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FACULTY OF PUBLIC RELATIONS, MARKETING AND ADVERTISING

**THE ROLE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN ENHANCING CUSTOMER
SATISFACTION: A STUDY OF ABSA BANK GHANA LIMITED.**

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DECLARATION

Students Declaration

I, **Nana Asabea Ababio**, declare that this long essay except for quotations and references contained in published works that have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

Signature: Date:

Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work were supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of the thesis/dissertation as laid down by the Ghana Institute of Journalism.

Dr. Albert Anani- Bossman (Supervisor)

Signature:

Date:

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my husband, son, mother and colleague, Judith Hayibor.

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My profound gratitude goes to the Almighty God for his wisdom and grace throughout my period of study.

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to provide evidence of the role of public relations in enhancing customer satisfaction at the Absa Bank Ghana Limited.

The conclusion was drawn based on past and prevailing studies related to the subject matter. The review has shown that the public relations departments in most organizations needed to do more in the line of educating and informing the customers about new products and services, and on the scope and benefits of the various policies and packages offered by the bank. It was also discovered that most public relations departments in most organizations faced many challenges, including lack of funds and interferences.

Public relations departments should be protected from undue negative influences from other allied departments of the bank, were some of the possible ways to strengthen the activities of public relations practitioners.

Based on the review, the researcher recommends that stronger communication mechanisms should be installed and well integrated into the system to ensure ease and convenience in dissemination of information to the publics.

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Literature (Kotler, 2006; Gronroos, 1994; Narver & Slater, 1990) cited in Nimako, (2012) have established that corporations are becoming customer-centered and are adopting the best marketing strategies that can attract, understand, maintain and build a strong relationship with economic advantageous customers in these contemporary times. Companies are not focusing on just getting fresh customers or clients but rather, retaining the existing customers.

Customer-centered organizations are interested not just in getting new customers but more importantly, maintaining already existing customers through customer loyalty and satisfaction. Due to the competition in the service sector, organizations are now competing with better quality of services that fits customer requirements rather than basing the competition on just cost differentiation Bitta, (2014).

In the relationship management perspective, public relations is viewed as an organizational role whose ultimate motive is to induce, develop, and guide relationships among a company and its key customers. The effects that public relations activities have on customers have been debated by many public relations scholars. Ledingham & Bruning, (1998), stated that involvement, trust, commitment, openness and investment which are organization-public relationship variables can be used to forecast consumer behavior. According to Levary & Mathieu, (2000) organizational public appraisal is determined by an organization's ability to maintain existing customers and introduce or attract new customers

For any organization to survive, it has to satisfy and be pleased by the environment that it finds itself. Conrad et al, (1997) established that the form of the relationship between organizations and their customers is inclined by how well the customers are satisfied with the services that the organization rendered to them and how well they treated them (that is the

customers). Recently, the prospective customer is constantly switching and seeking alternatives. Hence it is essential to ponder on the customers' satisfaction. To retain a customer, it is necessary to provide the customer with the best service satisfaction. In doing this the organization must make use of customer relations management to provide both direct and indirect support for the customers and to maintain a good reputation in the customer's mind. Today's Public Relations has become part of the management decision that influences the policy-making of any business organization.

Albeit the term "satisfaction" is relatively subjective and has been defined by many researchers in different ways, it is important to note that satisfaction is an important aspect when organizations render services or provide the product according to their customers' requirements. Primarily, customers base their expectations on word-of-mouth, colleagues, and friends, information delivered through marketing activities such as public relations and also their past experiences. Customer dissatisfaction occurs when the expectations of the customer have not been met which can affect the loyalty of both existing and future customers to the organization.

The introduction of customer relations management is merely not adequate because proper execution of customer-centered policies demand coordination with the organizational climate and culture since there is a unique way of doing things in every organization as opined by Beidokhti & Ghaderi, (2011) It is important for the organization to pay attention to the determination of factors influencing customer satisfaction, and initiate service policies that can offer better and higher satisfaction for customers by application and execution of customer-centered strategies Colgate & Smith, (2005).

Given this, this study is aimed at examining the role of public relations in enhancing customer satisfaction at the Absa Bank Ghana Limited.

1.2. Problem Statement

Numerous studies have been conducted on public relations within the domains of corporate settings (Bruning & Hatfield 2002). The successes that studies on public relations have chalked cannot be overlooked especially within the circles of customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Despite these numerous studies on public relations, there is skewness towards research on customer satisfaction in banking services, especially in Ghana. Over the years, there have been several scholarly debates on how public relations is practiced in different countries and the empirical shreds of evidence that inform such practices (Grunig, Grunig, Sriramesh, Huang & Lyra, 1995; Gupta & Bartlett, (2007); Sriramesh & Vercic, (2009); Verčič, Van Ruler, Verčič, et al., (2001)). Evidence shows that literature on the development and practice of public relations is virtually rippled. The focus of establishing empirical facts on public relations has been mainly skewed in favor of the banking sector in developing countries. Empirical studies of public relations have established public relations as the relationship that exists between organizations and their respective public stakeholders (Ferguson, 1984). Other scholars have also posited that after establishing the above unit of study, it is important that the relationship is well managed to become mutually beneficial to both parties (Ledingham, 2003).

Banking in Ghana continues to be a strong dominator in the Ghanaian financial services sector, with the sector's total assets standing at GH¢100.35 billion as of June 2018. In recent times, the sector has been served with pockets of weaknesses such as the upsurge of non-performing loans owing to high-interest rates, poor corporate governance practices, credit risks, and regulatory lapses. In an attempt to create a satisfactory service experience, (Oliver, 1993) banks are interested in building and harnessing positive relationships with their new and existing customers (Barnes, 1997). To explore the role that public relations play in

enhancing customer satisfaction, a qualitative and quantitative study analysis will be conducted using Absa Bank Ghana Limited as a focus.

The efficiency and sustainability of Absa Bank Ghana Limited depends on how well the customers are satisfied with the services of the bank. Customers transacting with the bank have in recent times faced difficulties in accessing information, making it seem like the bank does not make use of public relations tools at its disposal or has weak public relations policies. Absa Bank Ghana Limited has been able to integrate the relationship management perspective of public relations in enhancing their customer services (Ledingham, 2003), and maintained some customers by demonstrating a high relational positioning (Bruning, 2000) Although the relationship between public relations perceptions and key public perceptions have been explored, studies have not been conducted on the various ways public relations can be engaged in enhancing satisfaction. This study seeks to find how public relations can be positioned to enhance customer satisfaction at Absa Bank Ghana Limited.

1.3. Aim and Objectives

1.3.1 Aim

The purpose of this study is to find out the role of public relations in enhancing customer satisfaction at Absa Bank Ghana Limited.

1.3.2 Research Objectives

1. To find out public relations activities rendered by Absa Bank that enhances customer satisfaction
2. To examine how the performance of the public relations office in the Absa Bank contributes to the realization of the organizational objectives and goal.
3. To analyze the impact of public relations on Customer satisfaction in Absa Bank Ghana Limited

4. To determine the possible ways for strengthening public relations activities of Absa Bank Ghana Limited

1.4 Research Questions

1. What are the public relations activities rendered by Absa Bank that enhances customer satisfaction?
2. How does the performance of the public relations office in the Absa Bank contribute to the realization of the organizational objectives and goals?
3. What is the impact of public relations on Customer satisfaction in Absa Bank Ghana Limited?
4. What are the ways for strengthening public relations activities of Absa Bank Ghana Limited?

1.5 Significance of The Study

Firstly, the findings from this study will be of great importance as it will necessitate the application of public relations in enhancing the satisfaction of customers of Absa Bank Ghana Limited. A better understanding of these roles will empower organizations especially the Bank to initiate, develop, and maintain apt public relations policies, marketing strategies, and awareness programs. It will also assist policymakers at the bank in designing suitable policies that will augment customer satisfaction.

The study will pinpoint knowledge gaps and provide proposals for further study. It will also add to the existing body of knowledge which will be suitable for decision-making purposes. It will also provide reference material to future researchers on public relations and customer satisfaction.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The scope of the study is limited in gathering in-depth information on the role public relations play in customer satisfaction of the bank. The study will also take into consideration

the views of the public relations department, client relationship managers, and customers of Absa Bank Limited service satisfaction levels. Empirical literature will be also be used in the conduct of the study.

1.7 Organization of Chapters

This study is organized into four chapters these are as follows: Chapter one consists of the background of the study, the statement of the problem, aim and objectives of the study, significance of the study, scope, and delimitations of the study, definition of terms. Chapter two contains the literature review on conceptual issues, theoretical and empirical evidence. Chapter three consists of research methods, research design, the population, sample and sampling method, instrument used in collecting data, and data analysis method. Chapter four which shall be the concluding chapter will focus on the contribution of the study to the body of knowledge of Public Relations. The expected outcome and the new information that will be generated out of the study will also be discussed.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

This section shall provide general literature on Public Relations and customer satisfaction and highlight the link between public relations and customer satisfaction in relation to the performance of the businesses. Furthermore, this study shall make available the theoretical framework upon which this study shall focus on. Overall, this study shall contain a conceptual framework, theoretical framework, and an empirical review of the study.

2.2 Theoretical framework

2.2.1 The Excellence Theory in Public Relations

The Excellence theory is a general theory of public relations that “specifies how public relations makes organizations more effective, how it is organized and managed when it contributes most to organizational effectiveness, the conditions in organizations and their environments that make organizations more effective, and how the monetary value of public relations can be determined Grunig, (1992). The Excellence Theory explained that the value of public relations lies in organization-public relations. Grunig, (2006) opined that the excellence theory derived from four approaches: goal attainment, strategic constituencies, systems, and competing values. Grunig & Grunig, (2008) further stressed that to maximize the value of public relations, public relations must identify strategic publics and build long-term relationships with them through symmetrical communication programs. The theory is linked with the stakeholder theory, in the sense that for the organization to be effective, the organizations should be able to solve problems and satisfy stakeholder and management goals.

The excellence theory resulted from a study about the best practice in public relations, which was headed by James E. Grunig and funded by the Foundation of the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) in 1985. Constructed upon several middle-range theories, and tested with surveys and interviews of professionals and CEOs in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada.

2.2.2 Systems Theory

Grunig, Grunig, and Dozier, (2002) considered the systems theory relevant in the field of Public Relations because it provides an avenue to think about relationships among parties. Basically, this theory views organizations as made up of interrelated parts, adapting and adjusting to changes in the political, economic, and social environments in which they operate. The leaders of the organization create and maintain these internal structures.

These researchers state that the systems perspective focuses on the interdependence of organizations with both internal and external environments. The systems perspective, organizations depend on resources from their environments, such as raw materials, a source of employees, and clients or customers for the services or products they produce. The environment needs the organization for its products and services. It is notified that the environment imposes constraints on organizations. For example, customers can boycott an organization's products. The courts can make the business pay damages to people who are injured by its products. Banks can choose not to lend money to an organization. The systems theory provides mechanisms that identify organizations' stakeholders and by spanning organizational boundaries it can identify each side's relationship needs. If decision-makers keep their systems open, they allow for the two-way flow of resources and information between the organization and its environment. They use that information for adapting to the environment, or they may use the incoming information to try to control the environment.

2.2.3 Relevance of the theories to the study

The Excellence theory is seen as appropriate for this study because it explains in detail the characteristics and core functions of public relations and its value to organizations and society as a whole. The Excellence theory provides a "theoretical and empirical benchmark" for public relations units. Based on this theoretical premise about the value of public relations, the excellence theory derived principles of how the function should be organized to maximize. This value the research showed that involvement in strategic management was the critical characteristic of excellent public relations. Public relations executives played a strategic managerial role as well as the administrative manager role. Public relations practitioners were also empowered by having access to key organizational decision-makers.

Finally, the Systems theory has a close relationship with customer satisfaction which is an indispensable concern for a public institution. Systems theory has provided the management to take a thought-out decision as the public became outrageous by the company's decision of not accepting their fault. Public relations is a subsystem of an organization itself, it is part of an organization's purposive and managed behavior to achieve goal states, Cutlip, (1994). Therefore, the systems theory can be applied to many facets of public relations. According to the perspective of the social system, public relations is an organization-public system that deals with the relationships organizations build and maintain with their publics (Cutlip et al., 1994). Recently many companies have tried to make their employees the focal point but still, the society does not consider giving much attention to them. PR professionals of organizations have to understand what is required to gain a positive reaction of the masses. They need to make more focuses on surveys and monitoring graphs, whichever is possible, and then make necessary interaction with the public in their best possible way. Undoubtedly there are situations where the leaders have to treat many problems simultaneously, but to

make a wise decision is possible only if the leaders take responsibility critically and in a thoughtful way. Hazleton, (1992)

2.3 Overview of Public Relations

It is safe enough to say that public relations have been in existence from man's creation. The concept of public relations has been in existence over the centuries and in the early 20th century, the practice was formally termed as "Public Relations (PR)". There are numerous definitions of PR since the formal practice of the profession was discovered. However, it is very difficult to determine a specific definition for the PR profession due to its global nature, and that practitioners and scholars in the field of PR do not seem to accept one specific definition for PR (Butterick, 2011:6; Hutton, 2007:45; Vecic, et al 2001:374). It has been defined from different points of view by scholars, practitioners, and even institutions.

Ivy Lee established the first definition of public relations in the early 1900s as: "sa management function, which systemizes public attitudes, defines the policies, procedures and interests of an organization followed by executing a program of action to earn public understanding and acceptance". According to Ivy Lee, public relations is about creating and maintaining a relationship between the organization and the publics to establish mutual understanding between the parties. The British Institute of Public relations (BIPR) (1969) defines public relations as 'the deliberate planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between an organization and its publics.'" This definition suggests that public relations is not much of a complex activity but calls for planning, research, anticipation, analysis of activities aimed at creating mutual understanding between an organization and the public. It requires the organization to understand the publics and the publics to equally understand the organization. In this regard, it is to say that the publics should be able to comprehend why an organization has taken a particular decision. Onah (1995) also viewed public relations as how and what people think about you either as a

person or an organization. He established that these images or views are either favorable or unfavorable. Hence, the effort of public relations is to change a negative impression to a positive impression or image.

Public relations practitioners act as a link between an organization and its publics. The organizations initiate and maintain public relations programs after identifying their target publics, and use communication programs to build stable, open, and trust worthy relationships with them.

Davis often refers to public relations as marketing communication from the consumer relations perspective (Davis 2004). Marketing is the process of noticing the needs of consumers and satisfying those needs profitably. Grunig & Repper, (1992) established that “Public Relations makes organizations more effective by building long-term relationships with strategic constituencies,” and more specifically, by “developing relations with stakeholders in the internal or external environment that constrain or enhance the ability of an organization to accomplish its mission”.

2.3.1 Measurement of Public Relations

Some scholars of public relations have developed various constructs to measure the public relations variable. Ki & Hon, (2007) evaluated the measurement of public relations from a perspective of perception (cognition), attitudes, and behavioral intentions. Public relations in the organizational settings were also measured using the constructs of trust, openness, involvement, investment, and commitment (Ledingham and Bruning, 1998). They found that these constructs can influence behavioral intentions and loyalty towards the organization. Bruning and Ledingham (2000) purported that the overall satisfaction that the public evaluated of an organization was based on the constructs of personal, professional and community relationships. The dimensions of control mutuality, trust, satisfaction,

commitment, communal relationship, and exchange relationship were also used to measure the public relations variable in organizations (Hon and Gruning's, 1999).

The review will expound on Hon and Gruning's (1999) measurement model of public relations.

Control mutuality

According to Hon and Gruning (1999, p.3), control mutuality refers to "the degree to which parties agree on who has the rightful power to influence one another. That is, the distribution of power on who wields influence on the relationship can be flexible and dynamic

Trust

Hon and Gruning (1999, p.3) described trust as the willingness of one party to open up oneself to the other party. Barney & Hansen, (1994) expounded on the construct by explaining the trust variable with three dimensions of exposition; integrity, dependability and competence.

Satisfaction

Satisfaction is a result of one party's perception of the positive relationship that is maintained by the other party's behavior. (Hosmer, 1996). Ki and Hon (2007) argued that a satisfying relationship offers more benefits to the relationship, especially amongst organizations.

Communal Relationship

Owing to the concerns of welfares that parties exhibit in the relationship, the degree to which the parties will offer benefits to each other can be described as a Communal relationship. (Hon & Gruning, 1999). To improve the relationship, additional resources of time and effort will be spent by the organization to improve public wellbeing. (Ki and Hon, 2007)

Exchange Relationship

Hon & Grunig (1999, p.3) referred to the exchange relationship as the occurrence of benefits distributed by one party to the other as a result of previous benefits given in the past by the

other party. It was found that the relationship is not solely a relationship of exchanges and benefits, but one of social interdependence. (Thibaut and Kelley, 1959). In this relationship, organizations realize their dependence on the public for certain resources and therefore are somewhat responsible to provide certain benefits for the public.

Commitment

Hon & Grunig (1999) defined commitment as “the extent to which each party believes and feels that the relationship is worth spending energy to maintain and promote” Organizations have emotional orientations towards the furtherance of their relationship with the public, which is described as the affective commitment Morgan et al., (1994). Morgan and Hunt (1994) also described another dimension of commitment known as the continuance commitment where an organization's line of action or certain behaviors will promote the furtherance of the relationship with the public.

2.3.2 Customer Satisfaction and Measurement of Public Relations

Customer satisfaction has been defined in two categories; the first category viewed customer satisfaction as a process and the other viewed it from an outcome perspective.

Researchers such as; Tse and Wilton (1988) and Hunt (1977) defined customer satisfaction from a process point of view. According to these researches, customer satisfaction is "an evaluation rendered that the experience was at least as good as it was supposed to be". Three antecedents can be deduced from the above definition; one the expectations of customers, two the actual expectation and three the discrepancy between the expected and actual expectation.

Churchill and Surprenant (1982) which are in the second group defined customer satisfaction as "an outcome of purchase and use resulting from the buyer's comparison of the rewards and the costs of the purchase in relation to the anticipated consequences".

Customer satisfaction is recognized as one of the most powerful tools for attaining and sustaining competitive advantage for business success and survival nowadays, through excellent service quality. Mentzer et al., (1995) opined that "maximizing customer satisfaction will maximize profitability and market share".

Cengiz (2010) argued that customer satisfaction measurement issues are essential for maintaining a competitive advantage in business. Due to the fact that organizations develop customer satisfaction metrics and measure them, organizations will be abreast with customer knowledge and also have competitors' knowledge in the market.

Customer satisfaction is one of a personal assessment and a perception. Cengiz (2010) described customer satisfaction as “the degree to which a customer perceives that an individual, firm or organization has effectively provided a product or service that meets the customer’s needs in the context in which the customer is aware of and / or using the product or service”

Mittal and Frennea (2010) measured customer satisfaction using the dimensions of behavioral intentions, attribute-level perceptions, contextual information, and customer background variables.

Behavioral intentions

They described behavioral intentions as the likelihood of a customer to repurchase a product, brand, or service, the likelihood to recommend and the likelihood to complain.

Attribute-level perception

They measured attribute level perceptions based on experience, expectations, rating overall satisfaction, quality of care and waiting time.

Contextual Information

They measured customer satisfaction by customers' evaluation of their previous experience with a competitor, customers' most recent service encounter compared to the one before,

customers' rating of the brand, product and service experience in comparison with previous competitors' brand, product or service.

Customer Background Variables

They measured satisfaction using competitor related variables such as ownership and use of competitive brands in addition to customer demographics.

2.3.3 Public relations and customer satisfaction

Kogan, (1965) suggested that in the application of Public Relations, customers are considered as first among equals in the organization services, and are highly motivated and influenced to sway their behavior in favor of organizations' products and services. Despite other crucial roles that PR plays in support of awareness, its inputs are highly needed in the conceptualization of the image. Ehikwe (2005) echoes this fact as he believes that Public Relations usually prepares the minds of customers before they get the service and this may happen before, during and after the actual service delivery. In the pre-service delivery periods, Public Relations focuses on the organization while preparing their minds for future patronage. Public Relations when used as an after-service delivery; its activities will be to reinforce loyalty and continuous patronage by customers. Public Relations as a tool in corporate and product promotions, specialize in polishing the image of an organization and their services, improve customer confidence through relationship management, and provide sufficient and reasonable information including a feedback process for correct evaluation results.

Customer satisfaction is generally understood as the satisfaction that a customer feels when comparing his preliminary expectations with the actual quality of the service or product acquired (Czarnecki, 1998). This means customers are most concerned with the value and quality of the service and product they receive and are also concerned generally with value for money.

Czarnecki further establishes that analysis of gaps between customer expectations and the performance of a company or organization is a cornerstone to monitor the overall corporate performance. Rope et al. (1994) also suggest that the determination of customer satisfaction is by matching the required expectation against the actual encounter between the customer and the organization. If the customer expectations outweigh the actual expectation this would indicate a negative satisfaction which will lead to negative feedback and discouragement. When a customer's expectations meet the experiences, the level of satisfaction is neutral. If the customer had high expectations, the customer's relationship with the company will strengthen (Rope, 1994). A customer with a low expectation from before will not be fully satisfied, even if he is not disappointed with the company or organization. If a customer's experiences exceed expectations, the level of satisfaction is positive and the customer is satisfied.

The essential thing is to influence the customers' expectations to affect the level of satisfaction. This is because the same level of action and operation with different levels of expectations will result in different degrees of satisfaction.

2.4 Empirical Review

The review of the findings of some prevailing studies in the field of public relations is discussed in this section.

The study was done by Beidokhti (2011) on the topic "Studying the Relationship between Organizational Culture and Customer Satisfaction in Mellat Bank" indicated that there is a strong positive correlation between the customer satisfaction and organizational culture as 85% of respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the services of the bank because of their well-instituted culture. The study also revealed that prioritizing customer satisfaction in all spheres of operations in an organization is a major determinant of the success of the organization. Again, it was also found that banking is a customer-oriented service industry in

which a customer appears very essential and customer satisfaction is a key factor in determining success factors of an organization.

The findings from the study conducted by Beavers revealed that good PR can enhance banks' marketing and improve the institutions' overall competitiveness (Beavers-Moss, 2001).

On their part, Gan, Clemes, Wei and Kao (2011) did an empirical analysis of New Zealand bank customers' satisfaction. The results of this study indicate that service quality has the most influence on bank customers' satisfaction compared to the value and corporate image. The results also provide support for the moderating effect of value on the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction, and the moderating effect of corporate image on the relationship between the service quality dimensions identified in this study and service quality.

The results from the study of Merenda (2004) revealed that nothing will establish trust more than credibility and this is usually done by enhancing demand for the organization's services. The ultimate way to market service is to promote public relations activities. The study further indicated that another relevance of public relations in banks stems from the difficulty in winning back customers when lost. Good public relations help in building a good public image of the bank. Banks need good public relations to inform and educate the public and help to counter the adverse impact of the "public" on their operations.

The outcomes of the study carried out by Lynn (1999) noted that public relations activities could increase economic value for banks because it creates trademark and brand awareness in the community.

The ultimate objectives PR strategies focus on creating credibility, delivering information, and building positive images (Wells et al, 2003).

Studies reviewed show that little or no information exists on studies examining public relations' role in enhancing customer satisfaction in the banking sector. This study per its

results and outcome sought to close the gap by providing useful information on public relations that can be used to achieve banking sector goals.

2.5 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter has discussed the concept of customer satisfaction and how it can be enhanced to benefit an organization. A preferred theory that can improve public relations practice has also been discussed. Similar research works that have been done that are significant to this study have also been reviewed to position this study in a proper viewpoint.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The term methodology is a system of explicit rules and procedures in which research is based and against which claims of knowledge are evaluated (Ojo, 2003). The description of the research methods, which includes the research design, selected study population, and the sampling method will be used to guarantee what the study aims to accomplish. Also, the data sources, data collection, instruments, and data analysis techniques employed to carry out this study, the reason for population sampling are all discussed in this chapter as well as the ethical considerations for the study.

The chapter presents the research design, the research approach, research method, sample size, and sampling technique used, data analysis and ethical consideration.

3.2 Research Design

Research design is the strategy for a study and the plan by which the strategy is to be carried out.

Creswell (2014) defines research design as “the set of methods and procedures that are used to collect and analyze the various components of the study. It specifies the methods and procedures for data collection, measurement, and analysis of data.” The experimental research design and descriptive research design are the major types of research design in business research. Experimental research design is undertaken to determine the possible cause-and-effect relationships through experimental and control groups. The descriptive research design involves the collection of data to test hypotheses or answer questions concerning the current status of the subjects of the study Koh & Owen, (2000). The study will employ the descriptive research design. This is because the study revolves around a particular population.

Specifically, under a descriptive research design, the study will adopt the survey method. A survey is an attempt to collect data from members of a population to determine the current status of that population concerning one or more variables Fraenkel et al., (1993).

3.3 Study Population

The study population refers to the total observations or groups of people that have the same or specific characteristics. It is the parent group from which a sample is formed (Pandey & Pandey, 2015). For the research, the chosen population for the study is the staff and customers of Absa Bank Ghana Limited. The Absa Bank Ghana Limited is, a member of the African financial services group with a presence in over eleven (11) countries in Africa with numerous branches providing simple, international, local, retail business, corporate and digital banking solutions to individuals and companies on the African continent. The study aims to examine the role public relations plays in enhancing customer satisfaction in banks. Banks usually use public relations tools to engage with their customers, therefore, it is important to know the impact public relations have on customers' satisfaction with bank services.

3.4 Sampling technique

Sampling is the process of choosing adequate and representative elements from the population. There are two main types of sampling techniques probability and nonprobability sampling.

Probability sampling gives an equal and known chance of each element to be included as a sample. The key component behind all probability sampling is randomization. Simple random, cluster, stratified, and systematic are types of probability sampling techniques.

A non-probability sample is a sample for which each element of a population has an unequal chance of being selected. Purposive, quota, convenience, and snowball are types of non-probability sampling techniques used in business research.

To ensure complete and reliable information on the role public relations plays in enhancing customer satisfaction in banks, the study will adopt both convenience and purposive sampling techniques from which data is gathered. The convenience method involves selecting those respondents who are easiest to obtain as the sample of a study Ta & Har, (2000). This method is chosen because not all the staff and customers of Absa bank will be willing to make themselves available for a survey of this nature. On the other hand, the purposive sampling technique, also called judgment sampling, is the deliberate choice of a participant due to the qualities the participant possesses (Tongco 2007). It is a nonrandom technique that does not need underlying theories or a set number of participants. Simply put, the researcher decides what needs to be known and sets out to find people who can and are willing to provide the information by virtue of knowledge or experience (Sandelowski 1995). It is typically used in qualitative research to identify and select the information-rich cases for the most proper utilization of available resources Suri, (2011). The purposive sampling technique is chosen because the selection of respondents will be based on a predetermined set of criteria.

The choice of the purposive and convenience sampling technique is motivated by the fact that the information on the role public relations plays in enhancing customer satisfaction in banking in Ghana are specific and therefore an expert with the requisite experience is required to achieve data that is reliable.

3.5 Sample size

A sample refers to the group on which information is obtained (Sandelowski 1995). The sample must therefore be representative of the population. It tends to be a general rule in quantitative research that the larger the sample the more accurate your results. In this instance, the study will select a sample size of one hundred and twenty (120) comprising of 100 customers and 20 staff of Absa Bank Limited (Avenue Central Branch). The reason for this is because it is impractical to assess the entire population and the population of all customers of

Absa Bank Limited at the time of the study. According to Hair and Anderson (1998), a general rule is that the sample size should be 100 or greater. This validates the choice of sampling size.

3.6 Sources of Data collection

Data refers to any information obtained about a sample. Data are a collection of raw facts, opinions, statistics that have been collected together and recorded for reference or analysis (Saunders et al 2009). There are two main types of data namely primary data and secondary data.

The study will make use of both primary and secondary data. The primary data will be collected from the target population, while the secondary data will be sourced from published articles, journals, official documents, magazines and other related relevant literature.

3.6.1 Primary Data

The primary data involves the gathering of data directly from the respondents.

The primary data would be collected using a questionnaire which will be self-administered to the respondents. It is used to get both quantitative and qualitative information from the respondents. The quantitative data will be collected using a closed-ended questionnaire on five-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). This will be used to collect the data from the customers of Absa Bank Limited. However, the qualitative data will be collected through an opened-ended questionnaire distributed to the staff of Absa Bank Limited. The opened-ended questionnaire serves as an interview guide; therefore, the members of staff will provide the answers, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, a face-to-face interview will not be possible.

3.6.2 Secondary Data

Secondary data are those data that are used for many purposes. Secondary data of this study will be sourced from the Bank's bulletin, Brochures, Text Books, Journal articles, Dailies, and other already prepared literature. They are processed data. The study will also employ secondary data, this is to buttress the primary data.

3.7 Method of Data Collection

There are two main methods of data collection namely; quantitative and qualitative data collection methods.

“Quantitative method is an approach for testing objective theories by examining the relationship among variables. These variables, in turn, can be measured, typically on instruments, so that numbered data can be analyzed using statistical procedures” (Creswell, 2014). This method works largely with non-numeric data and follows a different analysis technique as compared to that of quantitative methods.

Quantitative methods follow the graphical and statistical data analysis procedures. “Qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem.” (Creswell, 2014) The combination of qualitative and quantitative methods gives a mixed method of research. This study engaged the use of a quantitative method of data collection and analysis.

3.8 Instrument for data collection

This is the device/technique used to collect data. The study will solely employ questionnaires in collecting data. This is because a questionnaire is a formalized set of questions for obtaining information from respondents. Questionnaires are one of the most widely used survey data collection techniques. The questionnaire will employ close-ended questions. Due to the COVID'19 pandemic, the researcher will not use interviews for collecting data.

3.9 Data Analysis Plan

Both qualitative and quantitative data would be collected through self-distributed open-ended and closed-ended questionnaires respectively in this study. The qualitative data collected will be analyzed manually. Qualitative data collected will be grouped according to the questions asked and issues of similarities, dissimilarities of the questions and answers will be compared, and emerging themes searched for. The quantitative data, on the other hand, will be analyzed using Version 20 of Statistical Package for Social Sciences and record results nature.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Summary

The study provides an understanding of the role of public relations in enhancing customer satisfaction at the Absa Bank Ghana Limited.

The findings of past studies have been analyzed to conclude the subject matter. The reviewed of the past studies have shown that the customer's perception of the inactive role of the Public relations unit had substance. It was realized that the public relations unit needed to do more in the line of educating the customers to register, inform them about new products and services and on the scope and benefits of the various policies and packages offered by the bank. According to Seitel (2007), the functions of public relations comprises writing, media relations, planning, counseling, researching, publicity, marketing communications, community relations, consumer relations, employee relations, government (regulatory) affairs, investor (stakeholder) relations, public affairs and issue management and website development.

The review of the literature also established that most public relations departments faced a number of challenges, which include lack of funds and interferences. The challenges affected the effectiveness of the Public relations department in satisfying the information and communication needs of customers. According to the excellence theory in public relations by Grunig & Grunig (1992), for an organization to be effective, it must behave in ways that solve the problems and satisfy the goals of stakeholders as well as of management

The review again observed that the ways in which public relations activities can be strengthened in organizations or institutions include; provision of logistics such as computers, information van and biometric machines; personnel should go for training to upgrade their

skills, and public relations unit should be protected from undue negative influences from other allied departments of the bank.

4.2 Contribution to Knowledge

The findings of the study are relevant to Absa Bank Limited and other banks to make an informed decision concerning public relations activities as various findings of the past studies have been scrutinized and the conclusions drawn.

Again, other corporations and institutions can make use of this study in the implementation of suitable public relations policies and strategies so that they can meet the expectations of their stakeholders.

Outcomes of Successful Public Relations Measurement in Absa Bank

Many practitioners and scholars posit that the goal of public relations is establishing and maintaining relationships with an organization's key operations (Childers and Grunig, 1999). Public relations evaluation does not only focus on measuring the outputs and outcomes of public relations programs but on measuring relationships (Childers and Grunig, 1999). O'Neil (2009) discussed that the efforts of public relations practitioners in showcasing their organization's efforts in a timely, systematic and responsible way have a direct implication in building trust, satisfaction, and commitment.

Public relations in Absa Bank Ghana Limited particularly aims at building relationships with the clients that will offer them maximum satisfaction because the bank has ensured that positive relationships have been strengthened which concurs with Childers and Grunig, (1999). The bank is also building consumers' trust, in that, the bank will offer products and services that they say they will offer (Childers and Grunig, 1999). Absa Bank Ghana Limited is particularly interested in establishing and maintaining a long-term relationship with all its

clients so that their products and services will be valuable to the needs of customers (Childers and Grunig, 1999).

Public relations practitioners at Absa Bank also want to ensure a balanced relationship with their customers so that they do not exert much influence on the service choices of customers (Childers and Grunig, 1999).

Public relations practitioners at the bank are usually attentive to what customers say, what customers want, what customers' expectations are, so that, management of the bank is considerate in decision making considering client perspectives (Childers and Grunig, 1999).

At Absa Bank, because customers have chosen to subscribe to services and products offered, public relations practitioners are at the forefront of ensuring that customers are receiving the right information and benefits that are associated with the banking services of Absa Bank Ghana Limited. The bank aims at ensuring that customers who often patronize its services and products are taken care of and rewarded for the patronage (Childers and Grunig, 1999).

Absa Bank is aware of the community it operates within, so the welfare and the communal wellbeing of its stakeholders are very important in their operations. They are interested in providing maximum benefits to customers even without expecting anything in return (Childers and Grunig, 1999).

Finally, this study will be added to the existing studies done concerning public relations and customer satisfaction.

4.3 Recommendations

In relation to the above, the study recommends that stronger communication mechanisms should be installed and well integrated into the system to ensure easier and convenient dissemination of information to the public. The study established that the PR department of

any organization contributes to its development and enhances customer satisfaction. In this line, the study recommends that a strong and well-integrated PR department should be established in organizations and should also be sufficiently funded to ensure its success. Further, the study recommends that organizations should devise ways and means to maintain a long-term commitment with clients.

4.4 Conclusion

The study provides an understanding of the role of public relations in enhancing customer satisfaction. The study has shown that indeed public relations activities of banks and other organizations have some element of influence on the satisfaction of the customers of the banks. It is therefore recommended that the banks especially, Absa Bank Ghana Limited should consider their public relations strategies carefully before implementing them as it influences the customers' expectations.

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