

GHANA INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM

**THE ROLE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE
CORPORATE IMAGE AND REPUTATION. A STUDY OF VOLTA RIVER
AUTHORITY-GHANA.**

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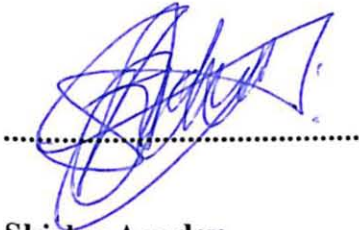


**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
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PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF
A MASTER OF ARTS IN PUBLIC RELATIONS DEGREE.**

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DECLARATION

I declare that, I have personally under supervision, undertaken this study during the 2014/2015 academic year. All sources used have been duly acknowledged.



27/10/15

Shirley Agudey.

Date

(Student)

I declare that I have personally supervised the student in undertaking the study submitted herein, and confirm that the student has my permission to present it for assessment.



27/10/15

Mr. Perry P.K Ofosu

Date

(Supervisor)

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my parents, Mr. and Mrs. Agudey and my sister, Priscilla Mardeykuwor Agudey for without, them; my family, I would not have believed I could come this far, nor would I have had the tenacity to go the distance.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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My gratitude again to Dr. Daniel Hammond for his assistance and to Emmanuel Essel, I owe you one my friend, I cannot thank you enough. God richly bless you.

ABSTRACT

Corporate image and reputation in recent times has gained recognition and acceptance as a valuable asset in the corporate world, especially in the increasing competitive business environment.

The purpose of this research was to examine the different activities that organisations engage in as part of their strategy to build a positive reputation and image. Volta River Authority, (VRA) was used as the research subject. The specific elements and activities employed by VRA in order to build a positive reputation and image were examined. The study also sought for the factors that influenced the decision to employ these image building activities and how VRA sustains this reputation and image.

Data for the study was gathered through both quantitative and qualitative methods. In- depth interviews with the professionals directly involved in building and managing reputation and image at VRA. Questionnaires to staff members of the communication unit and other department were the means adopted to gather quantitative information or data.

Findings of the research indicated that VRA carefully selects specific activities to concentrate on based on the expectation of its target audience and the image the company desires to build and portray. VRA employs corporate social responsibility activities, community relations and media relations as image and reputation building activities and through constant reputation research, VRA is able to re-adjust its strategies to ensure that the company's positive image and reputation are sustained.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Introduction

'The purest treasure mortal times afford is a spotless reputation'. - William Shakespeare

Managers of organisations today, are extremely sensitive in the way they are perceived by their critical publics as a result of increasing pressure from a host of stakeholders to be more responsive to their needs and interest. Where organisations exist and are successful, that success is generated largely by the image and reputation portrayed which can be attributed to the Public Relations outfits within them.

Public relations is one of the most prominent and dynamic areas in any organisation. Its roles and importance cannot be overemphasized. Developing, building and maintaining a good reputation is important to virtually every organisation in society, whether it exist to make profit or not. As Rensburg and cant (2003) indicate, public relations exist in every company and institution, irrespective of whether or not the company or institution wants it. It takes a great deal of time and effort to build a favourable image for the corporation. However, only one slip to create a negative public impression. In other words, corporate reputation is a fragile commodity. Most firms also believe that a positive corporate reputation is essential for continued long term success. At the same time, there are some people who still believe in the maxim of Milton Friedman (1970) that the only purpose of a corporation is to increase profits and to build wealth for investors, with reputation seen as something that is ' nice to have', but an expendable cost.

It is very easy for executives and management to think about and plan for financial risk, but still so hard for them to understand that, intangible risks to an organisation's reputation are far more likely to destroy shareholder value. Some of the ignorance about

threats to a company's reputation stems from a lack of understanding about what the potential risks might be but, more likely, it relates to the emphasis in business on that which is measurable and tangible.

In the operation of an organisation, activities such as phone calls, newsletters, press release, media relations, public letters including its everyday encounter with its publics , just to name a few, form a perception and an image in its publics minds about the organisation. Various images come into the public's mind based on how the organisation has identified itself to the publics.

Building the corporate image and reputation of an organisation is not an easy task that can be achieved in a day by a public relations practitioner. In this competitive era of business, the ability to create and maintain a positive corporate reputation has become an invaluable asset. It is this obvious truth which inspired Macnamara (1999) to assert that the days of public relations practitioners performing solely press agency roles are over. An organisation thrives on the goodwill of its multiple stakeholders to remain competitive (Blair et al, 2002). This makes the management of stakeholder relationships an essential factor in organisational success; this management is done by PR (Ni, 2006). However, in the eyes of many, they are seen as exploiters, inefficient and having 'fat-cat bosses' (Varey, 2002).

The image creating functions of public relations are principally counselling, based on the understanding of human behaviour. By analyzing trends and predicting their consequences, through research of public opinion, attitudes and advising a necessary action, public relations establishes and maintain two-way communication based on truth and full information. This is to say that public relations is concerned with maintaining public image for high profile organisations, programmes, or individuals (Seitel, 1998).

Public Relations practitioners need to prove themselves valuable by making strategic contributions towards the realization of an organisation's goals and objectives. To effectively achieve this, PR practitioners must, demonstrate the capacity to provide analytical insight and professional direction on the choices and consequences of corporate decisions on potential audiences. This imperative of PR as a management function has been widely theorized and researched. Rawjee, Veerasamy and Gqamane (2012), stressing this contention note that "Organisations need to recognize the value of placing public relations at the boardroom table as strategic business partner and critical part of business planning and operations".

However, the roles of public relations in building the corporate image and reputation of the organisation to the public are taken for granted, neglected and even attributed to other departments within many existing corporations. It should also be noted that, public relations roles have become the subject of extensive research by public relations scholars. Every organisation has an image, reputation and identity. Just by its existence organisations portray and send messages to their publics and it is those messages that influence the publics or stakeholders image of the organisation.

This study therefore seeks to ascertain the role being played by PR in full at Volta River Authority be it technical or managerial and strategic. It also seeks to ascertain the value attached to that role by the organisation and most importantly, how their roles helps in building a sustainable corporate image and reputation for the organisation.

1.2 The Volta River Authority. (VRA)

The Volta River Authority (VRA) was established in April 26, 1961 under the Volta River Development Act 46 of the Republic of Ghana, with the core business to generate

and supply electrical energy for industrial, commercial and domestic use in Ghana. VRA started with the development of the hydroelectric potentials of the Volta River and the construction and maintenance of a nation-wide grid transmission system. Today, it has expanded into distribution of electricity in the northern sector of Ghana, and thermal generation to complement inadequate capacity for hydro generation.

In 2005, following the promulgation of a major amendment to the VRA Act in the context of the Ghana Government Power Sector Reforms, the VRA's mandate has now been largely restricted to generation of electricity. The transmission function has been hived off into separate entity, designated Ghana Grid Company Ltd. (GRIDCo) to perform the transmission activities. The amendment is expected to attract independent power producers onto the Ghana energy market. VRA's distribution agency has been operationalized into a subsidiary company, the Northern Electricity Distribution Company (NEDCo).

The VRA's major bulk customer is the Electricity Company of Ghana (ECG). Power sold to ECG caters mainly for domestic, industrial and commercial concerns. Bulk sales are also made to a number of mining companies, including AngloGold Ashanti, Newmont Ghana Gold Ltd., Goldfields Ghana Ltd., Golden Star Resources Group, Aluworks, Akosombo Textile Ltd., and Diamond Cement Ghana Ltd. International energy sales to neighbouring countries include Togo, Benin and Burkina Faso.

Besides its power activities, VRA is mindful of its social responsibility in its operational areas, and continues to implement various programmes aimed at mitigating the adverse environmental effects of its operations, and ensuring the well-being of the communities of the Volta Basin.

The VRA commits annually the cedi equivalent of US\$500,000 to a Resettlement Trust Fund to support development initiatives in its resettlement towns. These projects in environmental improvement, social welfare, public health, education, electricity, potable water supply and sanitation activities.

In 2003, VRA introduced the Community Development Initiative (CDI) programme as a framework for supporting communities within its operational areas. The VRA runs hospitals at Akosombo and Aboadze equipped with excellent facilities, and provides free specialist and general medical care to communities along the Volta Lake accessible only by boat through its medical boat christened “Onipa Nua”.

The VRA maintains a dredging programme at the estuary of the Volta River to reduce the incidence of bilharzia, and to restore the ecosystem in the area. VRA runs afforestation programmes aimed at reducing siltation of the Volta Lake through the restoration of permanent vegetative cover on the slopes bordering the lake. A collaborative project with Clark Sustainable Resource Developments Ltd. (CSRDL) is aimed amongst others, at undertaking the harvesting of underwater tropical timber resources in the Volta Lake to alleviate the hazards created by the submerged trees, and thus improve lake transportation safety.

This Volta Lake project financed only with private capital represent direct foreign investment in Ghana. The VRA runs first and second cycle schools for children of staff and local communities at Akosombo, Akuse and Aboadze. It also administers local authority functions in the Akosombo Township. The VRA core values are Commitment, Integrity, Trust, Teamwork, and Accountability

1.2.1 Vision

The Volta River Authority exists to power economies and raise the living standards of the people of Ghana and West Africa. We supply reliable electricity in a safe manner, to add financial, economic and social values to our operations and assets, to satisfy customers and meet stakeholders' expectations.

1.2.2 Governance Structure for the Corporate Communications Unit

The Corporate Communications Unit is one of the Departments that reports directly to the Chief Executive. It is responsible for carrying out internal and external stakeholder communications to raise the corporate image of VRA.

The planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Communication Strategy and action plan are the sole responsibility of the Communications Unit.

In figure 1 below, is the Organogram of the Communications Unit with the various departments that handle functional segments of VRA corporate communications.

The Unit works directly under the Chief Executive and is headed by a Deputy Director, Corporate Communications who is further assisted by officers and assistants who perform lower level roles at the unit.

A Secretariat serves the Deputy Director and is composed of Assistants, namely – the Webmaster, Travel and Ticketing Assistant, Branding Coordinator, Crisis Management Coordinator, Principal Communications officer, Assistant Administrator, and the Unit Driver.

7 (seven) schedule officers include the Government and Industry Relations officer, the Research and Public Education officer, Media Relations and Publications officer, 3

(three) Area Community Relations officers, and lastly the Events, Sponsorship and Protocol officer.

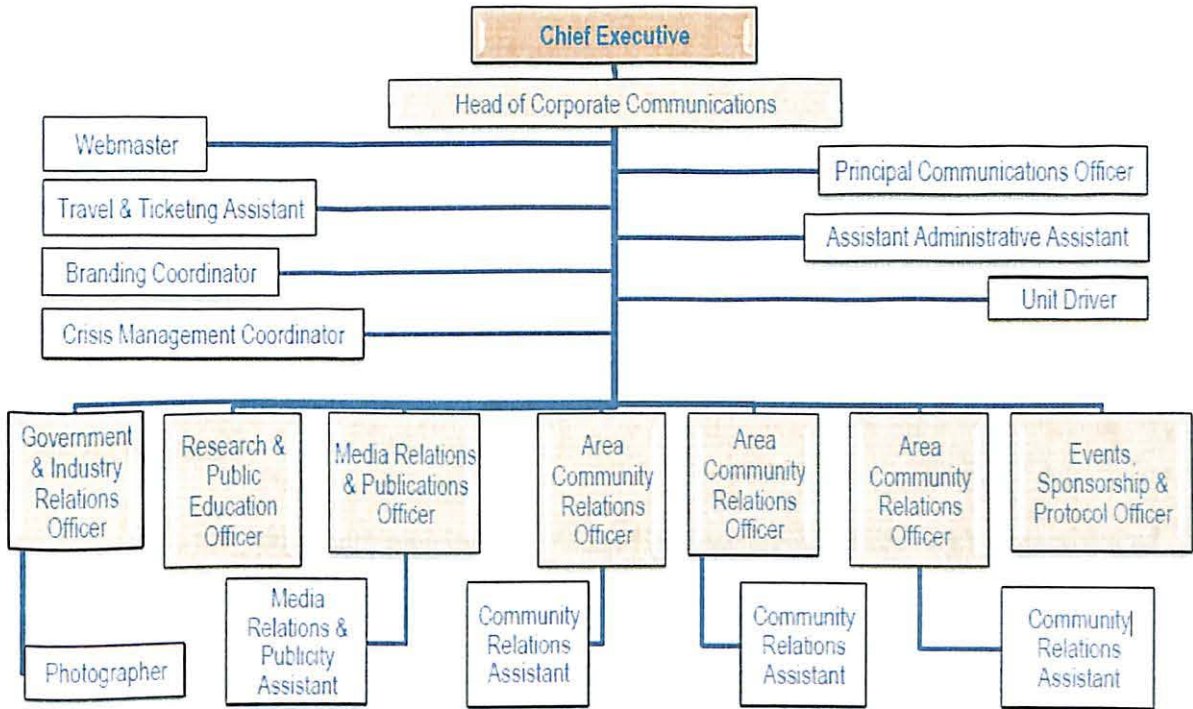


Figure 1: Structure of the Corporate Communications Unit

1.3 Definition of Public Relations

The management function of public relations is most frequently expressed in definitions. One of the most widely taught, is that of Cutlip, Center and Broom (2006:5) ‘Public relations is the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and the publics on whom its success or failure depends.’

There are several phrases to note in this well-known definition. They first describe public relations as a ‘management function’, which implies it is a deliberate, planned action that has an outcome in mind. This is reinforced by ‘identifies, establishes and maintains’,

which demonstrates research and a continuum of activity. ‘Mutually beneficial relationships’ relates to a two-way communication process through which the organisation will act in the interests of both itself and the groups or publics with which it interacts. This definition goes one stage further than others do by defining publics as those ‘on whom its success or failure depends’.

Another definition proposed by the Chartered Institute of Public Relations, UK (CIPR), embodies many of the aspects of the first definition, but notably omits the management function and says: ‘Public relations is the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics’ (www.cipr.co.uk).

It does share the continuum element of ‘planned and sustained effort’ with objectives of establishing and maintaining goodwill and understanding, also an aspiration for two-way communications. As in the Cutlip, Center and Broom definition, there is a strong aspirational element that presupposes there is a heightened of perfect communications which could be reached, if only ‘goodwill and understanding’ were established.

1.3.1 Roles of Public Relations

Roles are the collection of daily activities that people perform. In research on public relations activities, two broad roles consistently emerge in public relations: *the technician and the manager*. The technician role represents the craft side of public relations: writing, editing, taking photos, handling communication production, running special events, and making telephone calls to the media. These activities focus on the implementation of the management’s overall communication strategies. The manager role focuses on activities that help identify and solve public relations problems. Public

relations managers advise senior managers about communication needs and are responsible for broad organisational results. Public relations managers carry out three roles:

Expert prescriber: the person who operates as a consultant to define the problem, suggests options, and oversees implementation.

Communication facilitator: the person on the boundary between the organisation and its environment who keeps two-way communication flowing.

Problem-solving facilitator: the person who partners with senior management to identify and solve problems. (Cutlip, Center and Broom, 2006:41-45)

1.3.2 Functions of Public Relations

The PR practitioner performs a variety of activities that are fundamental and originate from his/her role of communicating with publics, managing relationships and reputation of a company. PR is usually described by referring to certain specialized parts of its functions like media relations, employee relations, lobbying, government relations, and investor relations. (Cutlip, Center and Broom 2006).

However the day-to-day activities performed by the practitioner include:

- (a) Writing and editing of news releases, reports, speeches, feature stories, shareholder reports, media placement and research
- (b) Management and administration; counselling, advising and making recommendations to top management
- (c) Planning and coordinating of special events; preparing and delivering of speeches

(d) Training and coaching of executives and colleagues on how to deal with the media, making public appearances and speech assignment

(e) Serving as the link between the organisation and the media, community and other external and internal publics (Cutlip, Center and Broom 2006:35).

1.3.3 Publics of Public Relations.

Cutlip, Center and Broom (2006) defines publics as any group, with some common characteristics with which an organisation needs to communicate, including the media, government bodies, financial institutions, pressure groups, as well as workers, customers and suppliers of an organisation.

Publics are individuals, institutions, or organisations affected directly or indirectly by the activities of an organisation. There are two types of publics: the internal and external publics. Internal publics of an organisation are usually the workers of the organisation and its external publics are people outside the organisation who are influenced directly by the decisions of the organisation.

1.4 Statement of the Problem

There are lots of public criticisms bordering on the operation of VRA over issues relating to power generation and the nature of the organisation. People complain that the organisation is not open and that it does not carry out adequate public education on its activities.

Also, the organisation is perceived as exploitative. Most of the Ghanaian public are of the view that funds and resources are not channeled to the right projects that will be

beneficial to the country but are actually spent on staff. These and many criticisms are likely to create a bad reputation and image to the organisation.

The problem this study will investigate is therefore, how Volta River Authority uses public relations in managing its corporate reputation and image in order to avoid having negative image among its various publics especially its internal publics.

1.5 Research Objectives

General objective

- The general objective is to assess the effect of public relations practice at the Volta River Authority on its corporate image and reputation, particularly, on internal staff of the organisation.
- Specifically the study's objectives are:
- To determine whether PR is considered as a management function and whether they form a part of the management team of VRA
- To determine whether VRA utilizes public relations in building a sustainable corporate image and reputation.
- To ascertain how VRA's management is carrying out public relations activities that will enhance and sustain its image and reputation.
- To identify the perception of the internal publics about VRA
- To find out the extent the usage of public relations activities has contributed to the positive image of VRA.

- To find out the extent to which the usage of public relations activities has contributed to the reputation of VRA.
- To find out about challenges and difficulties faced by PR in creating a positive reputation about VRA.

1.6 Research Questions.

Effort was made to provide relevant answers to the following questions in the research work;

- Does the perception of internal publics affect the institution's success?
- Does the role of public relations at VRA affect the organisation in building its reputation and image?
- How do internal publics of VRA perceive the role of practitioners in building organisational reputation?
- Is Public Relations role undertaken in the organisation a management/strategic or technical?

1.7 Significance of the Study

This research is in full realization of the various interests it will serve:

1. The study will serve an academic purpose for students who wants to study public relations and generally how it can be used effectively to build effective relationship with the publics. Since it will serve as a reference book for academic purpose, academicians can also use it to acquire relevant information.

2. Corporate institutions will likely be activated by the findings to invest their utmost creative abilities in communications to commensurate with current image building challenges facing their esteemed profession.
3. To the public relations student, the study is intended to motivate further study on other much unattended subject matter on corporate branding and investor relations and provide them with a storehouse of knowledge as well as provide direction to enable them exercise high prudence in their daily economic decisions especially on how they brand themselves.
4. The study seeks to provide insight into the current application of the principles of public relations management to organisations operating in the public sector.

1.8 Scope of the Study.

The study was concerned with the distinctive and effective role that public relations can play in building a sustainable image for public institutions. It was limited to Volta River Authority's corporate headquarters in Accra- Ghana.

1.9 Research Methodology.

In order to achieve the objective of the study, the mixed method was adopted, both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection were employed. The quantitative data was obtained from responses from a set of questionnaires. In addition to the questionnaire, qualitative data using face to face interviews was conducted for the head of the Communication Unit and the head of Human Resource department.

Secondary data was sourced from text books, journals, articles and literature by other people on the topic, the internet and reports of the chosen case study. In conducting this

study the employees of VRA were used which included management and staff of the organisation.

A sample size of sixty (60) due to time, financial and human constraints was used for the quantitative data. The study concentrated on only the internal staff of the organisation. For the qualitative, two members of the management team; the Heads of the Corporate Communication unit and Human Resource were interviewed.

In order to have a meaningful, valid and reliable conclusion, and make relevant recommendations/suggestions, descriptive and statistical analysis in the form of tables, charts and graphs were used, based on percentage corresponding absolute figures analyzed to obtain the data.

1.10 Organisation of the Study.

The study is organised in five chapters

Chapter one entails the background of the study, statement of problem, objectives of the research, the research questions, significance of the study, the scope of the study, research methodology and the organisation of the study.

Chapter two focuses on literature review. Thus any written material that is related to the work was consulted. This involves discussion of the theoretical framework and review of related studies.

Chapter three concentrates on the design for the research, the population, the sample and sampling technique, data collection methods and instruments, data handling and analysis.

Chapter four of the study deals with analysis and conclusions of the data collected.

Chapter five concentrates on summary, suggestions and findings of the research. The last page of the research comprise of referencing and bibliography.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a review of the available literature related to the topic. Literature and previous studies related to the study were reviewed in this chapter.

The chapter also tackles the theoretical underpinning of the study. The study was guided by the impression management theory, system theory and the convergence model theory. It must be noted that these theories help in answering the question of effectiveness and roles of the PR practitioner. These three theories are essential when explaining public relations' contribution in an organisation. They deal with organisation and stakeholder relationship.

2.2 Corporate Image

Corporate image is defined by Tench and Yeomans (2009) as the impression gained by an individual of an organisation at one moment in time and can differ from individual to individual and also throughout time.

Corporate image is the result of an overall evaluation of the company in terms of a 'set of beliefs and feelings' as Dowling (2001) put it in his definition.

Formbrun (1996) defined corporate image as 'the overall estimation in which a company is held by its constituents through perceptual representation of an organisation's past actions and future prospects when compared with other leading rivals'.

According to Percy (2008), image is a reflection in the eyes and minds of organisation's publics and also the result of how those various publics have processed the information they have about a company. Corporate image is therefore, the result of processing

information. This information is then consolidated in memory. Image in the regard is not 'imagination'. It is the result of associations in memory that are reviewed and updated when new information about a company is received. This means that corporate image is always subject to change. Corporate image will inform how people make decisions and form attitudes about companies. (Percy, 2008).

According to Balmer and Greyser (2003), corporate image is of four perspectives: the transmitter of images, receiver-end image categories, the focus of images, and construed images. Within each perspective there are a number of ways of looking at image. Each reflects various ways corporate image might be treated strategically.

The first category focuses upon the company as the transmitter of images in that, image is looked at in terms of its communication strategy and objectives. The remaining three perspectives are from the perspective of the stakeholders, not the company. With receiver-end image, one is looking at corporate image in terms of the immediate processing of a message from the corporation (transient image). This reflects everything from adverts to packaging to logos. It also is concerned with the congruence of the projected image of the company and how customers see themselves. The key is that the focus is on the receiver of the message, not the sender.

What Balmer and Greyser (2003) called focus-of-image looks at corporate image in terms of the various brand and category images. Finally, corporate image may be looked at in terms of what one group, such as the company's employees, think another group, such as their customers, believes about the company. This gives some idea of the complexity involved in dealing with corporate image. There are many ways of looking at it, with a corresponding potential for multiple interpretations. Image is a pointer to where

an organisation is now and where it intends to be, not necessarily where it is coming from or how to get to a new state that is healthier.

2.3 Corporate Reputation

A variety of definitions of reputation have been offered from a number of different academic and professional backgrounds.

Corporate reputation according to Tench and Yeomans (2009) is the sum total of images an individual has accumulated over a period of time that lead an individual to form an opinion about the organisation.

Corporate reputation is defined by Dowling (2001) as the attributed values (such as authenticity, honesty, responsibility, and integrity) evoked from the person's corporate image. His definition of corporate reputation is based upon the values a person associates with their understanding of a company's image. As he puts it, it is a value-based construct and these values are enduring values that are held over a long term which are unlikely to change in the short term.

These values includes integrity, honesty, and responsibility. When a company is seen as holding values important to its target audiences, it will enjoy a positive corporate reputation. This in turn, because of the perception of shared values, will lead to feelings of trust and confidence in that company.

Many people look at corporate image and corporate reputation as overlapping constructs, but Dowling (2003) reminds us that, it is important to keep them separate. In fact, he suggests that the way to a strong corporate reputation is through a strong corporate

image. Companies seek a strong corporate image built upon positive beliefs and feelings about the company, consistent with an overall corporate positioning strategy.

Reputation is often difficult to define since the perception of what is and not reputable is in the 'eye of the beholder' (Schreiber, 2011). It is suggested that, reputation is the collective representations shared in the minds of multiple publics about an organisation over time (Grunig and Hung 2002) and is developed through a complex interchange between an organisation and its stakeholders.

In his study on reputation, Schreiber (2011) stated that, definition of reputation is of two perspective. One from the perspective of the organisation and on the other hand from the perspective of the stakeholder. From the perspective of the organisation, reputation is an intangible asset that allows the company to better manage the expectations and needs of its various stakeholders, creating differentiation and barriers vis-à-vis its competitors.

From the perspective of stakeholders, reputation is the intellectual, emotional and behavioural response as to whether or not the communications and actions of an organisation resonate with their needs and interests. Stakeholders believe that, organisations which meet their needs are better than competitors and they will behave toward the organisation in desirable ways such as invest, join and support the activities of the organisation. As companies meet the needs and interest of stakeholders over time, they increase their reputation resilience and diminish their reputation risk, providing themselves with a 'halo effects' that can serve them well in times of trouble.

Because corporate reputation is value-based, as posited by (Dowling 2001), it enjoys a strategic advantage over corporate image. While both are dependent upon individual perceptions, the strength of a positive reputation will be greater than a positive image. Part of the reason is that an image is less permanent and more variable because it is

based upon beliefs and feelings while reputation, based upon values, is less subject to short-term change. Another is that a company's reputation will be more stable in the presence of negative publicity. Because it is value-based and not belief-based, negative information about the company will have a much more difficult time altering the association in memory.

The academic-practitioner team of Paul Argenti and Bob Druckenmiller suggested that, corporate reputation is a 'collective representation of multiple constituencies' images of a company built up over time'. (Argenti and Druckenmiller, 2004:369). It is also linked to the organisation's identity, performance and the way others respond to its behaviour. The elements to note are that the reputation is a 'collective representation' of images and perceptions, not a self-promoted message'. It involves relationships with all stakeholders ('constituencies') and it is gained, maintained and enhanced or detracted from over time. They also argued that 'organisations increasingly recognize the importance of corporate reputation to achieve business goals and stay competitive'.

While there are many recent examples of organisation's whose leadership and business practice behaviours have destroyed their reputations, others continue to thrive and have fostered continued expansion and growth through positive reputation. What is evident is that reputation does not occur by chance. It relates to leadership, management and organisational operations; the quality of products and services; and crucially; relationships with stakeholders. It is also connected to communication activities and feedback mechanisms.

2.3.1. Corporate Reputation and Public Relations.

Although reputation itself may be difficult to measure, its value in an organisation or an individual is indisputable. Reputation management according to Seitel (2008) is the ability to link reputation to business goals to increase support and advocacy and increase organisational success through profit, contributions, attendance and so on. Reputation managers attempts to influence behaviours including:

- Persuading customers to recommend and buy their products
- Persuading investors to invest in their organisation.
- Persuading competent job seekers to enlist as employees.
- Persuading other strong organisation to joint venture with them
- Persuading people to support the organisation when it is attacked.

The requisite of reputation managers is to help build, defend and maintain an organisation's reputation. PR purist would argue that these reputation management function have always been the province of a specific group within an organisation- PR professionals. Thus, it is the fundamental mandate for the PR person to promote, maintain, enhance and sustain the organisation's reputation in perpetuity.

2.3.2 Benefit of a Good Reputation and Corporate Image.

The benefits of a good corporate image and reputation are enormous. Increasing changes and complexities in the business environment has made it vital for institutions of all types to adopt measures and strategies aimed at competing and surviving. Today's consumers are more knowledgeable as access to information on products and services are easy to come by. Organisations survival therefore, depends so much on how good its

reputations among its stakeholders is. In his study, Schreiber (2011) again suggested the following importance of reputation and also from an article by Bilieu (2008).

Good corporate image and reputation creates high competitive edge – Schreiber (2011) stated that reputation is a core intangible asset of the firm and create barriers to competitive threats. Established reputations impede competitive mobility and produce returns to firms because they are difficult to imitate. A strong corporate reputation suggests that the products and services being offered by the firm are higher quality (Carmeli and Tishler, 2005) and that the firm is responsible and will treat its customers well. Moreover, intangible assets are very important for achieving a competitive advantage (Ambrosini and Bowman, 2001) because they are valuable, rare, difficult or costly to imitate, substitute and transfer.

Corporate image is instrumental in increasing business opportunities- several authors have argued that good corporate reputation have strategic value for the firms that possess them. Roberts and Dowling (2002), suggest that, stakeholders collect information about how a company behaves and these collections help them determine what a company stands for. Corporate reputation is like a magnet. It does not only attract customers. It also catches the attention of interested investors and business partners. Establishing a good image generates a lot of possibilities for business growth and expansion.

A good reputation creates financial value- communications practitioner must be able to show that reputation has a financial impact on the company since there is an ever increasing demand for proof of the return -on-investment (ROI) of communications programmes. Historical data compiled by Fombrun and Van Riel (2004) found that companies with good reputations outperformed companies with poor reputations on every financial measure over a five year period. Davies et al, (2004) stated that

reputation contributes between 3-7.5% of revenue yearly, and that reputation should be considered an investment toward increased revenues rather than a cost to the firm.

A good corporate image is an efficient marketing and promotional tool- according to Bilieu (2008) consumers will always remember an outstanding service. Likewise, they never forgive and forget mediocre works as well. If a company is known for good performances, it has a higher tendency of attracting more customers. The best part of it is that, satisfied clients will spread good word of mouth about the organisation thereby convincing new potential ones.

Credibility and Integrity comes with a good name- Bilieu (2008) again stated that corporate image is an organisation's identity. It articulates the culture of the organisation and it is hard to be credible when nobody believes in you. Relatively, it is also difficult to prove integrity when clients talk negatively about a company's services. Instead of recommending and promoting the company, customers would rather spread warnings and bad reviews.

Corporate image establishes trust, confidence, loyalty and superb client relationships- the most respectable companies did not reach the zenith of success without sustaining and protecting their reputation. It should be noted that achieving untainted corporate image is not just about avoiding scandals and controversies. It is more of meeting the expectations of clients. In order to build a good image, excellence and perfection must continuously be observed. For the clients, a good image provides a strong sense of security. They are assured of good results once they patronize the services or products launched and offered by a reputable company.

A good image can stand the test of time- in this highly competitive business markets, consumers will always look for alternatives. However, a well established reputation

lessens the worries of switching to other service providers. Clients would continue to patronize a company's products even if it is more expensive due to the awareness that the company can efficiently deliver their needs and demands. It has always been said that 'first impression last' Make a memorable impression. Value your company's reputation and its name will continue to resonate for the rest of the time.

2.4 Characteristics of Excellent Public Relations Programmes in the different levels of an organisation

Before PR can meaningfully contribute to an organisation's success, there are certain elements that must be present and which management are willing to emulate and adopt before PR can perform its roles and functions to the organisation. These elements or characteristics have been developed in the excellence study. Excellent public relations programmes must operate at organisation, department, and programme levels (Grunig 1992)

The excellence study, considered a monumental study in PR, was conducted by a team of six researchers (J. Grunig, L. Grunig, Dozier, Ehling, Repper and White) and was funded by the International Association of Business Communications (IABC).

The research was to answer the question posed: "How, why and to what extent does communication contribute to the achievement of organisational objectives?" (Grunig, 1992:5). This they called the question of organisational effectiveness (Rhee, 2004). The excellence study therefore offered the opportunity to conceptually examine how PR contributed to the organisational effectiveness (Grunig and Grunig, 2011).

Another question was added to the original question of organisational effectiveness which they called the excellence question: "How must PR be practised and the

communication function organized for it to contribute most to organisational effectiveness?" (Grunig, 1992: 5).

The team reviewed theories of business social responsibility, ethics and conflict resolution to back their study and developed a generic benchmark of best factors and practices in communication management across different types of organisations (Grunig and Grunig, 2011).

To answer the excellence question, the study proposed analysis at four different levels in the organisation, namely: the programme/micro level, the departmental/messo level, the organisational/macro level and the economic level (Grunig, Grunig and Dozier, 2002).

Grunig et al (2002: 9) provided a template of attributes of excellent PR programmes at the different levels of the organisational hierarchy. These factors (itemised below) provided the framework for assessing the communication practices within an organisation.

I. Programme Level

1. Managed strategically

II. Departmental Level

2. A single or integrated public relations department
3. Separate function from marketing
4. Direct reporting relationship to senior management
5. Two-way symmetrical model
6. Senior public relations person in the managerial role

7. Potential for excellent public relations, as indicated by:

a. Knowledge of symmetrical model

b. Knowledge of managerial role

c. Academic training in public relations

d. Professionalism

8. Equal opportunity for men and women in public relations

III. Organisational Level

9. Worldview for public relations in the organisation reflects the two-way symmetrical model

10. Public relations director has power in or with the dominant coalition

11. Participative rather than authoritarian organisational culture

12. Symmetrical system of internal communication

13. Organic rather than mechanical organisational structure

14. Turbulent, complex environment with pressure from activist groups

IV. Effects of Excellent Public Relations

15. Programmes meet communication objectives

16. Reduces costs of regulation, pressure, and litigation

17. Job satisfaction is high among employees (Grunig, 1992: 1–28)

The question of organisational effectiveness deals with how excellent communication makes an organisation effective and the economic value of that communication. The team argued that PR departments can contribute to organisational effectiveness by helping build relationships, resolving conflicts between an organisation and its strategic publics and managing those relationships. The organisational level of public relations programmes describes the best organisational approach to achieve excellent public relations outcomes for organisations. The department level examines the structure and focus of the public relations function.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

2.5.1 Impression Management Theory.

Impression management (IM) refers to the activity of controlling information in order to steer others' opinions in the service of personal or social goals. Although people can manage impressions of almost anything (e.g., a clothing brand, a political position, and celebrities), people most commonly manage the impressions others form of themselves, a sub-type of impression management that is often termed self-presentation.

Goffman's theory of Impression Management was originated in 1959 in his book *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Many frameworks and theories have branched off of the idea of self-presentation. Schlenker and Leary (1982) made it clear that self-presentation does not have to be deceptive. They argue "self-presentation involves bringing actual attributes or accomplishments to the attention of others, perhaps by performing meritorious deeds in their presence and presenting vertical information in ways that could generate optimal effects".

Many writers and philosophers have observed that people engage in strategic behaviours to control the impressions that their audiences form—as Shakespeare wrote, "All the world's a stage. And all the men and women merely players; They have their exits and their entrances, And one man in his time plays many parts." The sociologist Erving Goffman popularized this idea further, arguing that ordinary people in everyday life work to convey desired impressions to others around them, just as actors on a stage work to present their characters to audiences.

Impression management, or self-presentation, is the "process by which individuals attempt to control the impressions others form of them" Leary and Kowalski (1990). Further explained, IM is "concerned with the behaviours people direct toward others to create and maintain desired perceptions of themselves" Gardner and Martinko (1988). Goffman argues that "when an individual enters the presence of others, they commonly seek to acquire information about him". In this task to seek out information of others, "they can rely on what the individual says about himself or on documentary evidence he provides as to who and what he is" (Goffman, 1959).

The two different ways we gain impressions from others allow for two different actions including "the expression that he gives and the expression that he gives off" (Goffman, 1959). The individual giving information about him or herself has full control of the message they want to present. Goffman argues that a person can express themselves in such a way that will lead others to act voluntarily in accordance with their own plan. Leary and Kowalski (1990) write "because of the impressions people make on others have implications for how others perceive, evaluate, and treat them, as well as for their own views of themselves, people sometimes behave in ways that will create certain

impressions in others' eyes". Ultimately, impression management is how individuals form, sustain, defend, and enhance their social identities.

2.5.2 Impressions and Public Relations

Although this theory originated with the idea of presenting the self, public relations has coined the term to describe the process of how they form a public image. Allen and Cailouet (1994) argue that organisations, like individuals, are "actors" engaging in "performances" in various 'settings' before 'audiences'. Studying and understanding the roles and impressions PR professionals creates and play are important since these messages potentially build and shape public perceptions of legitimacy.

When individuals, groups and/ or organisations find themselves in situations where they want to present themselves as competent, they are likely to convey self-promoting messages that emphasize relevant attributes and achievements, corresponding to what expectations they think others have of a competent person, group or organisations. People and organisations generally try to put their best foot forward, such carryover effects of impression management may have both positive and negative consequences.

Thus, IM is a goal-oriented attempt to influence others perception about a person, a group, and/or an organisation regarding an object or event by providing self-assessed beneficial information in social interactions. The goal for the aforementioned attempt is to gain an advantageous first impression. The motive for this goal is based on assumption that the target audiences' impression about the individual, groups or organisations become reality of the target audience.

2.6 System Theory

The roots of system thinking began at least as far back as the 19th century with the theory of Georg Hegel. For Hegel the world is a process and is controlled by a tension between opposites. He explained historical development as a dynamic process. Marx and Darwin used this theory in their work. System theory was used by Ludwig Von Bertalanffy, a biologist, as the basis for the field of study known as 'general system theory', a multidisciplinary field (1968).

Systems theory provides a framework through which to view organisations and their relationships with the environment. It is firmly established as one of the guiding theories for public relations theory and practice. It is used to explain how public relations helps understand and manage the relationships an organisation has with its stakeholders and publics who make up its environment.

2.6.1 Defining Systems

A system is defined as a 'set of interacting units that endures through time within an established boundary by responding and adjusting to change pressures from the environment to achieve and maintain goal states' (Cutlip, Center and Broom 2006 :176). In this way, the organisation is seen as a system that exists to create and achieve goals that are beneficial to the organisation and the environment. These goals might include increased profits and sales, support from investors, increased employment, and the creation of new products.

A system can be said to consist of four things, the first is *objects* the parts, elements or variables within the system. These may be physical or abstract or both, depending on the nature of the system. Second, a system consists of *attributes* the qualities or properties of

the system and its objects. Third a system has *internal relationships* among its objects. This characteristic is a crucial defining quality of systems. Forth, systems exists in an *environment*. They do not exist in a vacuum. A system, then, is a set of things that affect one another within an environment and form a larger pattern that is different from any of the parts (Littlejohn, 1996:43).

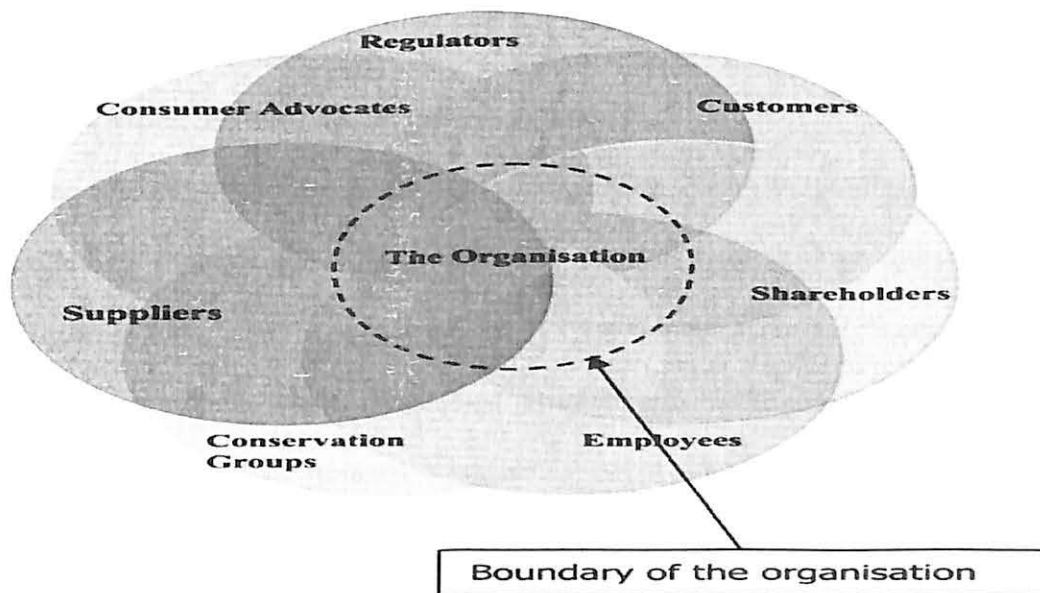
Organisational systems are not static but rely on a series of exchanges of inputs and outputs between environments and organisations. In organisational systems, inputs are likely to come in the form of resources to an organisation (materials, capital, people, and information). Once received, these inputs are transformed through a range of organisational activities, such as production lines and even boardroom meetings. The transformation process may be affected by the degree of interaction among the different departments within the organisation. Ultimately, the inputs become outputs that include: products, services, plant closures and job cuts.

Although each part is important, systems theory takes a holistic view and encourages us to look outside the organisation or organisational department to see the bigger environment (Modaff, Delvine and Butler 2008). The basic premise behind this whole view is that a change to one part affects the whole system.

2.6.2 Boundary Spanning and Public Relations

Early systems theory (Von Bertalanffy 1968) suggested that an organisation and its environment were separated by a boundary through which information and resources flowed. Spanning this boundary was seen as a critical role for public relations professionals, who would provide information to the environment about the organisation and bring information about the environment back to the organisational decision makers.

The practitioner monitors the boundary on an ongoing basis, with 'one foot in the organisation and one foot outside' (Grunig and Hunt 1984). Both roles continue in today's organisations'. Public relations professionals use formal and informal research mechanisms to gather information about key publics and issues and feed them back into the organisation. Knowledge of the attitudes and behaviours of key publics are important to institutions as they plan their goals and strategies.



2.6.4 Open and Closed Systems.

2.6.4.1 Closed Systems and Public Relations.

A closed system is isolated from the environment and other systems. Its boundaries are considered impermeable, which discourages the exchange of information with the environment (Cutlip, Center and Broom 2006:181). As a result, closed systems are rarely influenced by their environment. In closed organisations, managers operate as if they are autonomous or unconstrained by environmental forces (Grunig, Grunig and Dozier

2002). Closed systems are likely to encounter the system state of entropy or deterioration (Morgan 1998).

Because the organisation is closed to its environment, it is not able to take advantage of opportunities or move quickly to address potential problems. Instead, public relations departments react to crises, and when there is a crisis there is often a cover-up as management denies that there is, or was, a problem.

2.6.4.2 Open Systems and Public Relations.

Open systems view the environment as important to survival. Open systems continuously exchange inputs and outputs with the environment through permeable boundaries (Cutlip, Center and Broom 2006:181). Organisations actively seek information from their environment, which is received as input into the organisational system. The open systems approach encourages congruency or fit among the different systems and the identification and elimination of any potential dysfunctions (Morgan 1998).

Open organisational systems identify incongruence and respond to environmental pressures that may affect the viability or survival of the organisation (Witmer, 2006). Organisational responses can accommodate or counteract changes in the environment (Cutlip, Center and Broom 2006). The organisation does not need, nor is it able, to address every change, variation, or expectation of its environment. Instead, organisations and their public relations managers must select and prioritise environmental change pressures. In open systems, public relations takes on a functional approach that is concerned with two-way communication between the organisation and the environment. This requires resources for organisations to not only monitor their environments and public opinion but also to build and maintain relationships with key organisations and

stakeholders within their environment. These relationships are built on trust and a mutual interest in bringing about a solution that meets the needs of all parts of the system.

Communication in this perspective can be seen as an integrated process- not as an isolated event. Yet decades of management training and practices in the workplace have not followed this theory. Only recently, with tremendous changes facing organisations and how they operate, have educators and managers come to face this new way of looking at issues. This interpretation has brought about a significant change (or paradigm shift) in the way management studies and approaches organisations.

The effect of system theory management is that, writers, educators, consultants are helping managers to look at the organisation from a broader perspective. System theory has brought a new perspective for managers to interpret patterns and events in the workplace. They recognize the various parts of organisation, and in particular, the interrelation of the parts.

2.7 Convergence Theory

Convergence theory simply says that, the more two people (or a larger group of people) communicate with each other, the more similar their views of the world become. More precisely, 'unrestricted information flow within the boundaries of a relatively closed communication system will lead to a convergence of beliefs, values, and behaviour toward a state of greater uniformity or negentropy' (Kincaid, 1993: 132).

The convergence theory is attributable to Lawrence Kincaid and his colleagues. Kincaid stated that groups and cultures are open systems that sustains themselves by expending effort. The work required to sustain a human group is communication, or the transfer of information among individuals, groups and cultures. Convergence theory is closely

associated with network theory. Communication creates a network of relations among people that comprises the structure of society. Network connects groups with one another and enable them to exchange information, and groups cluster together according to common beliefs, values, and behaviour. Convergence theory explains why there is similarity within groups and differences between them.

Groups that come to share more and more information are said to experience convergence, and group that share less and less experience divergence. As communication decreases, the amount of variation within the group increases, the structure of the system comes apart, and entropy prevails. As communication increases within the group, more and more is shared, structure develops and convergence results. Generally speaking then, the more the communication, the greater the convergence, and the less the communication, the greater the divergence. People within a group come to share common ideas as they communicate with greater frequency, and they come to lose common ground when they communicate less frequently. (Littlejohn, 1996:59)

The convergence model specifically describes the process of arriving at a mutual understanding by encouraging participation and shared information (Littlejohn 1996:58)

2.8 Summary

In bringing these theories of impression management, system and convergence into the context of this study, management and staff of VRA constitute one of the primary publics of the organisation.

IM theory focuses on how one communicates to target audience to create the desired impression. An organisation must present itself the way in which it would like to be thought of by its stakeholders. Thus, organisations can influence the perception of their

stakeholders in building a good image and sound reputation for the organisation. The impression management theory shows the essential elements that should be looked at to show how a PR department can contribute significantly to the organisation. It therefore helps in exploring PR contribution in an organisation such as VRA. It emphasizes the need for an organisation such as VRA to foster a healthy relationship with its stakeholders, by planning and controlling the needed consistent messages that creates favourable impression on its various stakeholders, thereby showing the significant role PR plays. The theory is subjected to the functioning of all organs in a system to achieve a desired goal. That is to say that, creating the desired impression is the responsibility of all departments and staff but more importantly by the PR Unit of VRA. The PR unit center on corporate social responsibility, community relations, media relations, customer relations and strategic communication to project the desired image for the organisation.

From the system theory, VRA as a system consists of various departments, different people with different roles and responsibilities. The various parts make the whole. The public Relations unit therefore ensures that the relationship between staffs and management remains cordial so that they can work in consent to present a good image to the external publics.

To this end, the boundary spanning role of the PR professionals as stated in the theory cannot be overemphasized. The organisation need information from the external environment in its operations in order to adapt and make the needed changes necessary to create the desired reputation and image of the organisation. Management is constantly seeking to know how well the organisation is faring in the eyes and minds of their publics. Grunig and Hunt (1984) suggest that the PR practitioner can build long term relationships by playing a boundary spanning role that functions at the edge of an

organisation principally as a liaison between the organisation and its publics. In effect, the PR professional serves as liaison, a link, between the publics and the organisation.

To this effect, the convergence theory encourages management to build relationship and involve staff with information concerning the organisation to enable staff have full understanding of the organisations objectives. The theory also talk about participatory and shared information. Here the staffs not only share information but also participate in information. This then guarantee effective communication between both publics (internal and external) and the organisation. The image and reputation of an organisation can be dented by an uninformed, unparticipatory, and uninvolved staff. A bad reputation can be among the most damaging a company can face. But because they are often intangible, they can also be extremely difficult to manage. Reputation is generally wrapped around character; it is what an individual, organisation or society is known for, and it may be good, bad or ugly. It may be real, perceived, ambivalent or totally untrue. Management should keep in mind that what is essential is invisible to the eye. Organisations with solid reputations are likely to have stronger and more stable returns, an easier time hiring and retaining the best recruits, and a greater likelihood of enduring the challenges of a crises.

2.9 Related Studies

A study by Schreiber S. Elliot (2001), sought to determine the importance of reputation and its management to an organisation. The study evaluated reputation from a variety of perspectives, looking at how it should be defined, the connection between brand and reputation, the importance of stakeholder relations, and the power of employee commitment. The study indicated that reputation may be the most important asset entrusted by shareholders and board to the CEO and management team. It also stated that

as an intangible asset, reputation can help frame and manage expectations, needs and interests of stakeholders and can be used to create barriers to competition. When squandered, it is an asset that is difficult to rebuild since it is based primarily on perceptions and realized or unrealized expectations. The study further concludes that, while communications is an important part of reputation management, the most important way an organisation builds reputation is through its actions. In this regard, everyone in the organisation must understand the reputation objectives and have the willingness and the ability to act in support of these objectives.

Stephen A. Greyser (1999) in his journal 'advancing and enhancing corporate reputation' sought to describe corporate reputation as it pertains to corporate practice. He purported three specific strategic benefits and goals of strong corporate reputation and six key factors that drive corporate reputation. The study illustrated how company behaviour, relative to public expectations can erode corporate reputation. Credibility is cited as the central link between company behaviour and public confidence, also encompassing the 'promise /performance gap' between consumer expectations and product/service delivery.

The study established that executives worldwide believe companies can affect their reputations. Three very different major strategic benefits and goals of strong corporate reputation can be identified- and are supported by both attitudinal and empirical company reputation assessment. These benefits are preference in doing business with a company when several companies' products or services are similar in quality and price, support for a company in times of controversy, and a company's value in the financial marketplace. The study further stated that as much as we need to learn more about building reputation, we also need to learn about rebuilding it. The study further tried to explain corporate reputation and corporate behaviour, it asked the question 'what

undercuts corporate reputation and found the answer to be corporate behaviour, particularly relative to public expectations. It goes on to explain that when company's behaviour runs counter to public expectations, the company will suffer a major loss of reputation and often a loss of business and share price as well.

A study by Boatemaa Abena (2011) on the contribution of public relations in corporate image building at the Ghana Cocoa Board limited, sought to determine whether the department and PR professionals were achieving its role in image building. The study found out that the department was making the necessary effort in managing the image of the organisation. The study confirmed that majority of the organisations stakeholders were satisfied with the services of the organisation, provision of adequate information as well as relating cordially to the publics. It was also revealed that the management of the organisation must intensify their contribution to the PR unit in promoting the image of the organisation.

However, the study failed to prove whether PR was part of management or as part of the dominant coalition team. It failed to prove whether PR takes part in decision making, it seems more like just undertaking its technical role of performing and implementing the decisions of management.

A study on 'The value of corporate image of an organisation, the role of the employee' by Otabil (2006) states that corporate image is not created only by top management but also by employees. This study indicates that corporate image building is a collective responsibility of all employees of an organisation.

However, although the study focuses on employees' participation in building a corporate image for an organisation, it did not exhaustively discuss the subject matter.

Nevertheless, the study establishes that corporate image building is not the sole responsibility of management; employees also have a role to play.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the methodology for the study. The research approach was the mixed method which are both the quantitative and qualitative approaches. Specifically, questionnaire and the interview methods were employed. It also covers the research design; this part of the study presents the steps, procedures employed to carry out the study. The population used, sample size, sampling techniques, instruments of data collection and handling and analysis of data.

3.2 Research Design

The mixed methods research is defined as research in which the investigator collects and analyzes data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using either qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study or a programme of inquiry. (Tashakkori and Creswell, 2007). Mixed method adds rigour, depth, richness to the study. Mixed methods research provides strengths that offset the weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative research. It also has the advantage of providing more evidence for studying a research problem than either quantitative or qualitative research alone. Researchers are enabled to use all of the tools of data collection available rather than being restricted to the types of data collection typically associated with quantitative research or qualitative research.

Quantitative research refers to the numerical representation and manipulation of observations so that they can be described and explained in numerical terms. It is 'a research strategy that usually emphasizes quantification in the collection and analysis of data' (Bryman, 2004). Quantitative research has the advantage of collecting and

providing large amount of data in an economic way. It also allows for the treatment of data which aids in comparative analysis and repeatability of data collection in order to verify reliability. It is also characterized by independence. The researcher is independent of what is being investigated.

The quantitative method used for the study is the survey. The questionnaire approach was used to specify figures to assess the activities of Public Relations in contributing to corporate image and reputation building. The questionnaire is a set of questions framed by the researcher, based on the research problem and objectives of the study, and administered on the sample or respondent. The opinions and responses supplied by the respondents constitute the information or data, which help the researcher to resolve the research problem, answer the research questions and test the hypotheses as the case may be. Questionnaires has the strength of preventing interviewer bias because he/she may not be present during data collection, therefore does not influence respondents answers either intentionally or unintentionally.

A qualitative research approach is also utilized by the study. Qualitative research is defined as an approach to empirical inquiry that collects, analyses, and displays data in narrative rather than in numbers. Information gathered qualitatively is restricted to the setting in which it was obtained. It cannot be generalized.

Data was collected using in-depth interviews. An in-depth interview is an extensive one-on-one personal interaction in which much more information can be obtained (Wimmer and Dominick, 2011). This technique was adopted in collecting data because it allows the researcher to probe further and ask follow-up questions where necessary. The qualitative approach was also chosen for this study because it enabled the researcher collect rich data. According to Wimmer and Dominick (2011) the wealth of detail

provided by the in-depth interview serves as a great advantage. It therefore helped in gaining in-depth knowledge and understanding of the role and perceived contribution of PR in VRA in sustaining corporate reputation from the management point of view.

The qualitative method also was used to elicit in-depth information on how stakeholders perceive the organisation and their contribution to promote the image of the organisation.

3.3 Population

The population for the study is the entire staff of the VRA. They serve as the universal population for the study.

3.4 Sample Size

According to Wimmer and Dominick (2011) a sample is a subset of a population that is representative of the entire population. Sampling is therefore the process or guidelines by which events; participants are selected to represent the population. For the quantitative aspect of the study, a total sample of sixty (60). This was made up of the internal staff of the communication unit and the various department of VRA at the headquarters in Accra. For the qualitative, a total of 2 participants were purposively selected. This included the Head of the Corporate Communication unit and the Head of Human Resource.

3.5 Sampling Technique

The study employed the stratified sampling technique to select the sample for the quantitative. For the internal VRA staff, stratified sampling was employed as the sampling technique. The stratified random sampling is a type of probability sampling

that gives room for effective representation of the various subjects in the population. Babbies (2005) argues that stratified sampling ensures the proper representation of the variables in a given population. To ensure effective representation, the whole population is divided into smaller segments or strata called subsamples. The stratification is based on certain homogenous demographic variables. The stratified random sampling adopts same strategies or approach with the sample random sampling. For the VRA internal staff, the population was stratified into sub-groups based on the administrative department they belong. Next, using disproportionate sampling, all the employees of Corporate Communications Unit were selected and four employees were randomly selected from each of the remaining departments. This was because the researcher assumed that the input of staff of the Corporate Communications Department will make a greater contribution to the achievement of the research objective as compared to the other VRA departments. The samples of the various stratum were put together to form a total sample of sixty (60).

For the qualitative, two participants were purposively selected. The purposive sampling method is a non-probability means of sampling in which the researcher uses pre-determined criteria as the basis for selecting the actual sample for investigation or examination. This is the reason why this method is otherwise called the judgmental sampling. In this method, the subjects are selected from the population based on their ability to meet certain specified characteristics or quality. The implication is that all the elements or subjects that do not meet the predetermined criteria, qualities or characteristics would not be selected as part of the sample. The purposive sampling allows the researcher to use his or her judgment to select a member or members who is/are in the best position to provide the required data. They are deemed to be in position to serve the purpose and to enable the researcher find answers to the research questions and

achieve the objectives. The selected participant for the study were the Head of the Corporate Communication unit and the Head of Human Resource at VRA.

3.6 Instruments for Data Collection.

The main instrument for data collection were questionnaire for the quantitative and interview guide for the qualitative. The questionnaire were self-administered to sampled internal publics of Volta River Authority. In all 60 questionnaires were distributed to the internal publics (staff) of VRA. The questionnaire helped to collect primary data from internal publics.

The questionnaire was open and closed ended. The open ended questions helped respondents to express their views on the issues raised, while the closed ended helped respondents to choose from options given.

With regard to the face-to- face interview, the Head of the corporate communication unit and the Head of Human Resource were interviewed. The interview method was used to help collect data on the role of the PR outfit and the measures they put in place to establish good image and reputation for the organisation. A question guide was used for the face- to face interview.

3.7 Data Handling and Analysis

For the quantitative, after the questionnaire were collected, they were edited, coded and recorded respectively. The scores for each response were tallied. From the scores, tables and figures were generated. They were thematically and mathematically analyzed.

For the qualitative, after collecting the data, the interview sessions were transcribed. Analyses were carried out thematically to meet the objectives of the study. Data analysis

of the in-depth interview and observations were done using the research objectives as themes. Emerging themes were analyzed manually. Themes centered on the department, knowledge and understanding of PR, role and functions of PR, education, empowering the PR function, model of PR practised and the contribution of public relations to organisational strategy and performance in helping to build and sustain the corporate image and reputation of the organisation. The findings of the research were discussed with particular reference to theories, concepts, related works and themes as discussed in earlier chapters.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter covers the presentation and analysis of data collected. Questionnaire and interviews conducted with the head of the corporate communication unit and the human resource manager and the findings from the questionnaire sent out to the entire staff of the organisation. Data collection tools used are the in-depth interview and questionnaire.

There were two interviews conducted. One with the Head of the communication unit (first respondent) and the other with the Head of Human Resource (second respondent).

A total of sixty (60) questionnaires were disseminated to the staff of the organisation with twenty (20) going to the communication staff and forty (40) to staff of other departments.

4.2 Analysis of Qualitative Data

4.2.1 The Public Relations Department

The Public Relations department is known as the Corporate Communication Unit. It is made up of twenty- two permanent staff spread across the various offices in Accra, Akosombo, Akuse, and Aboadze. There are always almost about twenty interns and national service personnel who are recruited to help assist the unit. The Corporate Communications Unit is one of the Departments that reports directly to the Chief Executive. It is responsible for carrying out internal and external stakeholder communications to raise the corporate image of Volta River Authority, (VRA). The planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Communication Strategy and action plan are the sole responsibility of the Communications Unit.

The Unit works directly under the Chief Executive and is headed by a Deputy Director, Corporate Communications who is further assisted by officers and assistants who perform lower level roles at the unit.

A Secretariat serves the Deputy Director and is composed of Assistants, namely – the Webmaster, Travel and Ticketing Assistant, Branding Coordinator, Crisis Management Coordinator, Principal Communications officer, Assistant Administrator, and the Unit Driver.

7 (seven) schedule officers include the Government and Industry Relations officer, the Research and Public Education officer, Media Relations and Publications officer, 3 (three) Area Community Relations officers, and lastly the Events, Sponsorship and Protocol officer.

4.2.2 Knowledge/Understanding of Public Relations

Asked if in their opinion PR existed in their organisation, both respondents replied in the affirmative, explaining that PR existed under the corporate communication unit.

Respondents described PR in various ways based on their opinion.

- **First respondent**

The first respondent interviewed was the head of corporate communication. When asked his understanding of what he understood by PR, this is what he had to say:

‘PR is monitoring what comes outside the organisation into the organisation, and also to control what goes out of the company. PR is using communication tools to profile the organisation; just as a marketer will sell the products made by the organisation, the communication person will sell the organisation. For me, it’s all about the profile, the reputation and the concept used to build and maintain that reputation is PR.’

He mentioned their stakeholders as Government, regulators, the citizenry and they have healthy cordial relationship with all them as well as competitors.

- **Second respondent**

‘The arm that manages the reputation of the company; the ones who take care of media relations and stakeholder relationships; those who handle both internal and external communications and build relationship with the public; those who protect the image of the company and the people who write about the good things the company does. The Company needs ears and eyes outside the organisation, to give us stakeholders’ points of view during policy making and strategy formulation.

It is worth noting that, in describing what they understood by PR both mentioned stakeholder management, reputation and image management, and media relations. The non-practitioner interviewed had quite an impressive understanding of stakeholder management and its importance.

4.2.3 Role and Functions of Public Relations

- **First respondent**

When the first respondent was asked about the roles and functions of the unit, he mentioned the following:

- Government relations and stakeholder relations
- Media relations
- Corporate social responsibilities (CSR)
- Internal and external communication, public campaign and research,
- Public education.

Some other functions listed were writing of press releases, newsletter publications, event planning, managing all social media communication and activities, online communication and crisis management.

He further explained that other practitioners in the unit performed specialised functions of which they were in charge. Although all practitioners do a bit of technical work such as writing, distributing promotional material and press releases, events management, among others, most of the technical work is done with the interns and the national service personnel in order to give them technical training.

‘We handle what we call a lot of interface work with the public. First we undertake government and stakeholder relations, CSR, public sponsorship, campaign and research, public education, paraphernalia, media relations, internal communication, newsletter, online communication and managing all our social media presence’.

- **Second respondent**

The second respondent when asked he thought were the roles and function of the unit responded as,

‘They have an organisation to uphold, and are custodians, owners of the brand and so it is up to them to ensure that the brand reputation is maintained and protected both internally and externally’.

He added that the members of the department are expected to build relationships with the various stakeholders and “sustain” them. He also said that “PR is expected to publicize the actions of the company and protect the image of the company by telling the truth... see to the planning and organising of events and handle both internal and external communication effectively.

4.2.4 Education

In view of the roles and functions expected of the practitioners, the study was designed to find out if respondents thought it essential that a practitioner should have formal education in PR in order to practice it or they thought of it as soft skill in which no formal education was needed. The answer was in the affirmative. Both interviewees believed formal education in a communicated discipline was very essential for one to be an efficient communicator.

The head of the communication department has formal education in communication as well as other officers who perform the various specialised duties. It must be noted that almost all the staff had formal education in journalism, and public relations. Both heads of the two departments also believe it is important that practitioners undergo “continuous training” and therefore staff of the unit are encouraged to take advantage of the training courses offered by Institute of Public Relations (IPR), Ghana. Although they both believed people can also learn on the job, they were quick to add that while on the job the practitioner should take some “short, short courses” in the field. Respondents explained that formal education was important for in depth understanding of the practice.

- **First respondent:**

‘There are certain things learning on the job will never teach you. Like the theories, certain concepts and even definitions; your boss will not teach you that but they are very important. People are born with talents, but its importance also for people to get guidance. Guidance in the sense that one would have to learn the rudiments of the profession and that can only be achieved through formal education. Formal education is even needed to develop and nurture inherent talents’.

- **Second respondent**

Well, people think because once you can talk you can do anything communications especially PR. Maybe when it had to do with saying good things about bad people formal education wasn't that important but with growth in the discipline one needs to be educated.... PR is just like any other discipline: HR., marketing, finance... and to excel in it and be good at it you need formal tuition. Formal education helps you understand and recognize certain things that happen on the field.

4.2.5 Empowering the Public Relations function

4.2.5.1 Public Relations as a Management function:

- **First respondent**

As the interview progressed, the respondent was asked whether the Public Relations was a management function at the organisation and he responded in the affirmative. He reports directly to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and sits in management meetings. The head of HR was of the view that Public Relations deserves to be a part of management for a number of reasons but the two most frequent reasons were: because of the importance of stakeholder relationships to the organisation and because they manage the reputation of the company. He was also of the view that, it is not prudent for other people to take decisions for you and just ask you to implement them, PR needs to be a part of management so you can counsel and advice management when decisions and policies are being formulated so you can bring valuable contribution and information concerning staff and the outside environment. He emphasized the boundary spanning role of PR as described in the system theory.

- **Second respondent**

‘Oh! Absolutely! I think it is absolutely essential because let me tell you what, it takes a life time to build a reputation but it takes moment to destroy it. Therefore, if the organisation is investing so much money in growing the company and is not bothered about the reputation of the company then I don’t think we are a serious business. So, seriously I think that it deserves a place at the board table; the executive level, which is the case at VRA.

Concerning the formulation of PR policies, first respondent replied that they are formulated, developed and implemented by the unit itself and seek executive approval from the Chief Executive Officer. The head of the department and the manager are held responsible for the outcomes of PR strategies.

4.2.6 How can Public Relations be Made More Effective?

- **First respondent**

Moving on, the first respondent said PR activities can be made more effective if management buys in into the discipline. He said, PR manages reputation and no organisation can exist without a good reputation, therefore, the department that manages an organisation’s reputation should be seen as very, very important and until management buy into that idea, PRs job will be very difficult, because the ripple effect is that when management does not see the worth of PRs work then, a good budget allocation will be affected, since PR activities needs money and other resources to function well.

4.2.7 Public Relations as an Integrated Function:

Concerning communication activities, both interviewees were of the opinion that all communication activities are undertaken by the corporate affairs department. According to them no other person or department attempts to “usurp” the functions of the communication unit. No other department undertakes any kind of PR activity or function.

- **First respondent**

‘Even issues to be communicated internally comes to us first they know that we are the mouthpiece of the organisation’.

4.2.8 Model of Public Relations Practiced

The head of communication department was asked what model of PR was practiced in VRA. In his view they practiced both the two-way symmetrical and two-way asymmetrical model more. In other words Public Relations practiced is both advocacy and dialogical. He explained,

‘We try as much as possible to relate with stakeholders and know what they expect of us and try to let it shape policies and strategies. But sometimes too we just inform, put the information out there’.

4.2.8.1 Internal Communication

- **First respondent**

Regarding internal communication and communication tools used in transmitting information to internal staff he was of the opinion that there needed to be more work done on their internal communication apparatus. Asked how they communicate with

internal publics, he explained that communication is often one-way and they often received complaints from staff members. The practitioner also explained that this was as a result of the near impossibility of asking everybody for ideas or what they think. He however said that, the PR department and the decision makers have the staff members at heart and would always come out with good decisions.

The means of communication are the Email system, the intranet, the traditional telephone system, outlook, the VRA newsletter publication and notice board.

- **Second respondent**

The second respondent was of the view that the unit was doing well in terms of internal communication but much more needed to be done. He said the unit is able to communicate timely and right information with collaboration with the HR department.

4.2.9 Contribution to Organisational Strategy and Performance

- **First respondent**

According to the first respondent PR creates good publicity on which organisations thrive. It's value and the practice at VRA is very strategic. He also, explained that they shape the "direction of the company" when they want to formulate strategies or undertake certain projects or activities. This is possible because of the relationship they have with the various publics which enables them to know customers' needs.

'I remember one professor called me and said, Sam you've brought revolution to the PR and communication at VRA. Now people can appreciate what VRA is about, this was not the case some four (4) or five (5) years back. It is a plus for us and now people even sympathize with us'

- **Second respondent**

The second respondent talked about the building and handling of relationships with stakeholders as one contribution of PR. He pointed out that, the image of the organisation is not in tatters in the face of the recent crises that had bedeviled the organisation in recent times regarding power generation in the country. He attributed this to the timely and strategic policies adopted by the communication unit and their ability to deliver the right messages at the right time and giving explanations on the operations of the organisation through the various media to the general public. He stated:

‘Identifying the public that is important at a given time, by building relationships and managing them; putting the organisation out there and by preventing unfavourable publicity’.

4.2.10 Current Image, Reputation and Competition

Asked on what their thoughts were on the current image and reputation of the organisation and whether it gives the company competitive edge over its competitors this is what the first respondent had to say:

- **First respondent**

‘It is one of a kind, when you’re in a crises . and you haven’t been able to solve the issue, no matter what you do, people will not see your good side, so what I’ll say is that apart from those who understand the sector so well, I believe that generally the image out there is the cause of dumsor’.

Concerning competition this is what he said:

‘The reality is that we still produce 75% of power in Ghana. So we’re still a very strong competitor. In fact, we’re still the strongest in the sector. IPPs (individual power producers) even depend on VRA to operate. They

depend on us for gas, crude oil, tanks and other facilities to operate. We still believe strongly that we're the leaders'

- **Second respondent**

The second respondent is of the view that, the unit has done well in terms of the image of the organisation, more especially now due to the crises that is facing the organisation concerning power generation. He stated that, they are always on their feet, explaining the operations of the organisation, when it started having issues with power generation. He said the unit has done well regarding the sustainability of the reputation of VRA.

4.2.11 Appreciation from Management and Colleagues.

When asked how management and colleagues appreciate the work of the unit, the head of communication unit stated that both management and colleagues really do appreciate their worth more especially in these time of crises. He stated that sometimes crises can be good because it makes management appreciate the efforts by workers.

- **First respondent**

'With VRA, now we do, look we can have more but I'll say anything from 60% up. We have people who believe and see the worth of the PR department especially when you're in a crises'.

- **Second respondent**

'Well on the scale of 100, I will say more than 70%, they are doing well, and they know their duties and are performing them efficiently'.

4.2.12 Challenges

The head of the unit had this to say when asked about the challenges of the department

‘Constraints, well I’ll say budget, people’s attitude towards work. If you can get your people up to speed and get people to develop the right attitude a lot of constraints can be taken away.

4.3 Analysis of Quantitative Data

Quantitative data was sourced from staff of VRA with a sample size of 60 respondents.

The responses from the questionnaire are analyzed, presented in percentages and in tables, graphs and charts below.

4.3.1 Gender

In analyzing the quantitative data, gender representation of respondent of the questionnaire for internal staff, are 36 (60%) out of 60 for females and 24 (40%) were males and they are indicated in the table below.

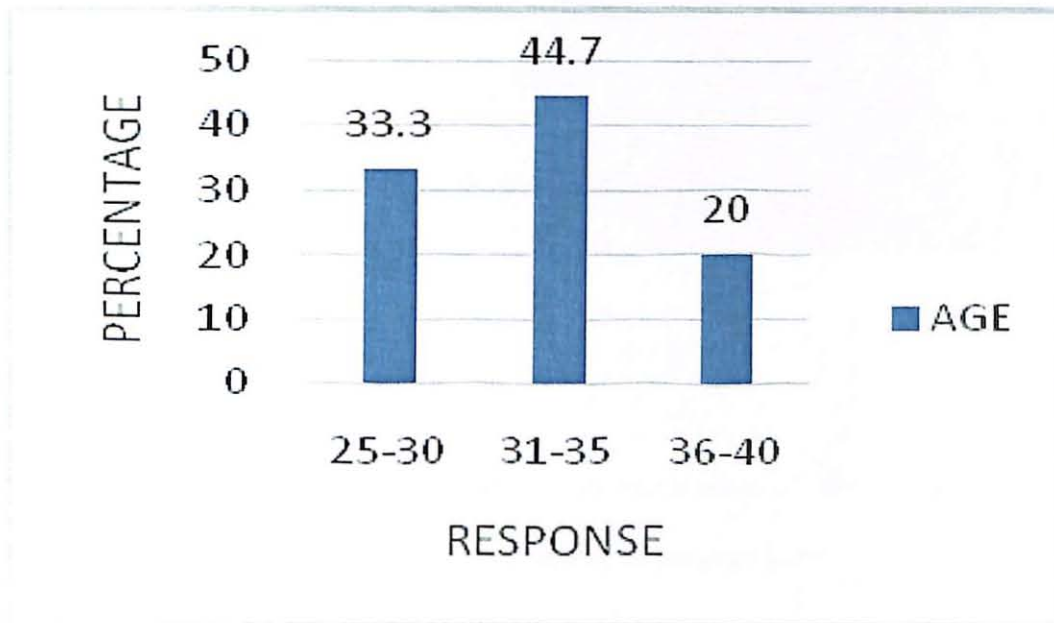
Table 1: Gender

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	36	60
Female	24	40
Total	60	100.0

4.3.2 Age

Regarding age of respondent, they are represented as 20 (33.3%) out of 60 for ages 25-30, 28 (44.7%) for 31-35, and 12 (22%) for ages 36-40. The figure below shows its representation in charts.

Figure 2: Age

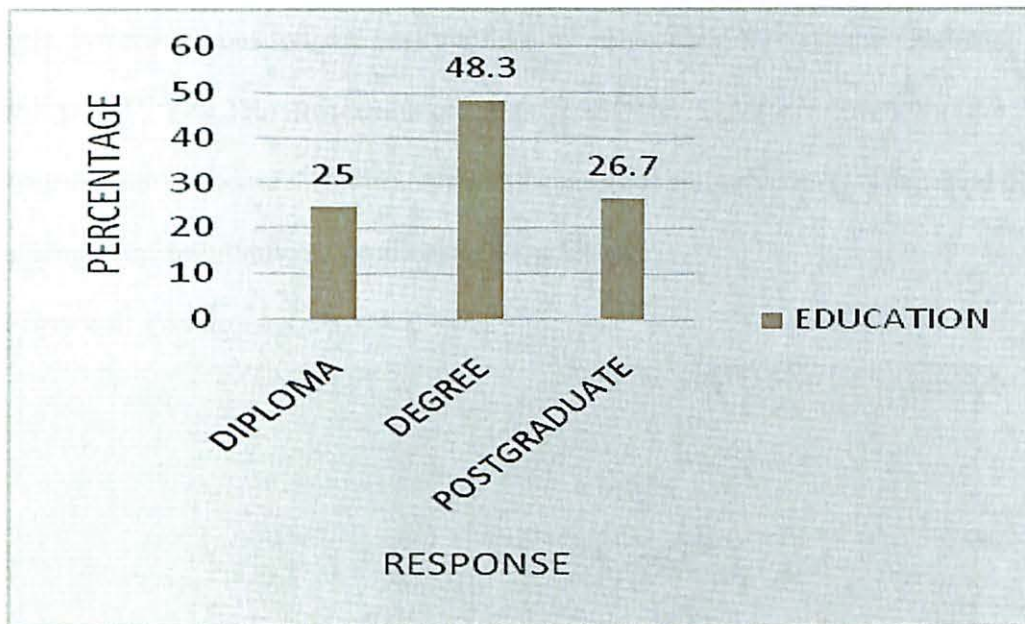


4.3.3 Education

On education, the representation of responses are as follows out of 60 respondents 15 (25%) are diploma holders, degree 29(48.3%), and 16 (26.7%) for post graduate holders.

The figure below shows the graphical presentation.

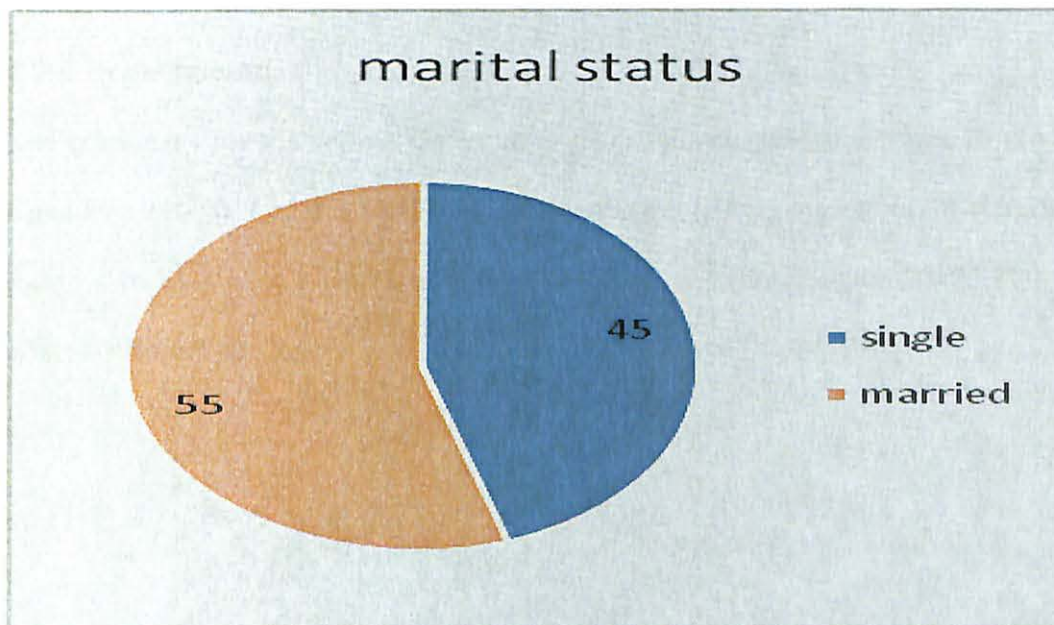
Figure 3: Education



4.3.4 Marital Status

Regarding marital status of respondents, responses were 27 (45.0%) as single and 33(55.0%) were married and it is represented in the pie chart below.

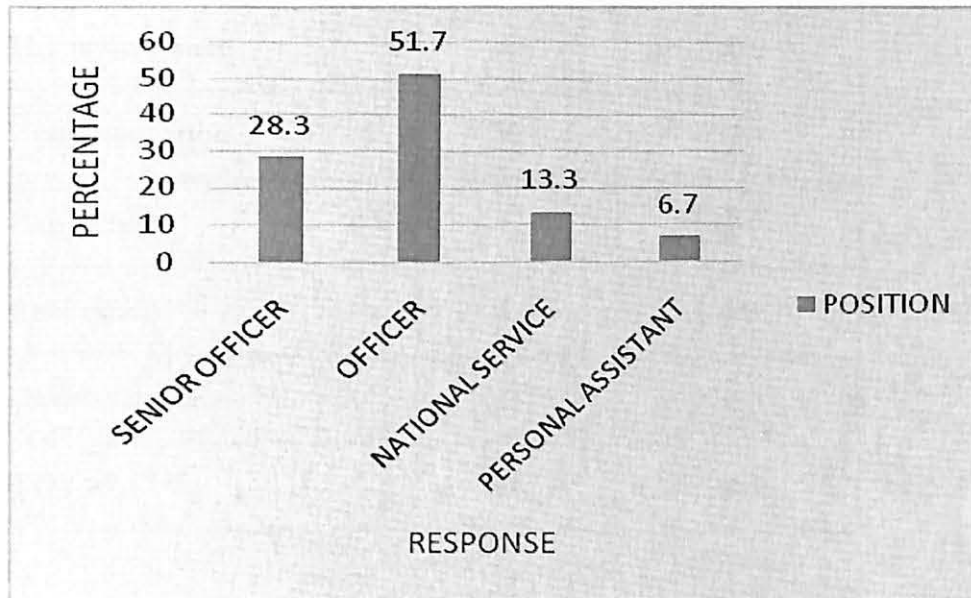
Figure 4: Marital Status



4.3.5 Position

In answering question on position held by respondent, the response gathered are as follows 17 (28.3%) for senior officers, 31 (51.7%) for officer level, 8 (13.3 %) for national service, and 4 (6.7%) representing personal assistance level. The figure below is a graph representation of positions of respondents

Figure 5: Position



4.3.6 Departments

The responses for the various departments are as follows, general services 10 (16.7%), finance 6 (10%). Legal 5 (8.3%), human resource 6 (10%), engineering 6 (10%), real estate 4 (6.7%), health service department 3 (5%), and communication 20 (33.3%) from a total of 60 respondents.

Table 2: Departments

Departments	Frequency	Percentage (%)
General service	10	16.7
Finance	6	10.0
Legal	5	8.3
Human resource	6	10.0
Communication	20	33.3
Engineering	6	10.0
Real estate	4	6.7
Health service	3	5
TOTAL	60	100.0

4.3.7 Awareness of Public Relations

Out of the 60 respondents, 60 (100%) stated their awareness of the PR unit.

Table 3: Awareness of Public Relations

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	60	100.0
No	0	0
Total	60	100.0

4.3.8 Assistance Sought

When asked for whether respondent had ever sought for assistance from the unit, the table below shows the responses in percentages: 12 (20%) representing the number who had never sought direct assistance from the unit and 48 (80 %) stated they have sought assistance from the unit.

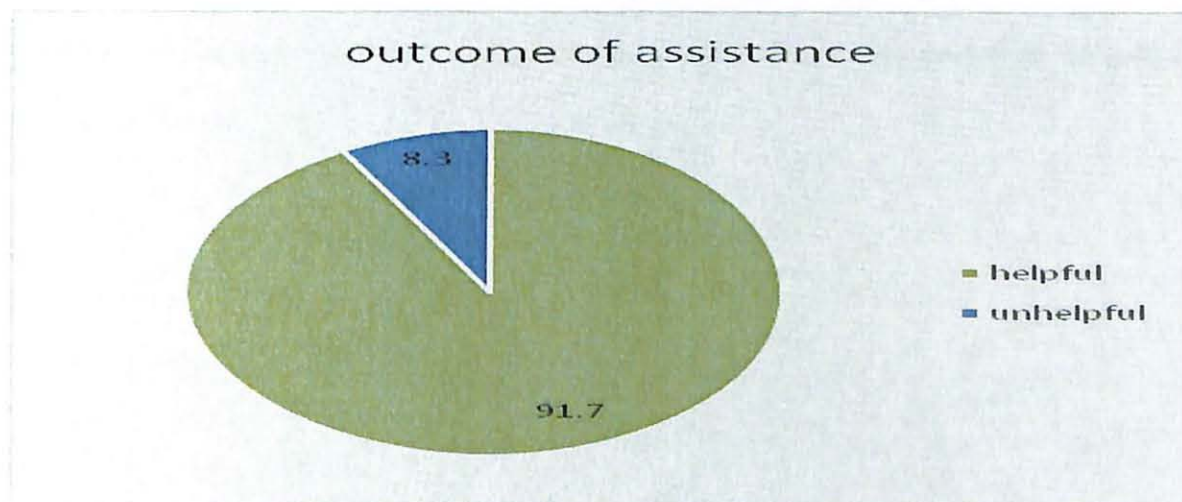
Table 4: Assistance Sought

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	48	80.0
No	12	20.0
Total	60	100.0

4.3.9 Outcome of Assistance

Responses from this close ended question are 55 (91.7%) stated as helpful assistance they sought from the PR unit and 5 (8.3%) stated assistance as unhelpful.

Figure 6: Outcome of Assistance



4.3.10 Relation with Management

When respondent were asked on the nature of relationship between them and management, the responses are represented in tabular form below. They were given the options to choose from. Responses are 20 (33.3%) for strictly business, 4 (6.7%) representing friendly and 36 (60%) for cordial relationship.

Table 5: Relation with Management

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strictly business	20	33.3
Friendly	4	6.7
Cordial	36	60.0
Total	60	100.0

4.3.11 Goals of Organisation

Respondent were asked to specify the goals of the organisation, the table below is the representation of responses. 47 (78.3 %) responded to the goals of the organisation as setting the standard for public sector excellence, 8 (13.3%) responded as providing quality service and 5 (8.3%) stated generation of electricity for the nation as the goal for the organisation.

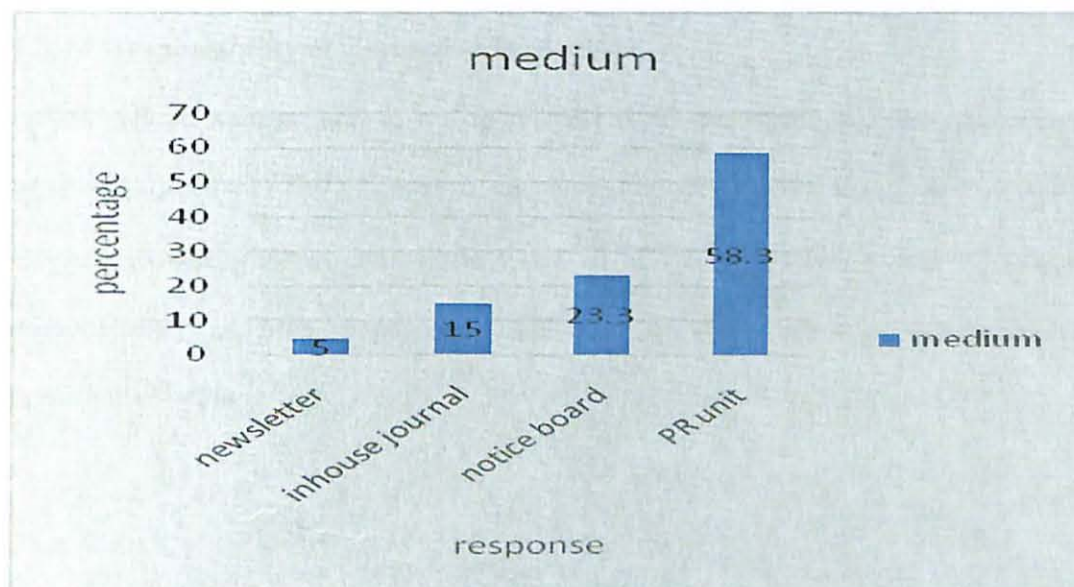
Table 6: Goals of Organisation

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Setting the standard	47	78.3
Providing quality service	8	13.3
Generate electricity	5	8.3
Total	60	100.0

4.3.12 Medium

When asked the medium with which they learnt of the goals of the organisation, respondents gave their responses as follows 3 (5%) from newsletter, in-house journal 9 (15%), notice board 14 (23.3%) and 35 (58.3%) for PR unit. The figure below shows the graphical representation of responses.

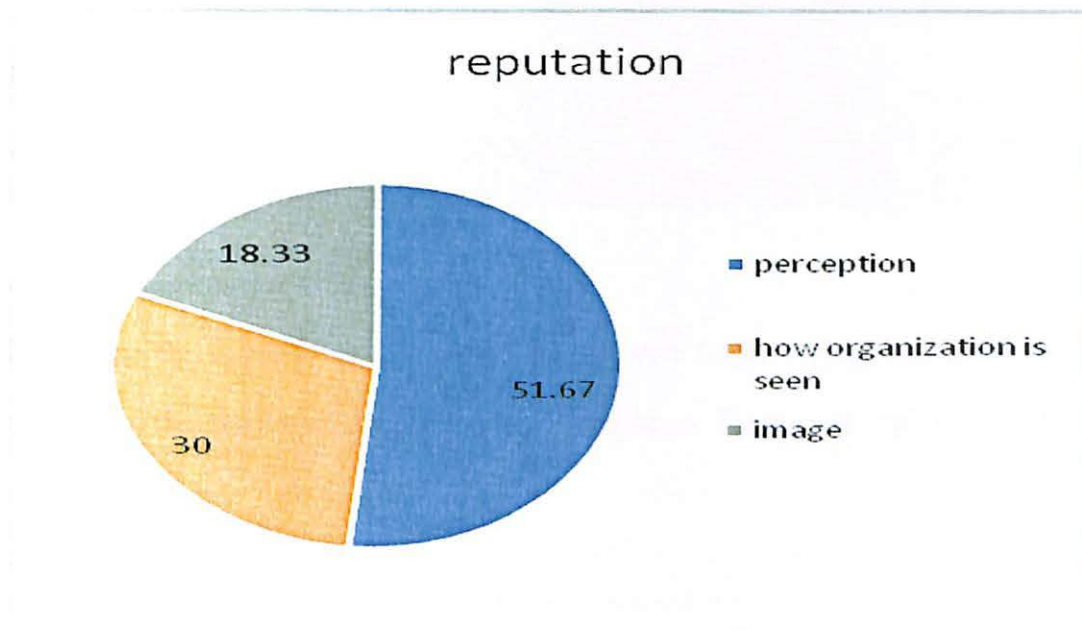
Figure 7: Medium



4.3.13 Understanding of Reputation

Respondent were asked to state what they understood by corporate reputation and the following were their response, 31 (51.7%) represents perception, 11 (18.3%) stated it as image and 18 (30%) gave their response as how an organisation is seen by customers. Responses are represented in the pie chart below.

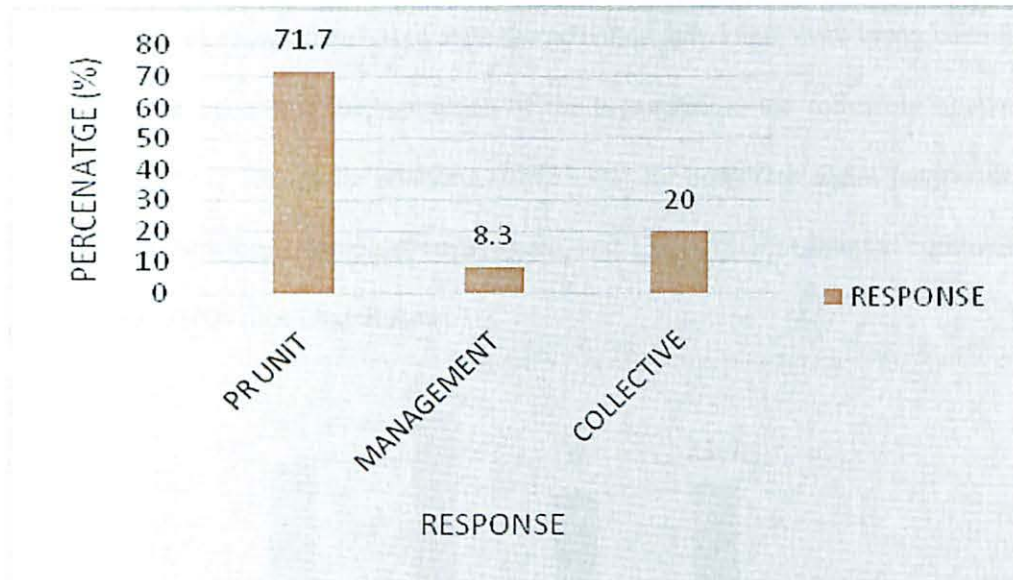
Figure 8: Understanding of Reputation



4.3.14 Responsibility of Reputation Promotion

Asked whose responsibility it was to promote reputation of the organisation, response were as follows 43 (71.7 %) stated it was the responsibility of PR unit, 5 (8.3%) stated it as the responsibility of management and 12 (20%) responded it was a collective responsibility of both management and PR unit. The responses are represented graphically below.

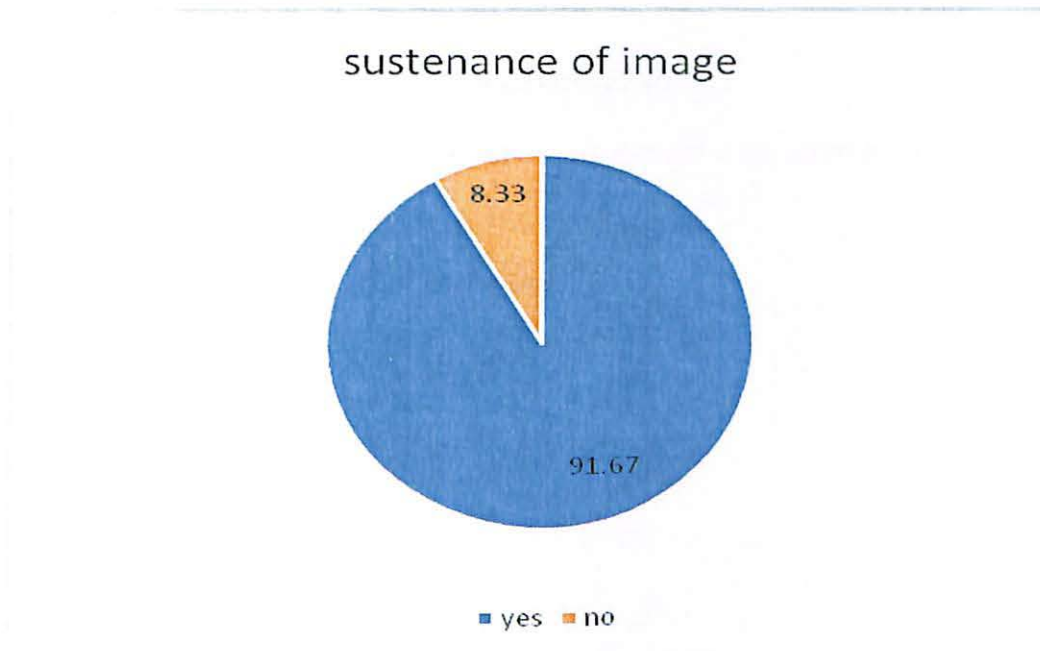
Figure 9: Responsibility of Reputation Promotion



4.3.15 Sustenance of Image

Regarding the sustainability of image, responses were 55 (91.7%) for YES and 5 (8.3%) responded that they were not performing to expectation. The responses are represented in the figure below.

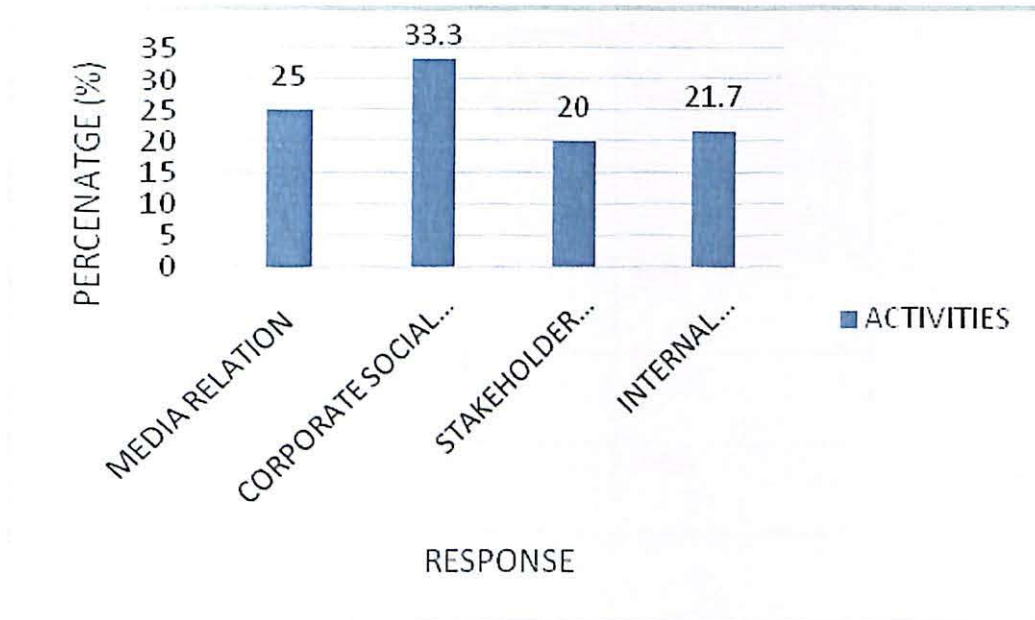
Figure 10: Sustenance of Image



4.3.16 Activities Undertaken

Respondent were again asked to state the activities they knew were being carried out by the unit that promotes the reputation of the organisation, the following answers were given 15 (25%) for media relations, 20 (33.3%) for corporate social responsibility, 12 (20%) representing stakeholder engagement, and 13 (21.7%) for internal communication.

Figure 11: Activities Undertaken



4.3.17 Can a Bad Reputation Affect an Organisation?

Regarding this close ended question, all responded in the affirmative.

Table 7: Can a Bad Reputation Affect an Organisation?

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	60	100.0
No	0	0
Total	60	100.0

4.3.18 Personal Contribution to Reputation Building

when asked to state how they can personally contribute to the organisation's image, responses given are as follows 30 (50%) for good customer service, 17 (28.3%) for coordination with other colleagues in order to be well informed on issues and 13 (21.7%) stated telling the truth to customers as ways to promote the image of the organisation.

The responses are represented in the table below

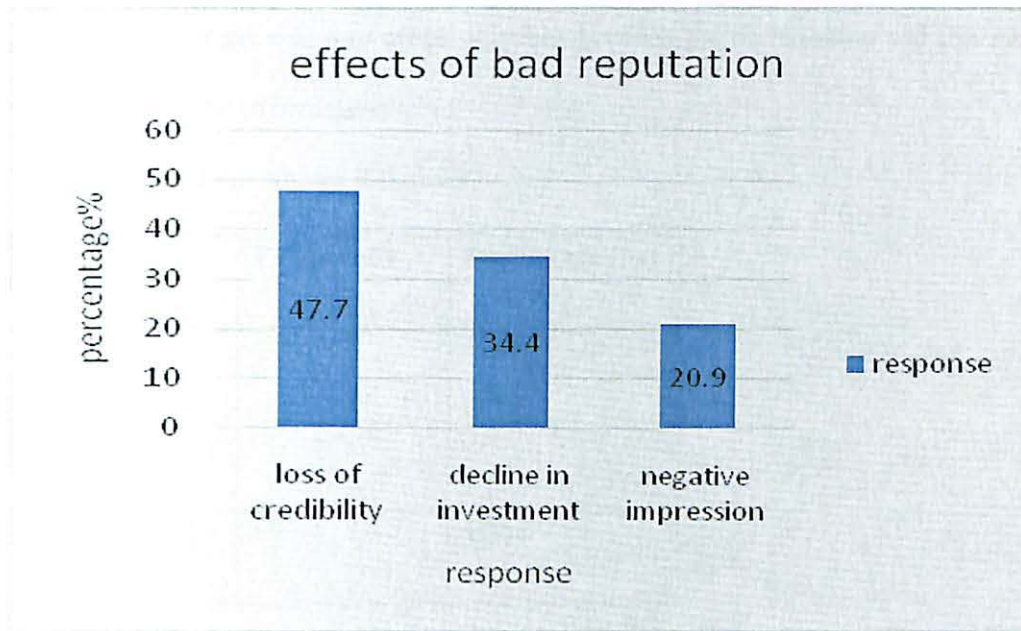
Table 8: Personal Contribution to Reputation Building

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Good customer service practice	30	50
Coordination with colleagues	17	28.3
Telling the truth	13	21.7
Total	60	100.0

4.3.19 Effect of Bad Reputation

On this open ended question, respondent were asked to give some of the effects of a bad reputation and the answers are represented below in tabular form. The representation are as follows 41 (47.7%) for loss of credibility and customer loyalty, 19 (31.4%) for decline in investment, and 18 (20.9%) for negative public image or impression.

Figure 12: Effect of Bad Reputation



4.3.20 Enhancing Image by Organisation

On what can be done to improve and enhance the image of the organisation the following were the responses 36 (60%) for maintaining a positive corporate behaviour, 19 (31.7%) for employee involvement in organisational issues and 5 (8.3%) for improved work ethics. The responses are represented in the table below.

Table 9: Enhancing Image by Organisation

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Maintaining a positive corporate behaviour	36	60.0
Employee involvement	19	31.7
Good work ethics	5	8.3
Total	60	100.0

4.3.21 Media Relations

On whether there was any media relations between the organisation and the media, all responded in the affirmative.

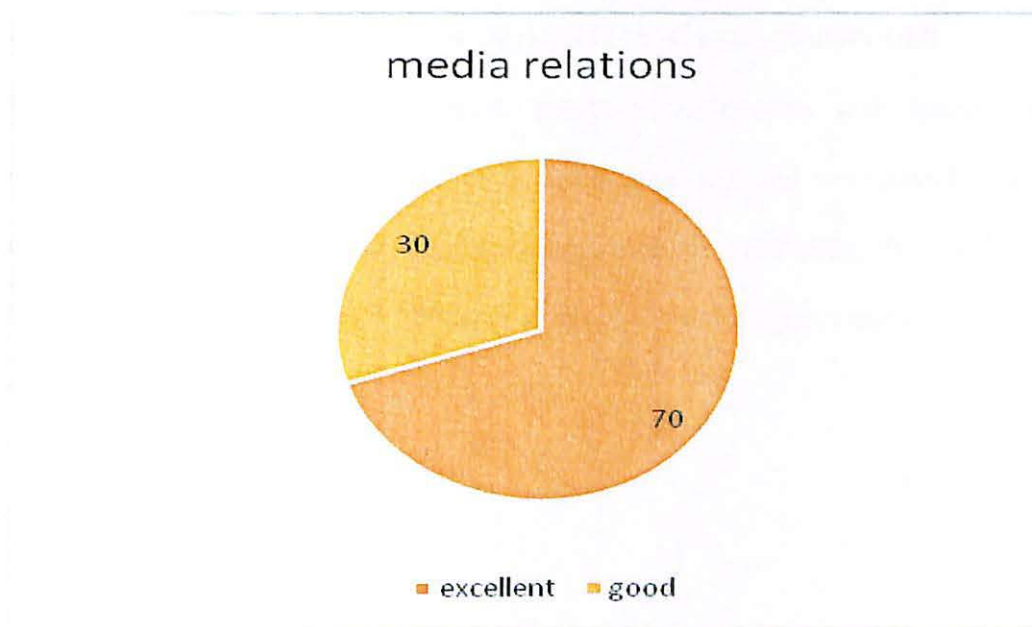
Table 10: Is there Media Relations?

Reasons	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	60	100.0
No	0	0.0
Total	60	100.0

4.3.22 What is the Relationship between Media and VRA?

Regarding relations with media, all respondents were asked to give their opinion, 42 (70%) stated media relations were excellent while 18 (30%) stated it as good.

Figure 13: What is the Relationship between Media and VRA?



4.3.23 Do You Have Any Academic Qualification in Communication?

In answering the questionnaire, respondents were asked whether they had academic qualification in communication and the responses are represented in the pie chart below.

20 (33.3%) stated yes, and 40 (66.7%) stated no as their answer

Figure 14: Do You Have Any Academic Qualification in Communication?



4.3.24 How Long Have You Been Working In the Communication Unit

From the response in the previous questions, respondents with qualification in communication happen to be in the communication unit and were asked to give the duration of working in the department, the responses are 2 (10%) for 10years, 1 (5%) for 5years, 3 (15%) for 4years, 5 (25%) for 3years, 8 (40%) for 2 years and 1 (5%) for 1 year out of 20 responses.

Table 11: How Long Have You Been Working In the Communication Unit

years	frequency	Percentage (%)
4	3	15
2	8	40
3	5	25
10	2	10
1	1	5
5	1	5
total	20	100.0

4.3.25 Do You Think the Roles of the Unit Need To Be Reviewed?

When respondents from the communication unit were asked whether the roles of the unit need to be reviewed, they all responded in the negative. The responses are represented in a tabular form in the figure below.

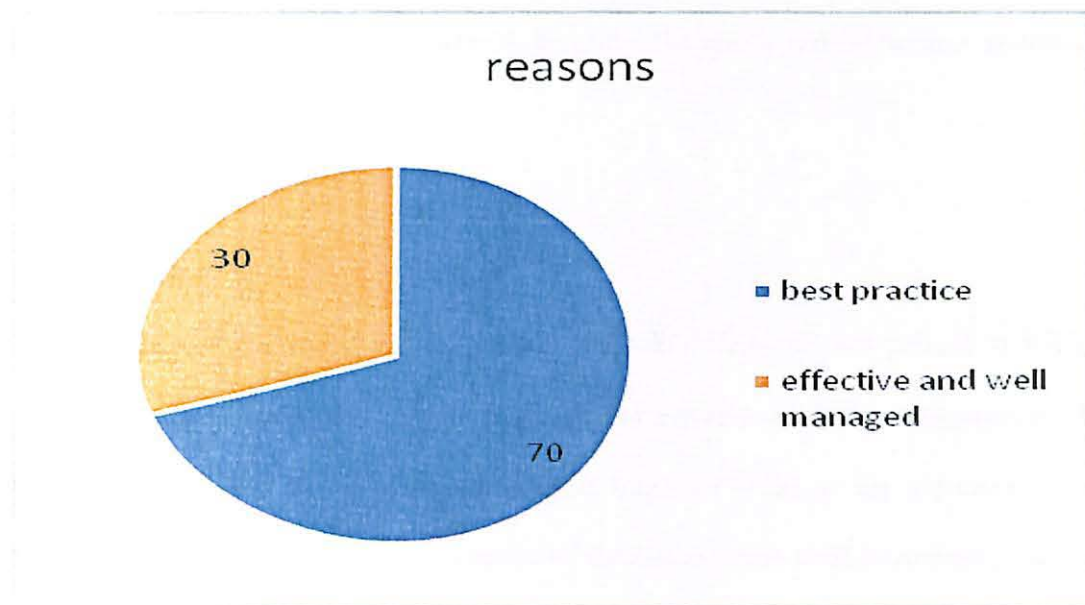
Table 12: Do you think the roles of the unit need to be reviewed?

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	0	0
No	20	100.0
Total	20	100.0

4.3.26 Reasons

When they were asked to provide reasons for their answer 14 (70%) stated that the roles and duties being performed by the unit are of best practice, and 6 (30%) stated the unit was effective and well managed. The figure below represents the responses.

Figure 15: Reasons



4.3.28 Is Public Relations a Management Function?

On this close ended question of whether PR was a management function, all respondents responded in the affirmative and they are represented in the table below.

Table 13: Is Public Relations a Management Function

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	20	100
No	0	0
Total	20	100.0

CHAPTER FIVE
SUMMARY, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND
SUGGESTIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter contains the summary of the study, the results and discussion, conclusion and recommendation/suggestions.

5.2 Summary

The purpose of the study was to find out how Public Relations was utilized at VRA to promote and sustain the corporate image and reputation of the organisation. The background of the study, review of relevant literature based on the objectives of the study, research questions and description of the methodology used have been presented. The mixed method was used. In-depth interview was conducted with the Head of the Corporate Communication unit and the Head of Human Resource unit. Questionnaires were also disseminated to the staff of the communication unit and other staff in various department. Transcripts of data from the interview were presented. Both qualitative and quantitative data were analyzed using the characteristics of an excellent PR department proposed by Grunig et al (2002) at the different levels in the organisation in the literature reviewed. And also the impression management theory, the system theory and convergence theory which are the theoretical underpinnings of the study. It further highlights the conclusions of the study and offers suggestions based on the interpretation of the results.

5.3 Results and Discussion

5.3.1 Programme Level of Public Relations at Volta River Authority (VRA)

The literature reviewed showed that Public Relations can make a contribution to the organisation if it is practiced strategically and seen as making a contribution to strategic planning. According to Steyn and Puth (2000), in order to come up with a general organisational strategy all functions should take part in the formulation and implementation of the strategy.

Findings show that the communication unit at VRA is managed strategically. Programmes are developed strategically to meet a specific public. The head of the department takes part in strategy formulation. Grunig (2011) suggested tools to help the strategic manager in their operations.

Most of these tools were found in Public Relations practiced by the communication unit of the organisation. These are: environmental scanning, identification of stakeholders, issues management evaluating Public Relations programmes, relationship cultivation strategies and managing reputation.

5.3.2 Departmental Level

At the department level, all communication functions are performed by the communication unit at VRA. Thus at the departmental level Public Relations functions are integrated in one department as recommended by the excellence study of Grunig et al (2002). This therefore allows for maximum concentration and allows the moving of resources from one strategic public to another and also the promotion of a coordinated, planned and consistent information to their various publics.

It should be noted that, the department is independent and the head of the unit is a trained communication person.

Both the two-way symmetrical and the two-way asymmetrical models of communication are practised in VRA with feedback affecting strategy some of the time. The excellence theory upholds the two-way symmetrical model of communication as the ideal form of communication but recognises that most companies operate a mix method of both the two-way symmetrical and the two-way asymmetrical model.

The literature suggests that at the departmental level the most senior PR team member must play a managerial role and not be headed by a technician. This is because Public Relations must be represented at board meetings and must be involved in strategy and policy. This is essential to public relations being included in strategic management. For PR to be involved in strategy making, the literature indicates that the most senior PR practitioner should be part of the decision makers if not, other non-PR personnel will take decisions for the communication department. Findings indicate that the head of the unit VRA play managerial roles.

Most of the staff at the unit are trained communication personnel and they periodically take refresher courses with the Institute of Public Relations (IPR), Ghana. The head of the unit and almost all the staff of the unit had knowledge of the symmetrical model. This is as a result of their formal education in PR and other related communication discipline and they all appreciated the feedback system. According to the literature on the excellence study, the head of the PR function or other practitioners in the department must have the requisite knowledge for a strategic role, acquired through education.

5.3.3 Organisational Level

The head of the communication unit reports directly to the CEO and therefore wields influence in the dominant coalition. On internal communication, both one-way and two way communication are adopted, but dominated by the one-way model. Internal stakeholders are a part of the Public Relations effort. Internal stakeholders are as vital as the external stakeholders or may be even more important. As ambassadors of the organisation, their loyalty is essential for the realization of the organisational mission and goals. This brings to the fore the importance of the convergence theory. However the structure is to a certain degree organic: employees working together, face-to-face communication both formally and informal and a network of teams with team members acknowledging teams.

5.3.4 Role of Public Relations

The communication department of VRA played the boundary spanning role as described in the systems theory. They were referred to as the mouthpiece, eyes and ears of the organisation. Being the eyes on the ground refers to the strategic role of environmental scanning. According to the literature, surveying and monitoring the environment to identify threats and opportunities is a way for Public Relations to contribute to organisational strategy and organisational effectiveness and excellence (Steyn and Puth, 2000). They bring information and views of the public to the organisation which helps in policy making and also communicate the organisation's policies to the public.

Thus they serve as the boundary spanners. VRA can be said to operate an open system where there is exchange of information between the organisation and the public. From the literature we learn that for an organisation to survive and grow it needs permeable membranes that allow the exchange of information.

5.3.5 The Value of Public Relations

Literature indicates that the importance or value attached to Public Relations in the dominant coalition will determine if it is made a line function or it is made subordinate to other functions. The function should play a managerial role and the most senior Public Relations practitioner should be part of management. It further suggests that Public Relations in any organisation should be recognised for the strategic role it plays rather than for its message delivery role. Public Relations is also said to have value when its programmes affect the cognitions, attitudes and behaviours of stakeholders as explained in the Impression management theory.

The results of this study have revealed that Public Relations in VRA is appreciated and valued as it is treated as a line function and plays a managerial role. This is because practitioners have been able to demonstrate that its programmes have positive effect on the attitudes and behaviours of the stakeholders and plays a role in strategy formulation. By admission, the head of the unit and his team evaluate programmes and tailor programmes for specific stakeholders; they are also able to prove that their programmes have an effect on the stakeholders. The research concludes that Public Relations is valued in VRA because it adds value to organisation particularly regarding image and reputation building.

5.4 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to find out if Public Relations practiced at Volta River Authority performs a strategic managerial role in the sustaining the image and reputation of the organisation. To achieve this purpose, the research employed the mixed method research methodology and the impression management theory, system theory and the

convergence theory. The study also outlined some objectives to guide the research process:

- (a) To find out the nature of Public Relations practised in VRA
- (b) To study the roles and functions of PR in a government institution such as VRA and find out the importance attached to it
- (c) To ascertain how VRA's management is carrying out public relations activities that contributes and enhance the image and reputation of the organisation
- d) To identify the perception of internal staff of VRA regarding the reputation of the organisation

A literature review was done to lay the ground regarding the requirements or characteristics that needed to be present in order for Public Relations to make any contribution in an organisation. Therefore, to draw conclusions regarding the contribution of Public Relations in sustaining the image and reputation in VRA, the empirical findings were compared to the literature.

From the findings, Public Relations in Volta River Authority can be said to play a strategic managerial role and takes part in strategic decision making. Public Relations through the corporate communication department plays an integral role in policy making. Although communication internally is more of one-way, external communication is both two-way symmetrical and two-way asymmetrical. (Advocacy and dialogical)

There is an impressive understanding, knowledge, appreciation and value of Public Relations amongst staff members of VRA. Findings from interview with the Head of human resource and responses from questionnaires disseminated indicated that the various departments expected Public Relations to play a managerial role and not a

technician role. In performing its function of sustaining the image and reputation of the organisation, the department builds and manages relationships with various stakeholders, identifies strategic publics, handles internal and external communication, undertake corporate social responsibilities, plays the boundary spanning role, adopts positive relationship with the media and serves as the link between the organisation and the public.

It can also be concluded from the findings that, the internal staff believes VRA has a positive reputation and image and this is due to the strategic role and function performed by the communication unit. Both staff and management are again of the view that, the organisation cannot function successfully without a good image and reputation. Staff indicated from the study that a bad reputation has the effect of damaging investor relations, customer loyalty and employee satisfaction. They also mentioned ways they can contribute to enhance the image and reputation of the organisation. These include good customer service practice, coordination with colleagues and always telling the truth as it is to its customers. This indicates that the employees of the organisation are aware of the role they can play in sustaining the image and reputation of VRA. The organisation is again benefitting from its present positive image by having the trust of its internal publics as their perception on the role being played by the Public Relations unit in projecting the image and reputation of the organisation is positive.

The corporate communication unit is independent of all other departments. The structure is therefore supportive as Public Relations is not made to be subservient to other professions making it possible for it to be heard at the highest level because it has access to top management.

The results of this study indicate that Public Relations through the corporate communication department of VRA contributes to organisational effectiveness and excellence as its role is strategic and managerial. This in turn, enables the unit to perform its role in sustaining image and reputation of the organisation. Being strategic and managerial, the unit is able to perform its counselling function to management.

It must be noted that due to coordination between the various departments in the organisation regarding whose responsibility it was to communicate to external publics and stakeholders, the unit is able to control the impression held by various stakeholders as posited in the Impression management theory discussed in chapter two.

By acting as a boundary spanner and managing stakeholder relationships, Public Relations in VRA contributes to organisational excellence and effectiveness as it plays strategic managerial roles. The reason why Public Relations under the corporate communication department plays a managerial role is because both management and practitioners understand strategic Public Relations and what it involves. Their understanding of Public Relations has moved beyond the early stages when it was just about publicity and public information. Public relations is generally seen as a tool to facilitate communication between the organisation and its stakeholders.

It was also clear Public Relations was a priority department in the organisation as internal staff and management was of the view that, the unit utilized best practices as far as reputation of the organisation is concerned. There was a belief or feeling that public relations functions sometimes crossed over with other departments but this was generally seen as unavoidable due to the fact that it was the eyes and ears of VRA and also due to the expansive role of the department.

Generally it was believed that the organisations reputation and image was enhanced through a good corporate communication unit. There is little doubt that VRA will continue to utilize public relations as a tool to build and manage relationships with its important stakeholders, by giving out needed information concerning its operations, and most importantly, to continue to work tirelessly to uphold, maintain and sustain the corporate image and reputation of the organisation.

5.5 Suggestions

As much as the practice of Public Relations in VRA is strategic, and enjoys a supportive structure, much more needs to be done by the Unit regarding reputation management. This is due to the fact that there is little or almost no competition from other players in the power generation industry. Although the grounds needed to perform excellently is fertile, the units rests on its past laurels. With time when the Individual Power Producers (IPPs) solidifies its footings in the industry, customer loyalty will eventually wane. Regarding resources and logistics, management should continue to make provisions for the unit and they should continue to sponsor staff in periodic professional training. Also for public relations to be a useful tool, regular standards of evaluation must be employed by the organisation to find how well it is performing.

5.6 Suggestion for Future Studies

Due to time, human and financial constraint, the sample size was limited to 60 staff of the organisation. Therefore further studies can be conducted using a larger sample size and also involve the external publics as well.

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APPENDICE

APPENDIX A

A QUESTION GUIDE FOR INTERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am a student of Ghana Institute of Journalism undertaking a research on the topic 'The Role of Public Relations in Building a Sustainable corporate image and reputation'.

I would be very grateful if you will spend few minutes of your time to grant me an interview. The interview will help me obtain the required information for my study.

The information given would be used solely for academic purpose.

Thank you.

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PR PRACTITIONERS

1. What is your understanding of public relations?
2. How many members make up the corporate communication unit and what is the major role?
3. Would you rate public relations as a management function in this organisation?
4. How would you measure the effectiveness of the management's contribution to corporate image and reputation building?
5. What achievement(s) has the unit made as far as organisational reputation is concerned?
6. Has there been any image and reputation problem? And how did the organisation handle it?
7. How would you describe the present image and reputation of the organisation? Does it give the organisation a competitive edge?

8. Do you think the present image and reputation of the organisation has affected the organisation in anyway whether positive or negative?
9. Based on your understanding of public relations do you think it exists in your organisation? Explain.
10. What are some of the public relations activities undertaken by the organisation which has contributed to the reputation of the organisation?
11. How can PR be made much more effective in your opinion?
12. Would you say the Public Relations practiced is strategic? Does it add value to the organisation in general? Briefly explain.
13. Do you think the top management team has the same understanding of what PR is as you do?
14. What do you expect from management and other employees in enhancing the image of the organisation?
15. To whom does the most senior public relations practitioner report to?
16. Who makes PR policies and strategies? And who is held accountable?
17. In your opinion is formal education in public relations/communication related discipline necessary for one to be a PR/communication practitioner? Explain.
18. What are the constraints that you see in carrying out your job?
19. Would you say other people in the organisation appreciate and see the value of the public relations profession? Explain.
20. How does your department communicate with internal publics?
21. How does management relate to staff? And what is the role undertaken by the communication unit in fostering a cordial/friendly relationship between management and staff?
22. With your knowledge in PR is communication symmetrical or asymmetrical in the organisation?

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR NON PR PRACTITIONERS

1. What is your understanding of Public Relations?
2. What do you think are the roles and functions of the unit?
3. Would you say management interferes in the job of the Public Relations Practitioners or are they left to do their job as professionals who know what they are doing?
4. In your opinion is the most senior Public Relations practitioner in the organisation a part of the management team? Elaborate.
5. In your opinion is formal education in public relations necessary for one to be a PR practitioner? Explain.
6. How would you describe the image and reputation of VRA?
7. How has the communication unit contributed to the image and reputation of the organisation?
8. How would you rate the performance of the communication unit?
9. Is the unit doing well in terms of internal communication?
10. What would you suggest that the PR departments should do to make a significant contribution to the organisation?