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THE ROLE OF AUDIO VISUALS IN BRAND GROWTH IN PUBLIC RELATIONS IN
THREE GHANAIAIAN INSTITUTIONS

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OCTOBER, 2020.

DECLARATION

I, Aryee Bismark Adamafio hereby declare that with the exemption of unique references to other people's work, which has been properly referenced, this this study, is my original work carried out under supervision. I also claim that it has not been submitted in full or in part for any degree at this University or elsewhere.



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2ND OCTOBER, 2020

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Date 2/10/2020

SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

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

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.....

DATE

DEDICATION

This research work is dedicated to God Almighty for His endless mercies. I also dedicate this work to my mother Magdalene Mends and the deGraft-Johnsons for the support and encouragement given me throughout this journey.

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ABSTRACT

Brand growth and the exact influence audio visuals have on it, is a grey area to find research literature. However, it remains an interesting field to consider especially because of trends and innovations today. The trend of businesses today see the same good old highly competitive bouts against each other to excel and harness greater market share. The progress however is that of late, focus and tons of attention is given to the development of a mutually beneficial relationship between consumers of a product or service and the producers or providers of the said product or service respectively. These attempts ultimately aim at ensuring constant provision of purchases and consumption of products and services produced to sustain and promote the business and its growth (brand growth).

Multiple tactics, tools and channels are utilized in these processes discussed above. This research employs the qualitative research method through in-depth unstructured interviews and will focus on one of such highly effective means of achieving brand growth, the use of audio visuals. With key focus on the Ghanaian setting, this research looks at audio visuals and the roles they play in improving, enhancing and providing fertile grounds for brand growth.

Based on existing literature, the exact benefits and roles audio visuals play in terms of promoting brand growth were out doored in this study. The study also looked at why Public Relation (PR) agencies will prescribe the creation, development and utilization of audio visuals to their clients.

In the end, this study is a dive into the spheres of un-abundant researches that are already existent and are key in fostering brand growth.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The influence of various forms of communication remains existent in every form of Public Relation related activity and forms relevant entry points into the achievement of set out strategies and objectives. Pictures, motion graphics, videos, text-based formats and all other means of communication, be they visual or audio, remain relevant today to the achievement of Public Relations objectives and the improvement of a brand's growth and stature.

However, over the years meaningful growth, experienced by major brands have seemingly been less and less accredited to the influence of audio-visuals. Even though some of the world leading brands like Nestle, Uniliver, Coca Cola, Barclays, Total and others like UNICEF, WHO and UNDP have heavily invested continuously in the production and conceptualization of several audio and visual contents targeted at conveying multiple lasting information to respective audiences, very few research exist on the direct influence of audio-visual contents on brand growth. Focus and purpose of several existing literature have been on the study of Public Relation and concepts relating to the several branches of Public Relations as a whole such as; Conflict Management, Brand Management, Health Communication, Reputation Management, Crisis Communication and Community Relations among others. These areas mainly contribute to areas focused on for examination of PR theories and existing Literature.

Brand growth and how adequately audio-visual content contributes to its improvement is a relevant and interesting field to examine. This is because Audio Visuals part of our day to day livelihood

reality and also because brand growth is becoming necessarily, the focus of almost all organizations of today. Creating and maintaining a positive brand image is seen as an essential avenue for companies to create and maintain competitive advantage (Nwulu & Ateke, 2013).

Due to the strong emergence of the internet, coupled with the ever-increasing patronage and usage of Mobile and smart devices, audio visuals have become the sure and most preferred means of communication and advertisement for modern day organizations. Televisions, which used to be the only means to propagate and disseminate audio visual content still remains useful but due to their fixed and immobile nature, contents originally meant for only Televisions are linked and duplicated for consumption on mobile phones and other smart devices. Various television channels have resorted to making room for online consumption through the creation of social media handles such as Facebook live, YouTube channels, Twitter and Instagram feeds in reaching targeted audiences. World renowned television channels like CNN, DW Tv, BBC, CNBC and Bloomberg have all created channels on major social media platforms through which there is a deliberate appeal to reach audiences with curated content.

Such is not different from the case of Ghana. Indigenous Ghanaian media outlets and various Public Relation agencies have all integrated social media into the primary execution of their news gathering and dissemination as well as promoting their communication campaigns. On a whole, it can be said that social media and the internet, are key contributors to the possibility created for mass production and consumption of audio visuals which in turn aid greatly in promoting the growth of brands.

This research examines the nature of audio visuals and the roles they play in improving, enhancing and providing fertile grounds for brand growth. With key focus on the Ghanaian setting, the research focused on three organizations namely - Ghana Investment Promotion Centre (GIPC),

Stratcomm Africa and Mosaic Blue. The selection of these three (3) organizations for the study was based uniqueness of each organization. GIPC stands uniquely as a brand that makes use of audio visuals predominantly and therefore its choice is intended to aid in understanding why GIPC and their brands as a whole demand make use of audio visuals in their dealings and further promote their brand growth. In addition to this is a further enquiry into whether or not real growth is actually attainable through the use of audio visuals by brands such as GIPC.

Stratcomm Africa and Mosaic Blue are notable Public Relation and Advertising agencies with years of experience and track record of serving, solving and providing brands with relevant contents to aid in image promotion. A study of these two firms will help unravel the methods and reasons by which these agencies prescribe the utilization of audio-visual contents for their clients. This will create an understanding of the undergirding reasons based on which various audio-visual contents are produced. It will also assist in gaining insight on the role of audio visuals in brand growth from the agencies' perspective.

1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

In a world where audio-visuals and brand growth hypothetically exist as “human beings, they would probably be a happily married couple. If these two concepts were to exist as human beings, they would have had need for each other. This is to paint a picture of how deep the roles of audio-visuals are in promoting brand growth. Along the line of promoting brand growth, audio-visuals cross paths with several other public relation tools but they remain key in the production process of communication products (Callard, 2011).

Existing literature have established and outlined relevant strategic measures that when implemented, can achieve significant brand growth over a specific period of time. Works by Kevin Lane Keller & Donald R Lehmann (2009), Alex Wang and Darrel D Muehling (2010) including that of Ed Keller (2007) all bordered on brand growth and the use of audio visuals and although they are relevant for this study and will be explained further under Literature review, none establishes that exact role audio-visuals play in achieving higher levels of brand growth. The gap remains as to what exactly are the roles that audio-visual formats have in the brand growth and promotion process and how audio-visuals specifically contribute to the growth of a brand. This was the gap that this research set out to fill. Riding on that as a background, this research sought to examine the relationship between brand growth and audiovisuals and to closely examine the nature of the relationship with key focus on the various roles audio-visuals play in brand growth. This has become necessary since audiovisuals have and will continuously influence the establishment and sustenance of brand growth. A study of the influence (roles) that audiovisuals have on brand growth will in turn improve and strengthen the decision to use audio-visuals by brands and branding companies.

A good understanding and appreciation of how audio-visuals shape and influence brand growth would help to improve the creation of audio-visual contents and the inclusion of tactical elements of appeal to achieve specific aims. This will in turn result in brand growth (Forsen 2013).

1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this study was to investigate the role of audio-visuals in fostering brand growth using GIPC, Stratcomm Africa and Mosaic Blue as case studies. Specifically, the study sought:

1. To determine the underlining reasons for the preference of audio-visual contents over other communication formats
2. To determine the elements of appeal to targeted audience; Public Relations Professionals, in good audio-visual contents
3. Identify factors that influence the prescription on the usage of audio-visuals by Public Relation Agencies

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following questions served as a guide for the study:

1. What are the roles of audio-visuals in promoting brand growth?
2. What elements are present in an appealing audio-visual content?
3. Why do brands prefer to use audio-visuals?
4. What factors influence PR Agencies to prescribe audio-visuals for their clients?

1.4 SCOPE OF STUDY

This study focused mainly on the roles audio-visuals play in achieving brand growth. This study therefore concerned itself with brands that utilize audio-visuals in order to grow their brands and public relation agencies that suggest, create and run audio-visual content for brands seeking to

grow. To aid in acquiring accurate and authentic answers to the outlined research questions, interactions were held with personnel of the Ghana Investment Promotion Centre (GIPC), Stratcomm Africa and Mosaic Blue Ghana Limited as a way to seeking answers to the research questions.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

In the course of this research, information gathered will help researchers have a better understanding of the roles that audio-visuals play in promoting and enhancing brand growth. Such improved understanding of the roles and influence of audio-visuals on brand growth will help bring most brands to an appreciation of the benefits of the integration of various forms of audiovisuals into their overall communication plans will affect how efficiently their brand grows.

In addition, this study will serve as a foundation upon which further research on the place of audio-visuals in promoting brand growth or any other objectives such as promotion of sales, crisis management and community relations can be built.

1.6 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

Several literature exist on diverse fields of Public Relations. Conflict Management, Brand Management, Health Communication, Reputation Management, Crisis Communication and Community Relations among others have served as the focus of many research on Public Relation.

Although literature exist on Public Relation and its related fields, very few have focused on creating a resourceful connection between audiovisuals and brand growth. Very few literature have

also established the exact roles audio-visuals play in the brand growth process of organizations. This served as the primary basis of this study. The justification of this research stems from the following reasons;

First is the relevancy of the field of study. As early intimated, this research looked at an essential concept that has the potential of adding to brand communication designs. Once the important roles of audio-visuals in achieving brand growth are established, brands who have over the years not come to this realization would be encouraged to integrate the use of audio-visuals into their day to day communication activities.

Secondly, this research adds to the very few existing bodies of knowledge on the subject matter. The number of studies on brand growth and how it is influenced by audio-visuals begs for increment and this research does just that as well as serving as a relevant addition.

1.7 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The study has been organized into four main chapters:

This Introductory Chapter entailed an overview of the Background of the study, the Problem Statement, the Objectives of the study, the Research Questions, Significance and Justification of the study, Scope of the study and the Organization of the study.

The Literature Review Chapter examined some relevant theories with regards to the subject matter and some empirical works in the study area. It includes Theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of the study, a review and critique of existing related studies and concludes with how previous literature influenced and relates to this research.

The Methodology Chapter described the proposed Research Design for this research, the selected Methodology for data collection and analysis and the reasons underpinning the selections.

Finally, the Concluding chapter reflects on how this study contributes to existing body knowledge and the outcome of the research contribution as well as highlighting how the pursuit of research creates and adds a new understanding to existing literature and generates new information on brand growth.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 OVERVIEW

This chapter reviews some of the existing theories relevant to this study, that is the role of audio-visuals in public relations with a focus on brand and brand growth. The theories served as the foundation for this study because of their intellectual pedigree and their general implications for public relations and its practice.

From the onset, it is important to admit that brands are confronted with fierce and aggressive competition on national and international fronts and public relations officers and practitioners are constantly searching for alternative avenues of communication in an attempt to contribute to the bottom line. Creating and maintaining a positive brand image has become an essential avenue for companies to create and maintain competitive advantage (Nwulu & Ateke, 2013).

Therefore successful branding does not serve only as a proof of ownership, but also as an unwritten warranty, mark of integrity, promise of intrinsic value and a whole assemble of attributes that confer a favorable reputation on the firm and its products (Travis, 2000).

Although firms struggle to construct a uniquely identifiable identity to retain or acquire new customers at little or no cost, marketers have come to the realization that the future of communication in their firms are hinged on visual communication. Inasmuch as other professionals are coming to this realization, public relation practitioners are yet to embrace this new trend of communication (Erci, 2011).

2.1 AUDIO-VISUALS: DEFINITION AND ROLES

Audio-visual communication is the use of both sounds and graphics to relay effectively information that meets its objectives. In communicating, one of the key ways to measure your success is how best you are able to draw the attention of your audience to your message.

Appealing to both the audio and visual senses of your audience and tying in with their experience and the imagery in their mind creates a lasting communication result for them.

There has been a dialogue shift on the impact of audio-visuals aside its initial function of entertainment. Barrett & Leddy (2008) identified distinct impacts of documentary film and by extension, audio-visual campaigns. These potential impacts expand from individuals to groups, movements, and a bigger objective of social change. Public awareness films are used to shed light and to bring to the fore, issues, campaigns and stories that hitherto may have been unknown or overlooked.

Audio-visuals can also be used to engage publics to act on issues. An audio-visual campaign is likely to answer the 'What can I do?' question, and further conscientize an individual or group to act in accordance with the objective of the said campaign. Thus, audio-visual content can be used as a tool for mobilization and collaboration in areas of social movement and advocacy, prompting social change. Karlin & Johnson (2011) buttress this claim by asserting that audio-visual campaigns have impacts on individuals as well as altering both the agenda for and the substance of policy deliberations.

2.2 THE CONCEPT OF BRAND GROWTH

A basic definition of brand growth would be the constant and persistent collection of multiple efforts channeled towards the increment of an organization's recognition and market share over a specified period of time. The entire concept of brand growth includes a variety of different strategies. These strategies can be categorized under four headings, namely

- i. Market penetration: seeking to gain from an existing market
- ii. Market development: seeking to enter a new market or area with an existing product
- iii. Product development: introducing a new product in an existing market
- iv. Diversification: introducing a new product in a new market

These shape and constitute what can be referred to as brand growth (Aford 2018).

In recent years, companies that produce consumer products across the globe are coming to terms with the profound insight of finding the best ways to grow brands over the long term through an expansion and an increase of the number of buyers (consumers). This essentially has increased the desire by companies to employ numerous means of increasing the consumption of respective products or services. The intent is simple - the more consumers purchase a product, the more the brand of that product grows. In effect no multinational company has a non-selling product. The recognizable brands deemed as fast-growing brands are those with products in high demand by consumers.

The concept of brand growth is pivotal in every organization's long-term goal not only because of the refreshing vibes offered to entrepreneurs when they see their brand grow but also the stability it brings to companies. Most importantly, brand growth establishes a constant purchasing stream of products, resulting in surety of sales and the constant accumulation of revenue. That is why it

is the concern of all companies today, to establish an appealing and relatable brand, then strive to see it grow through the utilization of multiple, consistent and effective approaches to communicate the values of the brand and the product.

The concept of brand growth further thrives on the idea that, a brand's success is hinged on its ability to be "uniquely unique" in the face of competition. This is to say, a brand must be different and easily recognizable or be set apart from other competitors. The varieties in services or products offered in response to preferences and demands of consumers is what keeps a brand relevant and aids a brand to obtain a competitive advantage.

In some exiting literature on brand growth, authorities like Gerald Goodhardt and Chris Chatfield (1990) confutes marketing myths surrounding man's unending quest for "brand differentiation". Most notable amongst them is Andrew Ehrenberg (1984), who argues his case by referencing the "Dirichlet" model which asserts that consumers are polygamous rather than either promiscuous or monogamous. In basic terms, the "Dirichlet" model posits that consumers often than not, are drawn towards a set of brands over others across time.

At specific periods, consumers tend to make purchases from certain brands and then at certain other times, they prefer other brands. Typical example in the Ghanaian settings is the edge to purchase clothes at Kantamanto, a market known for quality second hand clothing but purchase appliances elsewhere even though some traders in Kantamato sell appliances.

Generally, brand growth is always an exciting prospect (concept). However, the emphasis on hard work cannot be stressed enough. Brand growth does not happen out of the vaccum. It requires a well thought out strategy with clearly defined objectives. The overall strategy must be contingent on the data gathered on specific publics and tactics outlined based on this data. Without a uniquely

crafted brand, a company would have no identity. Therefore, a conscious attempt to measure and know the success of a brand is essential to the growth of the company. In a nut shell, the brand is what consumers associate or attribute the services or products offered with thereby making it what consumers recall and attach themselves to. The more consumers recall and associate themselves to a brand, the more that brand is referred to be growing.

2.3 EMPIRICAL LITERATURE

Existing literature relevant to this study serve as the basis for this section. The key element here is to discuss and examine some existing literature on the topic - Brand growth in public relations and the role of audio visuals. This served as the foundation for this study because of their intellectual discourse and their general implications for public relations and practice. Below are some literature related to audio-visuals in public relation although most did not focus on the role it plays in brand growth.

Researchers like Alex Wang & Darrel D. Muehling (2010) and Sony Kusumasondjaja (2019) did work on areas that speak to either audio-visuals or visuals but this were not linked directly to the role they play in the growth of brands. Other researchers also have explored the field of brand growth but the focus of their research did not speak to the various role audio-visuals paly in the growth of a brand.

The effects of audio-visual and visual-only cues on consumers' responses to co-branded advertising by Alex Wang & Darrel D. Muehling (2010) examined how brands could capitalize on each other when they are featured in an advertisement together and its effect on consumer perception. Their study reported the results of a research which indicated that advertisements done

audio-visually, enhance brand association and influences the decision to purchase. This research highlighted the vital role played by audio-visuals in changing consumer behavior and helping the growth of a brand. They however were not focused on the vast implications on how audio-visuals had on the growth of brands and how it can be utilized to leverage for brand equity and growth. The missing link in the study was that brands can only proceed with the use of audio-visuals for their various engagement with their audience if they know the immense implications it has for their brand. With this, audio-visuals can be used to create the needed brand perception and change consumer behavior be it in co-branded advertisement or in a single brand advertisement or commercial from an already existing brand or an emerging brand.

Sony Kusumasondjaja (2019) in his 'exploring the role of visual aesthetics and presentation modality in luxury fashion brand communication on Instagram' examined how expressive and aesthetic Instagram posts had more engagements than those which came across as ordinary. The research also found out that video content received more engagements than static content. Content which adopted audio-visual modalities generated more engagement than those that employed a visual-only format. The study then called for a consideration in the use of appropriate approaches when creating content for Instagram, which in effect can be extended to other platforms. However, there is a gap of the effect or the impact such approaches can have for brand development. The work of other researchers help to create a broader understanding of research work carried out on the topic under study, which is, audiovisuals and brand growth. There have been some research works on brands and how is can be developed to gain the trust of the public.

Kevin Lane Keller & Donald R Lehmann (2009) in 'Assessing long-term brand potential' posited that long-term brand value depends on a firm's understanding and recognition of the brand's potential, and capitalizing on the said potential in the marketplace. Realizing this capability, in the

long run fosters growth. This brand growth gets conceivable as a result of current clients expanding their spending just as new clients being pulled in to the brand later on. The study explored brand, its long-term value and growth and how imperative it is to remain significant.

“Unleashing the Power of Word of Mouth: Creating Brand Advocacy to Drive Growth” by Ed Keller (2007) posited that there are abundant evidence that Word of Mouth” (WOM) is the most significant and viable correspondences channel, creating brand advocacy and driving growth for firms. The study was to assist advertisers with exploring this new territory, where control rests with the purchaser and not the advertiser.

The various literature, which are related to the topic, did not address the gap being identified by the current study namely brand growth in public relation and the role audio-visuals play in achieving this feat through the creation of a long-term equity for a company. Various existing literature have served as a guide to understand some related works that have been done in the area of brand growth and audio-visuals.

2.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This work was anchored on two theories - The Medium Theory and Social Marketing Theory.

2.4.1 MEDIUM THEORY

Twentieth-century communication philosopher, Marshall McLuhan is credited with the statement “the medium is the message” as he believes that the potency or effect of a message is dependent on the media through which the message is conveyed. He stressed that the media had a significant

impact on communication, arguing that communication is not just message dissemination but also across which medium the transmission is been done, hence the medium theory (Babe, 2000).

The core assumption is that the media is not just a channel where the communication happens but a vehicle which may alter the meaning and sense of the intended communication.

The influence of media on communication and its role in reducing the gap in communication in present times cannot be overemphasized. By understanding features of media, especially audio-visuals, a public relations professional will be able to examine the efficiency of a campaign through available mediums and compare its efficiency to other communication channels.

A study has shown that, two sets of students who were exposed to the same information leading to a test, had the group whose information was presented in a video format outperforming the group whose information was a reading material. This proved that moving images were easy to recollecting than just words (Anon., n.d.).

In relating it to this research, the Medium Theory posits that success of various communication messages targeted at improving or growing a brand, depends on the medium through which they are communicated which in this case is audio-visual medium. In general, the intent to achieve brand growth requires the effective and strategic conveyance of tactically composed messages. These messages are targeted at defined audiences with the sole intent of growing brands. The messages can in turn be conveyed to these defined audiences through varied media with audiovisual formats inclusive. The medium theory therefore asserts that whether or not these messages will indeed cause brand growth, depends on the medium (audio-visuals) through which they are communicated to the audiences.

The effectiveness of the medium and as to whether the medium is the right one for communicating the message, affects the deduction of the message and the understanding to be received by the audience. The medium theory therefore ties in perfectly with this research since it is in the interest of this research to investigate the impact audio-visual formats have on messages meant to aid brand growth and aim if really audio-visuals can on a larger scale influence the achievement of brand growth.

2.4.2 SOCIAL MARKETING THEORY

Social Marketing Theory, proposed by Philip Kotler and Gerald Zaltman, in the 1970s emerged as a structure that guides arranging, planning, actualizing and assessing social missions with data sharing as its significant objective. It explores innovativeness in communication, with techniques like advertisements and documentaries which are very popular forms of audio-visual communication, rather than relying on public service announcements, as before, for giving out information.

Generally, the theory integrates ideas, tools, principles and techniques of creative marketing in conjunction with varied means of appeal as well as socially advantageous ideas to advance communication and benefit society when all is said in done. The genesis and foundation of the execution of this theory is premised on identifying first the target audience and their needs. Once this is done, the entire communication process is structured and designed utilizing these tools, ideas, principles and techniques of marketing aimed at the audience to achieve desired outcomes. Audience identification and examination is therefore very vital in this theory. Other relevant features or components of this theoretical framework includes Awareness creation, Targeting of Right Audiences, Effective Image and Impression Cultivation, and Interest Stimulation. All these

however must, in the end, contribute to the second most important aspect of this theory, which is, achieving a societal benefit or inducing a social behavioral change.

Since audio-visuals present an ultimate platform featuring all relevant features of this theory, social marketing tools and principles have been and continues to be used for promoting and creating awareness in social campaigns over the years. Campaigns for family planning, hazards of smoking, use of helmet in riding bikes, environment pollution, following traffic rules, use of mobile phones while driving, sanitation among others employed the Social Marketing Theory in these communications (Bajracharya, 2018). This seamlessly ties into this research.

In the creation and production of audio-visual formats, creativity is employed in other (to as an end result) achieve grand persuasion and positive change in social behavior. The effectiveness of audio-visuals in achieving estimated change in social behavior could be used as a basis to examine the achievement of brand growth through the same means as is the general objective of this research.

2.5 AUDIO-VISUALS AND BRAND GROWTH

A brand is a service, product or concept which is publicly different from that of other services, products and concepts so that it can be communicated as well as marketed easily. Merriam-Webster (2011), asserts that “it is a public image, reputation, or identity conceived to characterize an entity to make it a distinctive kind.” Being able to create a visibly successful brand is very important for businesses as it creates a memorable impression on patrons and that boosts stakeholder confidence. A visible brand makes it easier for patrons and the general public to understand why the product, service or concept is a better choice. With time, the image of the

product, service or concept is associated with a specific degree of value, believability and fulfillment by stakeholders.

Brands become visible, leading to acceptance through brand communication. Brand communications should therefore be tailored to meet consumers in profoundly important ways and make the brand symbolic to publics (Batra, et al., 2012) by designing and delivering these communications through “authentic” messaging and “close-to-consumer” media. Brand managers and public relations practitioners need to create easy and attractive ways for consumers to engage and interact with the brand to generate brand affinity for third party credibility to build long-term relationships and loyalty which translates to brand growth (Batra & Keller, 2016). Being able to build a strong and consistent brand is very essential in the life of a business, cause or organization hence the need to adopt channels and techniques to aid in brand positioning, identity and image with planned PR programmes targeted at brand awareness (Shaw, 2017) because a brand should be easily recognized and recalled (Keller, 2013, p. 142)

According to Brennan & Babin (2004) and Wang & Muehling (2010), experiments conducted on subject to determine brand recognition had results indicating that audio-visual communication’s recognition exceeded that of other placements. Kusumasondjaja (2019) also posited that brand video content on social media received more engagement than static content, generating more responses.

2.6 UTILIZATION IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

In a very simple definition, audio-visual communication is the utilization of a medium which consolidates sound and visual substance to communicate specific information to an audience.

Audio and visual signs, when joined, increase message retention. As per the United States Department of Labour, 10% and 35% of information is retained when presented only orally and only visually respectively. On the other hand, when combined, 65% of an audio-visual information is retained (Ireland, n.d.).

What relationship does audio-visuals have with public relations? We can consider a public relations space where a brand's identity and message all have strong visuals and is consistent across different media channels. Malayna Evans (2018) posits that humans are visually stimulated. She states that there is a direct link between the human eyes and brain, hence the tendency to process, understand and retain visual information. The visual appeal of an information has an effect on its tendency to be recalled. In that regard, good visuals are important in persuasion. (Evans, 2018).

The ultimate goal of Public Relations is to communicate and establish mutual understanding between parties, and what better way to do this than to use a medium which is proven to be the most effective way of transferring information. Erin McCoy in an online article "4 Ways To Improve Your Public Relations Strategy With Visual Communication" stated that, using visual communication effectively, especially in press releases will set one apart from other PR professionals, placing one's communication ahead of the curve. Audio-visual contents are dominating the internet space, and marketers are jumping on board. This is as a result of the growing number of internet users. Audio-visual content in a public relations campaign will give the campaign a higher chance of meeting a larger audience and public. Keller (2013) buttresses this point when he asserted that the number of times a brand visually appears, increases its degree of correct brand association. In the digital age, fewer people have the attention span to consume text-y campaigns and press releases. Audio-visual contents are dominating the communication

space hence the need to employ this approach to get publics excited about public relations materials and campaigns (McCoy, 2018).

2.7 CONCEPTUALIZATION OF PUBLIC RELATIONS ROLES

“The basic goal of public relations is to influence public opinion” (Rubinstein, 1998, p. 156). Public Relations (PR), since its inception, has been a practice of planned management of information, activities and policies by which individuals, corporations and organizations seek to create favorable atmosphere and working relationship between themselves and the public they interact with. From information dissemination through counter adverse attitudes to crisis management, PR has been at the heart of brand image building. Turow (2009) equates the very nature of PR to ‘the father of public relations’, Edward Bernays’ beginning in the 1920s. Described as the ‘scientific persuader’, Bernays believed that it was “essential to draw upon the social sciences to carefully shape the responses of audiences and engineer their consent by learning to push the right psychological buttons” (Turow, 2009, p. 631). The ultimate goal of a PR campaign is to gain validity in the public space. PR practice has undoubtedly thrived on involvement with the mass media, thus media relations (Turow, 2009).

2.8 CONCLUSION

The theories and research works discussed provide a better understanding of audio-visuals in communication and further promote a examines how audio-visuals in general could be used to boost brand equity. The work of other researchers helped create a broader understanding on the selected topic of audio-visuals and brand growth.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 OVERVIEW

Collis and Hussey (2013) describe research methodology as the overall process or technique around which the research or study is conducted. It is the step by step guide used in discovering what we want to know.

This chapter is devoted to the description of the methodology which will be employed in conducting this study. This chapter also captures the research design and method, study population, sample and sampling procedure, data collection methods and procedure and method of data analysis, as well as ethical issues and considerations.

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design is a coherent plan which specifies how data relating to a given problem should be collected and analysed for guiding a study conducted. The purpose of a research design is to provide the most substantial and exact answers conceivable to the research question (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; McMillan & Schumacher, 2001).

The qualitative approach was adopted for this research and as such, In-depth interviews were conducted to elicit information on the role of audio-visuals in brand growth. Qualitative research endeavours to comprehend the world from the subjects' perspectives, to unfurl the importance of their experience (Kyale,1996). Thus, the qualitative method is perfect in seeking a respondent's point of view on the role of audio-visuals in brand growth.

Interviews under the qualitative method are also a better option since the researcher is able to communicate with respondents adequately to get concrete and detailed information that answers the outlined research questions.

According to Barbie (2002) unlike quantitative research which emphasizes numbers, qualitative research is a non-numerical examination and interpretation of observations, for the purpose of discovering underlying meanings and patterns of relationships.

3.2 STUDY SITES

The Public Relations and Communication units of three organizations (one public sector and two private sector) were chosen to investigate the effect of audio-visuals on brand growth. The organizations chosen were the Ghana Investment Promotion Centre (Public Sector), Stratcomm Africa (Private Sector) and Mosaicblue Communications (Private Sector). The profiles of the organizations are presented in the section below.

3.3 PROFILES OF SELECTED INSTITUTIONS

3.3.1 THE GHANA INVESTMENT PROMOTION CENTRE (GIPC)

The Ghana Investment Promotion Centre (GIPC) is a Government agency, responsible under the GIPC Act, 2013 (Act 865): to encourage and promote investments in Ghana, to provide for the creation of an attractive incentive framework and a transparent, predictable and facilitating environment for investments in Ghana. GIPC is on a mission to make Ghana the ideal destination of choice for investing in Africa as it strives to be the most accurate information hub for investors

looking to explore Ghana and Africa as a whole (GIPC, 2020). GIPC will be an interesting contributor to this study since they have employed a lot of audio-visuals in promoting the brand Ghana.

3.3.2 STRATCOMM AFRICA

Stratcomm Africa is a total communications and reputation management agency that uses communication to enhance organizational performance. They specialise in the formulation and implementation of communication strategies for individuals as well as public, private and governmental institutions in both national and international contexts (Stratcomm, 2020). Stratcomm Africa has received several awards in the public relations industry because of its innovativeness as they ranked 67th in 2015 Ghana Club 100 as the Business Promotion and Consultancy of the Year. Other awards like the Institute of Public Relations' PR Consultancy of the Year may be an indicator of how Stratcomm Africa has achieved success in managing the reputation of their clients.

3.3.3 MOSAICBLUE COMMUNICATIONS

Mosaicblue communications is a Ghanaian public relations and communications consultancy that offers professional services in Corporate Communications and Reputation Management. Together with its partners, Portobello & Co Blue Apple and Cobalt Blue have between them 50 years of experience with the media, local and international clients. Mosaicblue communications has built a reputation for being a boutique agency for very select blue chip multinational corporates such as Cargill, Meridian Port Services (MPS) and Cocoa Toton Processing Company Ghana (Amissah, 2020). This company will be interesting to research and interview since they have a client base that is very active in the media space, employing a lot of audio-visuals in their communication.

3.4 STUDY POPULATION

The study population for the study will be the staff of the three organizations chosen for the study. They will include the Management and functional members of the communication teams of the organizations whose roles and duties relate directly to the focus of the study.

3.5 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

LoBiondo - Wood & Haber (1998:250) describe sampling as a process through which a segment of a populace is chosen to partake in a study, hence the research population. Probability sampling and non-probability sampling are the two main sampling designs. This research applied the purposive non-probability sampling. This sampling method was chosen because the researchers identified from the population who have shown to utilize the audio-visual medium over time and can give informed responses to aid this study. Though the sample being studied is not representative of the population, purposive sampling focuses on specific characteristics that are of interest, and best aids the study, in this case, utilization of audio visuals in PR communication.

Other reasons why purposive non-probability sampling was chosen were that;

- It is helpful when limited funds, time and work force are available to the researcher.
- It can be utilized during a subjective or qualitative (as in this case), pilot or exploratory study.
- It can be used when the researcher does not intend to produce results that will be used to make speculation relating to the whole populace.

Kothari (2004) points out certain key factors to consider. These include the nature of the universe or population (whether finite or infinite), the sampling unit, sampling frame, budget limitations

and sampling procedures. Based on these, the author of this study determined, with guidance, from secondary data available on Public Relations, that brand growth and audio-visuals as well as primary data collected through interactions with Ghana Investment Promotion Centre (GIPC), STRATCOMM AFRICA Limited and Mosaic Blue Ghana Limited are sufficient to satisfy the criteria for a representative sample. These sources provided both secondary and primary data for the study.

3.6 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

According to John W. Creswell (2014), data collection is the starting point of a research. It basically is the gathering of variables using the two main types of data which are primary and secondary data. Primary data will be used in this study. Primary data can be obtained either through observation or through personal interviews. Hence, the primary data collection method will give the researcher first-hand contact with selected companies.

3.6.1 IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

Interview is the verbal conversation between two people with the objective of collecting relevant information for the purpose of research (Kothari, 2007). In the light of this, in-depth interview was considered to be the best tool to aid in data collection per the nature of this research work.

Interviews could be structured, unstructured or semi-structured interviews. Structured interviews have guidelines, following a predetermined format. Unstructured interviews on the other hand has no structured approach. The interviewer and interviewee basically go with the flow. For the purpose of this study, unstructured interviews will be employed in a bid to arrive at responses that will facilitate the objectives of this research.

The researcher will have the opportunity to read facial expressions and gestures and ask follow-up questions during the interviews. This formed a good source of information to the researcher because it helped in deducing additional information on the research topic.

According to McNamara, (1999) “interviews are particularly useful for getting the story behind a participant’s experiences.” In the light of this, the interviewer makes accessible direct feedback to the respondent, gives explanation and help reduce any misguided judgments or fears over confidentiality that the respondent may have in addressing the questioner's inquiries.

Interviewers can probe if the respondent’s answer is too brief or unclear. This gives interviewer some flexibility in dealing with unstructured questions and is especially suited for handling complex questions. Interview also gives the researcher the chance to probe more into a particular answer from respondents if he or she is not clear, because the research seeks to understand the motive behind the practice of BEJ and if this practice has any influence on their reportages in the long run. This can influence participation, as many people prefer to communicate directly, sharing information and insights with interviewers.

In-depth interview was used in the data collection of the study. This is because the researcher sought to have control over the interview and kept the interviewee focused and on track to completion because ‘brown envelope journalism’ is a very complex topic that can lead respondents to divert from the focus of understanding whether it influences their reportages. Also, it captured an interviewee’s emotions and body language which can indicate a level of discomfort with the questions.

3.7 INSTRUMENTATION

Data for this study will be gathered using the conduct of interviews. The interviews will be conducted based on interviews schedules that will be designed based on the objectives to be achieved by this research pertaining to the study. Since the interviews will be instructed, the questions will be sent via Electronic to the interviewees to enable prepare beforehand. The interview will then be recorded and transcribed. The main set of audience for this study are the Ghana Investment Promotion Centre (GIPC), STRATCOMM AFRICA Limited and Mosaic Blue Ghana Limited who were all selected through a Non - Probability sampling process.

3.8 ETHICAL ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS

Every practice has laid down ethics and principles to be followed and research work is no exception. Ethics in the context of research is defined by Saunders et al., (2015) as the proper conduct of one's self in relation to the rights of those who become the subject of the study and or are affected by it.

In the process of collecting data, respondents are assured that sensitive information will be kept confidential. Respondents will also be assured that their responses would be used for the purpose of this study only. All throughout this study, all scholarly work consulted including books, journals, theises and research materials are also duly acknowledged. Due to the outbreak of COVID-19, the researcher has taken into consideration the possibilities of conducting the interviews via video conferencing applications to avoid contact as much as possible.

CHAPTER FOUR

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

4.0 OVERVIEW

Audio-visuals indeed have enormous influence on brand growth. As the world edges closer to more advanced innovations each day, audio -visual formats remain vital in achieving various intended purposes, outlined tactics and strategies and estimated growth of communication campaigns, Public Relation Practitioners and brands respectively.

The purpose of this study is to explore the role audio visuals play when it comes to growing a brand in the public relations space through the eyes of three Ghanaian companies: GIPC, Stratcomm Africa and Mosaicblue Communications. The research further aims to find out what influences the choice of audiovisual communication above the traditional print communication. This chapter presents a summary of the study, its relevance and provide recommendations for future studies in this field.

4.1 SUMMARY

The study sought to discover the role audio visuals play in growing a brand by studying three Ghanaian companies. The study depended on existing literature as the basis for exploring the phenomenon. Findings from the literature suggested that brands cherish the use of audio-visuals and even resort to them as the “first go to” option in terms of rolling out activities that would in turn increase brand growth. This is mainly because various audience and stakeholders of brands prefer to hear and see things for themselves, an opportunity that audio-visuals offer. Audio-visual formats are effortlessly used to tell and show rather than merely being read as is the case of text.

This offers the opportunity to narrate stories of brands, tell testimonies of products and show realistic benefits harnessed from products. This goes a long way to increase persuasion levels and promote effective marketing of products; services, and brands as a whole, thereby resulting to brand growth.

Another role of audio-visual communication is that, it has proven to be one of the most effective means of communication on the most utilized medium of communication - social media. Social media has now become part of our daily lives and has become the most used media genre. It is not surprising therefore that it is the most preferred platform for advertisement and generally for the dissemination of brand information. Audio-visuals are synonymous with social media and basically become the essence of social media. LinkedIn, Facebook, Youtube, Twitter and Instagram are major social media outlets featuring an enormous amount of audio-visual content. Tens of thousands, if not millions of audiences are readily reachable to advertisers as long as they can afford with the best part being the ability to target. Information, be it advertisement or general social messages by brands, can be targeted to the specific audience it is meant for by indicating regions, age groups, countries and interest. This largely increases the chances of achieving a successful, efficient and result oriented process of communication with a direct influence from audiovisuals.

4.2 CONCLUSION

From this study, it can be said that the ability of audio-visuals to adapt and become compactible with operating on almost all major media platforms is worth noting. Television, social media and outdoor advertising channels such as LED Screens and Motion Billboards are major means of reaching audiences and are all means compactible with audio-visuals. This unique feature coupled

with the ability to retain effectiveness without losing content no matter the platform is a major contributor to why brands prefer the use of audio-visuals. Brand growth can be achieved through various means. Conducting Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), enhancing media, community and Governmental relations, Marketing and Sales promotions and Activation along with several others. However, all these involve the use of audio-visuals in one way or the other. Audio-visuals play an enormous role in the promotion and growth of brands by providing a cheap but effective, flexible and precise means of reaching audiences and disseminating information.

This study would have adopted a qualitative methodology which would have presented a holistic information, exploring this phenomenon in a Ghanaian setting. This however was not possible as a result of the novel coronavirus hence a long essay.

4.3 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

This study seems similar to stepping into a cave that has never been explored. The researcher would have wanted to offer a detailed description of the role of audio visuals in public relations and brand growth in a Ghanaian context. This information would be beneficial to future studies. Although the underlying principles can be similar, future studies should collect data and analyze data to be able to compare and contrast local practice as against international practice.

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