

GHANA INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM

SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

FACULTY OF PUBLIC RELATIONS, MARKETING AND ADVERTISING

**PUBLIC RELATIONS AS A MARKETING TOOL IN HIGHER EDUCATION
MANAGEMENT**

SUBMITTED BY

JENNIFER OFORI-BOATENG

MAPR20142

**A DISSERTATION 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. IKE TANDOH

NOVEMBER, 2021

SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

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

(Supervisor's signature)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ike Tandoh', with a small flourish at the end.

DR. IKE TANDOH

DATE: 3RD DECEMBER, 2021

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 dissertation.

(Candidate's signature)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. Ofori-Boateng', written in a cursive style.

JENNIFER OFORI-BOATENG (MAPR20142)

DATE: 3RD DECEMBER, 2021

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to anyone who is in keen search of knowledge, and motivated by nothing else but by the desire to overcome life's challenges because the same determination for knowledge motivation produced this work.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I appreciate the prudence of the Almighty God. I am excited to thank Dr. Ike Tandoh for his patience and guidance throughout the study and in shaping my path towards the goal which is much appreciated.

I would further like to thank all the study participants from the various Universities. I am also grateful to my mother, family and friends who one way or the other believed in my dreams, invested their time and money in me to make this journey successful.

With a grateful heart, I appreciate all who in diverse ways contributed to the completion of this study.

I say, may the good Lord continue to bless you all.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SUPERVISOR’S DECLARATION	i
STUDENT’S DECLARATION	ii
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
ABSTRACT	viii
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION	1
1.0 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY	1
1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT	3
1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE.....	4
1.3 RESEARCH QUESTION.....	5
1.4 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY.....	5
1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY	5
1.6 SCOPE OF THE STUDY	5
1.7 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY	6
CHAPTER TWO	7
LITERATURE REVIEW	7
2.0 Introduction	7
2.1 Theoretical framework	7
2.1.1 Systems theory.....	7
2.1.2 Theoretical Position of Researcher.....	9
2.2 Public Relations and Marketing	10
2.3 Public Relations in Higher Education Management	11
2.4 Importance of Public Relations in Higher Education Management.....	12

2.5 Harnessing Public Relations in Higher Education Management	13
2.4 Related studies.....	14
2.5 Chapter Summary.....	17
CHAPTER THREE	18
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	18
3.0 INTRODUCTION.....	18
3.1 OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH DESIGN	18
3.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH	18
3.3 POPULATION OF STUDY	19
3.4 SAMPLE SIZE AND SELECTION OF SAMPLE	20
3.5 SOURCES OF DATA.....	22
3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION	24
3.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY.....	24
CHAPTER FOUR.....	25
DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION	25
4.0 INTRODUCTION.....	25
4.1 THEMES.....	25
4.1.1 Analysis of Data	26
4.2 UNDERSTANDING OF PUBLIC RELATIONS	26
4.3 UNDERSTANDING OF HIGHER EDUCATION MANAGEMENT	27
4.4 ROLE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN HIGHER EDUCATION MANAGEMENT	28
4.5 MARKETING EFFECT OF PUBLIC RELATIONS.....	30
4.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS.....	31
4.7 PUBLIC RELATIONS AS A MARKETING TOOL.....	33
4.8 PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICE AND THRIVING IN HIGHER EDUCATION	34

4.9 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS	36
4.9.1 Relationship between Public Relations and Higher Education Management	36
4.9.2 Importance of Public Relations in Higher Education Management	37
4.9.3 Harnessing Public Relations in Management of Higher Education	38
4.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY	39
CHAPTER FIVE	40
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION	40
5.0 INTRODUCTION.....	40
5.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS	40
5.2 CONCLUSION OF FINDINGS	40
5.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY	41
5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY.....	41
REFERENCES	43
APPENDIX.....	53

ABSTRACT

With a concentration of exploring how public relations could be used as a marketing tool in higher education management, the study set objectives to guide the study. These objectives were to assess the relationship between public relations and higher education management, understand the importance of public relations in higher education management and to understand the importance of public relations in higher education management. The study resorted to the qualitative research approach. Data was collected from Heads of communication/public relations of selected tertiary institutions in Ghana through interviews. After this, the data was analyzed using the thematic analysis approach which led to the observation that there is a significant relationship between public relations and higher education management. Also, imperative nature of public relations to higher education management, it was again found to be very important in that regard. It was also found that the proactive nature of public relations presents institutions with an advantage because stop-gap measures would have been anticipated already thereby increasing efficiency. The study recommends that tertiary institutions equip their public relations outfits so that they can be more efficient. Again, it is recommended that tertiary institutions recognize the public relations functions so that they can perform more efficient in a productive manner.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Today, Smith (2013) espouses the view that effective public relations are critical to every educational institution's success. Agyapong (2011) affirms this claim by noting that public relations professionals for instance explain the university's value and merit to a wide range of stakeholders, including state legislators, affluent donors, corporate and philanthropic foundations, and alumni. Although a variety of tactics are utilized to communicate the university's value and merit, news media coverage is an important part of the effort (Abugre, 2018).

Public relations are fundamentally built on this universal truth where individuals act based on their perceptions of facts (Anani-Bossman, 2020b). Public relations experts want to start a chain of actions that will lead to the attainment of an organization's goals by managing, controlling, or influencing people's perceptions (Thompson, 2018). Public relations professionals achieve their primary goal when they successfully generate, influence, or reinforce public opinion through persuasion (Heath, 2013).

Given the state of the news media these days, colleges and institutions do not have much of an option except to take matters into their own hands when it comes to storytelling (Okafor and Nwatu, 2018). Traditional media channels covering academic institutions are dwindling, as are journalists covering higher education and even fewer covering academic research (Kyeremeh, 2018). Furthermore, Ayiku and Tandoh (2021) espouse the view that the internet has made it

much easier to engage with the audiences who care about organization in a direct and cost-effective manner.

The use of public relations in public education began in higher education, when business public relations techniques were employed to promote the institution's offerings over competitors (Agyapong, 2011). "Educational public relations" alludes to the true collaboration with the community in the planning and implementation of good schools (Stanciu, Cristache, Tcaci, Tanasescu and Matis, 2017). By allowing ideas to flow freely between school and community, collaborating with internal and external publics becomes a two-way process.

Public relations create the foundation for mutual understanding and productive teamwork between the two through intelligent design and involvement (Anani-Bossman, 2020a). Both internally and externally, educational institutions use public relations. External public relations is concerned with maintaining positive relationships with the public and other stakeholders (Smith, 2013), whereas internal public relations is concerned with how public relations work within the organization (Gate, 2017). Within the organization, for example, events might be arranged to help members establish a strong relationship and improve communication.

Internal public relations' goal is to increase employee cohesion by communicating clearly about organizational aims, actions, and performance (Ampofo-Bekoe, 2014), as well as to disseminate enough task-related information and positive information about an organization's ability to provide demanding and meaningful tasks (Anani-Bossman, 2020a). Organization's external public relations could include hosting conferences, putting out news releases, manages events, and maintaining itself in the public eye for greater promotion and recognition (Abugre and Nyuur, 2015). Institutes now have specific functions like Alumni Relations through which they

keep in continual communication with their students who have passed out and are doing well in the industry (Agyapong, 2011).

The institutions do so for the objective of acquiring a better brand reputation and to secure great placements to the upcoming batches through their contacts (Tyagi and Sehwat, 2018). As the internet becomes the focal point of all communication, the work of public relations grows more precise while also becoming more demanding (Gordon and Fischer, 2015). The use of social media sites, blogs, and podcasts, among other tools, gives public relations professionals a wide range of options for reaching out (Ayiku and Tandoh, 2021). The focus of this study is to probe how public relations can be used as in managing higher education in Ghana.

1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The link between marketing and public relations was fascinating to observe (Adiko, 2015). Given the importance of a brand's social media engagement with its customers, it was argued that public relations should now be included in an integrated marketing strategy (Anabila, 2020). While this may not seem revolutionary in higher education (Agyapong, 2011), where decentralization is the norm, a shift in the focus of public relations is expanding the scope of what strategic integration of public relations should include (Kyeremeh, 2018).

At the lower stages of schooling, public relations is almost non-existent (Singh and Bisawa, 2019). Today's public research universities compete for the best undergraduate and graduate students, as well as excellent staff (Smith, 2013). Mahama (2017) adds that this is accompanied by contending with raising funds to create new buildings, maintain their physical plants, and, in some cases, provide a variety of educational, cultural, and entertainment services to students and the general public.

The need for the role of public relations grew in importance as the public university became a more complicated organization with a greater proportion of constituents (Gyasi, Wang, Owusu-Ampomah and Kusi, 2017). Public relations are critical in assisting university administrators in communicating their aspirations, aims, objectives, and needs to a wide range of stakeholders (Atuahene and Owusu-Ansah, 2013). While there are studies done on public relations in the tertiary space, this study approaches the phenomenon from qualitative outlook in order to gain more insight into how public relations can be harnessed in higher education management. This study will thus aid in appreciating how public relations is viewed and operates in higher education management in Ghana. Further, this will present information will help shape the function so that areas which is found to be lagging are improved and areas found to be good developed even more.

With a cursory observation of the teeming role public relations can play in higher education management to improve their growth, this study intends to fill this gap of how the practice can be harness by Ghanaian universities. By towing this course of action, the researcher explores this line of enquiry within the context of Ghanaian institutions of higher learning. The interrogation intended by this study helps gain insight into understanding how public relations tools and activities is used by institutions of higher learning to achieve their long and short-term goals and objectives.

1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

1. To explore how Public relations can be used as a marketing tool in higher education management
2. To assess the relationship between public relations and higher education management
3. To understand the importance of public relations in higher education management

4. To probe how public relations can be harnessed in management of higher education

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTION

1. How can public relations be used as a marketing tool in higher education management?

2. What is the relationship between public relations and higher education management?

3. What is the importance of public relations in higher education management?

4. How can public relations be harnessed in management of higher education?

1.4 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

By carrying out this study, Ghanaian institutions of higher learning can adopt public relations efforts to complement their growth and expansion as they metamorphosis to become complicated organization with a greater proportion of constituents. This study is justified again as it helps equip university administrators with how public relations can be employed to assist in communicating the institutions' aspirations, aims, objectives, and needs to a wide range of stakeholders.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

While public relations research has been conducted on various spheres and industries, this study adds on to the rather scarce literature originating from Ghana on how public relations can be used to complement higher education management efforts. Further, this study augment the relatively new branch of public relations which Stanciu et al. (2017) terms as Educational Public Relations. This success implies that this study is an essential research material not only to the discipline of public relations but to education as well.

1.6 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The main borders the researcher set for this study is focus on public relations and higher education management. This enquiry was done by interviewing resource persons from the public

relations outfits of selected Ghanaian institutions of higher learning. This study bothers on exploring the phenomenon under consideration from a strictly Ghanaian outlook.

1.7 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The research is broken down into five sections. The first chapter is an introductory chapter that covers the study's background, objectives, research questions, significance, scope, and organization. The study's theoretical foundation is outlined in the second chapter, which includes a review of related literature among others.

The third chapter as well discusses the strategies used to acquire data for analysis. The study methodology, research design, sample and sampling technique, data collection instruments, data collection procedure, and data analysis method are all covered in this chapter.

The fourth chapter of the study detailed the findings and discussions of the data acquired. The fifth chapter summarizes and concludes the findings, as well as making recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a search and evaluates available literature on how managers of Ghanaian institutions of higher learning could use public relations to help grow. It further documents how they can become effective organizations because of their complex stakeholder makeup.

2.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1.1 Systems theory

Systems theory is an interdisciplinary theory regarding the nature of complex systems in nature, culture, and science. It provides a framework for investigating and/or describing any group of items that interact to produce a result (Krstic, 2013). A single organism, any institution or culture, or any electromechanical or informational item could all be examples. It primarily refers to the science of systems that emerged as a result of Bertalanffy's General System Theory (GST), among others, in launching what became a project of systems research and practice.

Many early systems theorists sought to develop a comprehensive system theory that could explain all systems across all domains of study (Karakurt and Silver, 2014). The word can be traced back to Bertalanffy's 1968 book "General System Theory: Foundations, Development, and Applications." Von Bertalanffy's goal was to bring together the organismic science that he had noticed in his work as a biologist under one umbrella. His goal was to utilize the term "system" to define the concepts that are shared by all systems. He writes in GST:

...there are models, concepts, and rules that apply to generalized systems or their subclasses, regardless of the type of system, the nature of its component elements,

or the relationships or “forces” that exist between them. It appears reasonable to demand a theory of universal principles that apply to systems in general, rather than a theory of systems of a more or less specific form.

The theory is a conceptual framework based on the idea that understanding the component pieces of a system is best done in the context of their interactions with one another and with other systems rather than in isolation. Bertalanffy argued for open systems rather than the closed systems associated with classical science at first. Closed systems do not communicate with other systems or the world outside of themselves, but open systems do. Closed systems are largely mechanical systems, whereas open systems are mostly biological and social systems. Open systems have more flexible boundaries than closed systems, which are stiff and, for the most part, inflexible.

There are several different sorts of systems. Biological systems, mechanical systems, human/mechanical systems, ecological systems, and social systems are only a few examples. Systems can also be simple or sophisticated. Social systems, for example, are made up of several subsystems, each having its own set of limits. Complex systems are usually open systems because they interact with their surroundings. Systems (or subsystems) rarely exist in isolation as a result of their interconnection.

Systems theory principles have been used in a variety of fields and disciplines, including the natural sciences, social sciences, mathematics, business, and technology. Systems theory is a means of conceptualizing an organization’s structure and properties in terms of the relationships and interdependence among its components, rather than a single coherent theory (Modest and Haworth, 2016). A systems thinking method is used by the majority of scientists and researchers.

That is, they think in terms of systems and apply this approach to the study of systems across a wide range of disciplines. As a result, depending on the situation, several systems theories exist.

Organizational development and management theory have both used systems theory as a framework for understanding organizations as diverse and dynamic entities made up of smaller, interaction subsystems (Diamond, 2012). Traditional organizational theory fails to account for many of the environmental effects that affect an organization's efficiency, and most theorists and researchers today examine organizations from an open-systems perspective.

2.1.2 Theoretical Position of Researcher

In actuality, most businesses today regard themselves as the center of attention, with other systems encroaching on their domain. They feel that by monitoring and responding to the environment, they may control their own fate to a considerable extent (Burns, Warmbold-Brann and Zaslofsky, 2015). The complexity of contemporary working environment prevents any of the analytical procedures that could be used in a more orderly and predictable world. However, public relations practitioners' recognition of the insights provided by modern systems thinking opens up fascinating opportunities.

The cautious, analytical, knowledgeable, and seasoned practitioner is at ease in his or her surroundings and understands how to create common meanings. He or she will be able to advice on what messages to send and how they might be received. They will also recognize that complex feedback within and across systems, as well as between systems and the environment, can produce resonances that are difficult to manage and can reduce or even contradict the communication's desired outcomes. Whatever the veracity of their arguments, company spokespersons at the height of the genetically modified food debate were going to be misunderstood, misinterpreted, and disbelieved because of all the other louder, conflicting

messages and emotions that were in the environment at the time and which reverberated back on their arguments to nullify them.

In light of this, the researcher sides with the notion that the systems theory is an essential theoretical base for this study. This is rooted in the universality of the theory as it proves to be practical and could be adopted to apply to a number of fields other than the traditional biological nature which led to its propoundment. Also, for public relations practitioners, the ramifications are huge as individuals in charge of managing communication between organizations and their stakeholders are required to possess talents that have never been seen before. They must not only be technically skilled (with all communication tools at their disposal), but they will also require enormous capabilities of analysis, wisdom, and authority, all of which can be partially developed through communication. The new environment and its problems necessitate the presence of a communication expert at the decision-making table for the organization's and all of its stakeholders' benefit.

2.2 PUBLIC RELATIONS AND MARKETING

New studies demonstrate that audiences appreciate authenticity over promotion and that they now see more content in a day than they can read in a year, indicating that public relations is no longer as effective as it once was. As a result, it is up to public relations professionals to persuade consumers that their content is worthwhile. To help with this, Daymon and Holloway (2010) emphasize the need of combining public relations and marketing efforts. This is based on the idea that as marketing and public relations become more aligned, new public relations methods will need to work alongside traditional content marketing techniques to provide the type of content that is beneficial to both organizational brands and their audiences.

This goal can be attained by employing relational, rather than transactional, approaches. This value-driven approach eliminates the need for public relations experts to pitch promotional press releases to contacts in order to get their companies noticed (Gesualdi, 2019). Instead, public relations professionals should find and cultivate connections with niche influencers, journalists, publication editors, thought leaders, reporters, and online contributors who speak to their target audiences.

Furthermore, Theaker (2012) gives the suggestion that because audiences trust publications that keep them up to date on the latest trends and news in their areas of interest, public relations professionals and marketers may assist their media connections in meeting that demand by presenting story ideas they know would captivate readers. This connection of public relations and marketing will not occur quickly, but it is already happening. They may build revenue-driving teams that are bigger than the sum of their parts by putting audiences first and developing meaningful relationships with the correct media contacts.

2.3 PUBLIC RELATIONS IN HIGHER EDUCATION MANAGEMENT

Public relations have always been a one-way, uneven process within institutions (Pirozčková and Heskova, 2010). Practitioners have previously engaged in public relations practices that placed a strong emphasis on media interactions. Scholars have recently pushed for a strategic approach to university public relations that include strategic management, two-way symmetrical communication, and other excellence principles in addition to media relations. Recent studies of public relations in the university context demonstrate this strategic perspective. For example, in a university context, Jon, Hon and Brunner (2004) looked at how practitioners might assess relationships. University public relations practitioners should create synchronized

goals, identify stakeholders, and conduct evaluations (Brunner, Hon and Radice, 2017). Grillis (1997) suggested that having access to a university's senior officials is crucial for public relations practitioners. For managing communication in universities, Henderson (2001) recommended a four-step process: research, planning, communication, and assessment.

Scholars examining the practice of public relations at universities in the former Soviet bloc nations have found this concentration on strategic public relations management (Hall and Baker, 2003; Pabich, 2003; Ki and Hon, 2007). Universities in the former Soviet bloc face challenging circumstances. As a result of the arrival of capitalism, ancient state-owned institutions that had never had to compete are suddenly losing students to new private universities that provide appealing packages (Luo, 2005).

As a result of the competition, both public and private institutions have turned to public relations as a means of gaining an advantage. Previously, public relations at these colleges consisted of a mix of marketing, advertising, and lobbying (Coman, 2003). Recent studies, on the other hand, have recommended for a shift away from one-way asymmetrical methodologies and toward practices that reflect the Excellence study's characteristics.

2.4 IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN HIGHER EDUCATION MANAGEMENT

Several institutions have developed public relations departments in recent years. They did so to improve communication with students, alumni, benefactors, nearby communities, and other members of the public (Mohammed, 2014). Universities rely on public relations departments to deal with crises, improve rankings, raise donations, and a range of other activities (McGrath, Moss and Harris, 2010). It is unclear how these university public relations units handle public relations and whether their techniques are excellent.

Practices that are similar to the Excellence qualities have also been advocated in popular publications geared at university public relations practitioners. In the long run, this supplements higher education management exploits as public relations gains trust as a powerful marketing weapon. One of the most significant aspects of marketing is public relations, because the practitioner's ability to create a positive perception is beneficial to the organization's image. Public relations, as a marketing tool, must design unique strategies to appeal to the target population. This can be accomplished through communicating the institution's goal, mission, and vision to the public through outreach programs and flexible channels like social media. This is because Beverly (2013) espouses the view that colleges and universities all around the world for instance are discovering the value of using social media to engage with and establish mutually beneficial relationships with their important audiences.

2.5 HARNESSING PUBLIC RELATIONS IN HIGHER EDUCATION MANAGEMENT

Public relations are crucial endeavor that should be prioritized, especially for higher education administration (Coman, 2003). This is because it comprises more than just how the institution is portrayed to the outside world; it also includes skills like public speaking and the ability to interact effectively in a professional situation. Creating new inputs that raise the stock of higher education management so that it is viewed favorably with these skillsets available to higher education managers.

Levesque-Bristol and Cornelius-White (2012) urge practitioners to incorporate strategic planning and result evaluation into their practices. According to Jarrell (2003), universities should include public relations practitioners in decision-making because practitioners can reduce risk by building positive relationships with the public and can scan for potential difficulties. Gezihagne (2018) encourages university communicators to create strong community links, pay attention to

internal and external constituents, and take local problems seriously. Practitioners must however explicitly identify their aims and measure production, outgrowth, and outcomes (Ross, 2002). To improve their practice, Luo (2005) advises practitioners to use external research resources (e.g., consulting firms).

While the common perception is that colleges promote themselves because they are academic institutions where everyone wants to study, this has altered throughout time (Mohammed, 2014). Because information is always available to inform their choice, students and parents evaluate variables such as brand equity or how their choice adds to their quality of life, which counteracts the previous perspective. Because of this, Zhang (2009) indicates that public relations is vital to higher education management because without a compelling story to tell in the media and on social media, patronage will diminish, which will lead to a decrease in competitive urge, which will ultimately lead to market share loss. This is when public relations managers' innovativeness comes into play, because they would have foreseen and found countermeasures.

2.4 RELATED STUDIES

The primary mission of universities and colleges is the teaching of students, but there are other equally important tasks to be integrated into public relations education, such as the preparation of students for careers in a profession (Ferrari, 2009). From working their work in understanding public relations education, Culbertson and Chen (2013) in supporting this assertion indicated that ongoing contact and involvement with professional practitioners and organizations is a vital for university programs that prepare public relations specialists.

While Pirozšek and Heskova (2010) is of the view that much of the success of this new and detached campus is attributed to skillful public relations, Waymer (2014) is of the view that as a result of this development, all higher education institutions are encouraged to develop their

public relations capacities. From their study of approaches and instruments of public relations in relation to higher education, Pirozšek and Heskova (2010) found that private higher education first seized upon the possibility of public relations in order to carve out for itself a share of what has increasingly come to be understood as a higher education market. On the role of public relations in promoting the Faculty of management, it was observed that much of the successes chopped are attributed to skillful public relations. Based on these findings, Pirozšek and Heskova (2010) advised all higher education institutions are encouraged to develop their public relations capacities.

On the educational side of higher learning, Zhang (2009) made the assertion that to ensure sustainability, teaching fundamental public relations courses to students from diverse backgrounds posed additional complexities in learning effectiveness. This is because in order to fill the void of a lack of publication of works on Chinese public relations education Zhang (2009) undertook the initiative to offer a rich account of and a critical and cultural analysis of Chinese public relations education. This was done by attempting to understand how Chinese public relations educators, students, and practitioners make meaning of Chinese public relations education through the theoretical lens of the circuit of culture. From this qualitative exploration, it helped identify a hybrid identity for Chinese public relations education, which is neither purely Chinese nor American but a combination of values from both countries. Zhang (2009) was of the view that this finding called for a changed mindset to approach the relationship between Chinese and U.S. public relations scholarly communities from a dichotomous either-or to an embracing both-and mindset.

Valentini (2014) went on to find that the use of films to teach public relations concepts to no majors is an effective means of developing greater understanding and appreciation of concepts.

The motivation for Valentini's (2015) was premised on the fact that scholarship in public relations seemed to be overly positive about social media. While the dominant discourse in public relations is that using social media is "good", because social media could help organizations in developing dialogs and relationships with publics and in engaging with them. Valentini (2015) however pointed out empirical evidence in public relations is mostly case-dependent and limited to the realm of understanding current organizational practices, with limited understanding of the concrete value for organizations or for publics. Through discourse analysis, Valentini (2015) came to the realization that the positive view of social media held by the majority of public relations scholars is grounded on the profession's need to reconcile the two sides of public relations identity.

Kriyantono (2019) as well aimed to describe the public relations activities of Indonesian state universities in carrying out their functions along the line of the Excellence theory. The study administered questionnaires to 59 public relations practitioners of state universities and interviewed three practitioners. Kriyantono (2019) found that symmetrical two-way communication strategies was dominant although there was still more focus on the external public. Also, public relations activities were found to have been included as part of management activities and dominant coalition in state universities.

Gezihagne's (2018) study sought to assess the practice and challenge of public relations in government universities in Ethiopia. The research uses mixed approach to collect data from internal publics and external stakeholders. The researcher used questionnaire as a data gathering tool from the above subjects. Gezihagne's (2018) findings depicted that professional public relations practice in the universities were in difficult conditions as the offices are not professionally and structurally organized despite its key role being well recognized. Gezihagne

(2018) also found that the lack of professional skilled human power, having minimal attitudes and lack of empowering the office, absence of adequate capacity building trainings, lack of infrastructure, inadequate assistance from the concerned management took the first line as challenges for the public relations practitioners.

2.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presents a search and evaluates available literature on how managers of Ghanaian institutions of higher learning can use public relations to help grow. It further documents how they become effective organizations.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of the methodology used by the study to accomplish its objectives. This chapter covers an overview of the research design used, the research population, sample size and sampling technique, data collection procedure, and other important aspects that explain how the study collected data, as mentioned before.

3.1 OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH DESIGN

The descriptive approach was used to probe how public relations could be used as a marketing tool in higher education management in Ghana. The research design allows the researcher to adequately address the research questions and serves as a guide for selecting the appropriate data needed for the analysis. According to Maxwell (2012), descriptive research design is a data gathering strategy that is used to answer questions about the current status of people in the sample, and Vogt, Gardner and Haeffele (2012) claims that social science researchers are frequently used. The qualitative research design was chosen because it was the most appropriate for achieving the study objectives.

3.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Qualitative research was preferred because it is multi-method in nature and takes an interpretative, naturalistic approach to its subject. This means qualitative researchers explore phenomena in their natural environments, aiming to understand or interpret occurrences in terms of the meanings individuals assign to them. The study approach is motivated by the purpose of interpreting the event from the subjective position of stakeholders, as well as the requirement for

understanding from the participant, rather than empirical observation of the occurrence (Creswell and Creswell, 2020).

Gorard (2013) also points out that qualitative research also focuses on the many varied, thorough, and unique components of the human experience, with the intent of capturing those experiences in their whole, as well as the context in which they occur. The qualitative research process, as articulated by Hakim (2012), is an interpretive approach to research that can take the form of case studies, interviews, personal experience, and observations, and was used in this study. Researchers that use qualitative methods try to explain phenomena in terms of the meanings that humans assign to them, which, according to Schwartz-Shea and Yanow (2013), proves positivism's essential assumptions by demonstrating that empirical data may be acquired that is not influenced by interpretation.

3.3 POPULATION OF STUDY

Sampling is the method of selecting units from a population of interest so that we can generalize our findings equally back to the population from which they were selected by studying the sample (Lewis, 2015). A population is a group of interest from which the researcher extracts potential study information (Wahyuni, 2012) and that sampling is the method of selecting units from a population of interest so that we can generalize our findings equally back to the population from which they were selected by studying the sample (Creswell and Poth, 2016).

Bradshaw and Stratford (2010) further asserts that collecting data from a full population is usually simple when the population is small, accessible, and cooperative however, collecting data from every individual in bigger and more dispersed communities is sometimes difficult or impossible. This implies that a population cannot be fully researched, so a sample is taken to

provide the true representation of the population for which institutions of higher learning thus, tertiary institutes and universities to be specific was the population of the research.

3.4 SAMPLE SIZE AND SELECTION OF SAMPLE

Pursuant to Boddy (2016) observation, sampling is the method by which a researcher selects people, places, or things to test, and the quality of the sample primarily impacts the quality of the research findings. Dworkin (2012) says as well that the researcher's research technique will largely affect the sampling and site selection, while Mason (2010) continues that in this type of sampling, individuals thought to be most representative of the population as a whole are picked. In other words, the sample is chosen depending on the researcher's decision. In this study, the respondents were purposively sampled using a non-probability sampling approach.

With objective of the study focused on exploring how public relations is used as a marketing tool in higher education management in Ghana, the purposive sampling approach was better suited to achieve this. Etikan, Musa and Alkassim (2016) add that purposive sampling is a qualitative research technique for identifying and selecting information-rich situations in order to make the most efficient use of limited resources. This entails locating and selecting individuals or groups of individuals who are particularly educated or experienced about a subject of interest (Creswell et al., 2011).

In qualitative research, Tongco (2007) elaborates that samples are often small to allow for the depth of case-oriented analysis that is essential to this form of inquiry. Qualitative samples are also purposive, meaning they are chosen for their ability to provide highly textured information pertinent to the phenomena being studied. Purposive sampling, as opposed to probability sampling used in quantitative research, selects cases with a lot of information. Indeed, recent study (Aspers and Corte, 2019; Ames, Glenton and Lewin, 2019; Saunders et al., 2018) shows

that purposive sampling is more efficient in qualitative studies than random sample, corroborating claims made by qualitative methodologists for years.

The main objective of purposive sampling as well according to Kalman (2019) is to focus on unique features of an interesting population that will enable the researcher to address their research questions. Johnson, Adkins and Chauvin (2020) however elucidates that the research objectives and the characteristics of the study population such as size and diversity determine which and how many people to select especially in qualitative studies for which reason the analysis relied on the views of five (5) resource persons from tertiary institutes and universities in Ghana. These samples were sourced from relying on the researcher’s contacts as well as some level of snowballing effect. The total sample tertiary institutes and universities sampled for this study included, Ghana Institute of Journalism (GIJ), Ghana Communication Technology University (GCTU), African University College of Communications (AUCC), Pentecost University, Ghana Christian University College (GCUC).A breakdown of the respondents’ allocation is tabulated below.

Table 1.0 Breakdown of Institutions

NO.	INSTITUTION	RESOURCE PERSON
1	GIJ	PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER
2	GCTU	DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS
3	AUCC	HEAD OF COMMUNICATIONS
4	Pentecost University	HEAD OF COMMUNICATIONS
5	GCUC	PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER

Source: Field Data, 2021

3.5 SOURCES OF DATA

There is a variety of data collection methods used in research, but they always fall into one of two categories: primary and secondary data sources, with the former producing new data and the latter building on existing data (Heaton, 2008). Johnston (2017) claims that secondary data sources include government or semi-official publications, previous research, personal records, and the news media, among others, and that the approach used depends on the study's goals. Talanquer (2014) insists therefore that researchers use primary data analysis to address a new research issue or to investigate an alternative viewpoint on the original question of a previous study. While the study relied on secondary data to advance arguments and explain contrasting ideas, the study collected data which in the long run resulted in the creation of primary data.

3.6 COLLECTION OF DATA AND MANAGEMENT

As a result of the vital nature of the study, units of analysis were incorporated so that the researcher could identify what was being investigated and what aspects were being studied. In line with the objectives of the study, the unit of analysis was the responses from the Heads of communication/public relations of selected tertiary institutions. This therefore meant that primary data came from interviews with key research participants identified. Interviews or conversations, documentations, semi-structured face-to-face interviews, and observations are all examples of qualitative data sources (Zambas, 2016). Key informants provide in-depth and extensive knowledge by probing and asking questions (Rowley, 2014). Aside from spoken chats, the approach would record respondents' emotions and body movements and better document data (King, Horrocks and Brooks, 2018). The interview was largely used to provide an environment in which respondents can express themselves in their own words in a two-person conversation.

Based on specific interactional occurrences, the interview yielded contextualized understandings as anticipated.

Letters asking participation in the study was sent to all targeted participants, and these letters were used to recruit them. The letters also guaranteed the participants of confidentiality, stating that the information acquired will be utilized for academic purposes, and requesting permission to conduct the interviews if necessary. In-depth interviews with study participants' primary informants will be conducted by the researcher. The researcher met the participants at a pre-arranged location with the goal of introducing the research subject, building rapport, answering any queries, obtaining consent to participate, and obtaining permission to tape record the interviews.

Roulston and Choi (2018) indicates that data acquisition is critical in all investigations since no good study can be conducted without data, which is why it is critical to assess the most appropriate data collection methods. Through phenomenological interviews, the researcher was able to deeply engage and converse with participants, and as a result of this approach, rich data on the participants' viewpoints will be obtained. Based on the findings of the interviews, the interviewer made field notes. The moderator answered follow-up questions in response to the answers given to the questions during these sessions. The data was then analyzed using the thematic analysis technique, in which the researcher looked over the qualitative data to see if there were any recurring themes, subjects, concepts, or situational trends.

This was done by pointing out salient topics which the experiences of the respondents. This was done with all transcripts. From here, a list of topics were drawn out with similar topics being clustered together. This thereafter implied that columns be drawn to form major topics, unique topics and leftovers (i.e. those that fitted into major topics/categories and those that did not fit

into either of the categories). The compiled list was used to compare the data, and topics coded. The codes were then written next to the segments of the text, while checking if new categories and codes had emerged. The most descriptive words for the topics were assigned and turned into categories. Topics that were related to each other were grouped together as alluded to earlier in order to reduce the list of categories. This then made room for each category to be checked and alphabetized. The data was then analyzed and systematically explored to generate meanings, and existing data recorded, participants were asked to validate analyzed data, and recoding where necessary.

3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

Owing to the obvious nature of the phenomenon that the study aims to investigate, ethical considerations were taken into account. This included the researcher notifying the respondents of the study's intentions and obtaining their approval, as per international best practice in education, as well as the use of pseudonyms. Also, the respondents were informed of their ability to leave or stop partaking in the study once they felt uncomfortable with the line of questioning. The study as well followed the Ghana Health Service's recommendations for preventive measures in the wake of the Corona Virus outbreak in order to keep the respondents as well as the researcher safe.

3.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter provided an overview of the methodology used by the study to accomplish its objectives. This chapter covers an overview of the research design used, the research population, sample size and sampling technique, data collection procedure, and other important aspects that explained how the study collected data from respondents.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.0 INTRODUCTION

The study's findings are presented in this chapter, along with a discussion. The study's main goal was to explore how public relations could be used as a marketing tool in higher education management. Owing to this, the study gathered data from the Heads of communication/public relations of selected tertiary institutions in Ghana. This is because the sample was thought to be the best for achieving the study's objective.

4.1 THEMES

This section discusses the themes developed out of responses gathered from the research participants. A breakdown of the themes developed together with accompanying codes can be seen in the table below:

Table 1. Themes developed from interviews

THEMES	CODES/DIMENSIONS
Public Relations and Higher Education Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Knowledge of higher education management• Knowledge of public relations• Role of public relations in higher education management
Importance of Public Relations in Higher Education Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Marketing effect of public relations on higher education management

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significance of public relations in higher education management • Uses of public relations in higher education management
Harnessing Public Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How public relations can thrive in higher education • How public relations can be used as a marketing tool

Source: Researcher’s field data 2021

4.1.1 Analysis of Data

For the sake of the analysis, the respondents are represented by pseudonyms: Participant 1, Participant 2, Participant 3, Participant 4, and Participant 5. This is in keeping with the study’s strong commitment to preserve the respondents’ anonymity.

4.2 UNDERSTANDING OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

In line with focus of the study it was salient to appreciate the respondents’ understanding of public relations. Participant 1 described public relations to be “...*a management function that establishes and attempts to maintain mutually relations between organizations and it publics*”. This tied in to Grunig and Grunig’s (1992) view exactly identifying public relations as a management function. While Participant 2 further stressed that it bothered on “...*how you want people to see you or how you present yourself to the outside*”. Stressing the same view in a different manner, Participant 3 indicated that:

“Public Relations is basically the practices of managing and disseminating information from an individual or organization to the public to affect the public’s information”

Participant 4 as well indicated that *“PR is the conscious relationship that exist between an institution and their stakeholders”*. From the data, the predominant view of public relations had to do with it revolving mainly around the maintenance of image of either an institution or an individual in a way that the organization or institution is perceived by the outside world and public a way in which the relationship are maintained and managed. To a degree, Pirozěk and Heskova’s (2010) argument that public relations would be based on management-defined concepts seemed to have prevailed as this was alluded to here.

4.3 UNDERSTANDING OF HIGHER EDUCATION MANAGEMENT

Obtaining what higher education management meant to the respondents was next on the inquest. Participant 2 was subtle by noting that higher education management involved *“...managing the day to day activities of tertiary institutions”*. Participant 5 however had a broader insight indicating that

“...it is basically running the affairs of a school, thus ensuring that the day to day affairs of the institution are put in place to be able to deliver its mandate.”

Participant 4 as well argued that

“..Obviously for an institution of higher education, there are various processes and techniques that revolves around it administration and

management ... all processes and techniques revolves day to day administrations”

While these practices vary, Participant 1 pointed out that these could include

“...management of students affairs, management of administrators of the institute management of lectures and any other vital functions to help the educational institution move on smoothly”

Ultimately, the idea here is that higher education management essentially bothered on mechanism put in place to ensure that higher education runs smoothly. The respondent’s understanding is commendable because it meets the view Cutlip, Center and Broom (1994) espouse that, to address a concept that is susceptible to a variety of problems and stakes, practical visionary management at the organizational level is required.

4.4 ROLE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN HIGHER EDUCATION MANAGEMENT

To establish synergy between public relations and higher education management, it was prudent to ascertain the respondent’s view of the role public relations played in the management of higher education. This is because currently, there are a variety of approaches to public relations, particularly in the university setting (Stanciu, Cristache, Tcaci, Tanasescu and Matis, 2017). The data was interesting as well with Participant 1 elucidating that:

“...once PR attempts to develop and maintain relations between the organizations and its publics, it is really important in higher education management because, universities have lot of publics... if we do not have a relationship with them it will be difficult on very regular bases accept our students for internships then apart from that ministry of education and

policy makers. If we do not develop a good relationship between ourselves and them it would be difficult for us to lobby essential services to the school...”

Participant 3 also shared a similar view by noting that:

“...it is an integral part of the management team in institutions that really understands and want their goals achieved since PR is mostly about getting into the hearts of the public’s. It aims at contributing to achieve organizational goals through the publics. PR again aims at demonstrating organizational accountability identified by measureable results”

In another fashion, Participant 5 emphasized the role of public relations by agreeing to the assertion with a further justification

“Absolutely, like I said PR is about engaging the stakeholders of the institution by all means universities or higher education are equally institutions that has a lot of stakeholders so without a robust PR system definitely the university may not be able to run for example we had to consciously project ourselves in the media and it does not just have to do with the media, just how people come in here, how we receive guest in our institution, how people get responses to enquire that they make, if those things are not properly coordinated or done in a professional manner, the university can possibly run into reputational crises and people will not like to come to the university. PR is very important.”

In keeping with the affirmation tangent, Participant 5 as well noted that they shared the view significant

“...I agree hundred percent, I feel that as a human institution should be able to create impressions to the outside world. PR focuses not only on institution in the same market but also target market that is the potential students you want to attract and so you need to have a public image which is one of the main tenants of PR...”

The overwhelming support granted the role of public relations in higher education management indicates to an extent that to thrive in the market, the practice cannot be omitted or sidelined because it will be detrimental for the institutions.

4.5 MARKETING EFFECT OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

On the enquiry to find out if public relations had any marketing effect on higher education management, it is worthy of indication that all respondents were in affirmation. In this regard, the opinion shared by Participant 4 captures the argument made by all other respondents. The opinion held that

“Definitely, when it comes to marketing, PR is one of the critical aspects of marketing, in my view if not the serious because if you are able to create a good perception, the word is perception. It might not necessarily be real, real is the most important thing but if you are real and you are not able to create the perception of your realness definitely you will have to struggle so PR helps if you are able to have a good image out there in the public definitely it will help in the marketing, when the image is already there that

is public relations then marketers will now go to town and say come to our university get people to come to the school so public relation is very central in the marketing to help the marketer get students for the school.”

Once again, the versatility of public relations came to fruition as it was given credence as being having a salient marketing effect on higher education management. This is anchored on xx observation that university public relations is a comprehensive collection of policies, practices, and programs that must be discussed in university processes and then shared by all of the stakeholders. This means that once the public relations function is part of management or privy to the institution’s corporate strategy, transforming the function as a marketing tool becomes easier.

4.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

Even though public relations has been applauded in diverse way in this discussion, this enquiry sought to ascertain the respondents’ view on how significant public relations is to higher education management as a whole. Participant 1 indicated that as public relations professionals

“We define the tone of communication that go out, we are in charge of the strategic communication of the institute, we lead when it comes to press releases, we respond to media queries, we are in charge of all protocol functions in the university, event management it is the duty of PR all the catering services of the school is regulated by the Public Affairs. We write press releases, press statements, we issue notices to students we regulate the notice board of the institute and the notices that goes on the notice board, among other PR related functions so you realized that these are very important aspect of institutional management that without PR it would have

been difficult to manage, it is very significant in our education management.”

With a concise view as well, Participant 4 espoused the view that public relations played significant roles

“...in shaping and decorating information meant for public consumptions. It also a great communication tool in higher institution”.

This position was also supported by Participant 5 who added that

“...public relations is everything, let us get it, the university management is service industry, it is not like go and buy iron rods or cement so the cement is there but university management is service oriented, and every service oriented industry is run on perception so if we do not create good image about the university or any university it is going to be in crises so it is very important very critical to have a robust PR system so that people will continue to perceive your university as outstanding as a good place to study.”

With Cutlip (1994) furthering the argument that for an educational institution to engage in a proper public relations strategy, establish an image and renowned capital with existing resources, and then manage it appropriately, it must have the appropriate attitude and innovative spirit. The additional elaboration from the views rehashed the significance of public relations to organizations as a whole even though the focus was on higher education management.

4.7 PUBLIC RELATIONS AS A MARKETING TOOL

In practicalizing the discussion, this point of the enquiry explored how public relations could be used as a marketing tool in higher education management. Participant 3 had an interesting suggestion which bothered on

“...communicating the institution’s goal, value and vision to the public through special events like press releases and conferences. Further, this can be done through events such as matriculation and graduations and by launching new programs.”

Participant 3 on the other hand was more focused on touting organizational capabilities as well as garnering institutional support. This is captured in how the plan rolls out

“...starting from the top we need management to understand that, it is just about the fact that yes we have all the professors, the best facilities, academic is strong it’s beyond that, we also need to let people understand that we are thinking about our external public and how we can create product beyond just academics which is strong for them from the top as well from management, they need to understand that so the PR can become a central driving force in pushing the university or institution forward.”

Participant 4 also introduced a rather contemporary approach on the caveat that

“...if it is well funded, for example if we say we are doing a media soiree, and if the right set of people are in the unit and the budget is presented for media soiree definitely objective is obtained, if in indeed you provide the budget and media soiree is done, if we say we want to do social media

optimization, there is an extent we can do for free and get results but if we expect to get outstanding results we must be ready to invest. Also going to the people. If PR is financial strengthened they will be able to carry out their project.”

While these suggestions differed, the ultimate understanding is that public relations can be effectively adopted as a marketing tool for higher education management purposes. This is relevant because it fits into Stanciu et al. (2017) argument that in the university setting, the image of the institution is an operational result influenced by the resources that the institution’s management is willing to allocate to public relations activities, and that the latter’s intensification may have a consistent impact on the higher education institution’s performance in terms of attracted funds, number of students, and so on.

4.8 PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICE AND THRIVING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

For the long term, thriving is vital which is why the respondents view was once again sought on how public relations could thrive in higher education. While some respondents kept emphasizing the significance of public relations to higher education, there were no actual suggestions to address the question posed. Participant 5 was of the view that to thrive,

“...it can be achieved through constant media management as well as effectively communicating with top management to understand the institutions goal and visions to staff. Yet again, by constantly engaging with the public to satisfy and affect the public’s perception this objective can be achieved.”

In a rather precise and spot-on manner, Participant 4 argued that

“First of all, PR as an academic pursuit is important so PR is something I feel needs to be concentrated on especially for marketing students and from academic perspective students’ needs to be educated well on that because it goes beyond how you are portrayed to the outside world and it also involves other very important skills like public speaking, being able to relate in a very professional world as well because your own internal PR is something you need to be able to hold, so the way you dress, the way you conduct yourself, these are all important part of PR so from an academic perspective it is without a doubt that it can thrive...”

Participant 4 continued by elaborating that

“Corporately or from my corporate perspective, I think one thing that people do is understate the values of PR. In terms of universities, they think that universities sell themselves because it is an academic institution so everyone wants to come and learn... people now have access to information so when they will not just say I am going to “School A”, just because “School A” is a good school, they would rather want to research, they would rather want to know what is happening in this university that they can benefit from that beyond just academics and so I think that there need to be a sensitizations especially amongst management...this is where a proactive public relations professional comes in because they would have anticipated this....”

While Luo (2005) university public relations is a critical component of its long-term success, as it is linked to the its performance, the findings from this data once again puts premium on public

relations but does so by sounding a word of caution admonishing the adoption of proactivity in order to stay relevant within the space. This implies that a genuine approach to public relations in universities necessitates a new perspective that considers the very dynamic present environment.

4.9 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.9.1 Relationship between Public Relations and Higher Education Management

To establish the public relations and higher education management, it is important to draw inspiration from the findings of the study. A higher education institution's participation in the public relations process is motivated by two factors: the fear of exposing itself to danger, and the need for image (Kriyantono, 2019). From this data set, it was found that public relations was a function largely linked to managing communication and dealing with stakeholders while higher education management centered on those activities which ensured the smooth running of an academic institution. The overwhelming support granted the role of public relations in higher education management indicates to an extent that to thrive in the market, the practice cannot be omitted or sidelined because it will be detrimental for the institutions. Furthermore, the adaptability of public relations was demonstrated when it was recognized as having a significant marketing impact on higher education management. Even though the focus was on higher education management, this further exposition emphasized the importance of public relations to organizations as a whole which Piroz'ek and Heskova (2010) had alluded to earlier. What these findings ultimately suggest is that there is a significant relationship between public relations and higher education management. This is largely because of the way public relations complements higher education management, manages its reliance and while maintaining synergy.

4.9.2 Importance of Public Relations in Higher Education Management

Public relations plays an essential part in higher education management, according to the findings of the study. Advocating for public relations in a university setting cannot encompass all of the concept's connotations unless it is developed and integrated into the university's objectives (Levesque-Bristol and Cornelius-White, 2012). This is because, while higher education administration was found to entail a variety of tasks that contribute to the efficient operation of an educational institution, a significant portion of it, which is mostly administrative, is linked to public relations. This is due to the fact that public relations requires good communication with both internal and external stakeholders. This justifies Gezihagne's (2018) assertion that effective communication in the area of public relations has evolved tremendously to build relationships between an organization and its major publics.

With public relations gaining credence as an effective marketing tool, this augments higher education management exploits in the long run. When it comes to marketing, one of the most important parts is public relations, because the practitioner's ability to create a positive perception helps to the organization's image. As a marketing tool, public relations must devise novel techniques to appeal to the target demographic. This can be accomplished by using outreach programs and flexible platforms like social media to communicate the institution's aim, value, and vision to the public. This is because per Beverly's (2013) findings as referred to earlier, universities all around the world for instance are discovering the value of using social media to engage with and establish mutually beneficial relationships with their important audiences.

4.9.3 Harnessing Public Relations in Management of Higher Education

It was found that public relations is an important pursuit, and it should be prioritized, particularly for higher education management purposes. Reason being that it encompasses more than how the institution is portrayed to the outside world; it also includes other crucial abilities such as public speaking and the ability to communicate in a professional setting. This can be realized by making new inputs that drive up the stock of higher education management so that it is perceived in a favourable manner with these skillset at the disposal of higher education managers. Because, as Kriyantono (2019) points out, the quality of public relations efforts is critical in the era of accessible public information, which necessitates universities providing excellent public services as part of good governance.

While the general notion is that universities sell themselves because it is an academic institution so everyone wants to come and learn, overtime, this has changed. Students and parent consider factors such as brand equity or how their choice adds to their quality of life offsetting the old mindset because information is always available to inform their choice. It is for this reason that public relations is important to higher education management because without a compelling story to tell in the media and on social media as Grunig (2009) proposes for public relations practitioners in a digital era, there will be decline in patronage which will translate to a decline in competitive urge which will ultimately result in loss of market share. Beverly (2013) supports this recommendations with the observation that colleges and universities are now recognizing the value of it as a public relations tool. This is where the proactivity prowess of public relations professionals comes in because they would have anticipated and found stop gap measures. Gezihagne's (2018) recommendation that practitioners to practice public relations in a strategic manner.

4.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The study's findings were presented in this chapter, along with a discussion. The study's main goal was to explore how public relations could be used as a marketing tool in higher education management. It is for this reason that the study collected data from the Heads of communication/public relations of selected tertiary institutions in Ghana.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter summarizes some of the study's significant findings and draws conclusions based on the study's various objectives. It includes some helpful recommendations that can assist organizations as well as corporate leadership improve on their public relations practice.

5.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

With a concentration of exploring how public relations could be used as a marketing tool in higher education management, the study set objectives to guide the study. These objectives were to assess the relationship between public relations and higher education management, understand the importance of public relations in higher education management and to understand the importance of public relations in higher education management. The study resorted to the qualitative research approach. Data was collected from Heads of communication/public relations of selected tertiary institutions in Ghana through interviews. This led to the finding that there is a significant relationship between public relations and higher education management. Also, imperative nature of public relations to higher education management, it was again found to be very important in that regard. It was also found that the proactive nature of public relations presents institutions with an advantage because stop-gap measures would have been anticipated already thereby increasing efficiency.

5.2 CONCLUSION OF FINDINGS

While there are many approaches to public relations, particularly in the university context, an educational institution must have the right mindset and imaginative spirit to engage in a competent public relations plan. The image of a university is an operational result influenced by

the resources that the institution's management is willing to allocate to public relations activities, and that the latter's intensification may have a consistent impact on the higher education institution's performance in terms of attracted funds, number of students, and other factors. It is for this reason that public relations is relevant.

By gaining credence as an effective marketing tool, this augments higher education management exploits in the long run. When it comes to marketing as well, one of the most important parts is public relations, because the practitioner's ability to create a positive perception helps to the organization's image. As a marketing tool, public relations must devise novel techniques to appeal to the target demographic. This can be accomplished by using outreach programs and flexible platforms like social media to communicate the institution's aim, value, and vision to the public.

5.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study was limited in the methodology employed to an extent. This is because even though the findings are rich and insightful, it cannot be generalized over the Ghanaian higher education sector. Also, because the study was to be carried out within a limited timeframe, some potential respondents had to be sidelined.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study recommends that tertiary institutions equip their public relations outfits so that they can be more efficient. Also, public relations in this space are advised to undertake personal development initiative to make them apt and spot on in this ever-evolving business environment. Again, it is recommended that tertiary institutions recognize the public relations functions so that they can perform more efficient in a productive manner. For further study, it is recommended that the study be replicated if possible within the context of different methodologies so that

outcomes can be compared. Also, there can be studies done adding up to the variables of the study or changing some aspects so that there can be a variety of findings contribution to the discourse of public relations usage in the educational sector.

REFERENCES

- Abugre, J.B., 2018. Institutional governance and management systems in Sub-Saharan Africa higher education: developments and challenges in a Ghanaian Research University. *Higher Education*, 75(2), pp.323-339.
- Abugre, J.B. and Nyuur, R.B., 2015. Organizations' commitment to and communication of CSR activities: insights from Ghana. *Social Responsibility Journal*.
- Adiko, E.A., 2015. Integrated Marketing Communications Strategies on Brand Performance: A Study on three Private Institutions in Ghana. *Journal of Applied Thought*, 4.
- Agyapong, K., 2011. *Public Relations Practices: A Study of Selected Private Universities in Ghana* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Ghana).
- Ames, H., Glenton, C. and Lewin, S., 2019. Purposive sampling in a qualitative evidence synthesis: A worked example from a synthesis on parental perceptions of vaccination communication. *BMC medical research methodology*, 19(1), pp.1-9.
- Ampofo-Bekoe, A., 2014. *Internal Communication Strategies In The Oil Industry: A Study Of Tullow Oil Ghana Limited* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Ghana).
- Anabila, P., 2020. Integrated marketing communications, brand equity, and business performance in micro-finance institutions: An emerging market perspective. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 26(3), pp.229-242.
- Anani-Bossman, A.A., 2020. An exploration of strategic public relations management in Ghana. *Public Relations Inquiry*, p.2046147X20979292.

- Anani-Bossman, A.A., 2020. Role of Public Relations in Corporate Reputation Management: A Study of PR Practitioners in Selected Multinational Organisations in Ghana. *Corporate Reputation Review*, pp.1-12.
- Aspers, P. and Corte, U., 2019. What is qualitative in qualitative research. *Qualitative sociology*, 42(2), pp.139-160.
- Atuahene, F. and Owusu-Ansah, A., 2013. A descriptive assessment of higher education access, participation, equity, and disparity in Ghana. *Sage Open*, 3(3), p.2158244013497725.
- Ayiku, C.N. and Tandoh, I., 2021. The Use of Corporate Websites as Dialogic Public Relations Tools by Ghana's Public and Private Institutions. *Covenant Journal of Communication*, 7(2).
- Beverly, J.A., 2013. *Public relations models and dialogic communication in the Twitterverse: An analysis of how colleges and universities are engaging their public through Twitter*. The University of Southern Mississippi.
- Boddy, C.R., 2016. Sample size for qualitative research. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*.
- Bradshaw, M.B. and Stratford, E., 2010. Qualitative research design and rigour.
- Brunner, B.R. ed., 2016. *The moral compass of public relations*. Taylor and Francis.
- Brunner, B.R., Hon, L.C. and Radice, J., 2017. Journal of Public Interest Communications. *Journal of Public Interest Communications*, 1(2).
- Burns, M.K., Warmbold-Brann, K. and Zaslofsky, A.F., 2015. Ecological systems theory in school psychology review. *School Psychology Review*, 44(3), pp.249-261.

Coman, M., 2003. Public relations, advertising, and even some propaganda: Romanian private higher education institutions and their communication campaigns. *Higher Education in Europe*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 4, December 2003, 28(4), pp.409-418.

Creswell, J.W. and Creswell, J.D., 2017. *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage publications.

Creswell, J.W., Klassen, A.C., Plano Clark, V.L. and Smith, K.C., 2011. Best practices for mixed methods research in the health sciences. *Bethesda (Maryland): National Institutes of Health*, 2013, pp.541-545.

Creswell, J.W. and Poth, C.N., 2016. *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Sage publications.

Culbertson, H.M. and Chen, N., 2013. Public relations education in the United States: Can it broaden international students' horizons?. In *International Public Relations* (pp. 407-426). Routledge.

Daymon, C. and Holloway, I., 2010. *Qualitative research methods in public relations and marketing communications*. Routledge.

Diamond, L.M., 2012. The desire disorder in research on sexual orientation in women: Contributions of dynamical systems theory. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 41(1), pp.73-83.

Dozier, D.M., Grunig, L.A. and Grunig, J.E., 2013. *Manager's guide to excellence in public relations and communication management*. Routledge.

Dworkin, S.L., 2012. Sample size policy for qualitative studies using in-depth interviews.

- Etikan, I., Musa, S.A. and Alkassim, R.S., 2016. Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. *American journal of theoretical and applied statistics*, 5(1), pp.1-4.
- Ferrari, M.A., 2009. Overview of public relations in South America. *The global public relations handbook. Theory, research and practice*, pp.704-726.
- Gate, T., 2017. *Investigation on the impact of customer relationship management on customer retention* (Doctoral dissertation, BUSE).
- Gesualdi, M., 2019. Revisiting the relationship between public relations and marketing: Encroachment and social media. *Public Relations Review*, 45(2), pp.372-382.
- Gezihagne, T.B., 2018. The Practice and Challenges of Public Relations in Ethiopia: The Case of Government Universities. *Journal of Advertising and Public Relations*, 1(2), pp.27-37.
- Gillis, T.L., 1997. *Change agency and public relations officers in small colleges and universities* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Pittsburgh).
- Gorard, S., 2013. *Research design: Creating robust approaches for the social sciences*. Sage.
- Gordon, G. and Fischer, M., 2015. Strategic Planning in Public Higher Education: Management Tool or Publicity Platform?. *Educational Planning*, 22(3), pp.5-17.
- Gregory, A., 2000. Systems theories and public relations practice. *Journal of Communication Management*.
- Grunig, J.E., 2009. Paradigms of global public relations in an age of digitalisation. *PRism*, 6(2), pp.1-19.
- Grunig, J.E. and Grunig, L.A., 1992. Models of public relations and communication. *Excellence in public relations and communication management, 1992*, pp.285-325.

Gyasi, R.S., Wang, B.X., Owusu-Ampomah, Y. and Kusi, B., 2017. Brand Communication of Higher Education Institutions in Ghana: An Overview. *British Journal Of Interdisciplinary Research*, 8(1).

Hakim, C., 2012. *Research design: Successful designs for social economics research*. Routledge.

Hall, M.R. and Baker, G.F., 2003. Public relations from the ivory tower: Comparing research universities with corporate/business models. *International Journal of Educational Advancement*, 4(2), pp.127-154.

Heath, R.L. ed., 2013. *Encyclopedia of public relations*. Sage Publications.

Heaton, J., 2008. Secondary analysis of qualitative data: An overview. *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung*, pp.33-45.

Jarrell, A., 2003. Keeping off thin ice campus communicators play a key role in risk management. *Currents-Washington-*, 29(3), pp.14-19.

Jo, S., Hon, L.C. and Brunner, B.R., 2004. Organisation-public relationships: Measurement validation in a university setting. *Journal of Communication Management*.

Johnson, J.L., Adkins, D. and Chauvin, S., 2020. A review of the quality indicators of rigor in qualitative research. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*, 84(1).

Johnston, M.P., 2017. Secondary data analysis: A method of which the time has come. *Qualitative and quantitative methods in libraries*, 3(3), pp.619-626.

Kalman, M., 2019. "It Requires Interest, Time, Patience and Struggle": Novice Researchers' Perspectives on and Experiences of the Qualitative Research Journey. *Qualitative Research in Education*, 8(3), pp.341-377.

Karakurt, G. and Silver, K.E., 2014. Therapy for childhood sexual abuse survivors using attachment and family systems theory orientations. *The American journal of family therapy*, 42(1), pp.79-91.

Ki, E.J. and Hon, L.C., 2007. Reliability and validity of organization-public relationship measurement and linkages among relationship indicators in a membership organization. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 84(3), pp.419-438.

King, N., Horrocks, C. and Brooks, J., 2018. *Interviews in qualitative research*. Sage.

Kriyantono, R., 2019. Public relations activities of state universities based on excellence theory. *Avant Garde*, 7(2), pp.154-170.

Krstic, M., 2013. Adaptive Control of Anti-stable Wave PDE Systems: Theory and Applications in Oil Drilling. *IFAC Proceedings Volumes*, 46(11), pp.432-439.

Kyeremeh, W.B., 2018. *Public relations practice in technical universities in Ghana, a study of Sunyani Technical University* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Education, Winneba).

Luo, Y., 2005. Public relations function in a higher education setting: An examination of communication management in two eastern US universities.

Levesque-Bristol, C. and Cornelius-White, J., 2012. The public affairs scale: Measuring the public good mission of higher education. *Journal of Public Affairs Education*, 18(4), pp.695-716.

Lewis, S., 2015. Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches. *Health promotion practice*, 16(4), pp.473-475.

Mahama, A.V., 2017. Challenges of records management in higher education in Ghana: The case of University for Development Studies. *International Journal of Educational Policy Research and Review*, 4(3), pp.29-41.

Mason, M., 2010, August. Sample size and saturation in PhD studies using qualitative interviews. In *Forum qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: qualitative social research* (Vol. 11, No. 3).

Maxwell, J.A., 2012. *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach*. Sage publications.

McGrath, C., Moss, D. and Harris, P., 2010. The evolving discipline of public affairs. *Journal of Public Affairs*, 10(4), pp.335-352.

Modest, M.F. and Haworth, D.C., 2016. *Radiative heat transfer in turbulent combustion systems: theory and applications*. Springer.

Mohammed, R., 2014. Organization-public relationships practices in university setting. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 155, pp.484-489.

Okafor, O.C. and Nwatu, C.B., 2018. Public relations as a tool for attaining educational institution objectives in Enugu State. *International Journal of Marketing and Management Research*, 9(3), pp.0-22.

Pabich, I., 2003. Public relations: An instrument of co-operation linking the private sector and higher education institutions. *Higher Education in Europe*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 4, December 2003, 28(4), pp.519-522.

Pirožek, P. and Heskova, M., 2010. Approaches to and instruments of public relations: Higher education in the Czech Republic. *Higher Education in Europe, Vol. XXVIII, No. 4, December 2003*, 28(4), pp.487-494.

Ross, J., 2004. Finders Keepers, Users Reapers Campus communicators can use external research as a context for institution messages. *Currents-Washington-*, 30(1), pp.30-32.

Roulston, K. and Choi, M., 2018. Qualitative interviews. *The SAGE handbook of qualitative data collection*, pp.233-249.

Rowley, J., 2014. Designing and using research questionnaires. *Management research review*.

Saunders, B., Sim, J., Kingstone, T., Baker, S., Waterfield, J., Bartlam, B., Burroughs, H. and Jinks, C., 2018. Saturation in qualitative research: exploring its conceptualization and operationalization. *Quality and quantity*, 52(4), pp.1893-1907.

Schwartz-Shea, P. and Yanow, D., 2013. *Interpretive research design: Concepts and processes*. Routledge.

Singh, M.R. and Bisawa, T., 2019. Study of Public Relations as a Strategy for Achieving Corporate Objectives of Educational Institutions. *Journal of the Gujarat Research Society*, 21(16), pp.2364-2376.

Smith, A.P., 2013. Student Retention and Retention Information Systems in Higher Education.

Stanciu, T.I., Cristache, N., Tcaci, C., Tanasescu, I. and Matis, C., 2017. The Role and Importance of Public Relations in the University Environment. In *Proceedings of the International Management Conference* (Vol. 11, No. 1, pp. 428-437). Faculty of Management, Academy of Economic Studies, Bucharest, Romania.

- Talanquer, V., 2014. Using qualitative analysis software to facilitate qualitative data analysis. In *Tools of chemistry education research* (pp. 83-95). American Chemical Society.
- Theaker, A., 2012. *What is public relations?* (pp. 19-29). Routledge.
- Thompson, E.E., 2018. Public relations education in an emerging democracy: the case of Ghana. *Journal of Communication Management*.
- Tongco, M.D.C., 2007. Purposive sampling as a tool for informant selection. *Ethnobotany Research and applications*, 5, pp.147-158.
- Tyagi, L.K. and Sehrawat, A., 2018. Roles of Higher Education in Social Transformation. *Advance and Innovative Research*, p.45.
- Valentini, C., 2015. Is using social media “good” for the public relations profession? A critical reflection. *Public relations review*, 41(2), pp.170-177.
- Vogt, W.P., Gardner, D.C. and Haeffele, L.M., 2012. *When to use what research design*. Guilford Press.
- Wahyuni, D., 2012. The research design maze: Understanding paradigms, cases, methods and methodologies. *Journal of applied management accounting research*, 10(1), pp.69-80.
- Waymer, D., 2014. Shouldering the load: An analysis of gender-based differences in the undergraduate PR writing classes and advising undergraduate PRSA chapters. *Journalism and Mass Communication Educator*, 69(4), pp.404-414.
- Zambas, S., 2016. *Data analysis within an interpretive inquiry: Meaning as consequence*. SAGE Publications, Ltd..

Zhang, A., 2009. *Understanding Chinese public relations education: A critical and cultural perspective* (Doctoral dissertation).

APPENDIX
RESEARCH INTERVIEW GUIDE

Dear Respondent,

I am a Ghana Institute of Journalism graduate student working on a project titled “**Public Relations as a Marketing Tool in Higher Education Management**”. The study is being carried out as part of the requirements for a Master’s degree in Public Relations. The purpose of this interview guide is to elicit information in order to achieve the study goals. Please give your honest view on the issues raised, as the information gathered will be kept in strict confidence. You can also opt out at any time if you are uncomfortable. Again, this research is solely for academic purposes.

Thank you for your co-operation.

SECTION A: Public Relations and Higher Education Management

1. In your opinion, what is public relations?
2. What does higher education management mean?
3. Does public relations play any role in higher education management?

SECTION B: Importance of Public Relations in Higher Education Management

4. Does public relations have any marketing effect on higher education management?
5. How significant is public relations to higher education management?
6. How can public relations be used in higher education management?

SECTION C: Harnessing Public Relations in of Higher Education Management

7. Can public relations be used as a marketing tool in higher education management?
8. In your opinion, how can public relations thrive in higher education?
9. How can public relations be used as a marketing tool in higher education management?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME