

THE ROLE OF ADVERTISING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS AGENCIES IN BRAND BUILDING

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Abstract

Advertising and Public Relations agencies are firms designed to help advertisers grow their brands and services, the process of achieving this starts with creative brief from the client to the creative agencies. The essence of this article is to help give insight into how advertising and Public relations agencies functions and are managed but more importantly how they deploy creative efforts in building client products and services. Although both Advertising and Public Relations agencies has been in existence since Nigeria independence in 1960, the professions and practice has evolved over the years, faster than the industry envisaged most especially with the modern communication tools deployment to achieve better and faster result in the industry. With the unbundling of Mass Communication programme by the National Universities Commission which favoured Advertising and Public Relations to stand as full disciplines and departments, will further help examine how these two disciplines help build strong and enduring brands. This study also examined the requirements for establishing the Public Relations and Advertising studio PRAD for Mass Communication department of a University. The importance of creative brief to advertising and public relations agencies from clients is very vital and critical in marketing communication industry, because this brief is the only document from advertisers that help creative agency develop marketing communication strategy.

Keywords: Advertising Agency, Public Relations Agency, Mass Communication programme unbundling, creative brief.

Introduction

The marketing communication industry in Nigeria which is powered and nurtured by the activities of Advertising and Public Relations agencies has contributed immensely to the products and brand building efforts in the country. Jefkins (2000) described Advertising agency as a team of experts that plan, create, and execute advertising campaign for clients who are known as account. The word

account here refers to advertiser, advertising and public relations agency call client account while the agency staff that service the account or advertiser is known as account executive. An account executive in an advertising agency can be servicing two, three or more clients that the agency is working for. The number of accounts an agency manages and the good success stories in handling these accounts help agency get more clients, Agency use success stories around accounts they handle to showcase and advertise herself, Williams (2004),

Hafer and white (1976) posited that advertising firm is made up of highly skilled advertising professionals that offer it services to promote clients and prospects brands. According to Onabajo (2011), advertising agencies recognition by clients, prospects and within the marketing communication industries is propelled by her ability to generate fresh, unique and creative ideas in solving client's communication problems. Deploying creativity in producing client's advertisement materials and exposing such materials through the right media to the right audience says a lot about an advertising agency, having advertising experts in the agency make this possible. Gamblien (1970) advertising agency is dependent on creative people who specialised in the development and preparations of advertising plans. APCON is the regulatory body for advertising agencies and practitioners in Nigeria

Public Relations agency has experts in the area of publicity and with the ability to generate events that will be driven by media exposure. These events relevance are determined by the media slots and exposure provided by the Public relations experts that developed them for a client. Some of these well thought out events can be TV or Radio programme, Big Brother Naija, Nigeria Idol and events around women day, environment day or Cancer day. Public Relations agency help build activities on behalf of client around chosen event with the logo, colour and other objects that represent the sponsor. The Media will then be invited to cover the event with different story angles for a particular event in order to give maximum publicity in favour of the client.

Nigerian institute of Public Relations NIPR, is saddled with the responsibility of regulating Public Relations practice in Nigeria. The institute has the power to register and determine who should be a practitioner, regulate the practice of Public Relations and monitor professionals conduct Asemah, Kente, Nkwam-Uwaoma & Amah (2021). P304. Public Relations consultants' association of Nigeria defined PR practice as the provision of specified technical and creative services by an individual or group of individuals qualified by reason of experience or training with legal backing. Asemah, Kente, Nkwam-Uwaoma & Amah (2021, p308).

Public Relations agency according to tuckerhall.com, is a communication firm that works to influence public opinion about businesses and their products. Forbes.com (2013) Public Relations agency promote companies or individuals via editorial coverage. This comes in form free publicity on pages of Newspapers, newsletters, T programmes. Radio Programmes and websites. The editorial coverage part of it means comes with third party endorsement which gave it credibility.

Theoretical Framework

This work aligned with **Agency relationship theory** by Eisenhardt (1989) which stated that agreement is established between an advertising agency and an advertiser, when the later gets the blessing of the former to develop a creative material, determine the best media to expose it based on the advertiser's approval and such material exposed. Agency relationship theory opined that advertising agency must take the interest of the advertiser far higher than her own in all business transactions she carries out on behalf of the principal.

System theory of Public Relations also apply to this study. System theory by Ludwig Von Bertalanffy (1940) as it relates to public relations states that practitioners should all the time put into consideration developments within their environment and apply to the practice of Public Relations, it stated the importance of putting in place the right mechanism to measure the right audience feedback in all publicity efforts. According to the theory, the human environment is not only dynamic but progressive so public relations agency should continue embrace modern tools to achieve good result.

Methodology

This work will make use of oral interview of advertising and Public relations practitioners with good experience at advertising and Public Relations agencies, observation of target audience to publicity materials from advertising and public relations agencies, and the impression of affected Mass Communication students towards the course " Advertising and Public Relations Agencies". And relevant advertising and related case study. A relevant and related case study to this work is the press Easter greetings advertisement by a commercial bank in April 2022 to Nigerians. In the highly creative material, the advertising agency likened the resurrection of Jesus Christ to Agege Bread. The print advertisement as published

reads [“ Like Agege Bread, He Rose” Happy Easter]. The advertisement was highly criticised as it attracted the following comments from different people:

Comments and reactions to the advertisement

“ When Creativity becomes a Sterling Blasphemy”

“ The management of the Bank of the Bank has succeeded in demarketing the Bank by this stupid advert”

“ This is no creativity, it is purely an act of insanity ”

“ They lack knowledge”

“ I just wonder why Sterling Bank decided to stoke the religious fire with such blasphemous advert message”

“ This is one creative mileage misguided and deserving of serious reprimand ”

There was an extract in form of advice from one of the comments that the bank should adhere to and that is “ Definitely the bank has the herculean task to prove that it meant no harm comparing Agege Bread and the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

APCON: Advertising practitioners’ council of Nigeria, the regulating body for advertising in Nigeria also condemned the advertisement by issuing a statement signed by Registrar and the Chief Executive of the council. Below is APCON response to the advertisement

A situation like this must be attended to in a fast and recommended way by crisis management experts, **Rosa Gonzalez, PR & Comms at byhours** suggested that a high ranking person in the affected organisation should send out a statement to handle negative effect on the organisation. **Kate Lucadamo of Mercury Public Affairs**, strongly advised that affected organisations should employed the services of crisis management experts, especially for firms that has distrust and fear of journalists. This according to Kate, this will prevent irreversible reputation damage.

Jennifer Donahoe of PR & Social Media director at Planit Agency poited out that in a situation like this, silence is not golden, because it will be seen as indifference and affirmation of guilt. This according to her will allow critics and the media define the situation for your firm which is bad. [<https://learn.g2.com>]

APCON was established by Decree 55 of 1988, later renamed act 55 of 1988. [<https://ng.linkedin.com>]

APCON FUNCTIONS IN NIGERIA

- ❖ Promoting responsible and ethical advertising practice
- ❖ Act as the conscience of the society in commercial communications matters
- ❖ Register advertising practitioners
- ❖ Manage the needs and interest of stakeholders in Nigeria's advertising industries

Advertising Agency Structure

Ohaegbu 2015 broke down advertising agency structure as stated below:

- ❖ Admin department
- ❖ Client Service Department
- ❖ Creative department
- ❖ Media department
- ❖ Planning & Research
- ❖ Production Department

The administrative department handles administrative and HR functions; the client service manages the accounts that the agency service. The client service executives that works under a director serve as intermediary between the clients and the advertising agency, the client service get creative briefs from the client and bring them back to the agency to debrief the creative team. Butterworth-Heinemann (2005) described creative brief from the client, as the most important information issued by a client to the agency. This document contains the exact assignment the agency is expected to carry out and the direction. The client service unit carry out the assignment of debriefing the creative team with the client's brief, this is done during brain storming session. According to mindmanager.com, brainstorming by team members help generate innovative ideas that can be refined and fussed together in order proffer solution to advertising and marketing needs. [<https://blog.mindmanager.com>]

Creative department is referring to as the egg head unit of the agency, the department has among others creative professionals, visual artist and copy writers. Copy writers develop creative writings that are match with quality visual presentations that becomes artworks for print insertions and story board for television advertisement

The media department determine the best media strategy to expose the advertisement material. In the media plan strategy, detailed information about media selection based on the target audience, the number of spots / insertions and the exact locations for the billboard sites. Bakare (2005) described media buying services as a specialised way to purchase and package media space and time, according to him, media specialists negotiate for discount from media houses and resell to willing advertising agencies and advertisers. This is done with good value for money to both the advertisers and advertising agencies.

Bloomads.com described media planning as the act of selecting the best media platforms for a marketing campaigns, which is anchored on the best combination of media to achieve marketing campaign objectives [<https://www.bloomads.com>]

Media department help generate money for advertising agency through creative media buying and commission, the modern and scientific media trend in recent years is so complex and huge that it has developed into the establishment of media independent agencies.

Planning and research department help carry out research after been debriefed by the client service unit concerning client's product or service, the department mandate is to embark on research concerning affected products in terms of competition, price, best media outlet and other issues that that will enable advertising agency develop productive and result oriented advertising campaign.

Production departments is responsible for the translation of radio copy into tapes to be aired at radio stations, story boards into TV commercials and also liaise with external and bigger production house for tasks that cannot be handled by the advertising agency. Billboard productions and printing are done outside the agency.

Public Relations Agency Structure

Public Relations agency has less departments compared to advertising agency and it's usually headed by a chief executive officer with good knowledge of all areas of public relations. The major departments in a PR are:

- ❖ Administrative department
- ❖ Client service department
- ❖ Media Relations department

Administrative department: This unit is under the office of the Chief executive officer, it comprises the secretariat, Human resources and the finance sections.

Creative department: The client service department is the unit responsible for discussing with the clients and getting jobs for the agency, this same unit is also responsible for managing the existing accounts.

Media department: This department is as important as the client service, sometimes more important in a well organised Public relations agency because almost all activities of PR agency centres around planning and media exposures. Staff of this department are trained staff with good knowledge of corporate relations, community relations, media placement / monitoring and many other areas of PR functions.

Large corporations Public Relations Department

There are some big corporations in Nigeria with a well-established and large PR department than many PR agencies. A good example will be NNPC Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation with a full blown Group Public Affairs division. This corporation has different staff that handles Community relations, corporate relations, investment relations both within and outside the country. There are also staff responsible for public information, public affairs and lobby when it comes national assembly matters.

The term Public Affairs department is used by NNPC as against Public Relations used by other private organisations. The reasons why there is difference in nomenclature despite the facts that they carry out similar functions both in government and private organisation are stated below.

Functions	Public Relations Department [Private Org]	Public Affairs Department [Government Org]
Source of Finance	Banks, other financial institutions and private organisations prefer PR departments because they are private institutions that must generate funds through	NNPC and other government organisations like MDA derive their funding from government budgetary allocation, so they worry less about

	the services they render with profits.	funding but focus more on execution of approved projects.
Community Relations	Private organisations are not restricted in doing community relations in there Public Relations activities, they can focus more on other areas.	NNPC for example must be involved in community relations with the oil companies they do joint venture with in the various communities they drill crude oil in Niger Delta. NPHCDA [National Primary Health Care Development Agency] is a government agency that her PR unit must always reach out to their various publics with provision from government budgetary allocation to the agency. The agency do reach out to communities through different community relations efforts to improve their health..
Lobby	Private organisations sometimes do lobby relevant publics that are strategic to their functions but not up to the level with government institution.	These government agencies are involved in lobbying to get things done for their agencies and ministries, especially at national assembly.

There are big organisations with Public Relations departments but still make use of outside PR agencies, this style is encouraged because the external agencies will

be more objective in their presentation to the management compared to the internal staff ..

How Advertising and Public relations agencies contribute to brand management and developments

Brand Development Terms	Advertising Agency	Public Relations Agency
Brand Building	With advertisement exposure, the advertiser must be known.	PR help build and nurture products and services mainly with third party which is mainly through editorial efforts
IMC Billings	In terms of billing and execution of projects, advertising agency put in more efforts and human resources especially in the areas media planning and placement. Advertising agency do media placement based on the rate cards of media organisations and charge fees on commission which range between 15 to 25% depending on the volume of transactions. Meaning that advertising agencies generate bulk of their revenue from media placement	Public relations agency effort is directed mainly at media strategy and placement. With PR, stories and media exposure for clients are achieved through goodwill and quality relationship with media organisations. Meaning that with PR, agency spend less in executing projects compare to advertising. Billings is amount of client money agency spend on media placement and other equivalent activities, billings is also used to assess and determined the financial strength and size of an agency

		[George E Belch & Micheal A. Belch 1990]
Publicity measurement	Advertising efforts can be easily measured because they come in sizes with print media, and seconds / minutes with the electronic media	It is difficult and complex to really measure PR exposure. Though many professionals have tried and efforts are still ongoing to measure stories based on size especially as it is done in print media.
Regulation	In terms of regulation, advertising is more restrictive, for example you cannot advertise alcohol on TV before 10pm in Nigeria. There is also ban on cigarette advertising.	PR always find means to avoid this ban by giving adequate publicity in different forms to events and sponsorships of these restrictive products on a 24 hours basis

**Public Relations and Advertising studio for Mass Communication Department
 PRAD Studio**

In line with the unbundling of Mass Communication programme by the National University Commission, Mass Communication PRAD studio should be managed like a normal Advertising and PR agencies with Client service, Creative and Media units. It should be supervised by professionals with the good knowledge of APCON and NIPR regulatory functions. Here, students should be taken through the process of taking briefs from the clients and debriefing the in-house professionals at the agency which is the studio. Brain storming session is to be done immediately after debriefing in order to determine the best creative option and effective media deployment to achieve good result for the client. Creative Items that should be in the PRAD studio are

- ❖ Rate cards of radio, press, TV and outdoor organisations

- ❖ Illuminated table to process and view press illustration, and story board materials
- ❖ Samples of published media relations materials and advertising / PR briefs
- ❖ Electronic board with projector to analyse, review and critic radio and TV clips
- ❖ Advertising, PR and relevant IMC materials

PRAD students should know how to evaluate advertising and PR campaigns, it also important for them to know the relevant bodies recognised by the regulators, bodies like

AAAN: Advertising agency association of Nigeria

OAAN: Outdoor advertising agencies of Nigeria

MIPAN: Media Independent Practitioners association of Nigeria

PRACAN: Public Relations consultants association of Nigeria

Online Advertising agency: this is an agency that promote and project advertiser's brands and services using digital platforms including Search engine Optimisation (SEO). [<https://www.webfx.com>]

Online PR agency : this is a PR firm that deploy digital resources provided by online media to create good image for clients and their products

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