

**APPLICATION OF PUBLIC RELATIONS AS A MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY
TOWARDS THE ERADICATION OF SMOKING AND ALCOHOLISM AMONG YOUTHS IN ABIA
STATE – NIGERIA.**

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ABSTRACT

Excessive use of alcohol and cigarettes have over the years posed serious problems to the society. It has resulted in abuse. People, especially the youths are deeply involved in these habits for many reasons. But whatever the reason, alcohol intake and cigarette smoking has been proven by experts and organizations to be hazardous to the human health. Furthermore, people under the influence of these vices sometimes constitute nuisance for themselves and the environment. Accidents have taken place and several lives lost just because someone was drunk- driving. This study focuses on youths in Abia State. It is based on these that the researcher sought to find ways in which public relations as a marketing communication tools could be used to influence the attitude of **Abia youths towards Smoking and Alcoholism**. The data collection strategy for this study is via questionnaires. The results emanating from the findings suggest that the mass media as a public relations strategy to a great extent influences the attitudes of Abia youths towards Smoking and Alcoholism. Again, the study also revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between the use of seminars as a public relations strategy and attitude of Abia youths towards alcohol and cigarette smoking in Abia State. The researcher recommends amongst others that the mass media (TV, radio, newspapers and magazines), both local, regional and national must be improved to bolter communication towards creating more awareness about the dangers of smoking and alcoholism. And also that seminar shall be conducted to meet with the community members one-on-one to enlighten them about the effects of smoking and abuse of alcohol.

Keywords: Agenda setting theory, Media richness theory, Public relations, Alcoholism, Cigarette smoking and RACE model.

INTRODUCTION

Tobacco is one of the most dangerous health problems in the world (Dereje, Abazinad and Girma, 2014). Alcohol on its own causes a lot of damage to the human brain (Sullivan, Harris and Pfefferbaum, 2010). It had been revealed that smoking and alcoholism are the major risk factors that lead to cardiovascular and other diseases (Awosan, Ibrahim, Essien, Yusuf, and Okolo, 2014).

One of the greatest discoveries of man is the therapeutic use of drugs (cigarette and alcohol) to cure his ailment, to excite him when he is dull, to slim him when he is fat, to expand him when he is thin and to put him to sleep when he is awake. Thus, since time immemorial, man is known to be using cigarette and alcohol and learning to depend on their usage by various societies in the world to relieve pain, escape reality, to alter perception, provide pleasurable sensation and find the assumed meaning to life. Alcohol and cigarette smoking remains a huge public health problem and is still one of the leading preventable causes of death worldwide (adeyeye, 2011). "Smoking is one of the most common forms of recreational drug use. Smoking is a practice in which a substances such as, tobacco, marijuana or cannabis is burned and the smoke tasted or inhaled" (Akintaro, 2015). He tagged it a menace to Nigerian adolescents. .It is a very widespread activity and consumption of alcohol and cigarette has today reached the level of global epidemic (Can, Topbas, Oztuna, Ozgun and Can, 2009). Young people use alcohol and smoking habits as a way of rebelling against parents or authority, to feel like adults, to fit in and belong to a group of other youths, to satisfy their curiosity, and to simply derive pleasure from the short-term effects of alcohol and cigarettes. Abusers with underlying social or psychological problems are particularly at high risk for these substances.

Alcohol and cigarette where they are not used correctly, they produce unacceptable consequences to the user's mental health. They affect the individuals' health and welfare, which interfere with the educational and social well-being or productivity that have an adverse effect in some institutions leading to examination malpractices, bribery and corruption, anti-social tendencies including assassinations, cultism and rape. Arnold, Shelly, Jan, Olivia, Armen and Zung (2007) support this statement and added that cigarette smoking had astronomically increased among college students in the US. This more often results to loss of all powers such as powers of discernment discretion of discriminating judgment and criticism of moral relevance of an existing norm or practice, all these results to moral decadence of the youths that sometimes destroy their mental balance. The youths suffer the negative effect of drugs (alcohol and cigarette) which has been identified to be responsible for the altered behavioral patterns now observable among many students in higher institutions.

Drug abuse has the implications of contributing to students' poor performance in school, student dropout, low resistance to infectious diseases and a variety of neurological and mental syndrome. Thus, they take drugs for many reasons. Some take it because of peer pressure or influence, to relieve stress, to increase energy, to relax, to relieve pain, to escape reality, to feel more self-esteem and for recreation. For all these reasons, regulatory agencies such as the National Agency for Foods, Drugs Administration and Control (NAFDAC) and the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) are set up by the government to control the production, distribution and consumption of foods and drugs in Nigeria. In addition, they have also adopted many public relations strategies in changing the attitudes of youth towards alcohol and cigarette consumption

It is in the light of the above, the researcher sought to examine the application of public relations strategies in changing the attitudes of youths to alcohol and smoking in Abia State.

Statement of the problem

There are high cases of illicit smoking and alcohol consumption among youths in Nigerian society

(Ebirim, Amadi, Abanobi and Iloh (2014). This behavior as a result of youth unrest has assumed a dangerous dimension that every stakeholder of the educational system and the nation at large are at crossroads. This attitude is common among the youth considered to be leaders of tomorrow. Alcohol and cigarette smoking remains a huge public health problem and is still one of the leading preventable causes of morbidity and mortality worldwide. Obi, Osang, Ewona, Udoimuk, and Kamgba (2013) revealed in their study that majority of patients that were suffering from lung malfunctioning, heart attack, cancer, respiratory diseases and asthma had had record of bad smoking habits. Young people use alcohol and smoking habits as a way of rebelling against parents or authority, to feel like adults and to belong to a group of other youths, to satisfy their curiosity, and to simply derive pleasure from the short-term effects of alcohol and cigarettes. Alcohol and cigarette where they are not used correctly, they produce unacceptable consequences to the user's mental health. They affect the individuals' health and welfare, which interfere with the educational and social well-being or productivity that have an adverse effect in some institutions leading to examination malpractices, bribery and corruption, anti-social tendencies including assassinations, cultism and rape. These are common in our campuses due to the unfortunate involvement of youth in the habit of alcoholism and cigarette smoking. Drug (alcohol and cigarette) abuse often results to loss of all powers such as powers of discernment, discretion of discriminating judgment and criticism of moral relevance of an existing norm or practice, all these results to moral decadence of the youths that sometimes destroy their mental balance. The youths suffer the negative effect of drugs (alcohol and cigarette) which has been identified to be responsible for the altered behavioral patterns now observable among many students in higher institutions.

Enough is not been propagated in terms of marketing communication projected on the youth to change this abusive and absurd attitude that damages the health of our youths and therefore reduce their longevity. This area of adopting public relations as a marketing communication strategy is the lacuna that most researchers could not fill. If drug abuse continues, the abusers may end up not doing well and may drop out of school, suffer from sundry tobacco related ailments or even result to death. The study provides public relations strategies for preventing and changing the attitudes of Abia youths towards the illicit consumption of alcohol and cigarette.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study are to find out:-

1. The extent to which mass media as a public relations strategy influence the attitudes of youths towards alcohol and cigarette smoking in Abia state.
2. The nature of relationship between public speaking/seminars and attitudes of youths towards alcohol and cigarette smoking in Abia state..

Research Questions

The following are the research questions:

1. What is the extent to which mass media as a public relations strategy influence the attitude of youths towards alcohol and cigarette in Abia State?
2. What is the nature of relationship between public seminars as a public relations strategies and attitudes of youths towards alcohol and cigarette smoking in Abia State?

Research Hypotheses

The following are the research hypotheses:

1. Mass media as a public relations strategy to a great extent influences attitudes of youths in Abia State.
2. There is a significant positive relationship between public seminars as a public relations strategies and attitudes of youths towards alcohol and cigarette smoking in Abia State.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Conceptual Framework

Public Relations Conceptual Overview

Public relations is one of the most difficult concepts to define. The reason for this is not farfetched. This is because it seems so easy to understand and yet quit difficult to describe in practical terms. Also, many people including public relations practitioners believe they have come up with many different definitions. Experts say there are more than six hundred recorded definitions, some of which are going to be examined here (Nwosu, 2001). Nwosu (2001) offers the non-sensical and common-sensical definitions of public relations. For him, the non-sensical definition is a wrong and bizarre one as it is a total misconception, misrepresentation and total absurdity to the tenets of public relations. He cited the offering of bribe to or from government officials in Nigeria as an example of what is regarded as PR. Similarly, but relatedly, he defined the common-sensical as managing and re-engineering consent. Secondly, he defined PR as doing good and getting credit for the good you did or making sure you get caught in the act. "Public relations practice is the art and science of achieving harmony with the environment through mutual understanding based on truth and full information" (Black, 1990). Oluwasina (2012) had a definition by Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) which defined PR "as a deliberate, planned, and sustained effort aimed at establishing and maintaining goodwill and mutual understanding between an organization and its publics. Nwosu (2001) intellectually dramatized the planned and organized nature of PR when he categorically stated that PR is not gimmick, window dressing, flimflam, showmanship, hit-and-run, touch-and-go, fire fighting, fire brigade, a chance affair, but rather a deliberately planned effort towards establishing a two-way symmetrical relationships between an organization and its various publics. PR is not guesswork, misses or near misses, one-shot approach but rather a double-barrelled and rifle approach aimed at building and sustaining a harmonious relationship between an organization and the publics. PR is a management function that builds and sustains corporate image and reputation (Nwosu and Nkanebe, 2006).

Nwosu (1996) defines Public relations as the management function which evaluates public attitudes, identifies the policies and procedures of an organization with the public interest, and executes a programme of action to earn public understanding and acceptance. A definition generally agreed upon and worldly accepted, in Mexico, 1978, popularly termed "The Mexican Statement" goes thus: Public relations is the art and social science of analyzing trends, predicting their consequences, counseling organizational leaders, and implementing planned programme of action which will serve both the organization and the public interest. Public relations is a planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organization and its publics (Institute of Public Relations, 2004). These standard definitions

conspicuously indicate the systematic nature of modern public relations containing most of the functions of the profession. Lattimore, Baskin, Heiman and Toth (2009) define public relations as “a leadership and management function that helps achieve organizational objectives, define philosophy, and facilitate organizational change”. According to them, public relations professionals communicates with the relevant stakeholders (internal and external publics) to establish positive relationship and goodwill to generate positive reportage from the media to position it better in the mind of the publics as a corporate citizen.

History of Public Relations

Public relations as a discipline and as a management function had come a long way. Adekunle (1993) describe the origin thus-

In the United State, the first publicity firm, the Publicity Bureau was founded by George Michaelis in 1900. However, Ivy Ledbetter Lee has the credit of pioneering PR in the US. This is probably because of his famous “Declaration of Principles”, the theme of which was that the public can no longer be fooled in information management band dissemination. In Britain, Sir Stephen Tallent got the credit for organizing PR in 1926. Nigeria was to experience the waves of Public relations later in 1940, during World War II. It evolved from the information office in Lagos which was which was established by the colonial government. The task of this office was to disseminate information of the war. The name “Information Office” was changed to PR Office in 1944. The change of name came about because there were people who conceived the Information Office as a Police Detective arm. In 1947, the PR Office was renamed as PR Department, and Regional Offices in Ibadan and Enugu were opened in 1958. As the government activities were expanding into the hinterland (grassroots in today’s parlance), the PR Department became a strong force in using the local press to inform people about government plans. As government recognized the importance of PR in administration of the country, so did the private sector yearn for a piece of the action. And in 1949 the United African Company, now UACN, came up with the first PR outfit in this sector. That outfit metamorphosed from an Information Department in the UAC network into a full fledged PR Department in 1960. According to Mr Michael Okereke, the Group PR Adviser of the UACN, the company defines PR as “a continuous effort on behalf of the company to promote the best possible understanding of its policies, activities and social attitude among those who can influence its development”. That therefore is how the company mobilizes its public and receives their goodwill, support and cooperation which combine to create a favourable business environment. Shell BP came up with her own PR Department in 1969. The PR activities of Shell embrace” all activities relating to relations between the company, on the one hand,

and the government of the federation, local community, the press, commercial organization, educational institutions and the other sectors of the public, on the other hand". Like UACN, Shell's objective foe fostering these relations was to ensure constant existence of unobstructed channels of communication with these publics, thus creating an atmosphere of understanding and cooperation. Without any fear of contradiction, I want to say that the unparalleled consistent records of success which these companies have achieved would not have been possible without effective use of PR at the management level".

Public Relations Functions

Nwosu (2001) enumerates the following functions of PR-

- a. Corporate information and communication management
- b. Research and evaluation
- c. Planning
- d. Publication
- e. Writing
- f. Special event
- g. Protocol
- h. Employee relations and industrial relations
- i. Government relations and public affairs
- j. Media relations
- k. Marketing support
- l. Investor and financial relations
- m. Community relations and corporate social responsibility
- n. Issues and crises management

Public Relations Strategies

Public relations strategies are the techniques, approaches or methods by which public relations activities are carried out with the aim of establishing, promoting and sustaining mutually beneficial relationship between organizations and their publics. An organization will be whatever the chief executive wants it to be. If the chief executive could make his organization visible to key publics, he too will be visible. The extent of visibility and credibility, however, depends on the blending of the techniques adopted, which will be influenced by the positioning of the institution and the strategic choice. These strategies are used as arrowhead to win the communication war. This is because, businesses are in dynamic competition and firms want to develop a comparative cum competitive advantage over their competitors who offer similar, or even different products.

Mass Media

The mass media play an influential role in our lives. They are a sine qua non as a day cannot pass by without someone listening to the radio, watching TV, reading newspapers and magazines, looking at the billboards, as well as surfing the internet (Liu, 2016). It promotes environmental

education (Vibha, 2015). It mass media refers to the means of communication through which messages are relayed or conveyed to a large group of people known as the audience. They include TV, radio, newspapers, magazines, billboard etc. The mass media are very powerful publicity, public enlightenment and awareness creation tools. Government information and public relations' managers must therefore, know how to apply the mass media optimally in trying to achieve publicity and public enlightenment objectives for their organizations and their clients. The mass media has a colossal role in informing, educating, entertaining and dramatizing people, organizations and the government (Farzalipour, Akalan, Tuncel, Ghorbanzadeh, Kashef, Zadeh and Hajizadeh, 2012). They should also know how to relate to and work with reporters, editors and other media practitioners. Kheeshadeh (n.d.) states that "Mass media include all forms of information communicated to large groups of people, from a handmade sign to an international news network. There is no standard for how large the audience needs to be before communication becomes "mass" communication. There are also no constraints on the type of information being presented. A car advertisement and a U.N. resolution are both examples of mass media".

To achieve success in their mass media publicity efforts, they must understand the strengths and weaknesses of the various mass media through extensive media characteristics analysis and media research. They must also know how to use press conferences, interviews and media appearances/panel discussions to publicize their products, services, ideas and others. Also, they must know how to produce and use films, videos, photographs, press releases, media contents like editorials, commentaries, magazines and other television programmes in trying to achieve their public enlightenment and publicity objectives. Fog (2004) opines that the mass media is the root of democracy in the world. This is for the sole reason that the media is responsible for passing the information that allow the voters to make an informed decision on their most credible and qualified candidate. They are the societal watchdogs as they disclose those who perpetrate crime in the society. "Media are the vehicles or channels which are used to convey information, entertainment, news, education, or promotional messages are disseminated. Media includes every broadcasting and narrowcasting medium such as television, radio, newspapers, billboards, mails, telephone, fax, internet etc (the main means of mass communication)" (Hakim, Akhtar and Hakeem, 2014). Hakim et al. enumerate the media functions as –

- ✚ Media provide news and information required by the people.
- ✚ Media can educate the public.
- ✚ Media helps a democracy function effectively. They inform the public about government policies and programmes and how these programmes can be useful to them. This helps the people voice their feelings and helps the government to make necessary changes in their policies or programmes.
- ✚ Media can entertain people.
- ✚ Media can act as an agent of change in development.
- ✚ Media has brought people of the world closer to each other.
- ✚ Media promote trade and industry through advertisements.
- ✚ Media can help the political and democratic processes of a country.
- ✚ Media can bring in positive social changes.

The mass media will do a lot in communicating to Abia youths on the dangers of smoking cigarette and alcohol abuse.

Seminars

One of the tools that have been found most useful particularly in educational public relations is the conduct of seminars. A seminar is a public relations event where the public are communicated about an important issue concerning an organization. Such events might be to teach or educate a target audience about the benefits derivable from the purchase of a product, how to use a product, how much a product will cost, or even to help them change a negative attitude that might constitute danger to them or even make them nuisance to the entire society. It is a special event organized with a view to providing more information through learned speakers on an issue to a particular audience. It can be used to encourage customers to purchase goods and services and also to urge staff of an organization to improve on their professional skills (Gecikli, 2014). One main advantage is that the audience is in a captive state and thus, is likely to be more receptive to the discussion. Most public relations expert make use of seminars to reach their audience on critical issue affecting their organizations (Hatzios, 2003).

Public Relations Strategic Planning Model

Model in the context of this chapter can be seen simply as a theoretical construct used to describe and explain complex phenomena or processes usually to guide understanding, decision and action (Nwosu, 1996). They are based usually on research or long practical field experience, or both. The public relations models we shall tightly discussed in this chapter fit into the above conception of models. Oluwasina (2012) describe the following public relations models-

a) ADDSBA Model: This acronym is built from its components. It is model that explains the public relations processes and applications. This is because it can be applied by public relations practitioners as a practical model used for systematic planning and execution of specific public relations projects or programmes. A stands for Appreciation of the situation, first D stands for Definition of the problem, second D stands for Definition of the publics, S stands for Strategies, B stands for Budgeting, A stands for Assessment.

b) RACE Model: This is an acronym built from its components. It is at the same time an explanatory model in that it tries to explain the public relations process, and an applicatory model because it can be applied by public relations practitioners as a practical model that can be used as guide in systematically planning and executing specific public relations projects or programmes. In the model, R stands for Research, A stands for Action, C stands for Communication and E stands for Evaluation. These four elements of the model are no doubt among the major activities that must be well handled, if a public relations programme, problem or project is to be successfully dealt with.

c) Transfer Model: This is a model which explains and shows how public relations can be used or applied to change hostility among an organization's target publics to sympathy, prejudice to acceptance, apathy to interest, and ignorance to knowledge. It can be used or applied as a guide in handling specific public relations problems or project, and can also be used as a guide or frame

work for planning and executing the overall public relations programme of any organization or corporate entity.

d) IPCM or OP-Matrix model: This is a theoretical model, as well as an operational or applied model that can guide action in public relations practice. The model which is also called Operations Matrix highlights four major elements the public relations manager should pay adequate attention to in carrying out his responsibilities or executing specific projects. These are: I stands for Information gathering, processing and application, P which stands for Public Affairs Management, C which stands for Communications Management and M which stands for Marketing.

e) RICEE Model: This model deals with the topical issues of environmental public relations or how public relations can be applied in managing or controlling environmental issues and problems. In the model, R stands for Research, I stands for Information, C stands for Communication, first E stands for Education, while the second E stands for Evaluation. RICEE is more or less a public enlightenment or mass mobilization model of public relations.

Alcoholism

Over the years, alcohol as a beverage had been a part of people's way of life as it is used for entertainment in social gatherings such as birthdays, weddings, open house parties, naming ceremonies, meetings, festivals etc. The consumption of alcohol among college students is quite alarming (Adekeye, Adeusi, Chenube, Ahmadu, and Sholarin, 2015). History has it that man consume alcohol to quench their thirst for any substance that could make them intoxicated and help relieve from stress. Most drinkers feel that alcohol give them a sense of pleasure and entertainment. But instead of imbibing alcohol purportedly to guarantee pleasure, most youth began to take the overdose; abuse of alcohol. Alcohol abuse is by far the most widespread form of drug abuse in our society, because it is humanity's oldest and most widely known drug of abuse, such as gin (alcohol), beer (alcohol), table wine (alcohol) and palm wine (alcohol). Unemployment could lead to indulgence in alcoholism (Essien and Onukwubiri, 2015). Alberta Health Services (2014) highlight the effects of alcohol thus:

The Brain

The most immediate effects of drinking can be seen in the brain. Alcohol restricts a number of brain functions by depressing the central nervous system. At first, the effects may be pleasurable. There could be a reduction in stress and inhibitions, and a sensation of either calm or excitement. As drinking continues, other observable effects on the brain include slowed reaction times, impaired memory, and trouble with movement or co-ordination. As the blood alcohol concentration rises, the brain's motor and sensory centres are affected, contributing to difficulty with co-ordination and fine motor functions. A person's reaction time also slows down. Alcohol intoxication affects speech and thought processes. Cognitive and verbal skills are diminished, as well as the ability to resolve conflicts. This can contribute to a greater likelihood of aggressive behaviour. The immediate and short-term effects on the brain are usually less pronounced in regular drinkers because of an increased tolerance for

alcohol. This tolerance is both metabolic (the liver processes the alcohol more quickly and efficiently) and functional (the person learns to compensate for the deficits caused by alcohol). Nevertheless, the long-term effects of alcohol are harmful and people with a higher alcohol tolerance often drink excessively.

The Young Brain

Researchers have found that the brain continues to develop during adolescence and into one's twenties and that drinking affects the area of the brain responsible for learning and memory. This makes the brains of adolescents more vulnerable to alcohol-related damage than adult brains. Furthermore, there are several factors that increase the risk of developing an alcohol use disorder later in life, including drinking at a younger age and binge drinking. For more information about alcohol and young people, please refer to the resource in this series titled *Alcohol and Adolescents*.

The Endocrine System

As alcohol levels rise, the pituitary gland reduces secretions of the hormone that maintains the body's proper hydration level. When the kidneys are no longer able to reabsorb sufficient water from the urine, the body ends up eliminating more water than it absorbs, which causes dehydration. The symptoms of dehydration are fatigue, back and neck pain, and headaches.

The Heart and Cardiovascular System

Just one or two standard drinks can affect heart rate, blood pressure, circulation and contractions of the heart muscle, including the heart's ability to pump blood through the body. While these reactions are generally not clinically significant, they may be serious if an individual has pre-existing cardiovascular problems. Alcohol causes the small blood vessels beneath the skin to dilate, which increases blood circulation. Some heavy drinkers have a ruddy complexion because of dilated blood vessels. The dilation of blood vessels also causes heat loss, and a drop in body temperature. Contrary to popular belief, it is dangerous to drink alcohol to "warm up" when exposed to the cold. The Intestines As soon as alcohol is ingested, the intestines begin to secrete acid. As the blood alcohol concentration rises, secretions of pepsin, a digestive hormone, are reduced, leading to an irritation of the intestinal walls. This irritation can cause diarrhea.

Alcohol and Stress

Alcohol often goes hand-in-hand with, and even promotes, sociability, conversation, pleasure, and a sense of well-being. People may also experience a temporary reduction in stress. Although a small amount of alcohol may relieve stress in the short-term, it doesn't treat

the source of the stress. Studies have found that prolonged drinking increases anxiety and that, if stress levels remain high, alcohol dependency may result. For more information on alcohol and mental illness, please refer to the resource in this series titled *Alcohol and Mental Illness*.

Alcohol and Sleep

Alcohol is often thought of as a sleep aid. While it may help one fall asleep, alcohol interrupts normal sleep cycles, which can cause frequent sleep interruptions, and may intensify existing sleep problems. For more information on alcohol and sleep, please refer to the resource in this series titled *Alcohol and Sleep*.

Alcohol and Sex

Alcohol can cause or aggravate sexual problems. Drinking to excess can make it difficult for men to achieve an erection and for women to achieve orgasm.

Alcohol and Breastfeeding

The level of alcohol in breast milk is the same as the level in the blood and alcohol intake can decrease milk production. The safest choice a woman can make is to avoid drinking alcohol while breastfeeding. Women who choose to drink alcohol while breastfeeding can consult a healthcare provider to find out how they can reduce their infant's exposure to alcohol through breast milk.

They conclude thus "Alcohol's effects on the human body are complex. There are many individual factors that influence both its absorption and elimination in the body. After drinking alcohol, the impact on the brain is immediate and as drinking continues, the kidneys, heart, and intestines are also affected. It is important to be aware of the interaction between our bodies and alcohol to help make informed choices about alcohol use". Alcohol intoxicates and instead of being a stimulant as the drinkers might think, it rather becomes a depressant. Although alcoholic consumption has not received the required attention, the rate of abuse is on the increase (Ajila, 2001). Alcohol abuse is also a pattern of drinking that result in health consequences, social problems, or both. The abuse leads to effects; such as distorted vision, hearing, and coordination, altered perception, emotions and, impaired judgment, bad breathing, hangovers, loss of appetite, vitamin deficiencies, stomach ailments, liver damage, damage of heart and central nervous system and loss of memory. It also produces neurological damage, impaired memory, psychosis impotence, weakness, weight loss and dependency. Some of the social effects of alcohol include regular school or work absenteeism; uses drugs to 'remedy' negative feeling; begins to isolate from friends and family; may change peer group to others who are regular users; takes pride in noting increased tolerance and ability to handle the drug.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) in 2010 recorded a 34% intake of alcohol by adolescent especially those within the ages of between 15-19 years; noting that a higher proportion of them

are from Europe (Alex-Hart, Opara and Okagua, 2015). Evidently, alcohol is associated with many social and psychological problems. In spite of this, most alcohol researchers and professionals in prevention and treatment are not prohibitionists. They do not call for an outright bans on the production and marketing of the substance on the basis of moral values. The effect of alcohol is felt mostly in the brain, where it is associated with a verity of abnormalities. The prevalence of alcoholism has led to numerous social vices; rape, cultism, armed robbery, fighting and other social menace in the society (Bada and Adebisi, 2014). In their study “Alcohol Consumption Behaviour among Secondary School Students in Nigeria”, it was revealed that family background and religious inclinations have strong relationships with alcoholism among secondary school students in Ado Local government of Ekiti State. Alcoholism has strong relationship with social violence (Klingemann, 2001). Alcohol abuse leads to reckless driving, smoking, sexual abuse, etc and Onongha (2012) in his research “The Influence of some Factors on Alcohol Use and Abuse among Education Students of Osun State University, Nigeria” revealed that parents and students’ peerage influence their alcohol intake as it is perceived as a trendy lifestyle. Onongha also states that heavy intake of alcohol could result to liver problem and depression.

Cigarette Smoking

The rate at which people smoke cigarette is alarming in developing country as up to 80% of tobacco related deaths have been recorded (Odeyi, Okokon, Ogbeche, Jombo and Ekanem, 2012). According to them this increase in death toll has become a state of emergency as something has to be done before it is too late. Cigarette smoking is a huge public health menace and has been the remote cause of many deaths in the developing world (Raji, Abubakar, Oche and Kaoje (2013). It is really a growing health issue in the developing countries (Salawu, Danburam, Desalu, Olokoba, Agbo, and Midala, 2009). The human body, as everybody knows, needs food, water, exercise etc in order to be normally healthy. It does not require smoking. Many people smoke because they believe cigarettes calm their nerves, Smoking releases epinephrine, a hormone which creates physiological stress in the smoker, rather than relaxation. Smoking equally contributes to greenhouse gas effect. It pollutes the atmosphere (Obi et al, 2013). To clarify the situation, the comprehensive Drug Abuse prevention and control Act of 1970 repealed, replaced, or updated all previous federal laws concerned with narcotics and all other dangerous drugs. While possession was made illegal, the severest penalties were reserved for illicit distribution and manufacture of drugs. The act dealt with prevention and treatment of drug abuse as well as control of drug trafficking. The anti-Drug Abuse acts of 1986 and 1988 increased funding for treatment and rehabilitation. The 1988 act created the office of National Drug Control Policy.

Theoretical Framework

The Agenda Setting Theory

The media determines the direction of people’s thoughts and views concerning issues of public interest and discourse. It creates public awareness on issues of political, social, cultural, economic, technological and natural concern (Albalawi and Sixsmith, 2015). According to them, this theory is anchored on two major principles- “media shapes and filters reality before presenting it to people and these channels determine the priority with which individuals regard salient issues”. The media determines the salience of issue on public agenda (Luo, 2014). To Luo, any issue that

the media communicates to the public is perceived as germane. It serves as the natural gatekeeper to individual, government and corporate organisation's excesses. Agenda Setting Theory holds that the mass-media have a great influence on audiences by their choice of what stories to consider newsworthy and how much prominence, time and space to give them (McCombs, 2009). The Agenda Setting Theory's main postulate is *salience transfer*. "Research has focused on how the media set audience agenda, how political elites set media agendas, how media sources set each other's agendas, how nonelites set one another's agendas, and how all these parties influence perceptions of issue attribute. Since the beginning, the mass media have been the premier agents in setting nonelite agendas. While many agenda items originate with politicians and others considered to be politically newsworthy, they have traditionally been transmitted to citizens through journalistic intermediaries" (Freelon, 2012). Salience transfer is the ability of the mass-media to transfer issues of importance from their mass-media agenda to public agenda. The mass media has the capability to influence the decision of the masses on issues on public agenda (Nwokefor and Okunloye, 2013). To them, the media could *dictate what the people can think about but not, what to think*. . The agenda setting theory has become one of the most acknowledged theories of communication. The Theory which was propounded in 1972 by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw was derived from their study that took place in Chapel Hill North Carolina, U.S.A. where the researchers surveyed undecided voters during the 1968 US presidential campaign on what they thought were key issues and measured these against the actual media contents (Nwokefor and Okunloye, 2013).

The data or results they generated from the study helped them demonstrate empirical support for their main hypothesis. That hypothesis was that the mass-media positioned the agenda for public opinion by emphasizing specific issues and at the same time neglecting the other issues. This clearly demonstrated that proper use of various mass-media in communication campaigns to facilitate a positive behaviour change (negativity to positivity) would help the campaigns to be effective. This means that the mass media would help to force the issue involved in attitudinal change as regards alcohol and cigarette smoking into the public agenda and so influence their awareness, knowledge, opinions and attitude towards a better individual. The study will reveal to what extent the communication campaigns by the mass-media could be properly used for attitudinal change towards alcohol and cigarette smoking.

The Agenda Setting Theory shows therefore, that the media institutions usually help to tell the public what issues they need to have in their mind. Hence, it can be assumed that if a news or advertising medium is not successful, in directing people's thoughts, it is not doing what it is supposed to do in this day and age and will not be successful generally. Furthermore, the essence of this Theory is to show empirically that the audience usually learns from the mass media driven campaigns in direct proportion to the emphasis placed on those issues of the media campaigns. Ogbonna (2016) in his study "Agenda- Setting Role of the Nigerian Press: A Case Study of the Ebola Virus Disease Outbreak in Nigeria" discovered that "The findings of the study revealed among others that the Ebola Virus Disease was given significant coverage and that the issue received prominence in terms of story type, but not in the aspect of page placement. Albalawi and Sixsmith (2011) detail an agenda setting model proposed by Rogers and Dearing thus-

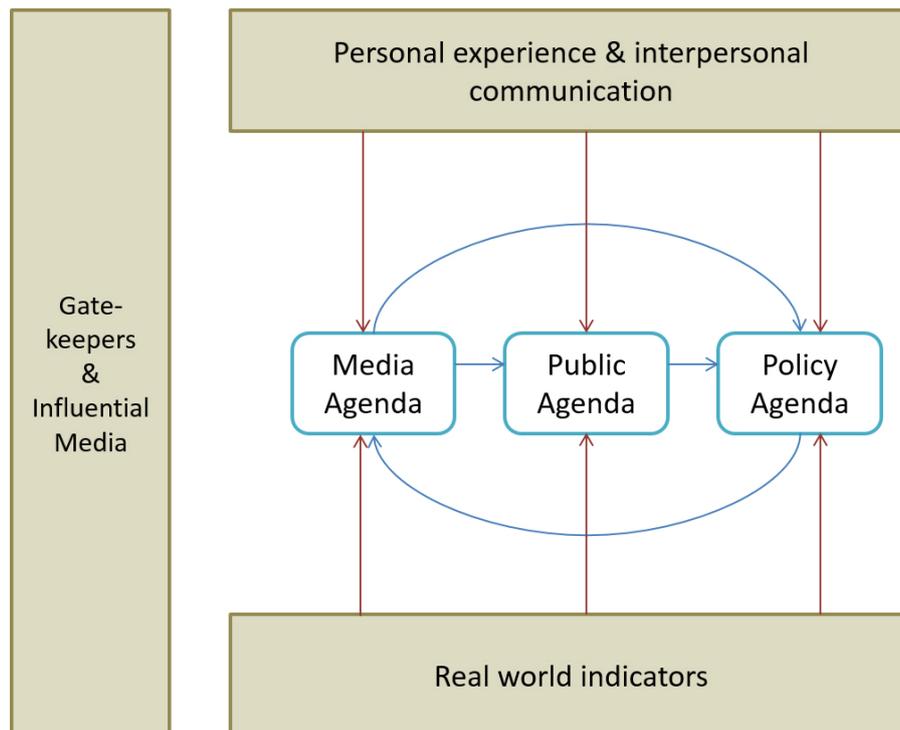


Fig. 1 Three Main Components of Agenda Setting Model: Albalawi, Y. and Sixsmith, J. (2015) "Agenda Setting for Health Promotion: Exploring an Adapted Model for the Social Media Era" *JMIR Public Health Surveill* vol. 1 issue 2.

These three components concern three different stakeholders. And these components are intertwined and their relationships form the basis for the agenda setting theory. First, the media agenda is concerned with the issues, discussions and the channel through which the media wants their messages to be communicated to members of the public. The public agenda has to do with what the public needs to hear about the government and the environment around them; and they may select the media based on 'uses and gratifications' (Oluwasina, 2012), while the policy agenda depicts the government concerns on issue that require public consumption.

Media Richness Theory

The paradigm shift in communication is the modern means of communication; the social media. The Media Richness Theory is applied to analyze or evaluate the power, viability, virility and robustness of the media to communicate to the audience in such a way that attitude and behaviour is either formulated or modified towards the adoption of a given idea, culture, goods and services. It is interested in determining the richness of a medium in conveying information that elicits change. It is the capacity of the media to process and project rich information (Lan, Hung and Hsu, 2011). "It focuses on individual medium choices and the message exchange of managers. MRT suggests that effective communication reduces uncertainty levels by achieving a good match between the chosen media and the level of ambiguity in a message" (Gu, Higa and Moodie, 2011). It means the propagation of individual and group media choices and alternatives as well as the message content and context of corporate managers. And also asserts that adequate communication reduces biases and doubts in the message content. Media Richness Theory

sometimes referred to as Information Richness Theory was developed by Daft and Lengel (2009). It is used to rank and evaluate the richness of certain communication mediums such as phone calls, TV, radio, newspapers and magazines, public speaking, face to face, town hall meetings, video conferencing and e-mail, Facebook, Twitter etc. For example, a phone call cannot reproduce visual cues such as gestures; it is a less rich communication medium than video conferencing which is able to communicate gestures to some extent. The media are ranked on the richness scale. While some ranked high, others are ranked low. Those that are ranked high are better equipped to handle doubts while those that are ranked low are more prone to biases and doubts. El-Shinnawy and Marcus (1997) demonstrated the contrast between email and vmail and, offered their support for vmail as being more credible than the former because of the audio content. In other words, email is only a written message. The theory states that the performance of an individual in communication is a byproduct of the relationship between the characteristics of the medium and the anticipated action expected from the audience (Brunelle, 2010). Brunelle remarks that Media Theory refers to the ability of the media to convey certain message to a given audience which is visualized through the media's capability to flexibly generate necessary feedback. Media Richness Theory states that the more ambiguous and uncertain a task is, the richer the format of media that suits it. It entails the ability of the media to pass information capable of changing people's understanding of a phenomenon (Daft and Lengel, 1986). People's understanding of a phenomenon based on media richness is a function of many interpersonal factors among which experience matters a lot (D'Urso and Rains, 2008). It further explains that richer, personal communication means are generally more effective for communication of equivocal issues than leaner, less rich media. This theory is used primarily to describe/evaluate communication medium within the organization. The goal is to cope with communication challenges facing organization, such as unclear or confusing messages. The empirical studies of the theory have often studied what medium a manager would choose to communicate, over, and not the effect of media use. The Facebook is a veritable management tool in terms of richness in communicating to the public in time of crises (Attouni and Mustaffa, 2014).

The most immediate and profound media richness theory is for senders choosing a communication medium. Senders that use less rich communication Media should understand the limitations of that medium in the dimension of feedback, multiple cues, message tailoring and emotions. Organizations may find that since e-mail is a less rich medium, they need to have face to face interaction with their workers to make important decisions. The theory states, the more important a message is to a receiver, the more rich a medium needed to communicate it. Different media, have varying benefits and drawbacks, some are more immediate than others and some mediums communicate vocal cues more accurate than others.

Since Media Richness Theory is the "ability of information to change understanding within a time interval" (Daft 2009), it is strongly believed to be the best medium for an individual or organization to communicate a message. This theory implies that effective and efficient communication depends on the type and nature of facility used. There is no one communication tool that can best suit every situation in changing the behaviour of workers and customers of an organization or members of a community. Different Communication tools, like speaking engagement, sponsorship, mediation, newsletters, speaking events, are for the purpose. It is the

nature of the message that determines the type of tool and technique to be used at any point in time. If information requires to be taken to the rural areas and grassroots, newsletters will be ineffective, instead the organizations/communities involved can organize a speaking engagement, sponsorship, speaking event, or special events. This is because the grassroots rural dwellers do not have the ability to read and write let alone watch television or radio. Organization and agencies can “sponsor” a field event and use speaking engagement to reach target audience. This can make a positive impact on educating the rural dwellers. Again, for the urban dwellers and the staff of the organization or members of town unions, in the case of communities, face-to-face contacts, group meetings, focus group discussions can be used to reach them. This theory is relevant to the current study which seeks to determine the effect of application of public relations strategies in changing the attitudes of alcohol and smoking of youths in Abia state, in south-east, Nigeria. This is because, the theory implies that effective and efficient communication for any change in behaviour depends on the type and nature of facility used as there is no one communication strategy that can best suit every situation in changing the attitudes of drug abusers. In this regard therefore, the various stakeholders of the community (the led and the leaders) require different but effective/efficient communication strategy to bring about positive behaviour that will enhance and guarantee desired attitudes that will change and shape the lives of the youths.

Lan et al, (2011) enunciate the richness of the media-

1. Capacity for immediate feedback: This refers to the speed and quality of common interpretation transmitted through the medium. Generally, if a media could effectively facilitate interactions among the users and the system, the media has a higher level of feedback.
2. Capacity to transmit multiple cues: An array of cues, including physical presence, voice inflections, body gestures, words, and numbers, even graphic symbols, facilitate the conveyance of interpretation information. According to this criterion, multimedia content is superior to the text in expressing certain concepts and meanings.
3. Language variety: This means the level of concept conveyance. For example, numbers and formulas could provide greater precision; but natural language conveys a broader set of concepts and ideas. Also, compared with text-based content, multimedia content can play a vital role in helping students understand many difficult and abstract concepts.
4. Capacity of the medium to have a personal focus: This refers to either the conveying of emotions and feelings, or the ability of the medium to be tailored to the specific needs and perspectives of the receiver. According to this view, information has its value when it satisfies a person’s needs. In other words, if a user is familiar with a specific media content (especially in the context of schooling or the daily life of the user), he or she will have more feelings while observing such content.

Research Methodology

The researcher employed survey method by administering structured questionnaire to gather primary data from respondents. The scope of the study covered adopting public relations as a marketing communication strategy aimed at changing the attitude of Abia youths from involving themselves with cigarette smoking and alcoholism. The population for the study comprises the Abia youth residing in Umuahia metropolis. The sample size was 323 which was determined using Freund and Williams method of determining indefinite population. 300 were correctly filled and returned. Content validity was used to determine the validity of the instrument by giving

questionnaire to public relations and marketing experts who modified and made the necessary corrections so that the instrument can be justifiable. The value of the test of reliability is 0.90 which was conducted using Cronbach Alpha which indicated that there is internal consistency of the instrument. Analysis of data was done using Percentages.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion

Table 1: The extent to which mass media as a public relations strategy influence the attitudes of youths towards alcohol and cigarette smoking in Abia State

Mass media as a public relations strategy to a great extent influences attitudes of youths in Abia state		
Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	160	53%
Agree	80	27%
Undecided	35	12%
Disagree	18	6%
Strongly Disagree	7	2%
Total	300	100%

From the table above, it is obvious that mass media as a public relations strategy to a great extent influences attitudes of youths in Abia state. This can be substantiated by 53% and 27% of the respondents who strongly agreed and Agreed respectively to the above assertion. The implication of this finding is that mass media as a public relations strategy to a great extent influences attitudes of youths in Abia state.

Table 2: The nature of relationship between seminars and attitudes of youths towards alcohol and cigarette smoking in Abia state.

There is a significant positive relationship between public speaking/seminars as a public relations strategies and attitudes of youths towards alcohol and cigarette smoking in Abia.		
Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	183	61%
Agree	82	27%
Undecided	25	8%
Disagree	5	2%
Strongly Disagree	5	2%
Total	100	100%

The table above, indicate that there is a significant positive relationship between seminars as a public relations strategies and attitudes of youths towards alcohol and cigarette smoking in Abia. This can be buttressed by the 61% and 27% of the respondents who Strongly Agreed and Agreed respectively to the above submission. From the response, it can be seen that a larger percentage

of the respondents believe that there is a significant positive relationship between seminars as a public relations strategies and attitudes of youths towards alcohol and cigarette smoking in Abia.

Summary of Findings

The following are the findings from the study carried out:

The study revealed that mass media as a public relations strategy to a great extent influences attitudes of youths in Abia state.

Again, the study also revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between public speaking/seminars as a public relations strategies and attitudes of youths towards alcohol and cigarette smoking in Abia.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the researcher concludes that:

Public relations strategies have a role in changing the attitudes of youths towards alcohol and cigarette smoking. And that illicit usage of alcohol and cigarette smoking has been associated with an extensive list of health disorders as well as reduction of life expectancy.

Recommendations

Based on the major findings the researcher recommends the following-

The mass media (TV, radio, newspapers and magazines), both local, regional and national must be improved to bolster communication towards creating more awareness about the dangers of smoking and alcoholism.

Seminars shall be conducted to meet with the community members one-on-one to enlighten them about the effects of smoking and abuse of alcohol.

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