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**PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICE AND TRADITIONAL MEDICAL  
INSTITUTIONS: A CASE STUDY OF CENTRE FOR PLANT MEDICINE  
RESEARCH (CPMR)**

**BY**

**EUNICE AMA OPPONG**

**(MAPR19073)**

**A LONG ESSAY SUBMITTED TO THE GHANA INSTITUTE OF  
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RELATIONS**

**SUPERVISOR: DR. MRS MAVIS ESSANDOH**

**SEPTEMBER 2020.**

**STUDENT’S DECLARATION**

*I hereby declare that this submission is my own work towards master of art degree and that, to the best of my knowledge, it contains no material which has been accepted for the reward of any other degree of the university except where due references has been made in the text.*

**EUNICE AMA OPPONG** ..... ..

**(MAPR19073)**

**SIGNATURE**

**DATE**

**SUPERVISOR’S DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that the preparation of this dissertation was supervised by me in accordance with the guidelines of supervision laid down by the Ghana Institute of Journalism.

This research project is submitted for examination with my approval as university supervisor.

**DR. MRS. MAVIS ESSANDOH** ..... ..

**(SUPERVISOR)**

**SIGNATURE**

**DATE**

## **DEDICATION**

This work is wholeheartedly dedicated to my parents for their unflinching support and encouragement over the years.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The practice of Public Relations has flourished all over the world as a distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance and cooperation between an organization and the public. The purpose of this study was to determine how Public Relations shapes the growth and emergence of traditional health institutions particularly in Ghana by identifying public relations set-up in traditional medical institutions, outlining Public Relations strategies used by traditional medical institutions and determining the role of Public Relations in promoting herbal products in traditional medical institutions. Documentary review research was the proposed method utilizing search terms like 'Public Relations strategies'; 'Public Relations promoting product'; 'Public Relations communication'; 'Public Relations channel communicate' plugged into online databases including Academic Search Complete, Academic Onefile and JSTOR, as well as Google Scholar. Besides efforts to uphold safety procedures in unusual times, documentary review research was chosen because of readily available data; inexpensive and economical compared to the other data collection methods; less time-consuming and reduced researcher prejudices. Findings from the documentary research indicate that only Study C reported the existence of recognizable Public Relations system utilized Public Relations officers to disseminate information that helped increase patronage from 22.49 to 29.43 %. For both Study B and Study C, there was no recognizable Public Relations system in the health institution studied in the original research, without any recognizable Public Relations strategies for promoting products. This study concludes that while companies expend significant resources in the area of market research for the purpose of improving performance and boosting a firm's bottom-line, an effective Public Relations system can be deployed to achieve similar results.

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# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background of study**

The practice of Public Relations has flourished all over the world as a distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance and cooperation between an organization and the public (Martinelli, 2011). The US academics Grunig and Hunt (1984) posit that Public Relations like activity can be traced back to 1800 BC among Greek rhetoricians, but the direct line of descent from the Aegean to today's Public Relations industry is difficult to detect. In the relatively brief period leading up to today, Public Relations have been defined in many different ways; the definitions often evolve around the changing roles in the field and profession and technological advances (Smith, 2013).

Good Public Relations require communication skills, expertise in dealing with all media and the principles of persuasion. As a Public Relations practitioner, it is important to know when and what to communicate; analysis, judgment, decision making power, counseling and planning (Seitel, 2001). Public Relations practice has gained ground in all fields of human endeavor and has proven to be needed more now than ever. From preceding definition, it can articulated that investment in Public Relations (PR) is key to create demand and position a business as the front runner against competitors. Public Relations plays an important role in every organization in relation to promotion, advertisement and marketing. Health institutions are not exempt from the practice of Public Relations, and in an era where alternative medicine is gaining some significant traction, even more so for traditional medical institutions (Martinelli, 2011).

Public Relations practitioners have the primary responsibility of disseminating official information from the medical institutions to consumers various other stakeholders. Traditional medicine practice cannot be exempted in the practice of Public Relations. In Ghana herbal medicine is promoted using different marketing strategies such as advertisement on the radio, newspaper, television and the internet (Mahoney, 2013).

## **1.2 Justification of Research**

As a part of the larger the healthcare industry that is growing in popularity, many questions have arisen about the various aspects of the practice of traditional medicine. Practitioners of traditional medicine therefore need to get their message out to be public to build trust and reassure them. Getting the message out effectively requires knowledge and skill in Public Relations. PR practice proceeds with strategies and through channels to interact, promote and strengthen business relationship with the public. In recent times, significant work and research has been done on various aspects of traditional medicine. Mahoney (2013) for instance researched on traditional medicine in primary health care while G. Bodeker and G. Burford's research focused on traditional, complementary and alternative medicine policy and public health perspectives. At the same time, there has been related study conducted concerning the role of public relations in health organizations, as done by Gai (2007), while Gyasi, Mensah, Adjei and Agyemang (2011) have conducted research into public perceptions of the role of traditional medicine. However, there is scant research on the utilization of Public Relations in the traditional health institutions. This has created a gap in knowledge in understanding how public relations is shaping the growth and emergence of traditional health institutions particularly in Ghana. This study would therefore help fill that gap.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

1. Are there established Public Relations set-up in traditional medical institutions?
2. What are the Public Relations strategies used by traditional medical institutions?
3. What is the role of Public Relations in promoting herbal products in traditional medical institutions?

### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

This study would be significant to theory, to practice and at policy level. The conduct of this study therefore would help produce data to act as a source of evidence to inform the knowledge base with respect to the use of Public Relations in traditional medical institutions and help provide new opportunities for more research into areas which this study could touch on, but does not discuss in detail. This means for other researchers, possibilities exist to extend the reaches of all the ideas occurring as mere undertones in this study. Furthermore, and in line with the foregoing point, this study and its findings potentially serve as a rich source of literature which these new studies can build on to develop their own paths.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Definitions of Public Relations

Public Relations is a profession dedicated to the effective use of communication. Yet, this definition is far too simple as Public Relations is so much more than communicating on behalf of corporations, institutions and other organisations. According to Grunig and Hunt (1984: 6) Public Relations is about ‘the management of communication between an organization and its publics’. Cutlip et al. (2000: 6) expands on this definition: ‘Public Relations is the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depends’. Similarly, Harlow (1976: 36) describes the profession as the ‘management function’ that maintains ‘mutual lines of communication’ between an organization and its publics, and which uses ‘research and ethical communication as its principal tools’. As these definitions highlight, Public Relations is a diverse profession that seeks to ensure that organizations manage their relationships with a variety of stakeholders and broader publics (Martinelli, 2011).

In order to manage the public image and stakeholder relationships of companies and organizations, Public Relations practitioners employ a variety of communication tactics, including media releases, social media accounts, media events, backgrounders, fact sheets, flyers, pamphlets, annual reports, newsletters, and other materials. Senior practitioners are responsible for planning the details of ‘what, how and why their organizations communicate with strategic publics’ (Mahoney, 2013: 2). As leaders of a communications team, senior practitioners are often part of an organization’s ‘dominant management coalition’ (Mahoney, 2013: 2). These senior

practitioners are responsible for protecting the company's public reputation by identifying issues, and by using effective communication to align the interests of organizations with those of the significant publics in their operating environment (Grunig, Grunig & Dozier 2006).

This chapter introduces the profession of Public Relations. Rather than providing merely a descriptive account of 'how to do PR', it offers a critical overview of the profession, including its history, strategies, tactics and ethical guidelines. This discussion will provide the reader with a smorgasbord of ideas that can inform 'best practice' within Public Relations roles. This chapter also provides several illustrative case studies designed to showcase the diverse activities that a Public Relations practitioner undertakes. This discussion begins by considering the historical development of Public Relations and its contemporary reach and influence

## **2.2 Evolution of Public Relations**

Public Relations is commonly considered to be a 'young profession', a type of communications by-product of twentieth-century capitalism but as Stockwell (2007) argues, the songs of the Shaman were used to unify tribal communities throughout history, likewise the ballads of ancient bards preserved the myths and legends that 'bound together nascent nations'

Stockwell (2007) continues to articulate that perhaps the best historical example of professional communicators is found in ancient Greece, where the Sophists developed and taught the 'art of rhetoric'. According to the great philosopher Aristotle, rhetoric was an important dimension of public life and Athenian democracy as it allowed assemblies of citizens to debate and then decide what was in their best interests (Stockwell, 2007). These rhetorical exchanges were the essence of their early form of deliberative democracy and are a communicative tradition that continues today in parliaments around the world. Aristotle's writings on rhetoric are the first comprehensive studies

of strategic communication and its impacts. While Aristotle recognised that the techniques of rhetoric may be used to manipulate, he believed the free play of communication in the rhetorical field produced a self-correcting mechanism conducive to the production of consensual understandings and truth. Some of Aristotle's ideas are still seen in the contemporary practices of political public relations and democratic politics. Aristotle argued that the elements of persuasive speech are 'ethos', 'pathos' and 'logos', ideas still seen in the contemporary practices of political Public Relations and democratic politics (Martinelli, 2011). Ethos refers to the credibility and trustworthiness of the speaker. Pathos refers to rhetorical appeals to emotions and belief systems, and in its modern usage can include the use of stories, inspirational quotes or vivid language. Finally, logos refers to the quality of the logic and reasoning within an argument. All of these dimensions of rhetoric are still considered by contemporary public relations practitioners when they employ communication campaigns that seek to build support for a particular person or brand, or when using third-party spokespersons for an endorsement (Martinelli, 2011).

Centuries later, the Roman Catholic Church developed the term 'propaganda' to refer to communication that sought to influence public opinion during the Counter-Reformation in seventeenth-century (Harrison, 2011: 42).

The history of Public Relations however agree that the modern profession emerged in the United States in the 1800s and early 1900s. In the 1830s, a new type of communications professional emerged in the form of a 'press agent', as companies and promoters sought new ways of communicating with the public rather than paying for costly advertisements in newspapers (Harrison, 2011). The role of the press agent was to concoct news stories in order to gain the

attention of journalists, thus receiving free publicity regarding an event such as a visiting circus; a product, such as the latest medical elixir; or a cause, such as the anti-slavery movement.

However, according to Harrison's (2011) history of Public Relations, the press agent model of Public Relations was not without controversy. Indeed, from the late 1800s, labour movements and the broader public started to seek more accountability and transparency from big business and government.

## **2.3 Theories and Conceptual Underpinnings of Modern PR**

Perhaps the most famous scholar in the field of Public Relations research is James Grunig, with his work influencing research and theory in communication studies, as well as the professional standards and tactics of practitioners around the world. According to Grunig and Grunig (1992), there are four different theories and concepts underpinning the practice of public relations namely the press agency/publicity model; the public information model; the two-way asymmetric model; and the two-way symmetric model.

### **2.3.1 Press Agency/Publicity Model**

In the press agency/publicity model, Public Relations seeks to shape public opinion by maximizing positive publicity and minimizing negative publicity, often through the use of tactics like pseudo-events, propaganda, and tactical persuasion (communication tactics sometimes labelled 'spin' or 'spin doctoring').

### **2.3.2 Public Information Model**

In contrast, in the public information model the purpose of Public Relations is to disseminate factual information, such as when an organization or government agency produce informative websites or provide fact sheets, backgrounders and media releases that journalists can use in the

production of the news. Both of these first two models in Grunig's typology presuppose one-way communication from an organization to their publics, and there is only limited room, or indeed interest, in feedback from the public to management. The majority of PR activity can be classified within these one-way models of communication (Strömbäck and Kiousis, 2011).

However, increasingly PR units seek to provide information about the public to the dominant management coalition within a given company, thus opening two-way channels of communication.

### **2.3.3 Two-way Asymmetric Model**

The 'two-way asymmetric model' of Public Relations is used as a form of 'scientific persuasion', where practitioners use the tools of social science – focus groups, surveys, and theories – to persuade people to accept the organization's point of view (Grunig & Hunt, 1984: 22). Feedback to the dominant coalition is important, but only inasmuch as it can be used to inform framing strategies within written and spoken tactics.

### **2.3.4 Two-way Symmetric Model**

In contrast, the purpose of Public Relations in Grunig's final model, the 'two-way symmetric' communication, is to achieve mutual understanding between an organization and its publics, so that management can avoid crises and conflicts, as well as maintain the company's social legitimacy. In the two-way symmetric model of Public Relations, the PR practitioner works to ensure a process of rational and fair argumentation, thus balancing communicative power between the organization and the public (Strömbäck and Kiousis, 2011: 19).

Grunig's research is also well known for his development of the 'excellence theory' of Public Relations (Grunig, Grunig & Dozier, 2006). Expanding on his 1984 work on models of Public Relations, Grunig and his collaborators undertook an extensive study of PR departments and their

activities to identify those values and practices that led to excellent outcomes for organisations and their employees. While all four of Grunig's models of Public Relations were identified in his excellence study, his findings clearly suggested that those companies that practiced two-way symmetric communication and sought to align their interests with those of their publics reaped the greatest commercial rewards.

Public Relations contribute to organizational effectiveness when it helps reconcile the organization's goals with the expectations of its strategic constituencies. This contribution has monetary value to the organization. Public Relations contributes to effectiveness by building quality, long-term relations with strategic constituencies. (Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2006: 34). Grunig's excellence study demonstrated that PR could proactively manage challenges that corporations face in their operating environment, including litigation, regulation, legislation and negative publicity caused by poor relationships. His research also showed that internal symmetric communication between managers and employees was especially important for preventing internal crises, such as industrial relations disputes or unethical conduct, and helped to build a 'participative culture' that increased workplace productivity and morale (Grunig, Grunig & Dozier, 2006).

In deciding whether to adopt a one-way or two-way model of Public Relations, an organization must consider the role of strategy and how it relates to specific goals, objectives and tactics. Botan (2006) proposes that effective Public Relations requires three levels of strategic planning: grand strategy, strategy and tactics. Botan (2006) argues that a company's strategy and tactics must be consistent with the overarching grand strategy of the organization, so that stable and positive relationships are built with strategic publics during Public Relations campaigns. It is to the topic of campaigns and tactics that we now turn. Grand Strategy is the policy-level decisions an

organization makes about goals, alignments, ethics, and relations with publics and other forces in its environment. Strategy is the campaign-level decision making involving maneuvering and arranging resources and arguments to carry out the organizational grand strategies. Tactics are the specific activities and outputs through which strategies are implemented—the doing or technical aspects of Public Relations (Botan, 2006). Botan (2006) argues that a company’s strategy and tactics must be consistent with the overarching grand strategy of the organization, so that stable and positive relationships are built with strategic publics during public relations campaigns. It is to the topic of campaigns and tactics that we now turn.

## **2.4 Public Relations Campaigns**

Campaigns are critical to influencing public or organizational policy, modifying social norms and changing behavior. Fundamentally, they raise awareness of issues by facilitating the goal of effective Public Relations to generate ‘stimulating conversations about reality and letting those shape perceptions’ (Turnbull, 2013). A more technical, process-oriented definition of the campaign is ‘a systematic set of communication activities, each with a specific defined purpose, continued over a set period of time and dealing with objectives relating to a particular issue’ (Sheehan & Xavier, 2006: 2). A campaign planning process will generally include identification of issue and problem statement; research and design of key messages; identification of target publics; setting of goals and objectives; design and implementation of strategies and tactics, as well as evaluation

A primary objective of any Public Relations campaign is effective issues management: ‘the identification or creation of issues and the application of systematic procedures designed to influence the issue’s resolution in a manner favorable to the issues manager’ (Coombs & Holladay,

2007). This puts the onus on campaign leaders to detect and respond to emerging socio-political trends through constant environmental scanning and to establish legitimacy in two ways. Firstly, they must attain recognition of the issue to be managed as a public concern. Secondly, they must establish the legitimacy of their client to speak or represent on the issue, establishing a connection that responds to those who question, ‘what right do you have to speak for this issue?’ (Coombs, 1992).

Campaign planning requires thorough research to inform messaging strategies, and the segmentation of the general audience into target publics for whom specific messages are tailored. Carefully crafted and effectively framed key messages are an integral element of campaigns and are particularly relevant in media relations and crisis communication when the informational environment is congested. Techniques of framing, whereby practitioners work to construct a particular version of reality in the minds of target audiences and publics, are vital to key message development processes (Hallahan, 1999; Ihlen & Nitz, 2008). Perceptions of credibility originate in processes of the co-construction of meaning between Public Relations professionals and target publics and are a result of all factors involved in the design, delivery and reception of key messages (James, 2011).

Smith (2013) suggests a number of phases of strategic planning for a PR campaign. Firstly is formative research which consists of analyzing the situation, analyzing the organization and analyzing the publics. The second phase is strategy formation which comprises establishing goals and objectives; formulating action and response strategies and developing the message strategy. Tactics comes in the third phase and it involves selecting communication tactics; implementing the strategic plan; evaluative research and evaluating the strategic plan

This strategic focus on communication with key publics is far more likely to succeed than a list of tactics applied to a general audience in an ad hoc manner. While Public Relations practitioners of the past relied on getting the attention of news gatekeepers, such as journalists and editors, via the common tactic of media releases, the digital age requires that all information be designed for online use and visual consumption (Smith, 2013). Engaging, rich media content including audio, video, images and links that tell a vivid story is more likely to be shared across social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Vine, Snapchat, Instagram and Pinterest, thereby allowing organizations to speak directly with their strategic publics without needing to go through the mainstream mass media (Hobbs and Mann, 2017). Public Relations blogging is also providing actors with voices in new virtual public spheres (Smith, 2013).

Social media tactics increasingly blur the boundaries between Public Relations, marketing and advertising. Some constants remain, however (Smith, 2013). Timeliness is vital in attaining viral distribution through an increasingly rapid news cycle, and while use of SEO (search engine optimization) keywords that move content up the Google hierarchy is now a standard Public Relations practice, many successful campaigns still pivot on an effective, credible spokesperson who, if consistently 'on message', can reduce distrust and cynicism in audiences (Hobbs and Mann, 2017). Media training is recommended to assist spokespeople in maintaining the integrity of message frames and third party or independent advocates lend further legitimacy to campaigns (Hobbs and Mann, 2017).

Evaluation is a vitally important, yet much neglected, stage in the campaign process. It includes data collection and recommendations for improvements to be made to the campaign in the future. One reason why good evaluation is rarely carried out is that the reception and interpretation of key

messages is little understood and neglected in Public Relations research. Whether or not the audience exposed to the strategically framed message produces the desired effects remains a challenge for those who evaluate the success or otherwise of Public Relations campaigns (Olson, 2011).

Media evaluation in the form of outputs, rather than outcomes in terms of behaviour change, remains the primary method of evaluating Public Relations campaigns. Whether or not media report key messages is the main indicator of success (James, 2011). It is ‘a fallacy’ to consider a campaign a success ‘if one gets lots of overall pick- up, and even “key-message” pick-up, without checking that the messages delivered were accurate and resonated well with the targeted audience’ (Jeffrey et al., 2006: 10). Social media monitoring tools including Hootsuite, TweetReach, TweetDeck and Social Mention can help campaign managers in the difficult task of measuring and tracking influence (Hobbs and Mann, 2017).

## **2.5 Media releases and shareable online content**

Traditionally, routine publicity and staged events were the two ways Public Relations practitioners sought media coverage for their clients. The former relied on news releases and editorials based on public statements, press conferences and interviews. Media releases remain one of several written tactics that are an integral element of traditional Public Relations campaigns. They incorporate the key messages that the organization wants the public to know. However, the media landscape is radically altering with the ‘proliferation of platforms, fusion of formats, and blurring of lines between traditional and social media’ (Lipschultz, 2015: 85). What has persisted is the potency of media exposure. How this exposure is obtained is more challenging.

In the digital media era the emphasis is moving from the traditional one-page press release to rich and shareable online content that can be directed at individuals through social media networks and other content sharing platforms. This requires Public Relations practitioners to be increasingly adept at managing content that is timely and contextual while maintaining a customer focus and a clear content strategy. The blending of ‘paid amplification’ through social media along with the convergence of Public Relations, advertising and marketing functions has led industry leaders to classify new archetypes including curated, co-created, original, consumer-generated and sponsored content (Amano, 2013).

In this complex new media environment, business is increasingly turning to Public Relations agencies for advice and assistance with brand building and reputation management. clients provided as ‘with an agile and integrated platform for storytelling, for both planned and real-time marketing’ while Golin Harris’s holistic engagement network, The Bridge, ‘pairs mainstream and digital experts with creative specialists like copywriters, digital designers and video producers to uncover storytelling opportunities in real time, deliver critical business insights, engage influencers and customers and create the content that shapes news and conversations’(Lipshultz, 2015: 79).

From the individual practitioner’s perspective it is clear that the basic skills of traditional Public Relations practice – such as writing media releases, compiling backgrounders, and organizing news conference – are becoming less relevant in the digital media age. According to Macnamara (2010) practitioners require new skills such as entering conversations online to represent their organisations, correct inaccurate information, and defend against criticisms. This requires new ways of talking and new ways of listening. They need to learn to write all over again in a new style that is very different from news releases, brochures, annual reports, speeches and journalism. They

also need to re-learn media relations, as traditional media databases no longer provide the contacts needed, and bloggers and other social media authors usually do not accept news releases and rarely attend interviews or news conferences (Macnamara, 2010).

It should also be noted that journalists and other content producers are increasingly turning to websites to collect information. A well organized, easy to navigate website with up-to-date, accurate information including news releases and backgrounders on organizational history, mission statements and other practical information is essential. Ease of interface and dialogic loops that enable visitors to ask questions, and organisations to respond, generates return visits, creating the sought after 'website stickiness'.

## **2.6 Social media and the breakdown of the 'control paradigm'**

What Poster (1995) termed the Second Media Age began with the internet, followed by interactive social media enabled by Web 2.0 and the emergent Web 3.0. Some scholars propose that these innovations are putting 'the public back into public relations' (Breakenridge cited in Macnamara, 2010: 3) based on the potential of interactive applications to realise the two-way symmetrical model of communication lauded by fans of the excellence theory (Grunig & Grunig, 1992) and also Kent and Taylor's (2002) dialogic model.

Political interest and activist groups appear to use the new interactive media more effectively than the majority of formal, corporate organizations and politicians. This is due to barriers the latter face including public service regulations, bureaucratic approval processes, tight restrictions on what is acceptable language and content, and meagre investment in resources to manage consultation platforms (Macnamara, 2010). These 'control paradigm practices' are being eclipsed by 'alternative interactive Public Relations strategies' (Macnamara, 2009) that exploit the

affordances of Web 2.0: Social media makes it possible for organizations to fully engage in dialogic communication with stakeholders. The word dialogue indicates open-minded, specific message content and a sincere listening attitude. When politicians actively share their candid opinions through the open public sphere of Twitter this can cultivate an open-minded image that leads members of the public to perceive politician users as sincere and reliable (Lipschultz, 2015).

Many corporates have much to learn from activists who are practicing Public Relations by increasing engagement in fluid collaborations, integrative campaigning and the use of alternative media platforms to create ‘new spaces of social movement activism’ (Olesen, 2005). The internet has provided social movements with new tools that facilitate and support traditional offline action by enhancing organization, mobilization and trans nationalization, and also offers more creative online modes, including email petitions and ‘bombs’, virtual sit-ins and hacking. These internet-supported modes of collective action enable social movements to trans nationalize and challenge the more extravagantly funded Public Relations campaigns of global corporations (Mann, 2014).

## **2.7 Media events**

The internet provides Public Relations practitioners with opportunities to bypass the mainstream media and is especially helpful in disseminating image events – the primary mode of public discourse for politics in the ‘televisual electronic public sphere’ (DeLuca & Peeples, 2002). Everyone is familiar with the NGO Greenpeace’s ‘media mind bombs’ which effectively raised the profile of environmental issues through shocking media images such as activists climbing smokestacks to hang banners and blocking whaling ships in tiny rubber boats. Arguably the first citizen’s group to recognize the power of the moving image, Greenpeace’s stunts continue to challenge the view that (written) content is king.

But, when organizations rely on the politics of spectacle they frequently draw a hostile response from mass media in coverage that depicts their behaviour as ‘the social construction of deviance’ (McLeod & Hertog, 1999). Protesters are often framed negatively, as anti-authoritarian and destabilizing, as initially claimed by Gitlin (1980) in his study of The New York Times’ coverage of the Students for a Democratic Society movement. Johnston and Noakes (2005) refer to the ‘protest paradigm’ as a ‘ready-made frame template that the media apply to social movement activity that, among other things, trivializes and demonizes social movement activities and beliefs’.

The alter-globalization protests at the WTO Ministerial Conference in Seattle in 1999, a prime-time media event framed by newsmakers as the ‘Battle for Seattle’, attracted this type of delegitimizing framing in mainstream media characterizing activists in one case as ‘disorganized anarchists on a demo-holiday’ (Rogers, 2004: 107). The desire to control and communicate alternative frames resulted in the creation of the independent media center (IMC), Indymedia, the first of a world-wide network of platforms for the circulation of alternative news and information (Juris, 2007).

## **2.8 Advocacy in a marketplace of ideas**

Ethical decision-making in public communication is always complex but perhaps more so for the Public Relations practitioner who serves, to various degrees, as an advocate, an educator and a persuader. Individuals have to consider their own personal ethics along with those of the institution they represent. Ethical responsibilities extend to at least the following publics: news media, clients, government agencies, educational institutions, consumers, stockholders and analysts, community, competitors, critics and other practitioners (Hobbs and Mann, 2017).

Corporate Public Relations, with its overt concern for reputation management, is frequently thought of as self-advantaging. For those working in this sector professional Public Relations associations provide useful codes of ethics. The code of ethics for Public Relations generally requires members to adhere to the highest standards of ethical practice and professional competence' and holds duty-bound to act responsibly and to be accountable for their actions. Fair and honest dealing, declaration of conflicting interest and a commitment to accuracy are basic standards. These codes of conduct, mission and values statements, while voluntary, provide a basis of information for public relations practitioners to use to guide their practice.

Changes in the media landscape, and especially the decline in investigative journalism caused by the collapse of the print news industry's advertising revenue model, raise particular issues for Public Relations practitioners as content providers. Davies (2008) despairs of a news environment where journalists are increasingly reliant on Public Relations output as they have insufficient time to develop good leads and contacts, check facts and interview sufficient people to get to the truth.

For Public Relations practitioners, however, this is an opportunity to renovate the image of their profession by making a genuine contribution to the public interest through demonstrating technical competence and ethically justifiable behavior. A corporate centric view of Public Relations is short-sighted and marginalizes the contribution of activists in the field, as well as potentially limiting what is considered to be Public Relations and how Public Relations practice is understood (Hobbs and Mann, 2017). Pressure groups, grassroots organizations, social movements and special groups 'exerting pressure on an organization on behalf of a cause' (Grunig, 1992) are part of a healthy democracy and contribute to the public sphere through representing the public interest.

Public Relations practitioners possess great potential, and a responsibility, to give a voice to the marginalized.

While advocacy separates activist and corporate Public Relations, constructive engagement between these two groups can enable the latter to be valuable resources for political and organizational change. To be effective, processes of collaboration must be conducted according to mutually agreed goals of engagement that prevent corporations from exercising cooption tactics and enable activists to maintain their identity or 'edge'. If activists are able to challenge the status quo they can prove valuable to an organization by identifying problems it needs to address.

Overall, (Hobbs) 2013 contends that Public Relations is an exciting profession, where public relations practitioners use a range of strategies and tactics in the service of commercial, non-profit, and governmental organizations. The goal of Public Relations is to provide useful news items to journalists that are factual and which conform to the 'public interest'. Public Relations also aims to meet the needs of organizations by using digital media technologies to engage in two-way conversations with various publics. When Public Relations is done well it can work to align commercial and social interests, and prevent conflicts between companies and publics within their operating environment. While it is possible for organizations to use certain covert Public Relations tactics to manipulate people rather than build mutual understanding, most Public Relations activities are ethical and transparent forms of communication between interested parties. Public Relations practitioners are 'key communication activists' within the marketplace of ideas, who are a positive force when acting as vehicles for information and fair debate, and an negative force when using covert tactics and spin to restrain discourse and manipulate attitudes and behaviors.

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3.0 METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Research Approach

This study would employ primary sources of data and would generally be achieved by means of documentary review research. According to Scott & Marshall (2015), documentary research is research that utilizes personal and official documents like newspapers, diaries, stamps, directories, handbills, maps, government statistical publications, photographs, paintings, gramophone records, tapes, and computer files as source material.

#### 3.2 Search Strategy

Documentary review process went through a number of stages. The first stage was to develop a search strategy. Search strategy basically consisted of determining appropriate search terms and online databases (search sources) by which the relevant articles matching the search terms were found. Appropriate search terms were practically key words, terms and phrases from the research objective including '*public relations strategies*'; '*public relations promoting product*'; '*public relations communication*'; '*public relations channel communicate*'; etc. These terms were plugged into various online databases which resulted in uncovering many articles and documents related to the research objective. Alternatively, these terms and phrases were used in combination with conjunctions like 'and'/'or'. Through a process of continuous refinement of search terms, the relevancy of results obtained was improved. In addition, names of known authors in the subject area of interest were used concurrently with search terms and phrases before they were typed into the online database search sources in the course of conducting this research.

### **3.3 Online Databases**

The main online database search sources used in this research include multi-disciplinary journal databases like Academic Search Complete, Academic Onefile and JSTOR, as well as Google Scholar. Over a period of 2-3 weeks, a total target of about twelve (12) articles and documents related to the research topic – has been identified from five different database search sources.

### **3.4 Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria**

The next stage of the documentary review process establishes inclusion/exclusion criteria. The inclusion/exclusion criteria determines which of these twenty-one articles are included (and by implication excluded from) as part of the initial draft of the research. The main criteria for inclusion/exclusion are articles primarily focused on English or Ghanaian jurisdiction and procedure. By applying the inclusion/exclusion criteria, 5 documents were removed, with 7 articles and documents remaining. Alongside online databases, hard copy documents were also used as sources of data for this research.

### **3.5 Justification for Documentary Review**

Compared to other methods employed in field research like survey questionnaires, focus group discussions and (structured or semi-structured) interviews, documentary research was employed for this study. Utilizing documentary review research was necessary to conform to the safety procedures in usual times even while pressing ahead with conducting feasible research work

### **3.6 Advantages of Documentary Review**

As a research approach, documentary review had the following advantages; Readily available data: employing documentary research implied that the data required was readily available in

various sources and in different forms. It was therefore a matter of harnessing all the available data, taking into account its appropriateness for the research topic and objectives.–Secondly because data was already collected and published in either print, online or other forms, documentary review was more inexpensive and economical compared to the other data collection methods mentioned previously. Thirdly, compared to documentary research adopted for this study, these survey questionnaires, focus group discussions and interviews could be quite time-consuming in terms of both their development and administration, which means that data may not be collected or gathered as quickly as desired. However, documentary research does not have this disadvantage because ready-made documents could be gathered more quickly when well executed. Furthermore, in many instances data collected in the field can be influenced by researcher’s prejudices as a result of factors like demographic make-up of respondents, duration of data gathering exercise, attitudes and thought processes, previous experiences, etc. Conducting documentary research however is readily conducted without such issues since the research data is already gathered and analyzed. Perhaps, the most overriding factor for utilizing documentary review rather than any of the methods typically used for field research is non-other than the COVID 19 pandemic which has caused the implementation of strict preventive protocols including social distancing directives by government. Compliance with these directives, along with guidelines set by the GIJ thesis committee in it was incumbent that the most appropriate COVID 19 compliant gathering data methods be utilized. Given that data gathering via documentary review could be conducted readily online without the physical presence of the researcher on the field in contrast to the identified methods, the former was employed as the main data gathering method.

### 3.7 Disadvantages of Documentary Review

In spite of its obvious advantages adduced for the use of documentary research over field research, its correct application is important because like any other method, documentary research has its own disadvantages including;

- limited ability to cross-verify data sets for any inaccuracies given that data would be historical and published
- difficulty in knowing whether there are additional documents to refer to on the subject. In other words, there is the possibility that documents to be reviewed are not complete in themselves
- possibility of data being out of context to what is required at the present such that data may not be in adequately line with objectives of the current research. This is because even though the subject may be the same, the research goal of the original document under review may not have been exactly the same as the current study.

The disadvantages outlined therefore clearly have the potential to introduce significant limitations into the overall outcome of the study. With this in mind, the following steps, in accordance with Sally's (2013) data synthesis matrix would be implemented to address such constraints;

- sort out documentary material obtained from the databases by grouping/classifying review material according to their content, and
- establish a synthesis matrix as shown in 'Author and Date', 'Purpose', 'Method', 'Sample Finding', 'Similarities' and 'Uniqueness'.

The Author and Date column would list the author and date for each of the 12 studies. The Purpose column would hold authors' research questions and objectives posed. The Methods column would

contain the methods authors used in their studies including the type of sampling used, etc. The Findings column would outline list the main themes and ideas that the authors discovered. In the Similarities column, there would an indication of findings that differ or confirms the findings of another, whilst the Uniqueness column would hold findings that are pertinent to only one author's work. The content of the synthesis matrix would essentially represent a summary of all germane information unpacked from the various studies.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FINDINGS FROM REVIEWED STUDIES

#### 4.1 Presentation of Data and Discussion

Three (3) different studies, Study A, Study B and Study C that each examined in one way or the other the role of Public Relations in a healthcare institution.

- Study A was a quantitative study that assessed Public Relations as a tool for effective healthcare management. Quantitative study by Kehinde and Igbozuruike (2016)
- Study B was a qualitative study that evaluated Public Relations effectiveness in a health care setting through communication audit by Henderson (2005)
- Study C was a quantitative study examining the use of Public Relations as indicators and improvement in hospital performance by Renzi et al (2012)

#### 4.1.1: Findings from 3 Studies on the Existence of an Established Public Relations System

*Table 4.1.1: Existence of PR System Findings from 3 Healthcare Institutions*

<b>RESEARCH REVIEWED</b>	<b>Study Finding on Existence of Public Relations System</b>
STUDY A	No recognizable PR system found in the healthcare institution under study
STUDY B	Basic PR system found in the healthcare institution under study
STUDY C	Existence of recognizable PR system found in health institution under study

#### 4.1.2. Findings from 3 Studies on Public Relations Strategies Found in Healthcare Institutions

Table 4.1.2: Public Relations Strategies Findings for 3 Studies

<b>RESEARCH STUDY</b>	<b>Public Relations Strategies</b>
STUDY A	No deliberate and organized Public Relations strategy found in the healthcare institution under study
STUDY B	No deliberate and organized Public Relations strategy found in the healthcare institution under study
STUDY C	Public Relations strategies include the use of newsletters, social media (twitter, Facebook) and PR officers to disseminate information to clients

#### 4.1.3: Findings from 3 Studies on Role of Public Relations in Promoting Products in Healthcare Institutions

Table 4.1.3: Role of Public Relations in Promoting Products in Healthcare Institutions

<b>RESEARCH STUDY</b>	<b>Use of Public Relations in Promoting Products/Services</b>
STUDY A	PR was not found to be used in promoting products/services in any significant form in the healthcare institution under study
STUDY B	PR was not found to be used in promoting products/services in any organized/deliberate form in the healthcare institution under study
STUDY C	The health institution studied in Study C actively used Public Relations as a key tool to increase patronage from 22.49 to 29.43 %

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

#### **5.1. Summary of Findings**

The objective of the study was to utilize documentary review to determine Public Relations systems existing in medical institutions; identify the Public Relations strategies used by traditional medical institutions and to determine the role of Public Relations in promoting herbal products in traditional medical institutions. Three main studies, Study A, Study B and Study C were reviewed by means of documentary research. Findings from the documentary research indicate that only Study C reported the existence of recognizable PR system in the health institution under study. At the same time, the health institution under study in Study C utilized newsletters, social media (twitter, Facebook) and PR officers to disseminate information. The health institution studied in Study C was also found to have utilized Public Relations to increase patronage from 22.49 to 29.43 %. For both Study B and Study C, there was no recognizable PR system in the health institution studied in the original research. The original research also outlined that both Study B and Study C did not have any recognizable Public Relations strategies. Consequently, the role of Public Relations in promoting products was minimal for both Study B and C.

#### **5.2. Relevance of the Study**

Conducting this study is relevant in diverse ways for scholarship, policy-making and for institutional leadership. First, it would add to the relatively scant body of knowledge in terms of literature and range of research available on the impact of Public Relations in traditional medicine/healthcare and its institutions. Conducting this study would potentially be useful to policy makers working with traditional medical institutions to drive the growth of the industry. This study would help point to data available in existing research showing the Public Relations

systems, strategies and outcomes that have been and can be utilized to build a vibrant traditional healthcare industry. This can lead to a shift in attitude in the importance attached to the use of Public Relations in the industry. Heads and leaders in medical/healthcare institutions will also find this study useful as a reference that can inform potential changes to internally restructure and prioritize their Public Relations infrastructure to maximize its potential in overall institutional outcomes.

### **5.3. Limitations of the Study**

Due to time constraints, a greater range of research work would not be reviewed. The duration for data collection, analysis and ultimately completing the research in its entirety was relatively short hence a larger volume of work would not be reviewed and analyzed. Most of the studies come from a non-Ghanaian context and so the conduct of this study has to be interpreted to suit the Ghanaian to make any results and outcomes meaningful. At the same time, the need to select research studies most likely to provide the relevant and required information for the purposes of this study was instrumental in, for instance, restricting this study to the number of original research works that were reviewed.

### **5.4 Recommendations for future studies**

This study recommends that future research to build on this initial study would expand to a greater range of original works and applied a more Ghanaian setting. Secondly, subsequent studies can conduct this same research with its objectives on the field, rather than via documentary review so as to ensure variety in methodology.

## 5.5 Conclusion

Companies expend significant resources in the area of market research for the purpose of improving performance and boosting a firm's bottom-line. Generally the idea is to try and understand exactly what the customer needs, wants or requires to improve the firm's decision-making (Zaborek, 2015). Data collection is a key step in market research Malhotra and Briks (2007) and as Brace (2008) argues, usually involves field research which comes with huge costs since it involves deploying many people on the ground to gather the data. The main contribution to knowledge of this study therefore would be that by successfully carrying out this study using documentary review, a different option to approach such kind of research would open up especially to startup firms which may lack the kind of resources to conduct bigger field research. By clearly outlining the processes, procedures and context to guide its conduct, study's methodology provides a blueprint that can followed to conduct viable future studies under similar circumstances. For instance the use of Sally's (2013) data synthesis matrix though not new, has not been readily or widely used in the area of data gathering for PR research. However, the detail with which it has been outlined in this study's methodology provides an innovative, simplified and cost effective way with which to gather data that is easy to follow. Ultimately, given the very peculiar and special circumstances facing the world in recent months which has practically forced a rethink of approaches to very standard and basic human business endeavors, successfully undertaking this study would boost documentary research as a viable alternative to field research in communication studies

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