

UNIVERSITY OF MEDIA, ARTS AND COMMUNICATION
INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM

TOWARDS BUILDING A FRAMEWORK FOR SPORTS AND
ENTERTAINMENT PUBLIC RELATIONS

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MARCH, 2024

DECLARATION

DECLARATION BY STUDENT – DISSERTATION

I hereby declare that this project is a result of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or any other higher education institute. I further declare that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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DECLARATION BY SUPERVISORS

This dissertation has been prepared and presented under our supervision according to the guidelines for supervision and formatting of a dissertation laid down by the University of Media, Arts and Communication.

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ABSTRACT

Sports and entertainment have transformed from a passion to a global industry as a result of the global market that public relations (PR) has established. The once-passionate endeavour has metamorphosed into a vast market with boundless prospects, driven by timely branding and communication on both ends. Amidst the evolution, the Ghanaian sports industry is generally stifled and has struggled to meet world standards in terms of revenue generation. The root of the problem is how unattractive entertainment and sports have been and their inability to meet global appeal due to poor promotion. Hence, to ensure the success of the work of these industry players and to create mass value, which helps them achieve many gains, it is necessary to work on creating positive impressions and feelings about them. To achieve this, this research employed the qualitative research approach and interviewed 10 entertainment and sports communication professionals. The study found that the trends in entertainment and sports public relations are shaped by the evolving media landscape of which social media plays a crucial role, with influencers and digital platforms impacting public perception. Similarly, authenticity, storytelling, and engagement are key focus areas for PR professionals in these industries. The findings further revealed that sports and entertainment personalities often face intense media scrutiny, making it challenging for PR professionals to manage and control the narrative, especially in the age where information spreads rapidly. The study finally discovered that sports and entertainment PR experts facilitate partnerships between celebrities and brands, an opportunity that ensures that collaborations align with the image and values of both parties. Through the findings, the study developed a 10-level framework for sports and entertainment public relations practice.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to:

My mother and brother, Madam Cecelia Akyea and Gideon Bonsu. You have always been my source of inspiration and unconditional love. Your unwavering support and belief in me have made all the difference in my life. This dissertation is dedicated to you with all my love and gratitude.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Chapter Overview

This thesis sought to explore the avenues for building a framework for practicing public relations (PR) in the sports and entertainment industry in Ghana. This opening chapter, therefore, covers the following: introduction and background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research objectives, research questions, significance of the study, and organisation of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

Sports and entertainment have transformed from a passion to a global industry as a result of the global market that public relations (PR) has established (Stoldt et al., 2014). The once-passionate endeavour has transformed into a vast market with boundless prospects, driven by timely branding and communication on both ends. Sports and entertainment industries have been integrated into this global market and are now required to adhere to its rules or risk being left behind. Like in any company with a worldwide audience, administrators in the entertainment and sports industries must communicate with their external audiences to paint the true picture surrounding the clubs and opportunities that await them from potential partners or investors accurately (Stoldt et al., 2014). The role of public relations in their administration is similarly vital for sports teams, especially football clubs, which have transformed from being only a source of entertainment to a large business on a global scale (Stoldt et al., 2014).

Public relations is a broad term that has been conceptualised in a variety of ways by different scholars. Hayes (2021) proposed one of the most simplified definitions of the term, stating that PR refers to any endeavour to portray oneself to others in a specific way. Hayes (2021) asserted that public relations refers to a collection of strategies or techniques for handling information about a person or organisation that is intended for the general public and the media. Pedersen et al. (2015) defined sports public relations as the “process by which people in sport, in a sports setting, or through a sports endeavour share symbols as they create meaning through interaction” (p.76) in their description of public relations. Thus, the purpose of public relations in sports is to develop collective strategies that enhances the reputation sports persons or organisations.

Hayes’ (2021) part of the observation is that the practice of public relations can take the form of news conferences, press releases, interviews with journalists, and posts on social media, among others. One of the main aims or goals of public relations is image management, which is necessary to prevent fallout. Since public relations appeals to public emotion, the actions of organisations or individuals are mostly exposed to the public. On this basis, it was discovered that organisations or individuals with a public face are more likely to provide information about themselves, their work, or their activities available to the public (Hayes, 2021).

The growing media hype and coverage associated with team victories or successes and failures, as well as the celebrity status of individual sportsmen and women, place an additional responsibility on sports public relations. Another authority on sports public relations who is Stoldt et al. (2014) opined that "the public that perhaps has the greatest potential effect on a sports organisation, however, maybe the mass media" (p. 64). Their rationale for the statement is supported by describing the extensive attention paid to sports in the media (e.g., all-sport television and radio stations, sports sections of newspapers, and weekly sports magazines). The authors noted the

unique partnership that exists between media and sports organisations through their combined efforts to deliver sports content to fans.

As a game dependent on sportsmen and women, spectators, investors and other external publics, the need for timely news and updates within sports clubs is priceless and must be given attention by sports club owners or entertainment administrators who understand the trend in the game. The successful stories of European giants like Real Madrid, Bayern Munich and FC Barcelona made a case for good public relations in modern-day sports. On the African continent, the likes of Al Ahly in Egypt, Orlando Pirates in South Africa and Tuit Puis Mazembe from the Democratic Republic of Congo confirmed what good public relations can do to a football club. These African giants have all embarked on good Public Relations, with over 10 million digital followers across the social media handles (Owusu, 2020).

Entertainment and sports public relations involve managing the reputation and image of celebrities, performers, athletes, and other high-profile individuals or organisations in the entertainment and sports industries (Kelley et al., 2021). This can include promoting their work, handling media inquiries and interviews, and managing their social media presence. It can also involve crisis management, helping to mitigate negative publicity or damage to an individual's or organisation's reputation.

Ghanaian duo of Asante Kotoko SC and Accra Hearts of Oak SC have succeeded in bringing advertisers and partners and exposing their players to the European football market space thanks to the help of social media handles in their Public Relations machinery (Sarpong & Zungu, 2023). The timely and regular flow of information from these two football clubs has succeeded in using public relations to brand themselves, earn partners and generate thousands of dollars through their social media handles. Most importantly, however, the gap between the club and the public is bridged (Owusu, 2020).

Public relations professionals in the entertainment and sports industries often work closely with agents, managers, and other industry professionals to help their clients maintain a positive public image and promote their work and accomplishments (Tilson, 2017). They may also work with journalists and other media professionals to secure coverage for their clients in newspapers, magazines, television, and online.

Haggard et al. (2021) pointed out that the media has long been a tool utilised by the public relations profession to reach its target audiences. In order to share the story of their organisations and inform people about their challenges and organisations, practitioners have turned to third-party channels rather than relying solely on traditional news media. It should not be surprising that professionals incorporated the entertainment genre into their toolkits, given the popularity of entertainment media (Haggard et al., 2021). By virtue of its own design, entertainment media gives an organisation more freedom to tell its story.

This allows for a more dramatic and captivating narrative than is possible with entertainment news coverage (Haggard et al., 2021). As a result, entertainment is a genre that communicators are using more and more. On this note, Galloway (2018) asserted that public opinion may be significantly influenced by how an issue or location is portrayed in the media. In order to better educate and engage their target audiences about their organisations, public relations professionals have been working more and more within the entertainment industry (Niedt, 2015).

Due to the commercialisation of sports, there is an increase in media, corporate, and community engagement in the activity. Activities to promote sports clubs and players have increased as well. Sports continue to be a popular media commodity that is distributed through many different media outlets, including television, online portals, radio and newspapers. To establish and manage relationships with all of these stakeholders, given the increased interest in sports among diverse stakeholders, sports clubs must engage in public relations operations (Hansherick, 2015).

The management of sports clubs and entertainment industry participants must build strong organisational brands and promote fan loyalty in order to strategically seem desirable to sports fan groups and sponsors (Tsepo et al., 2019). This will allow them to best serve their existing fan base while attracting new ones. Again, Tsepo et al. (2019) are of the view that it is important to take into account their expectations and perceptions of satisfaction since sports spectators and supporters are important stakeholders. Depending on how strongly they relate to the team, fans consciously prioritise their support for them. The squad as a whole, players and administrators alike, might be revitalised by management's use of effective public relations (Barrow, 2017).

Since running a sports club as a business is so complex, club administration must possess innovative business skills, an understanding of corporate sponsorship models, and good public relations (Soderman, 2013). Public relations firms support the creation of two-way communication channels as well as an environment of mutual respect and trust. Additionally, public relations assist stakeholders in achieving their goals by analysing issues and working to rationalise conditions (Ghryani & Omar, 2021). This informed the researcher's decision to carry out this particular research on building a framework for public relations in sports and entertainment in Ghana.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Public relations is an important tool for marketing products to large audiences. It has the ability to bridge the gap between products and their potential buyers or consumers. It is one of the fastest, most effective and most practical ways of marketing a product, informing the target about that product and keeping all parties updated. With modern tools and media handles available under good public relations mechanisms, the global market is condensed under one body through different media handles (Mihalís, 2015).

Sports, which is a mass communication product and takes the interest of millions, also uses the media in marketing and public relations. With the media, the communication of the football teams has changed as the supporters of the football teams can reach and communicate more easily with their teams and can have two-way communication with feedback (Mihalis, 2015). Football is the most preferred sport in Ghana, with national support that can captivate the whole nation whenever a national team is playing (Amenyo, 2016). Football is the nation's staple sport and has been the benefactor of primary attention by the state. This phenomenon has proven detrimental to the growth and improvement of lesser-known sports like table tennis and golf (Amenyo, 2016). It has oftentimes called for a presidential intervention to resolve issues (Amenyo, 2016).

However, the Ghanaian sports industry is generally stifled and has struggled to meet world standards in terms of revenue generation. The root of the problem is how unattractive entertainment and sports have been and the non-existence of proper infrastructure in place for industry players to utilise (Osei, 2011). Therefore, to ensure the success of the work of these industry players and to create mass value, which helps them achieve many gains, it is necessary to work on creating positive impressions and feelings about them. The formation of a positive mental image is critical to ensuring business continuity and success due to its impact on the behaviour of the masses, their satisfaction with these works, and the assessment of their ability to meet their needs (AL-Rhaimi, 2015).

More importantly, despite the importance of this special and growing area in public relations, there has been minimal scholarly effort to understand the phenomenon in detail, especially from emerging markets like Ghana. It is important for those working in entertainment and sports public relations in Ghana to have a good understanding of the local media landscape and be able to communicate effectively with journalists, fans, and other key stakeholders. They should also be knowledgeable about Ghana's entertainment and sports industries and be able to stay up to date on

industry developments and trends. However, this is only possible when a clear and concise framework is developed from the emerging economy perspective to guide the theory and practice of the phenomenon. As such, this research becomes timely.

1.3 Research Objectives

The aim of this study is to explore public relations practices within a gray area of sports and entertainment. Hence, the specific objectives of the study were as follows;

1. To assess the trends and dynamics of entertainment and sports public relations in Ghana.
2. To ascertain the opportunities in entertainment and sports public relations in Ghana.
3. To explore the challenges in entertainment and sports public relations in Ghana.

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions are set to develop the working framework.

1. What are the trends and dynamics of entertainment and sports public relations in Ghana?
2. What are the opportunities in entertainment and sports public relations in Ghana?
3. What are the challenges in entertainment and sports public relations in Ghana?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study is significant to stakeholders such as policymakers, industry players and academics in varying ways. For policymakers, it is in the study's capacity to shed light on the present condition of sports and entertainment public relations in Ghana and provide an actionable framework for enhancing it. This study has the potential to provide valuable insights for the formulation of policies and strategies aimed at improving the efficacy of public relations techniques in the sports and entertainment industries in Ghana. Ultimately, it may contribute to the advancement and professionalism of these sectors. Moreover, a well defined framework has the potential to allure

investment and collaborations, therefore enhancing the growth of sports and entertainment sectors in the country.

For industry players, this study provides them with a more comprehensive understanding of successful communication strategies that can be applied in the unique area sports and entertainment. The potential outcomes of this include improved brand management, increased audience engagement, and more effective event promotion within sports and entertainment. Similarly, the findings have the potential to assist industry participants in enhancing their public relations strategies, resulting in heightened visibility, improved stakeholder relationships, and overall expansion and competitiveness within the sports and entertainment sectors in Ghana.

The significance of this study to the literature in the subject of sports and entertainment public relations rests in its contribution to its ongoing development. By examining the convergence between public relations, sports and entertainment within the context of Ghana, it contributes an original perspective to the global pool of knowledge in the field of public relations. The creation of a framework also addresses a notable void in the existing body of literature. This framework offers researchers and practitioners an invaluable resource for comprehending and enhancing public relations strategies within these sectors. Moreover, the study's investigation of the ambiguous aspects in sports and entertainment public relations enhances comprehension of the communication dynamics within these industries, providing useful perspectives for future research and theoretical advancement in the field.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The study mainly focused on assessing and building a framework for public relations in sports and entertainment in Ghana. With regard to geographical scope, the study concentrated on Accra as the capital of the country; hence, the study may not be able to generalise the findings. It, however,

included data on conceptual, theoretical and empirical literature review. The study employed only a qualitative approach limited to an exploratory research design. Although every effort was made to ensure the research's success, the researcher encountered the following limitations: Due to the busy schedules and multiple responsibilities of the respondents, some of them were not readily available. To get over this, the researcher visited sports clubs and entertainment industry players more frequently than planned in order to find a time that was convenient for them to participate in the study. Another limitation was the unwillingness of some participants to participate in the study. The researcher, however, made every effort to contact willing participants at a time that was convenient for them.

1.7 Organisation of the Study

The study was organised into five (5) chapters.

The introduction of the study, which was chapter one, constituted the introduction and background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, research objectives, significance of the study, study or scope of the study, limitations of the study, as well as how the entire work was organised. Chapter two was dedicated to a review of current literature on relevant works done in this area of research. Chapter three established the methodology of the study. In this regard, this section discussed the following: the study area, research design, population, sample size and sampling techniques, data collection tools, and data analysis. Chapter four was dedicated to results and discussion. Chapter Five, which is the final chapter of this study, discusses the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the study's conceptual and theoretical framework. The chapter included the definition of public relations practices and sports and the significance of sports and entertainment public relations. This thesis sought to explore the public relations (PR) practices in sports and entertainment industry in Ghana.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This section explores theories that correlate with building a framework for sports and entertainment public relations (PR) in Ghana. The theory discussed was Excellence Theory.

2.1.1 Excellence Theory

Excellence Theory, developed by James E. Grunig and his colleagues, is one of the most influential frameworks in the field of public relations. This theory provides a comprehensive model for effective public relations practice that contributes to organizational success. It emphasizes the strategic management of communication and the importance of building mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their stakeholders.

Excellence Theory identifies four models of public relations: press agency/publicity, public information, two-way asymmetrical, and two-way symmetrical. The first two models are historically significant but less effective for achieving excellence in modern public relations

practice. The press agency/publicity model focuses on gaining media coverage and manipulating public opinion, while the public information model emphasizes disseminating truthful, but largely one-way, information to the public (Grunig & Hunt, 1984).

The two-way asymmetrical model involves scientific persuasion and feedback to shape public behavior in favor of the organization, often without genuinely considering the public's interests. In contrast, the two-way symmetrical model is the ideal form of public relations practice, advocating for dialogue and negotiation to build mutually beneficial relationships (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). This model aligns with ethical communication practices and democratic principles, ensuring that both the organization and its stakeholders influence each other and reach common understandings.

One key aspect of Excellence Theory is the role of public relations in strategic management. According to Grunig (1992), effective public relations departments should be integrated into the dominant coalition or executive management of an organization. This integration allows for public relations insights to be considered in organizational decision-making processes, ensuring that communication strategies align with organizational goals and stakeholder needs.

Excellence Theory also underscores the importance of a diverse and inclusive public relations function. Grunig and Hon (1999) argue that diverse organizations are better equipped to understand and communicate with a wide range of publics. This diversity leads to more effective communication strategies and stronger relationships with various stakeholder groups.

Moreover, the theory highlights the significance of ethics and social responsibility in public relations. Dozier, Grunig, and Grunig (1995) emphasize that ethical public relations practice fosters trust and credibility, which are essential for maintaining positive stakeholder relationships.

By prioritizing ethical standards and social responsibility, organizations can enhance their reputation and achieve long-term success.

2.2 Conceptual Definitions and Issues

2.2.1 Public Relations

Due to the various perspectives from which it is researched, public relations as a subject lacks a single, comprehensive definition. As a result, there have been several definitions of public relations based on various values, perspectives and assumptions. The literature is inundated with arguments regarding a common definition of PR (Fitch & L'Etang, 2017; Russell & Lamme, 2016). For instance, according to L'Etang (2013), public relations is not only a buzzword but a term that is perceived differently depending on the cultural context in which it is practised. Scholars like Terry Flynn and Fran Gregory are of the view that public relations is the strategic management of relationships between a firm and its public by the use of various communication tools to achieve the firm's communication goal (Flynn, 2014).

Public relations can also be defined as “the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and the public on whom its success or failure depends” (Broom & Sha, 2013, p. 29). The majority of researchers concur that the core purpose of public relations is to use persuasion in order to maintain positive connections between an organisation's customers and the public (Heath, 2016). There is no need to promote a uniform definition of public relations, according to some academics, even though the aforementioned definitions appear to be agreed upon by a majority of academics (Edwards & Usher, 2017). This is because public relations deals with many values, perspectives and assumptions. Corroborating the assertion of these scholars, the Public Relations Society of America in 2011 put together a programme aimed at obtaining a single definition. It was, however, found that it was impossible

to have a common definition for the concept because of the complexity of public relations (Rickey, 2015).

Some groups of scholars are overly critical of public relations (L'Etang, 2013b; Ihen & Verhoeven, 2016; Allotey-Ollennu, 2020). They describe public relations as a weapon for “manipulation and propaganda” owing to the fact that public relations practitioner places the interest of their firm above the interest of the various publics and the communities within which they operate. Christians (2016) opined that public relations is a deliberate and ongoing endeavour to build and retain trust and understanding between an organisation and its audience. Media releases, exhibits and exhibitions, press conferences, community engagement initiatives, staged events, and publicity stunts are a few often employed public relations strategies and tactics.

In the words of the British Institute of Public Relations, with the aim of achieving a state of common understanding through effective communication and policies, public relations is the systematic, planned, continuous effort to build the public's trust, sympathy and endorsement (Gilaninia et al., 2016). The same can be said of the definition of public relations by the Chartered Institute of Public Relations, which defined it as the striped and ongoing effort of specific bodies to establish and safeguard goodwill and mutual understanding between institutions and their masses (Ansango, 2012).

Public relations, as a management function, is the systematic development and cultivation of relationships with the public with the primary objective of improving the image of an organisation or an institution. Bailey (2018) argued that whenever people use the term ‘public relations’, they are, in fact, referring to public relations management. In Minshaw's (2019) view, public relations is one of the ‘core functions’ of management, along with operations and finance – meaning that it must be supported by a set of policies, accepted or world-renowned best practices and processes.

Therefore, to be effective, public relations needs to be consistent with policies and practices in accordance with established processes or guidelines.

In addition, it is a human communication art that aims to build strong relationships between the clients of the public relations organisation and the public based on recognition, trust, common interests, and respect (Gilinini et al., 2016). Public relations has an administrative character; it helps in understanding and collaboration between individuals or institutions and their various groups and establishes channels of communication.

Therefore, to achieve its objectives and progress in its field, public relations is used as an administrative instrument for efficient management to help the organisation (Chege, 2014). Public relations has gained great importance in recent years due to the intensification of competition between firms and institutions across all industries (Kaleli, 2021). Public relations is mainly used to maintain a positive and concrete view of the organisation, its administration, and its products, as well as to persuade the general public, financial supporters, workers, and various partners (Ansango, 2012).

Many of the strategies that public relations companies employ are aimed at anticipating, analysing, and interpreting public opinion, anticipated attitudes and trends, and issues that may be pertinent to their client's business. The key to these strategies is to build interactive relationships, create positive trends, and improve the mental image of those customers among their audience in a way that will ensure successful actions, help them achieve their goals, ensure the long-term success of their business and the continuation of their development with confidence (Oparaogo, 2021).

Public relations services around the world have become increasingly important in recent years. This is due to the increasing competition between multinational companies in foreign markets (Petersen (2014). Western-based multinational companies such as Coca-Cola, multinational banks and many others are expanding their businesses into new markets while leveraging public relations

to connect with their audiences. Public relations practices are becoming increasingly internationalised with the growing trade between nations and the need to sensitise, support and support government development projects (Tindall (2014).

A public relations specialist is responsible for maintaining an organisation's reputation and conveying the company's message to its clients, investors and the public at large. A positive image of a company or a non-profit can boost sales and improve its financial performance. A public relations specialist role and key responsibilities vary (Tindall, 2014). Through well-thought-out communications plans and tactics, the goal of a public relations professional is to present a positive image of the company to the world.

In simple terms, public relations is about maintaining a certain degree of positive public opinion, building relationships with different groups of people, managing or preventing negative news or gossip that could harm the organisation's reputation, generating positive press releases, strengthening a specific image, for example, innovation, integrity or reliability (Christian, 2016). When properly managed and integrated with the rest of a firm's operations, public relations can create a positive perception of a business and thus influence consumers' buying behaviour. Ultimately, this should lead to the achievement of corporate objectives such as increasing market share and improving profitability and higher sales (Cooper, 2015).

Public relations organisations work to clear up ambiguities, explain situations, anticipate and take advantage of opportunities, explain and analyse problems and help their clients to imagine and execute their objectives in a manner that is socially acceptable and creates mass value for the product that results in profits (Ghryani & Omar, 2021). Social media platforms have recently made it easier for public relations professionals to form and improve the public's mental image because they help in the documentation of media relations and allow for direct communication and participation with the public (Ghryani & Omar, 2021).

2.2.2 Sports

Sports are often defined as follows: organised, regulated, physical activity, competitive, and governed by rules and regulations (Coakley (2015) and Madigan (2009)). A definition provided by Coakley (2015) identified sport as “well-established, officially governed competitive physical activities in which participants are motivated by internal and external rewards” (p. 6). Sport is seen as a social construct that is influenced by a wide range of social, political, and economic factors and is utilised by a variety of actors who seek to exploit sport for their own ends (Trenberth & Collins, 2015). Sport is also seen as having no fixed status, is constantly evolving and is seen in different ways in different contexts by different people (Collins, 2016).

The ancient Olympic Games may have been the origin of competitive sport, but historians attribute the development of ‘modern sport’ to the West, especially the UK and the US (McComb (2004)). The sport experienced rapid growth during the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries, particularly in Great Britain (Ryan, 2016). It also became more organised and modernised. Countries such as England experienced significant population increases during the industrial revolution (Ryan (2016)). The sports industry has expanded rapidly due to globalisation, sports broadcasting and the commercialisation of sports as a business, as well as the increasing popularity of sports in society (Hoye et al., 2018).

Today, the sports industry is characterised by a wide range of uses and activities, making it difficult to define and describe it in one way or another (Pedersen, 2013). Today, the sports industry can be divided into three distinct but interrelated sub-sectors: the public sector, the non-profit sector, and the professional sector. The public sector is made up of national and regional government departments that fund other sectors and develop and implement policies (Hoye, 2018).

2.2.3 Entertainment

The term “entertainment” refers to the degree to which a medium satisfies the user’s need for escape, emotional fulfilment, diversion or aesthetic pleasure (Luo, 2019). Similarly, business academics define entertainment as a culture offered for ‘the exchange of money’ (Sayre & King, 2016, p. 4). Entertainment is used to describe anything that provides consumers with the ‘opportunity’ to ‘achieve’ gratification (Zillmann & Vorderer, 2017), and that satisfaction can be in the form of satisfaction (Oliver & Bartsch, 2017); ‘pleasure’ (Vermeer et al., 2016), as well as other forms. The higher the entertainment value, the more likely users are to use certain media more often than others. Additionally, Dyer contends that "entertainment" is best defined as a mindset towards things rather than as a category of objects (Dyer, 2016).

The entertainment industry is constantly changing and evolving. This is more true now than it has ever been before. The entertainment industry offers a lot of opportunities for public relations. There are a lot of innovative tools and technologies in the entertainment industry that are driving innovation and development. In recent years, a lot of immersive entertainment options have become more popular than ever before (Luo, 2019).

That is why there have been so many different types of attractions, from independent theatres that offer immersive experiences to giant theme parks that people can go to and enjoy. Entertainment is based on creating a portfolio of revenue-generating projects that will continue to ensure business continuity and generate income throughout its life cycle. In order to create the best experience for their target audience, entertainment companies need to find a balance between creativity and innovation. They need to come up with solutions that the audience will completely ignore so as to maintain the illusion of a good experience for their attendees (Casali, 2016; Luo, 2019).

People are moved by entertainment as they share their terror and triumph, laugh and cry, just generate calming or feel the sadness and happiness of others, and experience serenity and elation

or thrilling sensations (Zillmann & Vorderer, 2017). This takes us to the field of entertainment psychology, which is arguably the most established in the academic study of entertainment. Zillmann and Vorderer, who study the psychology of entertainment, contend that while entertainment encourages emotional reactions, these responses may not always be inherently positive. In the past, media was limited to radio shows and television broadcasts that people listened to on a daily basis, as well as movies that they occasionally went to the theatres to watch. Today, media encompasses a wide range of programming across a wide range of devices. Indeed, from social media platforms to YouTube channels, everything has become brand collaborators and media-driven, just as many of the world's best-rated television shows and movies are.

Furthermore, in the most efficient manner possible, consumers around the world have much more access and information to discover cinematic entertainment experiences, in addition to outdoor digital displays, VR initiatives, media-centric marketing strategies, and more, all of which necessitate media creation, distribution and management (Luo, 2019). As media has become an integral part of people's day-to-day lives, most audiences all over the world have come to expect to be entertained almost every waking moment. This has led to the emergence of new platforms that are designed to meet this need, as well as other platforms that are able to completely transform the way they work and meet the needs of their audience through the various emerging technologies. As the media began to function as a bridge between consumers and the brands that they interact with and choose to engage with, both new and older platforms have become ubiquitous in the day-to-day lives of billions of people worldwide (Luo, 2019).

2.3 Empirical Review

2.3.1 Public Relations Activities and Sports

In order for sports organisations and sports public relations experts to be successful, they need to understand, manage, create, and maintain relationships with their audience, as sports is widely considered to be a multi-faceted sector (Hopwood, 2016; Mullin, 2014). A wide range of publics (including media outlets, sponsors, international and national athletic organisations, governments and community organisations) interact with sports organisations across all three business lines (Hoye, 2018). Public relations is considered to be an increasingly important part of the business for sports organisations (Hopwood, 2016; Hoye, 2018; Stoldt, 2014).

Public relations is a unique management tool that facilitates communication, comprehension and collaboration between an organisation and its public (Limor, 2014). Public relations has different meanings depending on the type of relations and the ideological format. For example, in economic contexts, a community is made up of 'workers' who work for an organisation' and 'customers', 'audiences' and 'viewers' that the organisation interacts with. In political contexts, a community refers to the human masses referred to as 'people' or 'electors' who are referred to as 'country' and form a political entity.

From this point of view, the communities of sports (public) clubs are made up of athletes who work for the club, coaches and trainers, employees working in the sports venues owned by the club, entertainment centres; members of the club, shareholders, investors and customers – i.e. fans /supporters; other public and private organisations with whom clubs interact; building, maintaining and safeguarding mutually beneficial, right and credible relationships with the people or organisations with whom the club interacts; developing positive image in the eyes of the public; integrating with the community.

In today's world, sport is seen as more than just an activity; it is a collective enterprise that is based on social, human capital and economics. Sport remains special because of its social nature and the way in which it 'touches people in their day-to-day lives' (Conn, 2014, p. 50). Media relations have also been emphasised as a key factor in a company's corporate image and image management. Traditional media often has a peculiar relationship with certain sports, such as football, as they serve as a 'source of information' as well as a 'supplier' to the sports industry (Gardberg, 2015; Manoli, 2014). The role of the public relations department in the decision-making process of the organisation they work for has evolved. Public relations communication through traditional or new channels enables them to play an essential role in decision-making based on their search for additional information and their sharing, rejection of information or acceptance (Khatami et al., 2015).

Tamir et al. (2015) argue that events may be an integral part of sports public relations activities. The scope of events in sports public relations is very wide, encompassing anything from one-off events to special sporting events (e.g. exhibition games, friendlies), season-opening ceremonies, inaugural championships, events celebrating the transition to a higher league level, events celebrating the selection and induction of the best players, etc. The concepts of events in popular culture are closely linked to the field of sports public relations. This is due to the fact that early work in sports public relations was dominated by publicists who were concerned with getting media attention.

Today's sports are not only entertainment for the masses but also a "religion" with hundreds of millions of believers globally (Price et al. 2016). Sport is also a multi-billion dollar industry that spans countries and continents, shifting billions of dollars in revenue annually. In short, "sport is both international and a part of everyday life, and it shapes relationships at every level: diplomatic, cultural, economic, organisational, community and interpersonal" (L'tang, 2006, p. 386).

Scholars have concluded that sport is one of the most under-explored areas of PR practice and that it needs to be studied (Brown & Isaacs, 2017; Coombs & Osbourne, 2012; Hopwood et al., 2016; L'Etang, 2015). Scholars have also lamented the lack of use of the public in sports literature, especially in sports management texts and marketing texts. Sports communication scholars have tried to incorporate public relations into the realm of sports communication, but this has been met with criticism from those who advocate for a separate discipline of sports public relations.

All-encompassing in its definition, sports communication is the process by which participants in a sport or through a sport seek to share symbols in a way that creates meaning through interaction (Pedersen et al., 2017). Proponents of sports public relations argue that the term 'sport communication' is too broad and focuses too much on communication techniques rather than on the strategic approach supported by the definitions associated with the discipline. Public relations scholars claim that sports communication can be more valuable to an organisation if used strategically and not just for the purpose of conveying messages to the public (Coombs et al., 2010).

2.3.1.1 Importance of Public Relations in Sports

In sports PR practice, it is essential to build strong relationships with sponsors, fans, athletes, teams, communities, and other interested parties. Developing these relationships will put each party in a better position to achieve their goals (Ledingham 2016). “The proper term for the desired outcomes of public relations practice is public relationships where an organisation with effective public relations will attain positive public relationships” (Center et al., 2008, p.2). The appropriate unit of measurement of public relations impact is the organisation–public relationship (Ledingham, 2016).

Today's public relations profession now has a strategic orientation and is strategically managed across the organisation. In the past, PR practitioners performed functional roles where routine

reactions were provided. Today, they are accountable to senior management and perform decision-making functions. In the case of sports clubs, Cutlip (2015) maintained that it is well-known that a PR practitioner is expected to have communication skills and knowledge of relevant areas. Besides, it is argued that in sports clubs, new media practitioners direct the following processes listed below:

- Planning corporate communication of the club,
- Determining the communication language of the new media accounts of the club,
- Developing direct communication with senior directors and opinion leaders in the club,
- Increasing social media literacy and the number of followers of the club,
- Following, analysing and measuring the club's official new media accounts.

Research has highlighted the importance of public relations in sports organisations, which employ a range of communication techniques. Research in the field of sports public relations shows that media relations, a specialised public relations role, is the most important and frequently employed type of public relations within a sports organisation (Nicholson & Sherwood, 2016; Stoldt & Hlavacek, 2014). The goal of media relations implementation is to establish relationships with media outlets with the aim of obtaining a positive image for the organisation (Coombs & Holladay, 2010).

Roles associated with public relations practitioners can be generalised into two main categories: those of technician and manager (Broom & Sha, 2013; Lattimore et al., 2012). Technicians are responsible for tactical tasks, such as the writing and production of media releases, social media, websites, events and speeches (Broom & Sha, 2013; Lattimore et al., 2012). On the other hand, public relations managers are focused on providing solutions to organisational problems, advising senior organisational managers and undertaking more strategic tasks, such as issues management and environmental scanning (Broom & Sha, 2013; Lattimore et al., 2012).

Garcia (2020) examined the public relations practices of Real Madrid of Spain, one of the world's leading football clubs. García focused on how Real Madrid employed public relations strategies through relationship management to improve its brand image and economic performance. The study also looked at how Real Madrid utilised public relations tactics to keep one of its key audiences, the fans, satisfied, even though the club was not performing well on the field. García's findings showed how effective public relations practice was in Real Madrid's management, as the study found that the relationship management philosophy was applicable and effective in managing Real Madrid.

By using public relations strategically, Real Madrid's management was able to shield the brand from the unpredictability of sporting results. Business/marketing continued to be important to Real Madrid during this period, and it was one of the beneficiaries of the club's successful implementation of relationship management. Garcia also noted that "infotainment" became an integral part of Real Madrid's identity, particularly as sports audiences grew increasingly global. The findings suggest that Real Madrid largely achieved this by providing the media with "good stories" starring its star players, stories that excite emotion and create tension.

Bakalar (2013) investigated the many ways in which social media websites were employed as public relations tools by the sports business in another research. Bakalar stressed the importance of developing and maintaining such social media websites for the success of college club teams in terms of increasing their awareness among college students in a qualitative study in which experts in the fields of social media, public relations, and the Cal Poly Men's Club Lacrosse Team were interviewed. Social media platforms are transforming traditional sports public relations methods as a result of today's ongoing technological breakthroughs, providing practitioners with new means to reach desired audiences (Bakalar, 2013).

2.3.1.2 Challenges in Sports and Public Relations

Sports journalism and public relations have lost their status as the undisputed stakeholders in disseminating sports-related information to audiences in the modern digital media environments (Torrijos et al., 2023). Instead, the landscape of sports communication has gotten increasingly murky, and competitors from the periphery of the field are challenging the dominance of traditional media more and more (Torrijos et al., 2023). In recent years, new players have appeared on the scene, offering content that seems to be journalistic (Maares & Hanusch, 2022). Examples of these players include fan bloggers (McEnnis, 2017), data specialists (Kunert, 2020), and owned media (English, 2021).

The power structures of the sports/media complex in the digital era have unquestionably undergone major changes (Daum & Scherer, 2018). According to historical accounts, sports and news media have a "symbiotic" connection in which both individual and group sports actors depend on media services to increase their exposure and draw in sponsors (McChesney, 1989, p. 49). Sports journalists are able to create content that is appealing to a wide audience and increase their standing in the newsroom because they have direct access to athletes, teams and event organisers. Ultimately, in-depth relationships with sports stars have long been the foundation of sports reporting's legitimacy (Velloso, 2022). Accessibility has long been used as a dividing line between professional sports public relations practitioners and other actors, such as (amateur) bloggers (Mirer, 2022). The excellence and uniqueness of professional sports reporting have been called into doubt as a result of sports breaking their end of the deal in the digital era. The flow and form of information are now controlled by athletes and teams through the establishment of their own channels that they use to bypass the media. They no longer rely on the intervention of professional sports public relations practitioners, and they sanction critical reporting (Suggs, 2016), increasingly restricting journalists' access to information (Sherwood et al., 2017).

When it comes to sharing insider information about teams and athletes or behind-the-scenes perspectives, professional sports public relations practitioners have become inferior in this circumstance (Evans, 2020). Additionally, fan bloggers, data specialists and owned media have become the biggest competitors to sports journalism in the digital media landscape as audiences are no longer reliant on traditional media coverage to update them on match results (Nölleke & Perreault, 2023).

Being broader and more diversified in its coverage by giving non-mainstream disciplines and sportspeople prominence is still a challenge for professional sports public relations practitioners to set themselves apart from other actors and carry out their social goals. In capturing the interest of underserved niche audiences, this strategy will aid sports media organisations in delivering news to various communities of interest across all channels (Domeneghetti, 2021). During the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games, 15 public service media (PSM) organisations in Europe delivered a diverse agenda on Twitter, according to research by Ramon and Rojas-Torrijos (2023). The findings suggest PSM should take into account the significance of promoting inclusion and observe audiences' growing interest in parasports despite the significant imbalances observed among the various media organisations in terms of the volume of coverage and the attention given to various Paralympic sports and athletes.

Eight German newspapers' publishing strategies were examined by Seeger et al. (2023) across their Twitter and Facebook posts. It was discovered that much of the content released by these news outlets aim to redirect users to the publications' websites and increase their audience instead of creating a new editorial space where specific narratives may be pushed, and users can interact with the information. However, mobile and Internet video streaming services are altering how live sports are viewed, consumed, and shared across several devices (Hutchins et al. 2019). From the viewpoint of 28 German professionals who were interviewed, Kunert and Kuni (2023) examined

the conflict between entertainment values and professional sports public relations practitioners in live sports TV commentaries. The majority of commentators prioritise journalism over entertainment, although playing the role of "objective mediator" or an "emotional entertainer" to strike a balance.

Sports organisations, as previously mentioned, are also posing a challenge to the profession of sports public relations by using a lot of media and human resources to keep fans interested in their teams and sports while attempting to set the agenda and, if necessary, obstruct media outlets' access to athletes. Regarding the "defensive mediatisation strategies" employed by sports organisations, O'Boyle and Gallagher (2023) examined the perceptions of seasoned professional sports public relations practitioners in Ireland and Britain. They found a number of practices, including a rise in in-house media, the employment of professional sports journalists as internal communications consultants, mistrust of journalism, the treatment of journalists differently, and an overall attitude of growing competition. Broms (2023), a researcher who went beyond mediatisation, looked at how Swedish sports federations build their social media affordances in order to better understand how they engage with their audiences on social media.

It was found that, in the current digital environment, the proliferation of actors and platforms forces us to reconsider not only who qualifies as a professional sports public relations practitioner but also how to conduct quality sports public relations and how to navigate the digital environment in the years to come without abandoning the best professional practises.

2.3.2 Entertainment Public Relations

The literature has predominantly focused on crisis management as a public relations function in entertainment public relations. The term "crisis" has several interpretations. In a crisis scenario, the crisis managers and leaders are nevertheless guided by these meanings when determining what to do. Since we talk about "managing" a crisis while each crisis situation is actually quite unique

on its own (Zamoum & Gorpe, 2018), it is also an intriguing applied subject. Simola (2017) believes that the complexity of the concept of crisis management and its nature are the causes of the debate over a single definition. In Simola's words, a crisis is defined by its significance, its rarity, its high impact, its urgency, its high stakes or its ambiguity. These underlying characteristics define a crisis. But what a crisis means to one organisation might not mean what it means to another, as Simola acknowledges.

In an attempt to define a crisis, Kayes (2017) explains that a crisis is a period of discontinuity where the fundamental principles of the organisation/system are imperilled, and critical decisions need to be made. During a crisis, there is a disruptive effect on the entertainment PR handling and its stakeholders; mistakes or practices are anticipated, and there is an increase in one or more problems. As a critical function of entertainment PR handlers, crisis management can lead to loss of revenue for the entertainment sector, serious damage to stakeholders, or even the collapse of the entertainment industry (Probst & Raisch, 2015).

Holgren (2015) posits that due to the damaging effects of the crisis on the entertainment industry, "the purpose of Crisis Management is to avert crises, or if a crisis does occur, to effectively manage that event" (p. 15). Crisis management, on the other hand, is about preventing a crisis from happening in the first place. In order for entertainment PR professionals to be successful and to generate mass value that helps them make a lot of gains, they need to work on generating good impressions and good feelings about themselves.

2.3.3 Sport-Related Branded Entertainment

The term 'branded entertainment' was first used in academic research in the mid-2000s and is used in a number of fields of study (Duttenhofer, 2016). Berke (2015) defines branded entertainment as a tool of corporate communications as the focus is on branded entertainment content: "It includes any piece of content that involves the brand's message, objectives, or personality" (p. 22). Also,

according to Berke (2015), what differentiates branded entertainment from other advertising is that “it is developed and produced by and/or together with the brand and competes with existing media entertainment formats by focusing on the entertainment experience of the viewer” (p. 22).

A successful fusion of brand-related commercial and editorial content is referred to as branded entertainment (Kunz & Elsässer, 2015). A brand (product or service) is genuinely co-creating content in branded entertainment rather than just being "placed" into already-existing material (Hudson & Hudson, 2016). Most of the time, the customer is unaware that the material is branded since the promotional integration is not always visible. Engaging in sports has been shown to be able to transmit positive images, intrigue, and attract spectators (Cornwell, 2013).

Numerous niche sports, however, continue to go unnoticed by sports consumers, sponsors, and the media (Kunz & Schnellinger, 2014). As a result of this smart integration, consumers perceive the content as entertainment rather than advertising (Kunz & Elsässer, 2015). The phrase "branded sports entertainment" was first used by Kunz and Schnellinger (2014), who defined it as brands being incorporated into content around sporting events, among other things. Thus, branded entertainment may attract consumers' attention and encourage prosumer participation for specialised players, athletes, sponsors and sports enterprises. Although marketing in sports is a hot issue in studies (Milne & McDonald, 2017; Shank, 2015), Bennett et al. (2016) found a research vacuum in the specialised marketing of and with sports (especially non-mainstream sports) via media. The importance of sport in branded entertainment has only been briefly discussed in a few research articles (e.g. Chan-Olmsted & Shay, 2015; Kunz & Elsässer, 2015).

Sports-branded entertainment is a form of content that is created together by sponsors, sports teams and media organisations while embedding brands in a subtle way. The goal of sport-branded entertainment is to entertain sports fans and other audiences who consume, share or create related content of their own volition (Kunz & Schnellinger, 2014). Receiving and experiencing emotional

rewards, such as entertainment, were found to be the primary motivators for watching sports. Vorderer (2016) noted that affective gratification is in high demand. Gantz et al. (2016) ascertained that fans of televised sports are more active, productive, content-oriented and emotionally engaged than fans of other televised programmes. These characteristics suggest that sports fans are important in terms of consuming and consuming media content and engaging in viral activities.

2.3.4 Ethical Considerations in Entertainment PR

Bowen (2016) averred that ethics is the study of what behaviour is good or bad and what is right or wrong. Bowen added that ethics is a study of people, with a focus on issues, values, and decisions. To Brautovi and Brkan (2009), a collection of moral standards that are intended to guide professionals in their decision-making is what is meant by the term "ethics". Managing communication within an organisation is the primary role of entertainment public relations practitioners. They must behave themselves in this course with the intention of identifying what is right and wrong (Bowen, 2016).

Public relations practitioners can decide what action to take in the public's best interest by using ethical principles (Browning & Sweetser, 2020). The conduct of practitioners in different professions is governed by professional ethics, and this has an impact on their careers (Haque & Ahmad, 2016). Entertainment public relations professionals must make ethical, thoughtful judgments or analytical decisions that may otherwise harm an organisation's reputation in order to have a successful career. The code of ethics for public relations is not sufficiently practical enough to enable professionals to work effectively (Makamani & Zimanyi, 2020).

Ethics in public relations has been around for a long time, and ethical practice is often associated with professionalisation. Professionals who practice ethics and work in accordance with it are considered highly professional. Everyone is treated fairly, and decisions are made judiciously in a

just society. Justice focuses on the equitable distribution of common advantages and the sharing of common burdens (Mackie 2018). The people should be assured justice because they deserve it. Successful entertainment public relations professionals and businesses treat their clients or organisations with the utmost respect and provide the greatest services possible (Parsons, 2017). In their course of work, practitioners in entertainment public relations are required to adhere to these standards. Practitioners hold this code of ethics in high regard as long as they work for the organisation since violating it carries repercussions. Public relations professionals and firms that operate ethically are most successful as they provide the greatest services to their clients.

2.3.5 Public Relations and Image Management in Modern Times

The success of today's sports and entertainment organisations is largely dependent on their ability to create and sustain a good reputation with the public (Pedersen et al. 2017). Image is the public's perception or perception of an individual, group, or corporate entity. It is often the result of what others (the corporate entity) have done or have done and is the sum of all impressions that people have about an organisation, an individual, or an organisation (Pedersen et al. 2017). Udeze (2016) defines image as the totality of impressions that people make about an organisation.

Corporate image is the short-term mental image that audiences have about an organisation. It can be created more quickly and efficiently through well-designed communication programmes. One of the reasons for having a good image is that if an organisation's reputation and reputation are good, people will be more likely to patronise the organisation's products and services and boost the morale of workers (Udeze, 2016).

For Imadonmwiyi and Ekienabor (2019), managing an organisation's image calls for a more strategic approach, hence the need to provide suggestions as to how an organisation can improve its performance by better managing its corporate image. Some organisations have a specific image they wish to be associated with, while others may not but consciously agree on a target image

(Agbonifoh & Oshagbemi, 2017). The terms ‘organisation reputation’ and ‘organisation image’ have been broadly defined and used interchangeably throughout previous literature on organisational image management (Massey, 2015). The reason for this strong interdependence is that both terms are concerned with how the external public views an organisation. In Massey (2015), it was argued that both ‘reputation’ and ‘image’ are concerned with how stakeholders view an organisation. However, they differ from each other in terms of stability. While the image is vulnerable and reliant on external factors, reputation is more fluid and a more solid and long-term view of the organisation (Massey, 2015).

Time and stability are, therefore, two of the most important factors in differentiating an organisation’s image from its reputation. Managing the image of an organisation is a continuous process (Massey, 2018). Dialogic communication with stakeholders is at the heart of this process, as ‘an organisational image’ is the result of a dialogue between an organisation and its stakeholders. Massey (2015) explains what ‘dialogic communication’ between an organisation and external stakeholders means in terms of image management: ‘The concept of dialogue between the organisation and its external stakeholders is not the same as that of a conversation between the organisation and a customer’ (Massey, 2018).

In Massey’s (2015) view, it is a two-step process: first, the organisation projects a vision to the outside stakeholder environment, which then interprets that vision. Secondly, the process becomes dialogical when the organisation responds to that feedback and modifies its strategic communications accordingly. Ultimately, the organisational image is the result of both the image projected and the interpretation of that image. It is the organisation’s unique identity. It sets the company apart from others. Corporate image refers to the perception of a corporation’s overall image held by its multiple audiences. In some ways, corporate image depends on the public’s

perception of the corporation (Martinez & del Bosque, 2015; Palazzo, 2019; Arabska, 2020; Rubio-Andrade, 2021).

Pahwa (2022) asserted that key goals or objectives in public relations include actions that involve image/reputation management. According to the definition of reputation management by Campbell (2020), reputation management is an attempt to influence or affect what people think about a personality or a brand or how people perceive it. In today's world, reputation management relies heavily on online channels – websites and social media, to name a few. Campbell (2020) reported that reputation or image management is referred to by a variety of names, including but not limited to internet reputation management, online reputation management, impression management, rep management, brand reputation management, brand perception, or digital reputation.

Impression management is the primary influence on reputation management. It is the process by which individuals and organisations control the general perception of institutions (Schaer, 2021). Whatman (2020) attempted to explain reputation management in more detail by stating that it is a process of controlling and improving people's perception of a particular brand. While downplaying those that are considered negative, it is carefully executed and mostly involves efforts or attempts to magnify or highlight positive aspects or areas. In Schaer's (2021) words, impression management involves both conscious and subconscious efforts to highlight positive aspects while downplaying negative aspects. Impression management affects how people, organisations, and institutions interact with others every day. As an industry within the broad field of reputation management, reputation management is extremely important.

2.3.6 Opportunities in Entertainment and Sports Public Relations

Entertainment is already a part of our lives (Bosshart et al., 2013). Reading a book, watching a movie, playing a game, watching YouTube channels, and so on are all part of our daily lives. All

of these activities are supported by a large industry known as the entertainment industry. The wide variety of entertainment offerings and its immense influence make its understanding popular. When someone says ‘entertainment’, it’s easy to think of something you have had an experience with. In academic literature, the idea of entertainment is familiar and intuitively clear, so much so that it probably does not need previous studies to help explain what it really means (Altmeppen et al., 2013; Dorn & Sengmueller, 2009).

An entertainment market offer is any commercial industry vision that is primarily focused on offering pleasure to consumers, as opposed to its purely utilitarian function (Collis, 2017). Pleasure is a quality of experience that encompasses a wide range of psychological states (Hennig-Thurau & Houston, 2019). The myth that circus press agents invented modern publicity and PR has been thoroughly debunked by Lamme and Russell (2010), who also point to other sources of proto-public relations and publicity that were active in the 19th century, particularly in the promotion activities of Protestant evangelists. To bring events and films to the public's attention, press agents and publicists were crucial to circus and vaudeville (musical theatre) owners and their popular early 20th century successors, cinema owners and movie studios.

Entertainment, which often layers over ritualised ceremonial behaviour, “predates the written history of the human species,” as Neolithic animal hide drums and cave wall paintings attest with sports, in particular, already serving as “institutionalised entertainment by the time of ancient Greece with the Olympic games” (Vivian 2013, p. 233). Although it maintains a management perspective, public relations in the entertainment business functions largely as a promotional practice (Trayce & Natalie, 2019). The stakeholders for entertainment public relations enterprises may be categorised as enabling links, functional linkages, diffused linkages, and normative linkages that support the continued existence of the movie studio, celebrity, museum, or attraction. Since the product is an emotion or an experience, entertainment and public relations are unique.

The duties and responsibilities of public relations professionals in the entertainment sector are varied and unique to this sector. The ability to work long hours and in less-than-ideal conditions is a requirement for the entertainment and public relations industries (Trayce & Natalie, 2019).

In order to shape media content, public relations professionals work with the entertainment sector (Niedt, 2015). In media relations, a public relations professional collaborates with a journalist to grant access to the organisation in the hopes that the journalist will also shape the narrative and coverage (Hecht et al., 2017). This activity is comparable to that of media relations. However, what distinguishes this form of public relations from its commercial relative, product placement? The act of inserting a product into a movie or television programme is known as product placement in marketing. Since the company grants access to its organisation and procedures, this kind of entertainment media engagement for public relations is significantly more extensive than product placement.

The brand actively influences how its organisation is seen in the entertainment media rather than just being simply depicted in such outlets. This aids the entertainment sector in adding authenticity to their productions (Srivastava, 2020). Practitioners rated the justifications for product placement in movies, with national watching potential coming in second and the movie's topic in third (Pardun & McKee, 2017). A brand essentially purchases the opportunity to be included in the most basic type of product placement. As an illustration, a beverage manufacturer may pay to have their product represented as the soda pop the lead character consumes. That kind of inconsequential product placement often fails to make an impression on a customer (van der Waldt et al., 2007).

More extensive public relations entertainment partnerships are believed to have a positive influence on audiences that watch the films or TV series set within the featured brand's organisation, even if the magnitude of the media impacts is disputed in the literature. Supporting this notion, using “product placement to create a good personality for a brand can increase brand

equity” (Srivastava, 2020, p. 234). Continuing with this line of reasoning, Srivastava (2020) says, “the integrated nature of the product placement catches people off guard,” and “advertising up” catches people off guard.

The product placement allows viewers to associate the movie or television show with their own world, which in turn influences attitudes, norms, and attitudes towards the brand. For public relations, if the product placement is part of entertainment media collaboration, then it is much more important to a story and much more prominent than a soda pop product placement; the potential media impact would be even greater (Van Reijmersdal, 2009). Streaming entertainment seems to be on the rise, and with it comes an ever-increasing list of sometimes confusing options for sports fans looking to watch their favourite teams play (Wynne, 2022). At the same time, social video and user-generated content (UGC) are supplanting traditional video entertainment for highly coveted younger consumers (Ashley, 2022).

2.3.7 Trends and Dynamics of Entertainment and Sports Public Relations

Over the past decades, sport has changed from a leisure activity to a major industry. It has a direct impact on social well-being (through its socialisation effects, which improve the biological state of the society’s members) and economic well-being (Barbu, 2016). Hosting sport and entertainment events continue to be a top priority for many civic leaders aiming to promote tourism and economic growth in the cities (Chalip, 2017).

As for those who are active in the sports entertainment sector, it is essential to stay up-to-date and keep abreast of trends in the environment and in the broadcast environment and to adapt these trends to enhance the sports-watching experience that continues to be a key factor in the success of sports fans (Trial & James, 2016). Event organisers are constantly revamping their entertainment options at events as they strive not only to enhance the overall experience but also to attract more viewers (Barbu & Popescu, 2018). Spending on activation costs is equal to spending

on gaining event rights for sponsors. Sports and entertainment's business dynamics are more entwined than ever. Why is there a stronger relationship between the two businesses now than there was ten or twenty years ago? The explanation includes a number of factors, such as new technologies that increase the number of fans, the profit made by organisations that sponsor sporting events that have realised they can earn much more if they turn the sport into a real show, people who attend sporting events to be entertained, and the importance of the show produced at sporting events in addition to the matches themselves (Barbu & Popescu, 2018).

Previous research on event hosting has focused on the bidding process (Hiller, 2016; Sant & Mason, 2015), the economic and non-financial advantages of hosting teams or events (Solberg, 2007; Preuss, 2007), the development of infrastructure for hosting (Siegfried, 2016; Zimbalist 2016), the effects of hosting on the city's image and on the destination's brand (Kaplanidou 2007; Vogt, 2007; Misener & Mason, 2018) on the political process of seeking out certain events over others). Although there have been calls for more research on tactics and procedures in smaller cities and regions (Soebbing et al., 2016), previous work has primarily focused on cities that host "major league" teams and compete with cities around the world for major sporting events (Carey & Mason, 2014).

A growing body of literature (Soebbing et al., 2016; Carey & Mason, 2014) concentrated on the effects that events and infrastructure have (or have not) engendered in cities, in part due to concerns about the return on the public's investment and interest in identifying ways for local businesses to maximise the benefits of sports events and infrastructure. Some of our study has looked at how local stakeholders have tried to maximise civic benefits through hosting events and teams. Leveraging an event calls for integration with the destination's wider product and service mix in order to offer value to the city or area, as stated by Chalip (2017). Each event yields new knowledge and information that raises the prospect of future success.

2.4 Research Gap and Lessons Learnt

Although public relations has a substantial influence on communication and its strategies within the sports and entertainment industries, there is a noticeable lack of scholarly attention, especially in growing countries such as Ghana. Prior research has mostly neglected the distinct function and significance of public relations in these industries, instead concentrating on marketing and some specialised areas of public relations such as media relations and crisis communication in a more general sense. The existence of this vacuum emphasises the urgent need for more targeted research that investigates the distinct challenges and opportunities of public relations in the sports and entertainment, especially in the setting of emerging countries.

A key lesson learnt from this gap is the significance of establishing a well-defined and succinct framework for the implementation of public relations strategies in the sports and entertainment. Although conventional marketing strategies may provide some insights, the distinctive characteristics of these industries need a tailored approach. This framework will not only assist professionals in effectively managing public relations in the industries, but also provide useful insights for scholars seeking to enhance their understanding of the nuances of these industries.

Moreover, the lack of a comprehensive framework for public relations within the sports and entertainment in developing economies such as Ghana highlights the need for further study that is both inclusive and representative. Creating such a framework requires an in-depth understanding of the regional media environment, cultural dynamics, and industry practices. By addressing this gap, future research can contribute substantially to the expansion and professionalism of public relations within the sports and entertainment industries, ultimately enhancing the overall image and success of these industries in emerging markets.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Chapter Introduction

Sileyew (2019) averred that methodology is a path that researchers go through in the research process, and this shows how researchers achieve the research objectives from the gathered data. Pittman (2018) also added that methodology is a step that shows how the researchers gather and analyse the data. Hence, methodological steps such as the research approach, research design and data collection instrument were included in this research. Among other thematic areas are the research paradigm, population of the study, sample and sampling strategy, data collection procedure, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

3.1 Research Paradigm

The research paradigm is the set of beliefs and assumptions that guide the research process, including the choice of research methods, research questions, and data analysis techniques (Creswell, 2016). Researchers often choose a paradigm based on their ontological and epistemological beliefs about the nature of reality and knowledge (Johnson & Christensen, 2017). Interpretivism, often aligned with social constructionism, is a research paradigm emphasising the subjective nature of reality and how individuals and groups construct their own understanding of the world. Unlike positivist paradigms that seek objective truths, interpretivism posits that knowledge is created through social interactions and shared experiences. Researchers within this paradigm focus on understanding the meanings and interpretations people ascribe to their actions, interactions, and social contexts. This approach often involves qualitative methods such as

interviews, participant observations, and thematic analysis to uncover participants' rich, detailed, and nuanced perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Social constructionism, a closely related concept, asserts that social processes and interactions shape our perceptions of reality. This perspective holds that knowledge is not discovered but constructed through language, communication, and cultural practices (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). As such, researchers adopting this paradigm aim to explore how individuals and groups create, maintain, and transform their social realities. They investigate how social phenomena are produced and reproduced within specific contexts, often challenging taken-for-granted assumptions and highlighting the variability and fluidity of human experiences (Gergen, 1999). Through this lens, interpretivist/social constructionist research contributes to a deeper understanding of social life's complex and dynamic nature. The choice of interpretivism as a research paradigm for this study is based on the fact that interpretivism allows the researcher to address the research questions in a holistic manner as it enables the researcher to adapt to changing circumstances (Creswell, 2016). This made it easy for the researcher to make changes to the interview as and when it was deemed fit.

3.2 Research Approach

The qualitative research approach was utilised in this study. Hennink et al. (2020) asserted that a qualitative research strategy is an approach which enables the researcher to closely explore the experiences of participants through the use of certain techniques such as content analysis, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and observations. The goal of qualitative research is to explore a social field using respondents' opinions and interpretations of meanings, taking into account the study's perspective (Hennink et al., 2020). These advantages are the resilient arguments in favour of adopting the qualitative approach. Moreover, the qualitative data came to

assist the researcher in getting an in-depth understanding of the responses given by the participants on building a framework for public relations in sports and entertainment in Ghana.

3.3 Research Design

The combination of the researcher's and the study's philosophical orientations produces a research design, which is a methodologically referenced model (Mjjid, 2018). According to Asenahabi (2019), a research work's general substructure connects conceptual research problems to empirical research concerns and provides directions for research techniques. Asenahabi (2019) asserted that the purpose of a study design is to aid the researcher in achieving the research aim, control unimportant factors, reduce errors, and make a rational and justified decision regarding what data to obtain and how to analyse it. In order to provide insights into an issue or subject, Lucas et al. (2018) support the use of "case studies" as a research design. Hence, for this current study, the case study technique was considered to be the best choice since it offered additional information and details that might not be initially anticipated. This method contributed to a complete comprehension and understanding of the issue at hand, which motivated the decision to use this technique.

3.4 Population of the Study

In research language, Connaway and Radford (2021) stated that a population is a sizable set of individuals, items, institutions or other things that have characteristics in common and are of interest to the researcher. Connaway and Radford (2021) added that a population is an entire world and a collection of units that may be used to generalise the findings of a research study. Based on these descriptions, entertainment and sports communication professionals constituted the population of the study. They were chosen as the population because they have some knowledge about building a framework for sports and entertainment public relations in Ghana.

3.5 Sample and Sampling Strategy

3.5.1 Sample

A sample is a small subset of participants chosen at random from the complete group of participants who have the traits the researcher is interested in (Berndt, 2020). Taherdoost (2020) stated that a shortage of resources prevents researchers from fully analysing data from the population, which is why a sample is used. Even if the purpose of sampling is to conserve time and resources, a sample must have a representativeness feature in order for the researcher to confidently extrapolate findings from the sample to the target population (Berndt, 2020). Consequently, ten (10) entertainment and sports communication professionals were contacted for the study. The justification for selecting this number is in the assertion that the focus of qualitative research is on depth rather than breadth, aiming to gather rich, detailed insights from a select group of participants (Creswell, 2016).

3.5.2 Sampling Strategy

The convenience sampling strategy was used. A non-probability sampling method known as the convenience sample strategy selects participants who are close to the researcher (Stratton, 2021). Units are chosen for inclusion in convenience sampling based on their ease of availability. Gill (2020) postulates that convenience sampling refers to voluntary sampling in which potential participants make themselves available for a study. Gill maintained that using a convenience sample is simple, less expensive and effective. In this study, convenience sampling was used to select entertainment and sports communication professionals based on accessibility and proximity. In all, ten (10) entertainment and sports communication professionals were contacted.

3.6 Data Collection Instrument

Interviews were used by the researcher as the data collection method. A one-on-one conversation between two individuals who alternate roles of interviewer and interviewee is referred to as an interview (Ruslin et al., 2022). Afolayan and Oniyinde (2019) stressed that an interview also aids the researcher in discovering the truth by observing how the interviewee responds and behaves; hence, it entails more than just asking questions and hearing responses. Personal (face-to-face), telephone, or focus group interviews are all acceptable forms of gathering information (Ruslin et al., 2022). Interviewees were given the opportunity to open up, and this added additional information to the conversations, thereby providing real-world experiences that could be used to supplement the data gathered.

A semi-structured interview guide was used. Magaldi and Berler (2020) defined a semi-structured interview as an exploratory interview that is generally based on a guide that is typically focused on significant themes which offer a broad pattern to the issue under study. The semi-structured interview served as a guide in setting up themes generated from the major research questions. Similarly, a variety of observation techniques were utilised, including participant on-site observations, online observations, and observation by video or audio recording (Järvinen & Mik-Meyer, 2020). Not all possible combinations of qualitative techniques were used in the study. Instead, the study concentrated on pairing interviews with documentation, which was the most typical combination (Justesen & Mik-Meyer, 2020). Teachman and Gibson (2018) argued that in order to undertake an interpretation that could take the complexity of the social world into consideration, using observations together with dialogical interviews aimed at integrating "multiple perspectives afforded by each type of data".

3.8 Data Collection Procedure

Permission was sought from the UniMAC-GIJ for ethical clearance. A letter of introduction from the Head of Department was used to make it simpler for the researcher and participants to collaborate and assist the researcher in the study. Some explanations on how to respond to the interview guide were given to the participants. The interviews were recorded with permission from the participants and transcribed, taking into consideration the objectives of the study. The individual interviews lasted 45 to 60 minutes each. A thorough interview guide was prepared to solicit the required data from the participants. The data for the study was collected in November, 2023 for a period of four weeks (2nd to 29th). The unavailability of participants owing to the nature of their profession resulted in the scheduling constraints.

3.9 Data Analysis

Grant (2020) stated that data analysis is a process that extracts pertinent information from the gathered data using analytical or statistical methods. The data was thematically analysed. Thematic analysis refers to a method that deals with identifying, offering and categorising patterns of meaning or themes within a set of data (Braun & Clarke, 2013). By focusing on meaning across a dataset, thematic analysis contributes to detecting and understanding meanings and experiences collectively. In order to extract coded data from interviews and observations and organise it thematically for analysis, discussion and presentation, thematic analysis is required. Thematic analysis is a method used in qualitative research to identify, analyze, and report patterns or themes within data. The process begins with familiarization, where researchers immerse themselves in the data by reading and re-reading transcripts, noting initial ideas. This is followed by generating initial codes, where interesting features of the data are systematically coded across the entire dataset. The next step involves searching for themes by collating codes into potential themes and

gathering all data relevant to each theme. Once themes are identified, researchers review them to ensure they accurately reflect the data, refining them as necessary. The final phases include defining and naming themes to clearly describe the essence of each theme, followed by producing the report, where themes are woven into a coherent narrative that addresses the research questions, supported by vivid and compelling data extracts (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

3.10 Ethical Consideration

The standards used to determine whether research practises are acceptable or unsuitable are ethical considerations. Berg and Lune (2017) posit that the importance of ethical consideration in research cannot be overstated since it establishes clear guidelines and rules that signify morality and integrity. In order to prevent research misconduct and falsification, specific regulations must be adhered to. Through the Graduate School Coordinator, the researcher in this study applied for and received an introduction letter from the Department of Graduate Studies. Before starting the data gathering procedure, the researcher received the letter's permission and granting. The researcher took the time to walk participants through a summary of the study, explaining its goal and what was expected of them at each stage. The researcher was present at every stage to provide respondents with any necessary clarifications. Maintaining participant anonymity and secrecy is another important feature of research ethics that helps participants feel comfortable in sharing information. Where as there are no sensitive issues characterising the research, it was emparative to ensure that the participants remained anonymous as prescribed bu Creswell and Creswell (2018). Only scholarly reasons were pursued with the information acquired, which was kept private.

Furthermore, participants were given the option to leave the study at any point, and those who chose to do so were not under any danger of punishment or other forms of coercion. Therefore,

the researcher adhered to all university ethical procedures in order to conduct a study that would produce a reliable and legitimate conclusion. To ensure that the study would be widely acknowledged and free of bias, the researcher also meticulously adhered to the ethical clearance standards.

3.11 Chapter Conclusion

An overview of the methodological processes and considerations used by the researcher to guide the study was presented in this chapter. This chapter highlighted all of the approaches and procedures that were employed in the data collection and analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

The chapter presents the results and discussion of the primary data gathered from observations, document analysis and interviews with key participants. Data that were generally qualitative were analysed using thematic analysis. Analysis in this chapter was based on face-to-face and online interviews with ten (10) entertainment and sports communication professionals. The researcher sought to explore public relations practices within sports and entertainment in Ghana towards building a framework for the practice. Entertainment and sports communication professionals in Ghana need to have a good understanding of the local media landscape and be able to communicate effectively with journalists, fans, and other key stakeholders. The essence of being knowledgeable

about Ghana's entertainment and sports industries is to be able to stay up to date on industry developments and trends.

The presentation consists of a description and interpretation of the data in relation to the research objectives and questions. This allows for an easy and better understanding of the data.

4.1 Demographic Information of Participants

The presentation and discussion of the semi-structured interview data follow below. In terms of gender distribution, out of the ten (10) entertainment and sports communication professionals, four were males and six were females. Considering the age category of participants, six of the participants fell in the age bracket of 30 and 35, and four were between 36 and 38 years. Considering the educational status of the participants, six of them indicated that they had second degrees, whereas four of them had first degrees. Regarding their experiences as entertainment and sports communication professionals, four of them said between 4 and 7 years, whilst the rest of the six stated more than eight years. In order to adhere to ethical agreements between the researcher and the participants, the letter 'P' has been used in place of the original names to represent "Participants" for easy identification.

4.2 Trends and dynamics of entertainment and sports public relations in Ghana

Over the past decades, sport has changed from a leisure activity to a major industry. It has a direct impact on social well-being (through its socialisation effects, which improve the biological state of the society's members) and economic well-being (Barbu, 2016). Hosting sport and entertainment events continue to be a top priority for many civic leaders aiming to promote tourism and economic growth in the cities (Chalip, 2017). The following themes were identified from the analysis of data obtained in order to address the research objective one:

Trial and James (2016) argued that for those who are active in the sports entertainment sector, it is essential to stay up-to-date and keep abreast of trends in the environment and in the broadcast environment and to adapt these trends to enhance the sports-watching experience that continues to be a key factor in the success of sports fans. It was revealed in the interview that a participant (P1) was of the observation that:

The trends in entertainment and sports public relations are shaped by the evolving media landscape. Social media plays a crucial role, with influencers and digital platforms influencing public perception. Authenticity, storytelling, and engagement are key focus areas for PR professionals in these industries.

P3 added that:

Issues related to diversity, inclusion, and social responsibility are gaining prominence, impacting the strategies employed in managing public relations; hence, keeping abreast of technological advancements and adapting to changing consumer behaviours are integral for successful PR campaigns in the dynamic world of entertainment and sports.

P8 indicated that:

Entertainment PR involves managing public image, media relations, and promotions for individuals or entities in the entertainment industry. It is dynamic, adapting to trends, scandals, and industry shifts. Success often depends on strategic storytelling, timely responses, and cultivating relationships with media outlets. Social media plays a crucial role, requiring constant monitoring and engagement. Crisis management skills are essential, as the public eye can be unforgiving. Overall, navigating the ever-changing landscape of entertainment PR requires agility and a deep understanding of both the industry and public perception.

According to P4, entertainment PR, or public relations, functions to manage and promote the public image of individuals, companies, or events within the entertainment industry. P4 commented further that it involves creating and maintaining a positive relationship between the client and the public through media coverage, strategic communication, and event planning. P1 was of the view that the roles of entertainment PR are to generate favourable publicity, manage crises, and enhance the overall reputation of the entertainment entity. These findings corroborate the outcome of a study by Luo (2019), who established that, in the most efficient manner possible, consumers around the world have much more access and information to discover cinematic entertainment experiences in addition to outdoor digital displays.

4.1.1 Relationship between Sports and Public Relations

Today's sports are not only entertainment for the masses but also a "religion" with hundreds of millions of believers globally (Price et al. 2016). In view of this, P1 and P2 opinionated that "Sports and PR often intersect as athletes, teams, and organisations seek to manage their public image. PR in sports involves creating positive relationships with fans, managing crises, and handling media interactions to shape a favourable narrative". P2 added that "athletes may work with PR professionals to navigate public perception, especially in the age of social media where news spreads rapidly".

P3 and P7 mentioned that teams and organisations utilise PR strategies to build brand loyalty, address controversies, and engage with their audience, and effective PR can contribute significantly to the success and reputation of individuals and sports entities. Broms (2023), a researcher who went beyond mediatisation, looked at how Swedish sports federations build their social media affordances in order to better understand how they engage with their audiences on social media. It was found that, in the current digital environment, the proliferation of actors and platforms forces us to reconsider not only who qualifies as a professional sports public relations

practitioner. Adding to the discussion on the relationship between sports and public relations, P5 pointed out that:

Sports and PR are closely linked as effective public relations play a crucial role in shaping the image and perception of sports teams, athletes, and organisations. PR in sports involves managing communication, building relationships with the media, fans, and sponsors, and maintaining a positive public image. PR professionals work to create and maintain a positive image for sports entities. This involves handling crises, addressing controversies, and highlighting positive stories to shape public perception.

P1 was quick to add that:

Sports organisations rely on PR to manage relationships with the media. This includes coordinating interviews and press conferences and providing timely and accurate information to journalists. PR helps sports figures secure and maintain sponsorship deals and endorsements by showcasing their positive attributes and promoting the value they bring to brands. Building a strong connection with fans is essential for sports success. PR strategies, such as social media campaigns and community outreach, help teams and athletes engage with their fan base.

In this regard, Raney's (2006) Disposition Theory in Sports argued that allegiance to a team or player develops along a well-known continuum of effect from high like to severe disliking. The process underlying enjoyment in sports is disposition.

P10 averred that:

The relationship between sports and PR is symbiotic, with effective public relations contributing significantly to the success and positive perception of sports teams, athletes, and events. PR plays a crucial role in promoting sports events, attracting audiences, and generating excitement. This involves coordinating media coverage, managing press

releases, and utilising various promotional channels. In the event of controversies or crises, PR professionals work to minimise damage to the reputation of sports entities. They develop strategies to address issues transparently and effectively. PR assists athletes in building and maintaining their personal brand. This involves showcasing their achievements, values, and community involvement to create a positive public image.

This buttresses the work by authors and researchers such as (2015; Manoli, 2014), who argued that traditional media often has a peculiar relationship with certain sports, such as football, as they serve as a ‘source of information’ as well as a ‘supplier’ to the sports industry.

The next focus is on objective two.

4.2 Research Objective Two: To ascertain the opportunities in entertainment and sports public relations in Ghana.

Under this research objective, the researcher came up with two major themes. These were the opportunities in entertainment PR and sports public relations in Ghana. This theme is further discussed below:

4.2.1 Opportunities in Entertainment PR

Entertainment, which often layers over ritualised ceremonial behaviour, “predates the written history of the human species,” as Neolithic animal hide drums and cave wall paintings attest with sports, in particular, already serving as “institutionalised entertainment by the time of ancient Greece with the Olympic games” (Vivian 2013, p. 233). In Ghana, there are growing opportunities in entertainment and sports public relations as the industries continue to develop. PR professionals play a crucial role in shaping the image and reputation of athletes, teams, and entertainment figures. Within the field of entertainment PR, there are various opportunities for individuals looking to

engage with and shape the public image of entertainment figures, productions, and events. In relation to this, R4 noted that:

Entertainment PR experts facilitate partnerships between entertainment figures and brands, ensuring that collaborations align with the image and values of both parties. Handle crises and controversies that may arise in the entertainment industry to minimise reputational damage and control the narrative. Entertainment PR experts represent actors, musicians, directors, and other entertainment personalities by managing their public image, arranging interviews, and handling media relations.

In this case, the Intermedia Agenda-Setting theory, which grew out of the original hypothesis of agenda-setting, offers an explanation for where the media itself (journalists, talk shows or entertainment hosts) sets the agenda.

P1 and P2 stressed that:

Entertainment and sports communication professionals are able to manage the online presence of entertainment personalities through social media, websites, and other digital platforms to connect with fans and maintain a positive image. Work within PR agencies that specifically focus on entertainment clients, providing a range of services, including media relations, branding, and strategic communication. Entertainment PR experts and sports represent musicians and bands, securing media coverage for album releases, tours, and events. Entertainment PR professionals work to build and maintain a positive public image for their clients.

Research by O'Boyle and Gallagher (2023), who examined the perceptions of seasoned professional sports public relations practitioners in Ireland and Britain, found a number of practices, including a rise in in-house media, the employment of professional sports journalists as

internal communications consultants, mistrust of journalism, treatment of journalists differently, and an overall attitude of growing competition.

P1 and P8 also noted that some of the opportunities in entertainment PR are:

The potential to specialise in promoting and managing public relations for entertainment events, such as concerts, award shows, film festivals, and premieres, working with production companies to promote and publicise films and television shows. This involves creating buzz before release, organising premieres, and managing media coverage. Many entertainment companies, including film studios, record labels, and production companies, have in-house PR teams responsible for managing the public image of the organisation and its talent.

This is in line with the study of Kelley et al. (2021), which ascertained that entertainment and sports public relations involve managing the reputation and image of celebrities, performers, athletes, and other high-profile individuals or organisations in the entertainment and sports industries.

P5 was of the view that:

It facilitates partnerships between celebrities and brands for endorsement deals, ensuring that the collaborations are authentic and mutually beneficial. To succeed in entertainment PR, communication professionals should have strong communication skills, a deep understanding of the entertainment industry, and the ability to navigate the fast-paced and dynamic nature of the field. Building a network within the industry and staying updated on current trends and media landscapes are also crucial for success.

These findings confirmed the earlier study by Bhutda (2019), who conducted a study titled “Changing trend in PR in building celebrity image: A case study of the movie Sanju”. The Indian

Showbiz sector was the focus of the study, and it was found that the use of public relations is constantly on the rise.

4.2.2 Entertainment PR and Sports Public Relations in Ghana

People are moved by entertainment as they share their terror and triumph, laugh and cry, just generate calming or feel the sadness and happiness of others, experiences of serenity and elation or thrilling sensations (Zillmann & Vorderer, 2017). P1 asserted that:

With the rise of sports events, concerts, and entertainment shows, there is a demand for PR experts to promote and manage the publicity surrounding these events. PR professionals represent athletes and entertainment personalities, managing their public image, handling media interactions, and securing endorsement deals. Sports teams and clubs can benefit from PR efforts to engage fans, attract sponsors, and maintain a positive public image. This includes managing media relations, press releases, and social media presence. PR specialists can facilitate brand partnerships and endorsements for athletes and entertainers, helping to build mutually beneficial relationships between talent and brands.

P4 provided the following insight:

In the event of controversies or crises, PR professionals are essential to navigate challenges and mitigate reputational damage for individuals and organisations in the entertainment and sports sectors. With the increasing use of social media, there is a need for PR experts who can effectively manage and enhance the online presence of athletes, teams, and entertainment personalities. Public relations can also extend to partnerships with government bodies and NGOs, promoting sports and entertainment as avenues for social development and community engagement.

P6 and P10 remarked that:

Individuals interested in entertainment and sports PR in Ghana should build a strong network, stay updated on industry trends, and consider pursuing relevant education or training in public relations and communications. Additionally, staying abreast of cultural nuances and local preferences is crucial for effective PR strategies in the Ghanaian context. This was where Cornwell (2013) maintained that engaging sports have been shown to be able to transmit positive images and intrigue and attract spectators for entertainment. Objective three is the next focus.

4.3 Research Objective Three: To find out the challenges in entertainment and sports public relations in Ghana.

Under this research objective, three themes were developed. These are challenges in entertainment PR, challenges of entertainment PR and sports public relations in Ghana and overcoming challenges of entertainment PR and sports public relations. They are discussed below;

4.3.1 Challenges of Entertainment PR

The dynamic nature of the entertainment industry and the high visibility of clients pose significant challenges for PR professionals, as revealed by respondents P1 to P6. Managing and controlling the narrative is particularly difficult due to intense media scrutiny and the rapid spread of information on social media. Balancing the need for publicity with celebrities' desire for privacy is delicate, as they must engage with the public while maintaining personal boundaries. The industry's susceptibility to controversies and scandals necessitates swift and effective crisis management to minimize reputational damage. Additionally, PR professionals must navigate tight deadlines, work under pressure, and adapt to rapid changes. Maintaining a consistent and positive public image is challenging when dealing with diverse media outlets and public perceptions. Social

media, while providing a platform for direct fan engagement, also presents challenges in managing online criticism, rumors, and ensuring alignment with the clients' desired image.

P1 illustrated that:

Entertainment personalities often face intense media scrutiny, making it challenging for PR professionals to manage and control the narrative, especially in the age of social media, where information spreads rapidly. Balancing the need for publicity with the desire for privacy can be a delicate task, as celebrities may struggle to maintain personal boundaries while still engaging with the public. The entertainment industry is prone to controversies and scandals. PR professionals must be adept at handling crises swiftly and effectively to minimise reputational damage.

P6 avowed that:

The entertainment industry moves quickly, with tight deadlines for events, releases, and announcements. PR practitioners must be able to work under pressure and adapt to rapid changes. Maintaining a consistent and positive public image for clients can be challenging, especially when dealing with diverse media outlets and public perceptions. While social media provides a platform for direct engagement with fans, it also poses challenges in terms of managing online criticism and rumours and ensuring that clients' social media presence aligns with their desired image.

In reference to the above, Holgren (2015) posits that due to the damaging effects of the crisis on the entertainment industry, “the purpose of Crisis Management is to avert crises, or if a crisis does occur, to effectively manage that event” (p. 15).

P10 made the point that:

With the global reach of media and entertainment, managing international PR efforts can be complex, involving an understanding of different cultures, media landscapes, and

communication styles. PR practitioners may face ethical dilemmas, such as deciding whether to disclose certain information, handling sensitive topics, or balancing the needs of clients with broader societal expectations. The entertainment industry is highly competitive; hence, PR professionals must find innovative ways to make their clients stand out amidst a crowded field.

4.3.2 Challenges of Entertainment PR and Sports Public Relations in Ghana

In asking the participants to outline some of the challenges in entertainment PR and Sports Public Relations in Ghana, R3 mentioned that:

In Ghana, entertainment PR and sports public relations face challenges related to limited resources, competition for attention, and, sometimes, a lack of well-established infrastructure. Securing media coverage, managing public perception, and navigating diverse cultural contexts can also pose difficulties. Additionally, staying current with rapidly evolving digital communication trends is crucial in addressing these challenges.

Whereas P6 stated that global challenges in entertainment PR and sports public relations include managing the rapid spread of information through various media channels, handling crisis communication on a global scale, cultural sensitivity in diverse markets, and navigating the evolving landscape of social media, P1 reiterated that issues like athlete misconduct, geopolitical tensions affecting events, and balancing the interests of sponsors and fans pose ongoing challenges for professionals in these fields.

P3 and P5 added that:

In entertainment PR, navigating sensitive issues such as scandals or controversies can be challenging, requiring strategic communication to protect a client's image. In sports PR, managing athlete behaviour, handling team-related crises, and balancing the interests of

athletes and sponsors pose unique difficulties. Both fields require adaptability and quick response to media dynamics.

These findings are consistent with the literature by Zillmann and Vorderer (2017), which explored the psychology of entertainment and contended that while entertainment encourages emotional reactions, these responses may not always be inherently positive.

4.3.3 Overcoming Challenges of Entertainment PR and Sports Public Relations

Overcoming these challenges requires a combination of strategic thinking, effective communication skills, and a deep understanding of both the entertainment industry and the evolving media landscape. PR professionals in entertainment need to stay agile, continuously adapt to industry trends, and build strong relationships with media outlets to navigate these challenges successfully.

P3 and P4 specified that:

To overcome challenges in entertainment PR and sports PR, experts must consider cultivating relationships with media professionals, influencers, and key stakeholders in the industry, staying current with industry trends and adapting their strategies to align with evolving media landscapes and audience preferences, developing a robust crisis communication plan to handle unforeseen challenges promptly and effectively and tailor messages to resonate with specific audiences, ensuring relevance and engagement.

P7 and P9 detailed that:

There is the need to leverage social platforms strategically to amplify your messages, engage fans, manage public perception, foster strong collaboration within your PR team and with other departments to ensure a cohesive and integrated approach, maintain authenticity in your communication, align with the values and identity of the entertainment or sports brand, execute well-coordinated events that capture attention and generate

positive coverage, stay informed about legal considerations in the entertainment and sports industries to navigate potential legal challenges effectively and use data analytics to measure the impact of campaigns, identify areas for improvement, and refine strategies.

The above findings corroborate the study by Tsepo et al. (2019), which postulates that the management of sports clubs and entertainment industry participants must build strong organisational brands and promote fan loyalty in order to strategically seem desirable to sports fan groups and sponsors. Other studies also added that there is a need to come up with solutions that the audience will completely ignore so as to maintain an illusion of a good experience for their attendees (Casali, 2016; Luo, 2019).

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter summarises the entire study and, most importantly, focuses attention on drawing conclusions from the major findings this study has unravelled. The chapter also seeks to make recommendations based on the observations and research findings that have emerged from the data gathered. The conclusions and recommendations are mainly hinged on the analysis done in chapter four.

5.1 Summary of the Study

This study aimed to build a framework for sports and entertainment public relations (PR) in Ghana. Three main objectives were considered. These were to assess the trends and dynamics of entertainment and sports public relations in Ghana, to ascertain the opportunities in entertainment and sports public relations in Ghana and to find out the challenges in entertainment and sports public relations in Ghana.

The study examined the role of entertainment and sports public relations in managing the reputation and image of celebrities, performers, athletes, and high-profile organizations. The background highlighted that the media has historically been a crucial tool for PR professionals to reach target audiences, utilizing third-party channels beyond traditional news media. Analyzing previous methodologies, the study aimed to address gaps in the literature and was guided by Brennen's (2017) assertion that qualitative research allows for deep and rigorous data interpretation. The study employed qualitative methods, conducting interviews with ten

entertainment and sports communication professionals. Thematic analysis was used to discuss the data in alignment with the research objectives, which were: assessing trends and dynamics in entertainment and sports PR in Ghana, identifying opportunities in the field, and exploring the challenges faced by PR professionals in this industry.

The researcher came up with seven major themes from the thematic analysis of data from the interview guide to answer the three research objectives. The general impression of the trends and dynamics of entertainment and sports public relations, as well as the relationship between sports and public relations, were the themes which answered the first research objective. With regard to research question two, the themes identified in answering the research objective were the opportunities in entertainment PR and sports public relations in Ghana. Finally, themes such as challenges in entertainment PR, challenges of entertainment PR and sports public relations in Ghana and overcoming challenges of entertainment PR and sports public relations answered research objective three of the study.

5.2 Key Findings

In answering research objective one, which was to assess the trends and dynamics of entertainment and sports public relations in Ghana, the outcome showed that the trends in entertainment and sports public relations are shaped by the evolving media landscape. Social media plays a crucial role, with influencers and digital platforms influencing public perception. Authenticity, storytelling, and engagement are key focus areas for PR professionals in these industries. Issues related to diversity, inclusion, and social responsibility are gaining prominence, impacting the strategies employed in managing public relations; hence, keeping abreast of technological advancements and adapting to changing consumer behaviours are integral for successful PR campaigns in the dynamic world of entertainment and sports.

The participants also pointed out that entertainment PR involves managing public image, media relations, and promotions for individuals or entities in the entertainment industry. It is dynamic, adapting to trends, scandals, and industry shifts. Success often depends on strategic storytelling, timely responses, and cultivating relationships with media outlets. Social media plays a crucial role, requiring constant monitoring and engagement, and entertainment PR functions to manage and promote the public image of individuals, companies, or events within the entertainment industry.

The findings on opportunities in entertainment and sports public relations in Ghana reveal that PR experts play a crucial role in facilitating partnerships between entertainment figures and brands, ensuring alignment with their respective images and values. They handle crises and controversies to minimize reputational damage and control narratives. Additionally, PR professionals manage the public image of actors, musicians, directors, and other personalities by arranging interviews and handling media relations. They also oversee the online presence of entertainment personalities through social media and digital platforms, connecting with fans and maintaining a positive image. Opportunities also exist in promoting and managing public relations for entertainment events, such as concerts, award shows, film festivals, and premieres, as well as working with production companies to publicize films and television shows by creating buzz before releases, organizing premieres, and managing media coverage.

About finding out the challenges in entertainment and sports public relations in Ghana, which was the third objective, the findings revealed that entertainment PR personalities often face intense media scrutiny, making it challenging for PR professionals to manage and control the narrative, especially in the age of social media where information spreads rapidly. Balancing the need for publicity with the desire for privacy can be a delicate task, as celebrities may struggle to maintain personal boundaries while still engaging with the public. The entertainment industry is prone to

controversies and scandals. PR professionals must be adept at handling crises swiftly and effectively to minimise reputational damage.

Also, the study demonstrates that maintaining a consistent and positive public image for clients can be challenging, especially when dealing with diverse media outlets and public perceptions. While social media provides a platform for direct engagement with fans, it also poses challenges in terms of managing online criticism and rumours and ensuring that clients' social media presence aligns with their desired image.

In Ghana, entertainment PR and sports public relations face challenges related to limited resources, competition for attention, and, sometimes, a lack of well-established infrastructure. Securing media coverage, managing public perception, and navigating diverse cultural contexts can also pose difficulties. Additionally, staying current with rapidly evolving digital communication trends is crucial in addressing these challenges.

5.3 Conclusion

The study provides valuable insights into the trends, dynamics, opportunities, and challenges of entertainment and sports public relations in Ghana. It highlights the significant role of social media and digital platforms in shaping PR strategies, emphasizing the importance of authenticity, storytelling, and engagement. Managing public image, media relations, and promotions are key aspects of entertainment PR, which must adapt to trends, scandals, and industry shifts. Building partnerships between entertainment figures and brands, crisis management, and online presence management are identified as key opportunities for PR experts in these industries. However, challenges such as intense media scrutiny, balancing publicity with privacy, and handling controversies and scandals persist, requiring swift and effective crisis management. Limited resources, competition for attention, and a lack of well-established infrastructure are specific

challenges faced in Ghana. Overcoming these challenges demands strategic thinking, effective communication skills, and a deep understanding of the industry and media landscape. Adapting to industry trends, building strong media relationships, and staying current with digital communication trends are crucial for success in entertainment and sports PR in Ghana.

5.4 Sports and Entertainment Public Relations Framework

The findings gathered from the study aided the researcher in developing a ten (10) factor framework for public relations practitioners within the field of sports and entertainment. It is important to note that the framework may not be exhaustive or all-inclusive. However, it presents the predominant issues that practitioners should mostly and absolutely consider based on the needs of the participants interviewed for this study. Similarly, the framework should work conjointly with other specialities in public relations. The framework provides a comprehensive guide for sports and entertainment PR practitioners, covering key aspects of practice based on current trends and challenges in the industry. Simi

Understanding the Industry

This factor emphasises the importance of gaining a thorough understanding of the sports and entertainment industries, including their structure, key players, and current trends. It involves recognizing the impact of the evolving media landscape, particularly the role of social media and digital platforms, in shaping public perception and consumption patterns within these industries.

Strategic Communication

Strategic communication is paramount in sports and entertainment, focusing on crafting messages that resonate with audiences and promote positive perceptions about athletes and celebrities. This factor involves leveraging storytelling, authenticity, and engagement to enhance the sports and entertainment experience for fans.

Issues and Crisis Management

Issues and crisis management is essential in sports and entertainment public relations to effectively address and mitigate reputational damage during challenging situations since these fields are rife with issues and crisis. This factor involves developing strategies to handle crises swiftly and transparently, maintaining a positive public image for clients amidst controversies or scandals.

Media Relations

Media relations are crucial in sports and entertainment public relations for managing relationships with journalists and securing coverage. This factor involves coordinating interviews, press conferences, and media interactions to shape a favorable narrative and maintain positive media relations.

Brand Partnerships and Endorsements

Brand partnerships and endorsements are key aspects of sports and entertainment public relations, involving the alignment of collaborations with the image and values of both parties. This factor focuses on facilitating partnerships and ensuring authenticity in collaborations to enhance the public image of sports teams, athletes, and celebrities.

Online Presence Management

Online presence management is critical in sports and entertainment public relations, involving the strategic use of social media and digital platforms to connect with fans and maintain a positive image. This factor emphasises staying updated on industry trends, building strong networks, and adapting strategies to engage audiences effectively in the digital space.

International PR Efforts

International PR efforts are essential in sports and entertainment to navigate different cultures, media landscapes, and communication styles. This factor involves understanding global markets,

addressing cultural nuances, and tailoring PR strategies to resonate with diverse audiences, ensuring relevance and engagement across international markets.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are paramount in sports and entertainment public relations, involving the responsible handling of sensitive information and the maintenance of integrity. This factor emphasizes building trust with stakeholders, prioritizing transparency, and adhering to ethical standards to ensure the credibility and reputation of clients and organizations.

Legal Considerations

Legal considerations are crucial in sports and entertainment public relations to navigate potential legal challenges and protect clients' interests. This factor involves staying informed about relevant laws and regulations, ensuring compliance, and addressing legal issues proactively to mitigate risks and uphold professional standards.

Data Analytics and Evaluation

Data analytics and evaluation play a vital role in sports and entertainment public relations, helping to measure the impact of campaigns and refine strategies. This factor involves using data to identify trends, evaluate the effectiveness of PR efforts, and make informed decisions to optimize future campaigns and achieve desired outcomes.

5.5 Recommendations

Sports and entertainment PR professionals need to identify and understand their target audience and tailor their messages to resonate with the demographics and interests of sports and entertainment enthusiasts. Sports and entertainment PR professionals should be able to anticipate potential issues and develop a comprehensive crisis management plan. Being proactive and transparent during challenging times is crucial for maintaining public trust.

Moreover, they have to plan and execute events that align with brand and objectives, promote these events through various channels, including traditional media, social media, and partnerships, cultivate relationships with key media outlets and influencers in the industry, develop press materials, press releases, and media kits to ensure accurate and positive coverage. Additionally, they should forge strategic partnerships with relevant organisations, sponsors, and influencers and implement metrics to measure the success of PR campaigns. Track media coverage, social media engagement, and audience sentiment to evaluate the impact, foster a sense of community among the audience, engage with fans, respond to comments, and encourage user-generated content to build a loyal and interactive fan base. To crown it all, sports and entertainment PR professionals must learn to stay abreast of industry trends and be ready to adapt strategies accordingly. Being flexible and responsive to changes in the sports and entertainment landscape is essential. Regularly evaluate and refine the PR strategy based on performance metrics and feedback. Continuous improvement ensures the framework remains effective and aligned with organisational goals.

5.6 Suggestions for Future Studies

This study was an important empirical step in the ever-growing understanding of building a framework for sports and entertainment public relations (PR) in Ghana. Future studies should focus on examining concepts that similarly occur in public relations and marketing, such as the idea of product placement versus the entertainment PR collaboration efforts.

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APPENDIX

Interview Guide – Sports and Entertainment Public Relations

Research Question 1: Exploring Trends and Dynamics

1. Can you describe the current landscape of entertainment and sports public relations in Ghana?
2. How do you perceive the trends shaping public relations practices in the entertainment and sports industries in Ghana?
3. What role does social media play in influencing public perception and engagement within these industries?
4. In your opinion, what are the key focus areas for PR professionals working in entertainment and sports in Ghana?

Research Question 2: Addressing Challenges

1. What are some of the main challenges faced by PR professionals working in the entertainment and sports industries in Ghana?
2. How do you navigate the complexities of managing public perception during crises or controversies in these industries?
3. Are there any specific challenges related to media relations or online presence management that you encounter in your PR work?
4. How do you think PR professionals can overcome these challenges and continue to thrive in the Ghanaian entertainment and sports PR landscape?

Research Question 3: Identifying Opportunities

1. What opportunities do you see for individuals or organizations involved in entertainment and sports public relations in Ghana?
2. How do you envision the role of PR professionals in facilitating brand partnerships and endorsements within the entertainment and sports sectors?

3. Are there specific areas within entertainment and sports PR that you believe offer significant growth potential in Ghana?
4. Can you discuss any emerging opportunities or trends that you think PR professionals should capitalize on in the Ghanaian context?

Additional Questions

1. Can you provide examples of successful PR campaigns or initiatives within the Ghanaian entertainment and sports industries?
2. How do you stay updated on industry trends and best practices in entertainment and sports PR?
3. What skills or qualities do you believe are most important for PR professionals working in these industries?
4. Do you have any recommendations for individuals or organizations looking to enter or expand their presence in the entertainment and sports PR field?

Background Information

1. Name
2. Role/Position
3. Years of Experience in Entertainment/Sports PR
4. Current Organization/Company
5. Brief Overview of Responsibilities
6. Educational Background (Optional)
7. Any Specific Achievements or Projects in Entertainment/Sports PR