

GHANA INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM
FACULTY OF PUBLIC RELATIONS, MARKETING AND ADVERTISING
ASSESSING PUBLIC RELATIONS AND MARKETING STRATEGIES IN A
PANDEMIC
(A CASE OF FRANKO TRADING ENTERPRISE)

BY

JACKSON FORDJOUR

MAPR19114

A LONG ESSAY SUBMITTED TO THE GHANA INSTITUTE OF
JOURNALISM
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF A
MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

SUPERVISOR: DR. MODESTUS FOSU

SEPTEMBER, 2020.

STUDENT’S DECLARATION

I do hereby declare that the work presented is the result of my own effort, original research and findings and that no part of it has been presented for another degree or diploma in this University or elsewhere. All references to other people’s work have been duly acknowledged. I am therefore to be held responsible for any error that might be detected in this project work.

(Candidate’s signature)

DATE

.....

..... **SEPTEMBER, 2020**

JACKSON FORDJOUR

INDEX NUMBER: MAPR19114

SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation of this long essay was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for the supervision of long essays as laid down by the Ghana Institute of Journalism.

(Supervisor's signature)

DATE

.....

..... **SEPTEMBER, 2020**

DR. MODESTUS FOSU

DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to the Almighty God for His direction and His help throughout my life in this Institution and also for inspiring confidence in me to go through with a positive zeal.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank the Almighty God for aiding me to complete this study successfully. My sincere appreciation also goes to my supervisor, Dr. Modestus Fosu for all the patience and time he had for me throughout my work regardless of his busy schedule. His guidance and pieces of advice were very helpful and contributed tremendously to the completion of this long essay.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

STUDENT’S DECLARATION	ii
SUPERVISOR’S DECLARATION	iii
DEDICATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	viii
ABSTRACT	ix
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT	3
1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE	4
1.3 RESEARCH QUESTION	4
1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY	4
1.5 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY	5
CHAPTER TWO	6
LITERATURE REVIEW	6
2.0 MARKETING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS	6
2.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	7
2.1.1 Situational Crisis Communication Theory	7
2.1.2 The theory and the present study	9
2.2 RELATED STUDIES	10
CHAPTER THREE	13
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	13
3.0 RESEARCH METHOD	13
3.1 STUDY POPULATION	13
3.1.1 Sample and Sampling Technique	13
3.1.2 Sources of Data	15

3.1.3 Data Collections Procedure	15
CHAPTER FOUR.....	17
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION	17
4.0 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY TO KNOWLEDGE	17
4.1 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION.....	17
4.2 RESEARCHER’S REFLECTIONS.....	18
4.3 RECOMMENDATION	19
REFERENCES	20

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

COVID-19 - Corona Virus

MPR - Marketing Public Relations

PR - Public Relations

PRSA - Public Relations Society of America

SCCT - Situational Crisis Communication Theory

SMEs - Small and Medium Enterprises

ABSTRACT

SMEs in periods of prolonged economic crisis may suffer disproportionately from economic downturns because of their limited financial resources and dependence on banks' lending, paying such high interest rates. The World Bank (2020) findings reveal that Sub-Saharan Africa has experienced its first major economic recession in the last 25 years as a result of the impact of the COVID-19. For this reason, this study sought to assess PR and marketing strategies which can help Franko Trading Enterprise thrive in a pandemic. The study employed a quantitative approach to conduct the research. The findings of the study indicate that businesses increasingly turn to new and/or alternative methods such as social media and telemarketing to increase their competitiveness. This therefore suggests that assessing the PR and marketing strategies SMEs use during a pandemic was essential to both academia and business alike.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In today's turbulent business environment, firms experience complex crisis events involving large-scale of ecological disasters, dramatic political and social changes and severe economic disruptions (Shrivastava, 1993: Hong, Huang and Li, 2012). To deal with these disruptive events, firms need to take timely and effective responses, i.e., crisis management, for their survival and growth (Drummond, 2004: Hong, Huang and Li, 2012). Generally, Hong, Huang and Li (2012) assert that crisis is an unexpected and negative-orientated event, which has the potential to lead to huge negative consequence. Herbane (2010) notes that small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are important for wealth-creation and distribution in current global market in both developed and developing countries. However, Herbane (2010) argues that crisis management mechanisms of SMEs have not been adequately investigated.

The survival of SMEs has been the focus of a number of recent reports in Ghana, which call for new strategic directions if SMEs wish to sustain their competitiveness and financial success in the future (Ohene-Konadu, 2008). Keskin (2006) notes in Mahmoud (2011) that SMEs are vital in most economies including Ghana in that they contribute a lot in terms of GDP and employment. In the Ghanaian economy in particular, SMEs have been identified as the catalyst for the economic growth of the country as they make major contributions to employment generation and poverty reduction (Abor and Beikpe, 2005: Mahmoud, 2011). Thus, the SME sector is regarded in certain situations as a valve for absorbing the teeming unemployed youth in the Ghanaian economy (Mensah, 2004: Mahmoud, 2011).

The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) (2020) asserts that PR helps our complex, pluralistic society to reach decisions and function more effectively by contributing to mutual

understanding among groups and institutions. It serves to bring private and public policies into harmony. Dzisi and Ofori (2014) insist that in the current competitive business environment, marketing can be seen as a matrix of business activities organized to plan, produce, price, promote, distribute goods, service, and ideas for the satisfaction of relevant customers and clients.

This therefore indicates that adopting these two (2) concepts strategically can help SMEs thrive in the face of a pandemic. In recent years, these enterprises are continuously being given increasing policy attention, particularly in third world countries partly because of growing disappointment with results of development strategies focusing on large scale capital intensive and high import dependent industrial plants (Taiwo, Ayodeji and Yusuf, 2012).

Even in the face of Koutroumanis' (2011) advice that small business leaders to use social networks such as LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter to filter marketing strategies and retain customers, other challenges such as high cost of internet data and gadgets such as smartphones are impeding factors which prevents SMEs from adopting this strategy. This instance again adds to why SMEs should approach doing business in a pandemic with science and data.

In the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, the World Bank (2020) reports that there has been a huge strain on organization and that SMEs are among the sectors badly affected because of their size. For this reason, this study will attempt assessing PR and marketing strategies which can help SMEs in the informal gadget sector thrive in a pandemic. The approach to this study will be a desk research or long essay which will address the research questions posed from literature reviewed.

1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

According to the World Bank (2020) Sub-Saharan Africa has experienced its first major economic recession in the last 25 years as a result of the impact of the Corona Virus (COVID-19) on business. Economic growth predicted to decline sharply by up to -5.1% between 2019 and 2020 as a result of COVID-19 (World Bank, 2020). Faced with uncertainty about the future, many firms are responding to recession by adapting their marketing strategy to change consumer behavior (Bouey, 2020).

In appreciating the role of PR in business, Lizarraga (2010) notes that in order to gain brand recognition building a positive corporate image is an essential feature. Yeo and Youssef (2010) in line with this argument asserts that a good corporate image could present a source of competitive advantage. This assertion is made in the light of the claim that it is hard to replicate the corporate image that can only be created over a long time. Besides corporate image creates consumer trust and deters competitors from entering the market (Yeo and Youssef, 2010).

With hindsight of the havoc COVID-19 pandemic wrecked as well as its resulting economic implication, it is evident from the literature that businesses especially SMEs are in need of response strategies to help them stay afloat. Even though there has been several studies conduct to discuss the impact of economic crises on SMEs (eg. Soinen, Puumalainen, Sjögrén and Syrjä (2012) and Bourletidis and Triantafyllopoulos (2014), majority of these studies have been in different dispensations. Also, lack of recency is another essential factor which warrants the carrying out of this study. With regard to the phenomenon on a specific SME sector such as Franko Trading Enterprise (Franko Phones), there appears to be no work done in this regard. To this end, this study anticipates filling the gap of providing Franko Phones with PR and marketing strategies which will help them thrive. This is essential as these businesses play a pivotal role in the economy.

1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The overarching aim of this study is to identify and understand the PR and marketing strategies Franko Phones could adopt during the COVID-19 pandemic. In an attempt to carry out the study, the researcher set the following specific objectives:

1. To find out PR strategies Franko Phones could adopt during the COVID-19 pandemic to remain viable in business.
2. To find marketing strategies Franko Phones could adopt during the COVID-19 pandemic to remain viable in business.
3. To ascertain factor(s) affecting PR and marketing strategies employed by Franko Phones during the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTION

In line with the objectives set, the researcher also formulated the following research questions in line with the set objectives.

1. What PR strategies could Franko Phones could adopt during the COVID-19 pandemic to remain viable in business?
2. What marketing could strategies Franko Phones adopt during the COVID-19 pandemic to remain viable in business?
3. What factor(s) affect PR and marketing strategies employed by Franko Phones during the COVID-19 pandemic?

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The principal relevance of this study is that it will become an important source of acquiring information on PR and marketing strategies during a pandemic. In this regard, this study

visualises becoming a relevant material to help SMEs thrive in crisis situations such as a pandemic. In sum, the significance of this paper lies within the paper's tendency to make relevant marketing and PR strategies that can be used by organizations to mitigate crisis situations.

1.5 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

This paper will comprise four (4) chapters. The first chapter will be the opening part of the paper and will include a background to the study, problem statement, research objectives, among other salient sections. The next chapter will then bother on the reviewing of literature. This chapter will discuss literature relevant to the study as well as drawing on empirical studies to guide this study. The next chapter will covers discuss the research methodology this study will adopt. The fourth chapter gives findings of the study, summary and conclusion to the study primarily. This will then extend to the recommendations made by this study as well as reflections from the researcher.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 MARKETING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

In research, Papasolomou, Thrassou, Vrontis and Sabova (2014) espouse the view that the struggle for integration of the promotional tools into business has not been easy, partly due to the confusion and debate between the marketing and PR disciplines. In the past, marketers had treated PR simply as part of the marketing mix. Even though marketing and PR are essential, marketing literature usually subsumes PR as a function under marketing thereby gaining recognition (Grunig, 1992: Papasolomou et al., 2014). Many marketing academics, including Kotler (1988), McDaniel (1979), and Schwartz (1982), in their various writings have made a number of attempts to subsume public relations activity under marketing (Papasolomou et al., 2014).

Papasolomou et al. (2014) goes to further point out that Kotler (1988) proposed that among these variables, that PR should be conceived as a part of marketing in the performance of its communication role.

Papasolomou et al. (2014) once again assert that, PR-inclined academics, such as Grunig (1992), suggest that the PR and marketing functions, as structured within an organisation, have different missions to fulfil and therefore appeal to different paradigms or models of the organisation's social environment and to communications systems that are designed and utilised in that environment. According to Grunig and Grunig (2013), marketing managers tend to elevate marketing activities to a dominant position and marketing is treated as a company's most important commitment. Within this organisational framework, PR activities are not seen as an equal partner with marketing, but as a technical function, a set of tasks designed to assist the marketing function in a direct way (Grunig and Grunig, 2013). The

PRSA which represents the views of many PR practitioners and academics contended that PR fulfilled many organisational functions, with marketing only being one of these (Rose & Miller, 1994; Papasolomou et al., 2014). This debate created a tendency for PR and marketing to be seen as complementary and converging disciplines, both in academia and in the business world, a tendency that gradually led to the emergence and growth of the concept of Marketing Public Relations (MPR) (Papasolomou et al., 2014).

Harris and Whalen (2006) notes in Papasolomou, Kitchen and Panopoulos (2013) the concept of MPR was coined in the 1980s referring to it as the use of PR and marketing strategies and tactics to achieve corporate objectives. Giannini (2010) for instance observes that MPR has the potential to enhance the visibility of products and organisations, inform stakeholders in relation to issues that are critical to the organisation, influence public opinion favourably towards the organisation, as well as encourage the trial of products and increased usage. This concept has evolved overtime to diffuse into all sort of organizational structures so much that SMEs can take advantage of it to thrive especially in the face of a pandemic. In relation to this study, a synergy of these two concepts will help Franko Phones benefit from the advantages MPR presents to businesses. This is essential especially as the literature emphasize the disadvantage SMEs have suffered due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1.1 Situational Crisis Communication Theory

The Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) is credited to Timothy Coombs in 1995 (*Infinite Ideas*, 2020). The theory posits that crises are negative events that cause stakeholders to make interpretations about crisis responsibility, affecting how stakeholders interact with the organization. Jeong (2009) notes that Coombs (1995) built on the notion held by the Attribution Theory by affirming that people constantly look to find causes, or

make attributions, for different events, especially if those events are negative or unexpected. The SCCT suggests that effective crisis response depends on the assessment of the situation and the related reputational threat (Coombs, 2013).

To address the issue of crisis Coombs (2013) suggests three clusters of crises which are the victim, accident and intentional. The first is explained as a case where the organization is a victim of the crisis (e.g. natural disasters, rumours) which presents a minor reputational threat. Accidental crises is where the organizational actions leading to the crisis were unintentional which could be in the form of equipment or product failure, accusations from external stakeholders which may present medium reputational threat. Intentional crises are those which involve organizations knowingly taking inappropriate risk. This presents major reputational threat to the organization (Coombs, 2013).

Coombs (2013) also argues that the SCCT draws inspiration from the Image Restoration Model of Benoit (1997), where it shows that the levels of crisis liability and reputational hazard have been determined once. This theory then identifies a limited set of primary crisis response strategies which include denial, diminishment and rebuilding (Coombs, 2013). Denial could be in the form of attacking the accuser, denial of the story, scapegoating among others while diminishment may include offering excuses, justification of what happened and rebuilding has to do with compensating victims, offering apologies, taking full responsibility among others Claeys, Cauberghe and Vyncke (2010). Even though there could be other strategies, it is important to note that neither Benoit (1997) nor Coombs (2013) consider silence as a strategy. Silence is too passive and allows others to control the crisis (Coombs and Holladay, 2011).

The SCCT points out that the effectiveness of the crisis response is also influenced by how the organization managed the pre-crisis phase (prevention and preparation) and the post-

crisis phase, (learning from mistakes and successes) (Coombs and Holladay, 2011). Whereas the dynamics of social media limit the time for thinking a crisis response through, time can be won in the preparation phase, as social media offers various opportunities to see a crisis coming. In developing a crisis response strategy, there are factors not included in SCCT that might also be considered to determine reputational threat Claeyns, Cauberghe and Vyncke (2010). Potentially influential factors might be the role of culture, the role of visual elements in crisis media coverage, or other factors that are recognized by Attribution Theory, Contingency Theory and Complexity Theory (Coombs and Holladay, 2011).

2.1.2 The theory and the present study

The relevance of this theory to this study is that it proposes ways which suggest that crisis managers could benefit from understanding how crisis communication can be used to protect reputational assets during a crisis. In practical sense, if Franko Phones had had a good rapport with its public and had been positioned positively in the minds of their publics they would have responded differently. This is to say that even though there was the likelihood of a hiccup after the COVID-19, Franko Phones could have responded in a way which would put them in the positive limelight. This notwithstanding, the theory also offers a framework for understanding this dynamics. The theory also provides a mechanism for anticipating how stakeholders will react to a crisis which Franko Phones can employ in terms of the reputational threat posed by the crisis. Moreover, in line with Coomb's (2007) argument, the theory could project how people will react to the crisis response strategies used to manage the crisis which will be to the advantage of Franko Phones.

2.2 RELATED STUDIES

A number of researchers have done work on SMEs, PR, and Marketing. However this paper will look at some which are in line with the work. This paper reviewed Dzisi and Ofofu (2014), Taiwo, Ayodeji and Yusuf (2012) and Hong, Huang and Li's (2012) study.

Dzisi and Ofofu (2014) posit that marketing strategies constitute one of the key functional strategies that SMEs adopt to enhance performance. This study examined the effect of marketing strategies on the performance of SMEs in Ghana in terms of their profitability, brand awareness and market share. Data was collected through a survey research methodology. 363 SMEs were sampled from a population of 900 through stratified random sampling. A hypothesis was tested to ascertain the relationship between marketing strategies and performance. Dzisi and Ofofu (2014) reports that in the Eastern Region of Ghana, the overall results of this study suggested that strategic marketing was a key driver of organizational positioning in a dynamic environment, and that it helped to enhance the development of new product/service for existing markets.

Results of the study also revealed that the SMEs in Ghana mostly use traditional forms of marketing (eg. Television, radio, newspaper, etc.) to reach potential customers and to entrench their brands. Interestingly, Dzisi and Ofofu (2014) note that only few of them use modern technology in marketing their product and services; the SMEs should thus adopt more modern technological marketing tool such as mobile marketing to improve on their performance. The findings provided valuable insights for decision makers and SME owners on the relationship between strategic marketing and performance of SMEs in a globalized developing economy context (Dzisi and Ofofu, 2014).

Taiwo, Ayodeji and Yusuf's (2012) paper sought to investigate SMEs as a veritable tool in Economic Growth and Development. A survey method was used to gather data from 200 SME/Entrepreneurial officers and Managers from five selected local government in Nigeria

namely; Ijebu North, Yewa South, Sagamu, Odeda and Ogun Waterside Local government. Data was collected with a structured questionnaire and analyzed with several descriptive statistics to identify the perception of the roles of SMEs in Nigeria.

The results of the study revealed that the most common constraints hindering small and medium scale business growth in Nigeria was lack of financial support, poor management, corruption, lack of training and experience, poor infrastructure, insufficient profits, and low demand for product and services. Hence, Taiwo, Ayodeji and Yusuf (2012) recommended that Government should as matter of urgency assist prospective entrepreneurs to have access to finance and necessary information relating to business opportunities, modern technology, raw materials, market, plant and machinery which would enable them to reduce their operating cost and be more efficient to meet the market competitions (Taiwo, Ayodeji and Yusuf, 2012).

Hong, Huang and Li (2012) noted that research in crisis management involves a variety of perspectives, including crisis impacts, strategic vision and leadership, contingency planning and technical capabilities. However, Hong, Huang and Li (2012) indicated that crisis management mechanisms of SMEs were rarely investigated for sound theory building and practical guidance for management. The aim of Hong, Huang and Li's (2012) paper was to explore mechanisms by which SMEs use to manage crisis. This paper presented a general crisis management model that represents crisis management processes in terms of detection, occurrence, recovery and resolution.

To validate and refine this model, Hong, Huang and Li (2012) assert that a multiple-case study was designed to investigate five SMEs' actual crisis management practices. The case study results showed that SMEs, in spite of their resources constraints and relatively weak market positions, display resilient market responsiveness. Hong, Huang and Li (2012) further

suggested that effective crisis management of SMEs should involve proactive business mindsets for sustainable growth and continuous expansions.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 RESEARCH METHOD

The research approach a study adopts maybe either quantitative or qualitative in nature and this differentiates both procedures of data collection and data analysis (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). This study will thus adopt the quantitative approach to conduct this research.

3.1 STUDY POPULATION

Fraenkel and Wallen (2000) are of the view that a research population is a generally-large, well-defined collection of individuals or objects with common characteristics that are the main focus of a scientific enquiry. However, Aina (2004) is also of the view that due to the large sizes of populations, researchers cannot test every individual in the population because it is expensive and time-consuming. Thus, researchers use sampling techniques to pick samples from the population. Therefore, the population for the study will be gadget sales businesses in the Kwame Nkrumah Circle (Circle) area in Greater Accra. Circle was selected because it is widely cosmopolitan and has a lot of SMEs in the area.

3.1.1 Sample and Sampling Technique

Burns and Grove (2001) assert that sampling basically is the selection of a part or subset of the entire research population so that the selected part can represent the entire population. A research sample therefore is a subset of the population from which it was drawn and it must have a good size to warrant statistical analysis to draw conclusions which apply to the population (Burns and Grove, 2001). Due to the large sizes of populations, researchers often

cannot test every individual in the population because it is too expensive and time-consuming. Thus, researchers use sampling techniques to pick samples from the population (Aina, 2004).

Sampling occurs when researchers examine a portion or sample of a larger group of potential participants and use the results to make statements that apply to this broader group or population (Salkind, 2010). The type of sampling strategy a researcher uses will influence their ability to make generalisations from the sample findings about the study population, and the type of statistical tests you can apply to the data (Kumar, 2019). The process of selecting a sample according to Salkind (2010) is an integral part of designing sound research. In conducting a study, Frey (2018) suggests that there are two categories of sampling design: non-probability sampling designs and probability sampling designs.

Given (2015) explains that non-probability sampling is a common technique in qualitative research where researchers use their judgment to select a sample while probability sampling presents each participant with the same chance of being selected. Given (2015) further holds that the most basic form of probability sampling is simple random sampling. If samples are collected properly, precise statements can be made about a population, with a fairly high degree of confidence, from relatively small samples. Therefore, Frey (2018) states that simple random sampling is a method of probability of selecting a subset or sample from a larger population in such a way that each element is selected. For this reason, this study will employ the simple random sampling approach. Lavrakas (2008) notes that there are two simple random samples one with replacement and the other without replacement. For this study, the researcher will employ the one with replacement so that the likelihood of respondents influencing other is avoided because of their independence. De Vries (2012) supports this approach by stating that the order in which the elements occur in the sample is irrelevant,

and “doubles” are not allowed to occur. This technique will be used to select fifty (50) gadget sales businesses at Circle.

3.1.2 Sources of Data

In research, there are different methods used to gather information, all of which fall into two categories these are primary and secondary data sources (Douglas, 2015: Ajayi, 2017). Data gathered by the researcher is what forms primary sources, whereas the data obtained from already existing material makes up secondary data (Ajayi, 2017). Kumar (2019) notes that secondary data sources may include government or semi-government publications, earlier research, personal records, mass media among others. Kumar (2019) asserts that the choice of a method depends upon the purpose of the study, the resources available and the skills of the researcher and that there are times when the method most appropriate to achieve the objectives of a study cannot be used because of constraints such as a lack of resources and/or required skills.

The study will therefore employ the use of both primary and secondary data. Primary data will be collected using questionnaires. In line with O'leary's (2017) line of argument, this study will employ secondary data analysis which involves a researcher using the information that someone else has gathered for his or her own purposes. Researchers leverage secondary data analysis in an attempt to answer a new research question, or to examine an alternative perspective on the original question of a previous study (O'leary, 2017). These data will also be obtained

3.1.3 Data Collections Procedure

With the focus of the study in mind, the study will employ the use of both primary and secondary data as stated earlier. Questionnaires will be used to gather primary information from the gadget sales businesses while secondary data will be collected from books, journal articles, online/internet materials, among other publications on SMEs, PR, marketing

generally MPR generally. Data collected will then be analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The analyzed data will be presented using frequency distribution tables, graphs and charts. Also, descriptions and further explanation will be given in order to aid the comprehension process.

CHAPTER FOUR

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

4.0 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY TO KNOWLEDGE

The study will help define and develop an indigenous Ghanaian perspective on the use and implementation of PR and marketing strategies, in particular in times of a pandemic, by contributing to the body of knowledge. The research would also help decide whether these PR and marketing techniques used have an effect on the SMEs that are implementing them. In short, the research would have an impact because it will add to the literature on techniques that work for SMEs and recognize PR and marketing methods appropriate for doing business in a pandemic.

4.1 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Between late 2007 and the second quarter of 2009, Naidoo (2010) asserts that the global economy slid into a severe economic crisis (Naidoo, 2010). This global economic crisis has not only been severe for large enterprises, but also for SMEs which have become an increasingly important component of economic development (Soininen, Puumalainen, Sjögrén and Syrjä, 2012). From this assertion, the inference can be drawn that SMEs suffer the hardest in times of crisis. This clearly reveals the need for turnaround strategies which Cater and Schwab (2008) defines a set of consequential, directive long-term decisions and actions targeted at the reversal of a perceived crisis that threatens the firm's survival. Exceeding the norms of conventional strategic marketing practices, Thrassou and Vrontis (2009) businesses increasingly turn to new and/or alternative methods to increase their

competitiveness, all within a globalised and harsh environment characterised by hyper-competition and incessant change, both at the business and the consumer ends. For this reason, this study sought to assess PR and marketing strategies which can help SMEs thrive in a pandemic.

The study then set the objectives to find out PR strategies SMEs adopt during a pandemic to remain viable in business, to find marketing strategies SMEs adopt during a pandemic to remain viable in business and ascertain factor(s) affect PR and marketing strategies employed by SMEs during a pandemic. The findings indicate that with the success of an organization highly dependent on its relationships with its key stakeholders and their satisfaction level, showing good corporate governance has become critical (Lenguyen, 2011). SMEs in periods of prolonged economic crisis according to Bourletidis and Triantafyllopoulos (2014) may suffer disproportionately from economic downturns, because of their limited financial resources and dependence on banks' lending, paying such high interest rates. In addition to the financial aspect, their relative shortcomings in terms of technological, managerial and human capabilities may reduce their capacity to overcome the economic crisis (Bourletidis and Triantafyllopoulos, 2014). This therefore goes to suggest that assessing the PR and marketing strategies SMEs during a pandemic was essential to both academia and business alike.

4.2 RESEARCHER'S REFLECTIONS

In showing the originality of the study, the researcher set the scope the study to focus on the plight of Franko Phones. Also, the researcher deliberately approached arguments with the idea of directly drawing the Ghanaian perspective out. Drawing on the literature reviewed, the researcher further affirms the point that MPR is important but in the case Franko Phones

in Ghana, the concept has an even greater impact if employed by Franko Phones who can explore and leverage on it to grow.

4.3 RECOMMENDATION

This study recommends that Franko Phones should take note of the PR and marketing strategies if they want to sustain their growth. The literature shows that when organizations adopt PR and marketing strategies in other words MPR, they can complement the gaps each of the individual concepts comes with. If other SMEs for instance begin to adopt these strategies, it is likely to become an industry norm which will help them all succeed. Also, for further studies other researchers should consider conducting studies along the lines of other concepts such as maintaining customer loyalty and brand reputation in a pandemic among others.

REFERENCES

- Aina, L. O., (2004). Data collection techniques a guide for research. Retrieved on (14/05/2020) from: www.interjournals.org/.../data_collection_techniques-a-guide-for-research-pdf
- Ajayi, V.O., 2017. Primary Sources of Data and Secondary Sources of Data. *Benue State University*.
- Bouey, J., 2020. Assessment of COVID-19's Impact on Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises: Implications from China.
- Bourletidis, K. and Triantafyllopoulos, Y., 2014. SMEs survival in time of crisis: strategies, tactics and commercial success stories. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 148, pp.639-644.
- Burns, N. G. and Grove, S. S. K., (2001): The practice of nursing research: conduct, critique and utilization.
- Cater, J. and Schwab, A., 2008. Turnaround strategies in established small family firms. *Family business review*, 21(1), pp.31-50.
- Claeys, A.S., Cauberghe, V. and Vyncke, P., 2010. Restoring reputations in times of crisis: An experimental study of the Situational Crisis Communication Theory and the moderating effects of locus of control. *Public Relations Review*, 36(3), pp.256-262.
- Coombs, W.T., 2013. Situational theory of crisis: Situational crisis communication theory and corporate reputation. *The handbook of communication and corporate reputation*, pp.262-278.
- Coombs, W.T. and Holladay, S.J. eds., 2011. *The handbook of crisis communication* (Vol. 22). John Wiley & Sons.

De Vries, P.G., 2012. *Sampling theory for forest inventory: a teach-yourself course*. Springer Science & Business Media.

Dzisi, S. and Ofori, D., 2014. Marketing strategies and the performance of SMEs in Ghana. *Marketing*, 6(5), pp.102-111.

Fraenkel, J. R. and Wallen, W. E., (2000). *How to design and evaluate educational research*.

Frey, B.B. ed., 2018. *The SAGE encyclopedia of educational research, measurement, and evaluation*. Sage Publications.

Giannini, G.T., 2009. *Marketing public relations*. Pearson Education India.

Given, L.M., 2015. *100 questions (and answers) about qualitative research*. SAGE Publications.

Grunig, J.E. and Grunig, L.A., 2013. The relationship between public relations and marketing in excellent organizations. *K. Sriramesh, A. Zerfass & JN Kim, Public Relations and Communication Management: Current Trends and Emerging Topics*, pp.53-76.

Herbane, B., 2010. Small business research: Time for a crisis-based view. *International small business journal*, 28(1), pp.43-64.

Hong, P., Huang, C. and Li, B., 2012. Crisis management for SMEs: insights from a multiple-case study. *International Journal of Business Excellence*, 5(5), pp.535-553.

Infinite Ideas, (2020). Top 10 management models for your business #7: Situational crisis communication theory, Timothy Coombs (1995). Retrieved on 08/07/2020: <http://www.infideas.com/top-10-management-models-for-your-business-7-situational-crisis-communication-theory/>

Jeong, S.H., 2009. Public's Responses to an oil spill accident: A test of the attribution theory and situational crisis communication theory. *Public Relations Review*, 35(3), pp.307-309.

Kumar, R., 2019. *Research methodology: A step-by-step guide for beginners*. Sage Publications Limited.

Lavrakas, P.J., 2008. *Encyclopedia of survey research methods*. Sage Publications.

Lenguyen, T., 2011. Impact of a CSR Program on a Company's Image and Reputation: A Case Study. *AU-GSB e-JOURNAL*, 4(2).

Lizarraga, I., (2010). Benefits of Corporate Societal Marketing. Helium.com. Available from internet: <http://www.helium.com/items/1841732-benefits-of-corporate-societal-marketing-csm>

Koutroumanis, D.A., 2011. Technology's effect on hotels and restaurants: Building a strategic competitive advantage. *Journal of Applied Business and Economics*, 12(1), pp.72-80.

Mahmoud, M.A., 2011. Market orientation and business performance among SMEs in Ghana. *International Business Research*, 4(1), pp.241-251.

O'leary, Z., 2017. *The essential guide to doing your research project*. Sage.

Papasolomou, I., Kitchen, P.J. and Panopoulos, A., 2013. The accelerative and integrative use of marketing public relations in Cyprus. *Public relations review*, 39(5), pp.578-580.

Public Relations Society of America, (2020). *Public relations defined*. Retrieved 17/07/2020 from <https://www.prsa.org/aboutprsa/publicrelationsdefined>

Salkind, N.J. ed., 2010. *Encyclopedia of research design* (Vol. 1). Sage.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A., 2009. *Research methods for business students*. Pearson education.

Soininen, J., Puumalainen, K., Sjögrén, H. and Syrjä, P., 2012. The impact of global economic crisis on SMEs. *Management Research Review*.

Taiwo, M.A., Ayodeji, A.M. and Yusuf, B.A., 2012. Impact of small and medium enterprises on economic growth and development. *American journal of business and management*, 1(1), pp.18-22.

Thrassou, A. and Vrontis, D., 2009. A new consumer relationship model: the marketing communications application. *Journal of Promotion Management*, 15(4), pp.499-521.

World Bank, 2020. COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Drives Sub-Saharan Africa Toward First Recession in 25 Years. *World Bank*.

Yeo, R. K. and Youssef, M. A., (2010). Communicating Corporate Image into Existence: the Case of the Saudi Banking Industry. *Corporate Communications: an International Journal*, (3), 263-280.