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Strategies for Improving Building Industry through Public Relations in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area, Rivers State

¹Tambari Mtormabari Deebom (PhD)

tambari.deebom@ust.edu.ng
Department of Vocational & Technology Education
Rivers State University, Port Harcourt

²Iyagbaye, Prince Omoregie

excellent4omo@gmail.com

Department of Building Technology Federal College of Education (Technical), Omoku

Abstract: The study is designed to examine strategies for developing the building industry through public relations in Ogba-Egbema-Ndoni Local Government Area, Rivers State. Three research questions and three hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted a descriptive research survey design. The population of the study was all building construction practitioners in ONELGA and the sample was 69 respondents, comprising 59 registered practitioners in the building industry in ONELGA and 10 lecturers drawn from building technology department, Federal College of Education (Technical) Omoku, Rivers State. A Purposive sampling technique was adopted. A structured questionnaire instrument was used to collect data for this study. The instrument was structured on modified four-point response options of Agree (A), Strongly agree (SA), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) with numerical values of 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. The instrument was validated by two experts in the building technology department, Federal College of Education (Technical) Omoku, Rivers State. Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient formula was used to determine the reliability of the instrument which yielded 0.82 reliability coefficient. The finding of the study revealed that, involving the community in the industry, providing in-service communication and public relation for employees and the use of the media can improve the building industry. It was recommended that Stakeholders and practitioners in the building industry should acknowledge the role public relations play in the development of the industry and adopt appropriate strategy in reaching out to the public.

Key words: Building industry, Public Relations, Strategies, Community, In-service Communication and Media.

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Introduction

The need for improvement in all facets of life is of uttermost importance. This is true because changes that come with growth and development need to be accommodated to enhance continues existence and maintain relevance. To improve is to make something better; to develop or increase in mental capacity. Any improvement embarked upon must be continues. According to Jose (2014) Continues Improvement (CI) has been an all-important part of

manufacturing, production and construction history since the Stone Age, humans are always hungry for better ways to do their jobs or improve their tool. One sector of the human endeavour that needs continues improvement is the building industry.

Building Industry is the industry in which employers and their employees are associated for the purposes of erecting, completing, renovating, repairing, maintaining or altering, building and structures, and/or making articles for use in the erection, completion or alteration, of buildings and structures, whether the work is performed, the material is prepared, or the necessary articles are made on the site of the building or structure or elsewhere, and shall include all work executed or carried out by persons therein. (https://www.lawinsider.com/dictionary/building-industry). The main goal of the building industry is to ensure that building projects are successfully completed within the constraints of best quality, stated period with minimum cost possible. The building industry exists to meet the housing needs of humans as provision of shelter or accommodation is critical in meeting the fundamental need of humans.

Adequate shelter has been defined by Shaaban, Philippa, and Sheela, (2007) as: more than a roof over one's head, it means having adequate privacy, adequate space, adequate security of tenure, structural stability and durability, adequate lighting, physical accessibility, heating and ventilation, adequate basic infrastructure such as water, sanitation, and waste management facilities, suitable environmental quality and health factors and adequate and accessible location with regard to work and basic facilities and amenities, all of which should be available at an affordable cost. The absence of these housing necessities is seen as the defining characteristic of slums: lack of basic services; illegal or poor building structures, inadequate access to sanitation and other infrastructure; inadequate access to safe water; insecure tenure; overcrowding and high density, hazardous locations and poverty leading to social exclusion. Housing includes among others, the physical aspects of housing, such as the structural and design features, whereas the concept of home refers to the psychosocial dimension of housing and includes aspects of security, control, sense of attachment, permanence, and continuity. Neighborhood is the place where housing is located and which influences the provision of basic infrastructure and social services (Shaaban, Philippa, & Sheela, 2007). Floros, Torres, David and Horman (2007) observed that, buildings are essential components of a community. Apart from providing shelter, safety, and allowing for increased productivity, buildings also showcase our culture. The built environment creates a "sense of place" and connects people with the past while also leaving a legacy for the future. The building industry cannot adequately carry out its responsibility if it is not well developed in partnership with the immediate communities. This partnership can only be possible through public relations.

The place of public relations in any society or organization cannot be over-emphasized because inherent in man is the tendency to express or communicate desire, dream, aspirations and the drive to make the immediate environment better. Therefore, public relation is as old as man. Public relations is practically as old as society. Patrick Jackson, a publisher of the public relation society of America (PRSA) as cited in Emmanuel, Ndolo and Igbara (2021) opined that, public relation was initiated from the basic need of building and improving human relationship. Thus, public relations have been in practice even if only amateurish since the beginning of human existence. In the primitive society, human communication was limited by space and time. Due to the absence of modern technology, the potentials and application of public relations metamorphosed as societies became more urbanized, civilized, and complex.

The development of any society or organization is largely dependent on the priority given the public relations of such organization. The Public relations Society of America (PRSA) in Emmanuel et al (2021) defines public relations as "a strategic communication process that

builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics". Simply put, public relations help to influence an audience's perceptions by building relationships and shaping public conversations about a client or company. Public conversations often take place via mass media and social media, which is why public relations professionals need to understand how to work with and write effective and unambiguous messages for the media.

Public relations form the basis for communication and interaction between an organization and her target audience, customers or client. It is a mechanism that enables mutual understanding and cordial working relationship between an organization and the public. Public Relations (PR) is the attempt to establish and maintain good relations between an organization and its constituents. Public relations is a management function which evaluate public attitudes, identifies the policies and procedures for an organization with the public interest and execute a programme of action or communication to earn public understanding and advertisement. It focuses on systematic effort to gain public support which is funded on evaluative data, planned activities and public interest. The Public relation Society of America, PRSA in Emmanuel et al (2021) opined that, public relations help an organization and its public adapt mutually to each other. Simply put, public relations help to influence an audience's perceptions by building relationships and shaping public conversations about a organization or company. These public conversations often take place through mass media and social media, which is why public relations professionals need to understand how to work with and write effective messages for the media. Two key words are prominent in the definitions above, which are "organizations and public" and this in includes the building industries. Public relations can be harnessed to develop any society or organization including the building industry. The management of the building industry should ensure adequate functionality of the public relations department of the industry to enhance the consistent development of the industry. This is necessary because the industry cannot develop in isolation. The industry must engage and involve the community and form a synergy that is symbiotic in nature. Symbiotically involving the community will give room to mutual benefits gearing to mutual development as well.

Furthermore, the building industry needs to apply appropriate PR strategies in order to bring development through PR. However, this fact has eluded many organizations. Senija and Đenar (2015) opined that, considering that only about 40% of building construction companies have developed PR strategies. It can be concluded that the awareness of the companies' managements about the role, importance and potentials of PR strategy in creating image is insufficient. The management of the building industry needs to consider the peculiarity of the situated locality and know the PR strategy that is most appropriate. Strategy is a carefully developed plan/blueprint or method for achieving a goal or the skill in developing, undertaking, and actualizing such a plan. There appropriate strategy can be developed or adopted to suit any kind of public. It is based on these that this study seeks to examine strategies for developing the building industry through public relations in Ogba-Egbema-Ndoni Local Government Area, Rivers State.

Statement of the Problem

It has been observed that, in places where building industry has developed, public relations has played paramount role in driving the vehicle of development. This was supported by Senija and Denar (2015) who asserted that, managers must know that positive image represents an important parameter of business efficiency, and that it has the power of initiating profitable growth and development of Building construction companies. A strategically developed positive image can improve the company's reputation, lead to bigger affection of internal and

important external publicity, increase recognizability of the company in the market, enhance competitiveness and employment and lead to many other communication and business benefits

However, in developing nations like Nigeria the building industry has suffered underdevelopment and retardation over the years irrespective of the input by the government at all levels and stakeholders in the industry. Senija and Đenar (2015) opined that, considering that only about 40% of building construction companies have developed PR strategies, it can be deduce that the awareness of the companies' managements about the role, importance and potentials of PR strategy in creating image is insufficient. Therefore, administrators in the building industry need to take the public into their confidence, providing them with the information they need to understand the total purpose of the industry.

A major contribution of community involvement in the development of the building industry is made through direct contact with employers, landlords, clients and concerned citizens. However, due to lack of proper PR engineered by the building industry, communities in ONELGA have suffered under-development in terms housing and construction generally. Buildings are erected by quacks without following standard operational guide of construction thereby leading to construction of substandard structures that are not durable and cannot stand the test of time. Most buildings have also become death trap to occupants due to leaking roofs, faulty foundation, cracked walls and so on and so forth. The lack of involvement of professionals in the building industry by landlords/clients in the construction of their structure has also led to the underdevelopment of the building industry. All these have posed some concern to the researcher as to know the strategies for developing building industry through public relations. Therefore, the researchers seeks to examine strategies for improving building industry through public relations in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area, Rivers State.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to examine strategies for improving building industry through Public Relations in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area, Rivers State. Specifically, the study seeks to determine how:

- 1. Involving the community in the industry improves the Building Industry in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area, Rivers State.
- 2. Providing in-service communication and public relation for employees improve the Building Industry in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area, Rivers State.
- 3. The media can be used to improve the Building Industry in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area, Rivers State.

Research Ouestion

- 1. How does involving the community in the industry improve the Building Industry through Public Relations in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area, Rivers State?
- 2. How does providing in-service communication and public relation for employees improve the Building Industry in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area, Rivers State?
- 3. What ways can the Media be used to improve the Building Industry in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area, Rivers State?

Hypothesis

- 1. There is no significant difference in the mean response of practitioners and lecturers on how involving the community in the industry improves the Building Industry in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area, Rivers State.
- 2. There is no significant difference in the mean response of practitioners and lecturers on how providing in-service communication and public relation for employees improve the Building Industry in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area, Rivers State.
- 3. There is no significant difference in the mean response of practitioners and lecturers on how the media can be used to improve the Building Industry in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area, Rivers State.

Methodology

The study adopted the descriptive research survey design. The research was carried out in Ogba-Egbema-Ndoni Local Government Area, Rivers State. The population was all building construction practitioners, and the sample was 69 which comprise 59 registered practitioners in the building industry in ONELGA (Source: Works Department, ONELGA Council, 2022) and 10 lecturers in Building Technology Department, Federal College of Education (Technical) Omoku, Rivers State. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the 59 registered practitioners in the building industry in ONELGA while all 10 lecturers in Building Technology Department were used. The instrument for data collection was a self-structured questionnaire tagged "Strategy for Developing Building Industry through Public Relations Questionnaire (SDBITPRQ)". The instrument was validated by two experts from Building Technology Department, Federal College of Education (Technical) Omoku, Rivers State. The instrument has sections A, B, C and D. Section A sought information on selected personal data of the respondents, sections B to D consisted of 15 – items relevant for answering research questions posed in the study. The instrument was designed after a modified four point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree(SD) with numerical values of 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively.

The reliability of the instrument was established by using Cronbach's Alpha reliability method on data collected through administering the questionnaire to 5 artisans in Ahoada East Local Government Area and 5 Lectures from Industrial Technical Department (Building option), Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rivers State. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.82, which was high and above the recommended acceptable value of 0.70 for good reliability (Nunnally,1978). Therefore, the instrument was regarded as reliable enough for use in data collection for the study.

A total of 69 copies of the instrument were distributed to the respondents directly by the researchers. All questionnaire distributed were retrieved representing 100 percent return rate. The descriptive statistics of mean with standard deviation was used to answer the research questions. An item with a calculated mean value equal or greater than 2.50 (2.50 – 4.00) was considered agree, while an item was considered disagree if the mean rating was less than or equal to 2.49 (0-2.49). An inferential statistic of t-test was used to test the null hypotheses in the study. It was decided that where the t-calculated value was equal or greater than the table t-value, it indicates significant difference; the null hypothesis is rejected otherwise, accepted.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results of data analysis of the study are presented in Tables 1 to 6 below.

Research Question 1

How does involving the community in the industry improve the Building Industry in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area, Rivers State?

Table 1: Mean Response on Involving Community as a Strategy for Improving Building Industries in ONELGA

		Artisans (N=59)			Lecturers (N=10)		
S/N	ITEMS	\overline{X}	SD	RMK	$\overline{\pmb{X}}$	SD	RMK
1	Exposes the community to the aim of the building industry.	2.53	0.62	Agree	2.50	0.53	Agree
2	Enhances commitment of the community to the building industry	2.53	0.98	Agree	2.90	0.74	Agree
3	The community becomes advertising agent to the building industry.	3.14	0.83	Agree	3.10	0.74	Agree
4	The building industry becomes aware of the need of the community.	3.40	0.75	Agree	3.30	0.82	Agree
5	Enhances symbiotic relationship between the community and industry.	3.36	0.69	Agree	3.10	1.10	Agree
6	Gives the community a sense of belonging.	3.14	0.61	Agree	3.30	0.48	Agree
7	Enhances the community's value for the building industry.	2.84	0.89	Agree	2.70	0.82	Agree
	Grand total	2.74	0.33	Agree	2.86	0.28	Agree

Source: Researchers' Field Result; 2022

The result in Table 1 shows that, the practitioners have mean range of 2.53 to 3.84, a grand mean of 2.74, and standard deviation range of 0.61 to 0.98 and a grand standard deviation of 0.33. While the lecturers have mean range of 2.50 to 3.30 and a grand mean of 2.87; a standard deviation range of 0.48 to 1.10 and grand standard deviation of 0.28. This indicates that all respondents are homogeneous and agree that all items in Table 1 are how involving the community in the industry improve the Building Industry in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area, Rivers State with a mean response greater than 2.50.

Research Question 2

How does providing in-service communication and public relation for employees improve the Building Industry in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area, Rivers State?

Table 2: Summary of respondents Responses to Questionnaire items in Research Ouestion

Quest		Artisa	ans	(N=59)		Lecturers (N=10)		
S/N	ITEMS	$\overline{\pmb{X}}$	SD	RMK	\overline{X}	SD	RMK	
8	Sharpens the PR skills of the employees	2.90	0.48	Agree	3.10	0.57	Agree	
9	Exposes employees to the relevance of PR to the building industry.	2.86	1.03	Agree	3.20	0.92	Agree	
10	Helps employees to be humane in dealing with public.	2.90	0.64	Agree	2.90	0.74	Agree	
11	Employees become more productive	2.90	0.81	Agree	3.10	0.74	Agree	
12	Employees are taught to us comfortable language in dealing with the public.	3.33	0.60	Agree	3.30	0.68	Agree	
13	Helps employees to understand the PR policy of the industry.	2.93	0.81	Agree	2.70	0.95	Agree	
14	Helps employees contribute meaningfully to develop the building industry	3.31	0.68	Agree	3.30	0.48	Agree	
	Grand total	3.02	0.27	Agree	3.09	0.30	Agree	

The result in Table 2 indicates that, the practitioners have mean range of 2.89 to 3.33, a grand mean of 3.02, and standard deviation range of 0.48 to 1.03 and a grand standard deviation of 0.27. While the lecturers have mean range of 2.70 to 3.30 and a grand mean of 3.09; a standard deviation range of 0.48 to 0.95 and grand standard deviation of 0.30. This indicates that all respondents are homogeneous and agree that all items in Table 2 are how providing in-service communication and public relation for employees improve the Building Industry in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area, Rivers State, because they have means greater than 2.50.

Research Question 3

What are the ways the Media can be used to improve the Building Industry in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area, Rivers State?

Table 3: Summary of respondents Responses to Questionnaire items in Research Question

S/N	STRATRGIES	ARTISANS (N=59)				LECTURERS (N=10)		
	ITEMS	\overline{X}	SD	REMARK	\overline{X}	SD	REMARK	
15	The use of radio	3.07	0.72	Agree	2.90	0.74	Agree	
16	The use of television	2.97	0.73	Agree	3.00	0.94	Agree	
17	The use of newspaper and magazine	3.52	0.60	Agree	3.40	0.70	Agree	
18	The use of internet	3.62	0.64	Agree	3.70	0.48	Agree	
19	The use of posters and handbills	3.26	0.74	Agree	3.40	0.70	Agree	
20	The use of newsletters	3.10	0.59	Agree	3.40	0.52	Agree	
21	The use of paid advertisement	2.90	0.83	Agree	2.80	1.03	Agree	
	Grand total	3.20	0.21	Agree	3.23	0.22	Agree	

The result in Table 3 shows that, the practitioners have mean range of 2.90 to 3.62, a grand mean of 3.20, and standard deviation range of 0.59 to 1.83 and a grand standard deviation of 0.21. While the lecturers have mean range of 2.80 to 3.70 and a grand mean of 3.23; a standard deviation range of 0.48 to 1.03 and grand standard deviation of 0.22. This indicates that all respondents are homogeneous and agree that all items in Table 3 are ways the Media can be used to improve the Building Industry in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area, Rivers State because they have means greater than 2.50.

H₀1. There is no significant difference in the mean response of practitioners and lecturers on how involving the community in the industry improves the Building Industry in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area, Rivers State.

Table 4: t-Test Analysis of Mean Ratings of Responses of practitioners and lecturers on

how involving the community in the industry improves the Building Industry.

Group	N	\overline{X}	SD	Df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision	Remark
Practitioners	59	2.74	0.33	67	1.07	2.00		No
Lecturers	10	2.86	0.28	07	1.07	2.00	Accepted	significance

Source: Researchers' Field Result; 2022 Accept Ho if tcal ≤ tcrit; Else Reject Ho.

The result in Table 4 shows that t-cal is 1.07 and t-cri is 2.00 at 0.05 significant level. This indicates that t-cal (1.07) is less than t-cri (2.00). As a result, the stated null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the mean response of building industry practitioners and lecturers on how involving the community in the industry improves the Building Industry in Ogba-Egbema-Ndoni Local government area, Rivers State is accepted. The implication of the result is that, both practitioners of building industry and lecturers of federal college of Education Omoku, Rivers State hold the same opinion on how involving the community in the industry improves the building industry.

Ho2: There is no significant difference in the mean response of practitioners and lecturers on how providing in-service communication and public relation for employees improve the Building Industry in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area, Rivers State.

Table 5: T-test Analysis of Mean Ratings of Responses of practitioners and lecturers on how providing in-service communication and public relation for employees improve the Building Industry.

Group	N	\overline{X}	SD	Df	t-cal	t-cri	Decision	Remark
Practitioners	59	3.02	0.27	67	0.74	2.00	Aggented	No
Lecturers	10	3.09	0.30	67	0.74	2.00	Accepted	significance

Source: *Researchers' Field Result*; 2022 Accept Ho if tcal ≤ tcrit; Else Reject Ho.

The result in Table 5 shows that t-cal is 0.74 and t-cri is 2.00 at 0.05 significant level. This indicates that t-cal (0.74) is less than t-cri (2.00). As a result, the stated null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the mean response of building industry practitioners and lecturers on how providing in-service communication and public relation for employees improve the Building Industry in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area, Rivers State is accepted. The implication of the result is that both practitioners of building industry and lecturers of federal college of Education Om0ku, Rivers State hold the same opinion on how providing in-service communication and public relation for employees improves the Building Industry.

Ho3: There is no significant difference in the mean response of practitioners and lecturers on how the media can be used to improve the Building Industry in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area, Rivers State.

Table 6: T-test Analysis of Mean Ratings of Responses of practitioners and lecturers on how the media can be used to improve the Building Industry

Group	N	\overline{X}	SD	Df	t-cal	t-cri	Decision	Remark
Practitioners	59	3.20	0.21	67	0.33	2.00	Aggantad	No
Lecturers	10	3.23	0.22	07	0.33	2.00	Accepted	significance

Source: *Researchers' Field Result*; 2022 Accept Ho if tcal ≤ tcrit; Else Reject Ho.

The result in Table 6 shows that t-cal is 0.33 and t-cri is 2.00 at 0.05 significant level. This indicates that t-cal (0.33) is less than t-cri (2.00). As a result, the stated null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the mean response of building industry practitioners and lecturers on how the media can be used to improve the Building Industry in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area, Rivers State is accepted. The implication of the result is that both practitioners of building industry and lecturers of federal college of Education Omoku, Rivers State hold the same opinion on how the media can be used to improve the Building Industry.

Discussion of Findings

The finding of the study indicates that, involving the community in the industry improve the Building Industry. This is in line with the assertion of America Planning Association [APA)](1951) that, some communities, recognizing that the amount and kind of industry within their vicinities will, in large part, determine the economic opportunities, development and level of living for their inhabitants, have devised means of attracting industries. The Industry is rightly recognized as providing jobs, not only through direct employment, but also through the encouragement of commercial services for the industries themselves, and for the persons employed in the industries. The Industry is also recognized as a major provider of public revenue to the community. Communities also often feel that they must compete with each other in attracting new industrial enterprises, and in enticing industrial enterprises away from other communities by ensuring they are involved in the running of the industry.

The finding of the study also shows that, providing in-service communication and public relation for employees improve the Building Industry. This is in line with Emmanuel, Alex, and Nicholas (2006) that, in order to have effective public relations in an organization employees should possess certain qualities to be efficient. Some of these qualities include ability to communicate information clearly; ability to get on with all kinds of people; ability to organize relevant materials; ability to integrate personality both in professional and private life; ability to be creative and imaginative; and ability to find out and have access to relevant materials and information. All these qualities may be acquired through in-service training.

The finding of the study also indicated that, the Media can be used to improve the Building Industry. Cutlip *et al* in Okwelle (2011), opined that, public relations is a management function that seeks to identify, build and maintain mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and all of the public on whom its success or failure depends. Deebom (2022) posited that, there are so many ways which public relations can be carried out which includes the use of the media of all kinds; mass media, (radio and television), press release, newsletters,

magazines, paid advertisement, and internet to target both external and internal publics for the purpose of developing linkages between the institution and the community. It remains the responsibility of the building industry practitioners to select those approaches that have the greatest impact on the public in a particular locality.

Conclusion

Public relations activities are needed in the industry in order to communicate adequately and effectively to both internal and external public the aims and objectives of the building industry, this is critical to the development of the building industry. The use of PR in the industry is of paramount importance if the industry must experience development and achieve the aims for which it was established.

The management of the building industry should be sensitive to the peculiarity of the immediate public and devise means of reaching out to her. This involves being strategic in dealing with the public to get results. It is necessary that the industry make some sacrifices in achieving a positive corporate image in the eyes of the public in order to get the attention of the public and develop a symbiotic relationship to foster mutual development.

Recommendation

- 1. The building industry should create and or revitalize her public relations units to reach out to target public.
- 2. The management of the building industry should adopt appropriate strategy for Public Relations.
- 3. All necessary steps and avenues available to the industry should be used to reach the public.
- 4. The building industry should ensure to maintain positive corporate image with the public.

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