

Nigeriana

**Stirling-Horden
Encyclopaedia**

of

Mass Media

&

Communication

Social and Entrepreneurial Imperatives

Volume 3

Edited by

Oshiotse A. Okwilagwe



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Media and Communication**

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Preface

Mass Media and Communication practices in Nigeria have immensely contributed to national integration and development in the face of serious national, economic, social and politically inhibiting problems. The practitioners in the Nigerian Mass Media and communication spheres have attained a great deal of professional competence and efficiency in their various domains of activities such as the radio, television, print and other media of communication. They would seem to have successfully created a Nigerian mass media and communication practice phenomenon, peculiar to Nigeria and worthy of emulation by other nations of the world.

While the Mass Media practitioners have more than enough evidence to showcase their direct contributions to national development and integration in terms of output and effects, the scholars in the academia often point to the fact and pride themselves with the satisfaction that the Mass Media practitioners are the direct products of their scholarship. However, the consensus seem to be that the mass media practitioners were bred by mass communication teachers mainly on foreign mass media instructional materials when they were students at various levels. The problem of lack or shortage of indigenous relevant instructional materials, have always been with us in Nigeria. This situation has grown more precarious because of the recent developments in teaching and learning in the Mass Media and Communication disciplines in Nigeria.

The issues of rising number of mass communication departments and a corresponding rise in the number of mass communication students at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels have made the writing and publishing of indigenous instructional materials imperative. This is the situation that necessitated and guided the perspectives that initiated and executed the Mass Media and Communication Instructional Materials Writing and Publishing National Conference that resulted in the publishing of these volumes of encyclopaedia.

The present published set of four volumes of *Stirling-Horden Encyclopaedia of Mass Media and Communication* was meant to

bridge the gap between indigenous curriculum, instructional materials needs, teaching and learning outcomes in the various sub-units that make up the Mass Media and Communication disciplines. The publications contain intrinsic Nigerian and global generic issues in mass media and communication disciplines.

Nigeria boasts of indigenous scholars in almost all disciplines of human endeavour and the mass media and communication realms are no exceptions; this is apparent. The authors of the articles in the first four volumes of the proposed set of twelve volume Encyclopaedia of Mass Media and Communication are teachers and practitioners who are in the various academic departments and media houses of the universities that run such programmes in Nigeria. The publishing of these books is a marked demonstration of the greatness of our nation in this discipline. The depth, contents, style and insightful treatment given by the authors to the contents of the publications, in part, reveal the reason for the dynamism of the Nigerian journalists both in print and electronic media.

With these publications, these authors and teachers of journalism have further strengthened the foundation and framework for academic research and professional practice of journalism in Nigeria. They must be commended for their professional ethos, determination and the innovation that resulted in the publishing of these very relevant instructional materials. These publications would be found relevant for teaching, learning and research internationally.

The first four volumes that make up the first set of the encyclopaedia cover four basic themes:

Volume 1: Historical and Theoretical Perspectives of Mass Media and Communication in Nigeria.

Volume 2: Principles and Practices of Mass Media and Communication in Nigeria.

Volume 3: Social and Entrepreneurial Imperatives of Mass Media and Communication in Nigeria

Volume 4: Technology Imperatives of Mass Media and Communication in Nigeria

We are convinced that readers; students, teachers, researchers and the practitioners would find these publications relevant to their various needs. We wish to thank all the contributors and those who attended the First National Conference on Communication with the theme: *Development of Instructional Materials (Textbooks in Mass Communication and Communication Studies in Nigeria in the 21st Century* and the members of the editorial board. The authors are responsible for the contents of their articles and the observance of the copyright law.

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Media Analysis for Public Relations

Everyone seems to have a personal idea of what Public Relations (PR) is, though only very few really know what it actually is. To some, PR is the way an entity (or entities) is seen or perceived by people. While this is one of the attributes of PR, it is hardly the entire picture. To some others, PR is the smoke-screen that is used for concealing wrong doings. This is actually one of the strongest and most common perceptions about Public Relations and which has been the most difficult to shake off by PR practitioners. It also does not help the situation that the insincerity of some PR practitioners in dealing with crises in their organisations contradicts the noble claims of the profession. This chapter, therefore, presents some definitions of PR and attempts to assert what the profession is. By so doing, there would be an insight into its nature, thereby, clarifying what it is not. The chapter also provides a background into the relationship between Public Relations and the mass media and proceeds to examine the characteristics of the media.

Public Relations

Public Relations has been subjected to several definitions over the years. Several professionals, scholars, associations and institutions have supplied their own definitions with each attempting to capture the very essence of the profession. According to Baskin, Aronoff and Lattimore (1997), it is so difficult to sum up PR in one brief statement because the very nature of the profession allows it to be constantly adapted to the needs of the society, hence making it 'a moving target for definition'(p.4). Nevertheless, there are some definitions that are more generally accepted than others. Two of the most common definitions are that of the (British) Institute of Public Relations (IPR) and one popularly referred to as the 'Mexican Statement,' being resultant of an International Conference of Public Relations Institutions held in Mexico City.

1. IPR Definition

Public relations practice is the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics (Jefkins 2000:243).

This definition has some key functional words that communicate the nature, mode of operation and purpose of public relations. PR as a practice involves planning and planning can be simply described as a careful process of organising tasks according to priority, time and resources. PR is not impromptu, rather, it involves carefully determining what to do, the best way to do it, the time required to do it and how much it will cost to get it done. In Public Relations, winning the goodwill of people is not as tasking as maintaining it. Once an organisation or individual is in the full glare of the public, careful steps must be undertaken to ensure that the image built over the years is not jeopardised overnight. Hence, sustained efforts becomes a necessity. Since human nature is dynamic, Public Relations efforts must be constantly upgraded to maintain and even improve the success achieved so far. Mutual understanding is one of the most important attributes of Public Relations. The PR practitioner sits astride the wall

of communication, mediating between the organisation he represents and their publics. This practitioner must represent the organisation in public and represent the publics in the boardroom. PR efforts can only be considered successful when the wall is flattened between the organisation and its publics and a common ground is found.

2. The Mexican Statement

Public relations practice is the art and social science of analysing trends, predicting their consequences, counselling organisation's leaders, implementing a planned programme of action which serves both the organisation and the public interest (Daramola 2003 :12).

The Mexican statement explores some very interesting attributes of Public Relations. PR is an art because it involves a great deal of creativity. As human nature continues to evolve and change, PR must be ready to adapt its strategies to new possibilities. Since no two people are exactly alike, it is to be expected that a variety of approaches may be required to reach them and this is where the artistry of PR comes in. Public relations is a social science because it deals with the study of people and how they relate with one another. From the name of the profession, it cannot be more obvious that people form the core of its activities. Extracting the word 'public' leaves us with no one to relate with. Hence, PR must not be tempted by the interest of the organisation it represents into becoming egocentric. By analysing trends, PR examines the precedence of a given situation and attempts to determine if a pattern has been formed. For instance, if an organisation is having problems with its host community, the PR practitioner launches an investigation into the origin of the problem and tries to determine if there exists a prevailing style. If such a style exists, the knowledge acquired can be used as a springboard to predict the consequences of the current trend. This puts the practitioner at a vantage point to counsel the organisation's leaders on the best course of action to undertake which will benefit all the parties involved.

Scope of Public Relations

Public relations is one of the most versatile professions in the world today. This claim is consequent on the fact that it can and should operate in any situation in which people are involved. From the moment, more than one person is involved in any situation, mutual understanding becomes a necessity. Breakdown in communication, even between just two people can result in crisis affecting a whole community. PR is, therefore, functional at every stage of human relationship. PR can conveniently operate in conjunction with any other profession be it medicine, engineering, business, name it. This attribute makes the profession pivotal to the successful operation of every other profession. For instance, no matter how equipped a hospital is, if patients perceive that other patients die often there (without taking into consideration how late some of them might have been brought in, or whether or not they have terminal diseases), they may avoid being treated at that hospital. The above scenario might have been an unfortunate case of misunderstanding, nevertheless, if the hospital does not have a specialised means of creating understanding with its publics, it may attract negative publicity. Hence, it becomes a very difficult task to define the scope of public relations. PR can function anywhere and at anytime so far there is more than one entity involved.

Publics of Public Relations

Public relations deals with people and these people are referred to as publics. The word 'publics' is usually in the plural form because several groups of individuals are involved. PR efforts are not targeted at the general public because there is actually nothing general about the public. In Public Relations, publics refer to a homogeneous group of people which directly or indirectly affect or are affected by the activities of an entity (organisation) (Jenkins, 2000, Daramola; 2003). When we refer to a combination of two or more of such homogeneous groups, the word 'publics' is used. The publics of Public Relations depend on the context in which PR functions. For instance, the publics of a bank will definitely be different from those of a hospital, just as the publics of non-profit organisations will differ from those for profit

organisations. Nevertheless, there are some publics that most organisations have in common. These can be broadly classified into two categories; internal and external publics.

- a. **Internal Publics:** these are the publics that are within an organisation and that are directly instrumental to the achievement of organisational goals and objectives. They can even be seen as a part of the organisation because of their proximity and involvement in the organisation's vision and mission. The internal publics mostly defend the organisation when the need arises because their services or investments are at stake. Among the major internal publics are employees and shareholders.
 - i. **Employees:** this group includes all the staff employed in an organisation ranging from security personnel to the Chief Executive Officer CEO. The relevance of this group to the achievement of the organisation's overall objectives cannot be overemphasised. Employees are the front-liners who directly relate with the customers of the organisation. Any unsatisfactory treatment by the management can result into employees transferring their aggression on the customers, hence, jeopardising the image of the organisation. Since the CEO cannot execute the business strategies all by himself, the role of employees in organisational development becomes apparent.
 - ii. **Shareholders:** Baskin *et al* (1997) observe that an organisation requires the ability to attract resources from its environment. The organisation that succeeds in attracting the most important resource (money) will have no problem acquiring the others. Shareholders are the people who invest their money into a business with the hope of making profit at a later date. Constant efforts must be made by the organisation to keep them informed about the progress of the business since they are part-owners by reason of their investment. The consequence of leaving shareholders uninformed can be dire; they may dump the company's shares or even sell them to competitors, which may result into a hostile take-over.

- b. **External publics:** these set of publics are neither staff nor owners of the organisation, but they are nevertheless relevant to its continual existence. Though, they are outside the organisation, their influence can affect its very core. Some of the major external publics of an organisation are:
- i. **Customers:** these are the people who buy the products or use the services of an organisation. They account for the profit of the organisation and returns on investors' money. Customers can be segmented according to age, sex, geographical location and others. Organisations can maintain a good relationship with their customers by producing high quality products and by providing the best possible services.
 - ii. **Host community:** this refers to the neighbours of the organisation. These are the people who live in the vicinity where the organisation is sited. There is interdependency between the organisation and the people who live in its immediate community. While the organisation requires a peaceful and conducive environment for business, the host community desires development and improved standard of living. The organisation can impact negatively on the community. If for instance, it has a poor waste disposal system, the people can negatively affect the organisation if they vandalise its infrastructure.
 - iii. **Potential employees:** no matter how committed and efficient the employees of an organisation are, they cannot be available forever. Retirement and relocation are just two of the numerous factors that may lead to the loss of the services of valuable employees. The survival of the organisation will depend on its ability to consistently attract a steady flow of qualified and efficient staff. A high staff turnover in an organisation can be an indication of problem(s) and this may make the job appear less attractive to potential employees. Also, no matter how much money an organisation pays, if the public perceives that exposure to deadly chemicals shortens the life span of its employees, the chances are that only very few people may

want to take the risk of applying for employment. Hence, organisations must be able to secure the trust and goodwill of their potential employees. The category of publics may be found in host communities, schools, other companies, overseas and others.

- c. **Financial institutions:** this category includes banks, insurance houses, pension fund managers and the stock market. An organisation must maintain a credible relationship with all these institutions for it to excel in business. If it has not been found credit worthy by its bankers, it would be deprived of future loans, thereby hampering growth and development. Being behind in insurance premium may cost the business its existence in case of eventualities and the organisation may even be sued if proper arrangements are not made for staff pension. Publicly held organisations are also bound by the rules of the stock market and must provide adequate information to investors and analysts.
- i. **Government:** every organisation is subjected to governmental policies of the country in which it operates. If, for instance, the government places a ban on the importation of leather, every business in that sector will be affected. An organisation that has a good relationship with the government may attempt to lobby the government into reversing the policy or into subsidising the alternative. The government can also be approached for tax reduction.
 - ii. **Competitors:** these are other organisations in the same business as one's organisation. The relationship built with one's competitors is most valuable when a joint force is needed to deal with a common situation. In a case where the government of a country is contemplating opening the country's furniture business to international competitors, indigenous companies may join forces to appeal to the government that the industry is not yet ready for such a competition.
 - iii. **Suppliers:** this category may be suppliers of raw materials and components without which an organisation cannot function. A fall

out in the relationship with this group may lead to the demise of the organisations, particularly if alternative sources cannot be established. The organisation should, therefore, strive to maintain the goodwill of its suppliers so as to stay in business and even obtain the best bargain for the supplies.

- iv. **Distributors:** this includes everyone involved in transferring the products and services of an organisation to its consumers and users. It goes without saying that it is impossible for an organisation to establish a direct contact with all its customers, hence, the role of the distributors becomes indispensable. If products are not conveyed to the customers, the warehouse of the company will become congested and the product may waste, while the customers will find alternatives. Distributors are also very valuable in respect to customer feedback since they deal with them directly.
- v. **Opinion leaders:** these are people whose opinions can either harm or profit an organisation. Consequent on their status, position, or qualification, they have the ability to influence other people on a wide range of subjects. They serve as a knowledge base for other people who may not even bother to seek more information or confirmation. These people may be parents, teachers, politicians, media experts, religious leaders and others. If they favour an organisation, so also would the people they influence and *vice versa*.

Public relations is a profession that is communication-based and this communication exists on three basic levels. First, there has to be adequate communication among the PR team members. They must share the same set of goals and objectives as well as have access to the same amount of information. The PR department of an organisation is the information centre (particularly for the various publics); hence, any disparity of information at that centre can be fatal. The second level of communication involves the PR team and the management of the organisation. The line of communication must be perpetually open between them so that each group can know what the other is doing. The PR team must constantly report to the management on outcomes of researches carried out and the position of public opinion, while the management must communicate its policies and stand on certain issues to the team. The third level of communication involves the PR team (now representing the organisation) and the

organisation's various publics. Here, the team interacts with the publics with the sole aim of creating mutual understanding. Communication in public relations is actually a continuous process in which it is difficult to determine the beginning or the end once the process begins. This is because the third level, as presented below, leads back to the first level, thereby starting the process all over again.

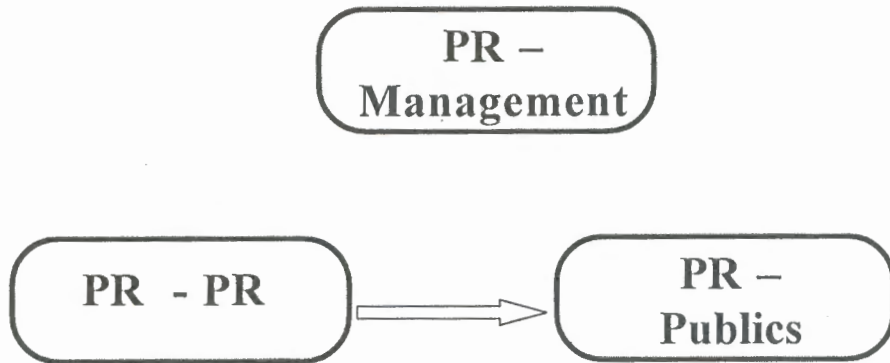


Fig.1. Communication Circle in Public Relations →

At every level of communication, there exists a dynamic interaction which requires a specialised style and appropriate medium for effectiveness. For instance, the form/style of communication within a PR team would be interpersonal communication and computers may be employed in the case of video conferencing if they are not all at the same location. The style and medium for the first two levels of PR communication are, however, not the focus in this book. Our focus is on the third level; communication between the PR team and the publics. Public relations messages are generated from a source (the team) and channelled towards a large number of people, hence, the communication that exists at this level is mass in nature and the medium cannot be short of the mass media.

Mass Communication

Baran (2002) defines mass communication as a process in which shared meaning is created between the mass media and their audience. Here, the mass media encode their messages and send them to their audience

who decode and interpret them. Several identical messages are generated and disseminated simultaneously to a mass audience. The feedback from the audience is, however, inferred because it is indirect rather than direct as in the case of interpersonal communication. Public Relations make use of the mass communication process to disseminate its information to its various publics. In fact, one of the ways to measure the success of a PR campaign is to evaluate the extent of audience coverage. No matter the volume of resources and efforts invested into a PR programme, if the publics are not well informed, it would all be a waste.

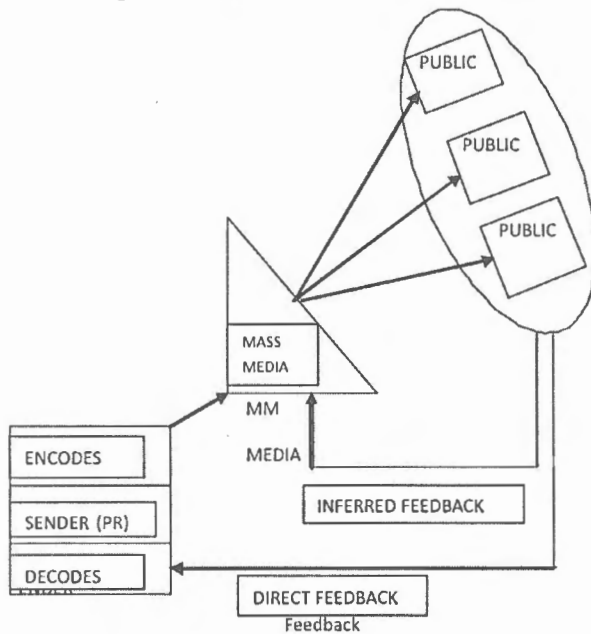


Fig.2.

This model clearly illustrates how Public Relations use the mass media to reach its numerous publics. The message is encoded by the PR team and sent to the mass media for dissemination to their mass audience. Unlike in Schramm's model of mass communication however, the feedback here is not only inferential, it is also direct. Audience's response through the mass media may be inferred, but feedback to the PR office (the source) is usually direct. For instance, audience's feedback to an invitation to a company's new product

launch can be measured by their attendance. The PR team receives, decodes and interprets the feedback from its publics and this forms the basis for continued communication.

The Mass Media

During the communication process, encoded messages are not just automatically available to the receiver; there has to be the intervention of a medium. The medium bridges the gap between the sender and the receiver. For instance, when speaking to a friend who is nearby, sound waves serve as the medium which carries the voice across. Also, when writing a note to another individual, the piece of paper is the medium. On the other hand however, if the medium is a technology that is channelled towards a large number of people, it is called a mass medium. The plural of medium is media; hence, mass media refer to a collection of technologies that carry messages to a mass audience. Examples of media regularly used are television, radio, newspapers, magazines, books, movies and computer networks. The mass media are invaluable and indispensable to successful achievement of public relations objectives. PR professionals need to effectively understand them so as to maximise their benefits. According to Clear and Weideman (2002:1):

Many practitioners fail to achieve their objectives because they do not have sufficient experience and knowledge of, first, what the media consider newsworthy, second, preparing material in a way acceptable to the media, and, third, dealing with journalists.

There are some salient characteristics of the mass media that Public Relations professionals must be familiar with. They are the following:

- a. *The mass media communicate with anonymous audience:* this means that the sender of the message has no way of identifying the audience by their personal demographic details. When a message is sent through the mass media, it ceases to be in the control of the sender, instead, it becomes a public property. It is

noteworthy however, that the anonymity of the audience does not mean that the sender of the message does not have a target audience. What it does mean is that they are known only as identified groups rather than as identified individuals with different names, sexes, ages, etc. For instance, a bank's customer care department may decide to inform the bank's customers through the mass media about a new customer care package. The target audience here are the customers of the bank, though, they are only known as a group and not as individuals.

- b. *Mass media audience is autonomous:* though, the audience is seen as a group (anonymous) from the perspective of the sender, they remain distinct individuals from the receiver's perspective. Messages may be received as a group (e.g watching television together) or as an individual (e.g reading a newspaper alone). Whatever be the case, each individual responds to them in a different way. For instance, two people may listen to the same music on the radio and one of them may enjoy it while the other may not. Mass media audience is independent individuals and this gives them the right to differ in their media appreciation.
- c. *Mass media audience is heterogeneous:* people differ from one another and they have different character traits. This, therefore, necessitates the careful planning of media messages because a delightful message for one person may be offensive to another, simply because they have little or nothing in common. This is the main reason Public Relations use the plural word 'publics' to describe the diverse nature of its audience. It also means that while planning a PR campaign, the target audience must be defined in the strictest term so as to avoid ambiguity.
- d. *The mass media leave no room for interpersonal relationship:* having earlier established that the audience of the mass media is anonymous, it should be obvious that there cannot exist an interpersonal relationship between the sender and the receiver of the message. The sender makes use of the mass media because of the need to reach a large number of people and the larger the number, the more impossible it is to establish any form of

interpersonal relationship. One might wonder if this fact still holds in this contemporary age of phone-in programmes on television and radio. We must, however, consider the fact that when a caller (receiver) calls into a programme, he/she is expected to be restricted to the topic of discussion rather than try to get personal with the host of the show (sender). The moment a caller starts to ask personal questions that displays some sort of familiarity, the host draws the attention back to the topic. Except the show is particularly designed for building relationships, familiarity is not allowed because it is on public space.

- e. *Audience's participation in the mass media is voluntary:* the sender of a message cannot compel a response from media audience; they respond only if they feel inclined to. Unlike interpersonal communication in which the listener(s) may be pressurised into responding due to personal recognition, the mass media audience cannot be personally identified. At best, the sender of the message can only appeal for response. There have been cases of some phone-in programmes in which the show presenter ended up carrying out a monologue because the audience did not call in spite of the appeal. This is why Schramm referred to the feedback as being inferential (Baran, op.cit).

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Media

The media is a very powerful means of expression. Through their gate-keeping function, they greatly influence their audience's perception. An organisation's failure in the media scene results in failure in the public scene; hence, great care must be taken in relating with them. The media, though strong, is not without its weakness. These strengths and weaknesses will be examined so that public relations professionals can learn to maximise the potentials of the former and minimise the effects of the latter. For clarity sake, we shall group the media into print, broadcast and the Internet.

1. The Print Media

This category includes media channels that make use of printed materials that are distributed to the public. Examples of print media are newspapers, magazines and pamphlets.

a. Strengths

- i. *They are permanent:* print media are permanent because they are tangible. They can be read and re-read for as long as they can be preserved. Consequent on this unique characteristic, they are considered very suitable for public relations use. PR adverts and press releases placed in the print media become permanent, and this creates the possibility of people seeing the messages more than once. Print media are timeless, not because the news they contain do not become outdated but because the media themselves endure. They can be referenced years after the initial publication, and this is useful to PR for the following reasons:
- ii. *They serve as documentation* for past good deeds done. This is particularly useful during crisis management when an organisation is trying to re-establish its credibility.
- iii. *They help PR professionals* to monitor the media coverage of their clients. This is done through the collection and documentation of press cuttings. Press cutting are printed articles, stories or news on a particular subject, individual, group or organisation, that are cut out and filed away for future reference.
- iv. *They have second-hand value:* Printed materials, for example, newspapers, can be bought by one person and read by several others. They can be passed from hand to hand for as long as they can be preserved. This attribute is very valuable to Public Relations because its messages are not limited to only those who bought the material; rather, they are extended to as many people who read it. Considering that people are often quite generous in sharing their copies of newspapers and magazines, PR messages can reach a large number of people whether or not they can afford it.

- iv. *They encourage literacy*: one of the most obvious characteristics of the print media is that their readers must be literate. The information in a newspaper cannot be accessed except the audience can read well and long enough to identify the news. Hence, it encourages individuals who have much interest in newspapers, but who cannot read, to pursue literacy. By understanding this attribute of the print media, Public Relations will be able to target the appropriate segment of its publics (the literates) using the print media.
- v. *They attract attention*: the print media, particularly newspapers and magazines are publicly displayed, therefore, they attract attention easily. Commuters notice them quickly because they are conspicuously arranged on stands or hawked by vendors. The print media also make use of bold and interesting headlines, variety of fonts, typefaces and colour displays to retain the attention of people. They possess an 'outdoor presence' which gives them an edge over the broadcast media. Readers may not necessarily plan to buy a copy but interesting headlines attract them to first take a look and eventually buy it. This is advantageous to Public Relations because the more people are attracted to the print media, the more press releases and other PR materials are available to the target audience.
- vi. *In-depth coverage of news*: television and radio break news while newspapers and magazines provide the supplement. The print media give detailed reports on news items because more time is available for them to gather information. While the broadcast media strive for speedy coverage, the print media strive for depth of coverage. Also, the stories are written with greater care to avoid errors and are lengthier than broadcast news stories because readers have more time to read, re-read and retain copies if necessary.
- vii. *They cater for personal convenience*: the nature of the print media allows their audience to receive messages at their personal convenience. While some individuals prefer to read on their way to and from work, others read it during their break period and yet some others read while awaiting their appointments. Print audience is not bothered with the necessity of confining themselves to a particular location and at a particular time to be able to receive

information. They even have the opportunity of receiving the information at their own pace. This is unique considering that reading skills vary. The audience feel more relaxed and less pressured knowing that the message is not transient. They even pay more attention to details and tend to absorb it better. Public Relations practitioners find this very valuable because their messages stay longer with the audience and have the tendency of making a better impression on them.

b. Limitations

- i. *Slow delivery*: the print media are tangible; hence, there is usually the problem of slow delivery. In most developing countries, locations that are far removed from the publisher or that are in remote areas receive their deliveries later in the day or even the following day. Maintaining printing presses in locations other than the head offices of the press can be very expensive, so it is not an option most newspapers are willing to consider. In view of this problem, PR professionals must learn to give enough allowance for those who may not get the information on time. This can be done by sending out information with enough time space before the event is being publicised.
- ii. *Class creation*: associating the print media with literacy can also have negative dimension. There will be some level of segregation that may be offensive to illiterate readers. It also means that the illiterates will miss out on the beneficial access to more detailed information-as provided by the press. This may constitute a major challenge for Public Relations practitioners whose objectives include reaching people in rural communities. In this case, a combination of media techniques should be considered.
- iii. *High level of concentration required*: reading effectively in most cases requires abandoning other engaging activities. This tends to cut it out as a serious business to be left for a less serious time. Public relations practitioners may be faced with a major challenge if audience embark on selective reading. Audience read selectively when they choose to read only what they consider very important

to them at that time, while they leave the less important ones for a more suitable time (which may never come). PR practitioners can address this challenge by making sure that their articles relate to their audience.

- iv. *Boring tendencies*: print media have the tendency of being boring. This is due to the fact that they are different from the interpersonal style of communication that comes naturally to people. They are devoid of elements such as voices, facial expressions and gestures. The reader develops a feeling of loneliness since all there is to relate with is a 'lifeless' material. Though, this cannot be avoided since newspapers cannot be animated, PR practitioners should endeavour to write articles that are interesting and engaging.
- v. *Relatively expensive*: print media are relatively expensive because they have to be purchased anytime they are needed. Some newspapers are published daily, while some are twice-a-week, weekly or even monthly. Constant access is necessary for audience to be informed on current issues and this means constant purchase. Irrespective of who buys them and who reads them, they still must be bought and this can be very expensive in the long run. For instance, *The Guardian* is a daily newspaper in Nigeria and it costs about ₦200.00. If an individual buys a copy every day, he will spend ₦1,400.00 weekly, ₦5,600.00 monthly, and ₦67,200.00 yearly. Public relations practitioners can neither control the prices of newspapers nor help to sell them; however, they can make circulation figures and ranges of distribution a major consideration while making their placements.

2. The Broadcast Media

This category of media includes channels of communication that give out messages through electronic and radio wave transmissions and examples of these are radio and television.

a. Strengths

- i. *They are timely*: one of the major assets of broadcast media is their timeliness. The advent of Electronic News Gathering (ENG) has made the real time coverage of news possible. Consequently, everyone who tunes in to the channel receives the same information at the same time it is being disseminated. This is advantageous to Public Relations because PR messages that are placed in the broadcast media get to the target audience promptly. Broadcast media is, therefore, particularly suitable for sending urgent messages.
- ii. *They are cheaper*: broadcast media are relatively cheaper because once the electronic devices have been purchased; news reception comes free of charge. Everyone owning a TV or radio set can always watch or listen to the news free of charge; whereas, the print media must be continually purchased so as to remain current. It is noteworthy, however, that this attribute is more applicable to the audience. This is because the audience is on the receiving end and they do not pay to receive, whereas, it costs a lot more for PR specialists to place messages on them than in the print. Nevertheless, Public Relations enjoys the benefit of placing its messages in the media the audience considers to be cheap.
- iii. *Less language and literacy barriers*: broadcast media overcome the language barriers more easily than the print media. This is because the broadcast media utilise more localised languages and music in their programmes. They also minimise illiteracy problem by replacing reading and writing with watching and listening. These factors make them particularly useful for Public Relations in reaching its rural publics.
- iv. *They are lively*: unlike the print media that have the tendency of being boring, the broadcast media are quite lively. They engage natural communication skill of speaking and this makes them more life-like. Since people easily associate with and pay more attention to human voices, Public Relations practitioners can capitalise on this by placing their messages on broadcast media and also by going on talk shows.

- v. *They are captivating:* broadcast media naturally catch and sustain the attention of their audience through the use of sound, music, pictures etc. Even when the audience is not aware of the availability of the broadcast media in a particular location, the music and voices attract them. Among the factors that are considered in determining the suitability of PR medium is the ability to attract and sustain audience's attention. Hence, the broadcast media are very appropriate for Public Relations campaigns.

b. Limitations

The broadcast media is very effective for communication; nevertheless, they have some limitations that can affect the reception and perception of their messages.

- i. *They are too fast:* information is passed across at such a pace that it can be easily missed. This does not necessarily mean that the newscasters speak very fast, it is mostly because the media is *time bound* and their outputs are *intangible*. There is limited available time to pass across the information so it is made brief. This can be a major problem for Public Relations because its target audience may not receive complete information.
- ii. *They are space and time bound:* unlike the print media that can be moved from one place to another, the broadcast media mostly require the audience to be at a particular place to receive the information. They also work with time which means that once the time of a particular programme is inaccessible, this can constitute a major problem for PR since time and space in respect to human beings are quite flexible.
- iii. *They are dependent on infrastructure:* it is needless to say that most broadcast media (except for those that use batteries) rely heavily on the supply of electricity. This means that an irregular power supply (particularly in developing countries) will result in minimal message reception from the broadcast media. This, no doubt, poses a major threat to Public Relations practice because practitioners would never be really sure of their messages ever reaching their target audience.

- iv. *The messages are transient*: broadcast media messages are usually very transient. This means that they can only endure for a brief moment, thereby, making it impossible to retain them like in the case of the print media. Though, it is true that broadcast messages can be recorded but how many media messages would the audience record? This is a liability on the part of PR because its messages can be easily forgotten.

3. The New Media

The coinage of the term 'New Media' was to differentiate print, radio and television, which are seen as the old media, from computerised electronic publishing which uses a multimedia combination of print, audio, video and digital images on the Internet and other digital format such as CD-ROM and DVD. The new media offer a wider range of possibilities than have ever been available. Through their use, it is possible to send a lot more information to a larger audience (Clear & Weideman, 2002).

In this book, focus will be on the Internet because of its global relevance. The Internet has the ability to maintain an open standard for transmitting text, digitised data-voice or video from one computer to another. It is a combination of Local Area Networks (LANs), which connect two or more computers, usually within the same building and Wide Area Networks (WANs), which connect several LANs in different locations (Baran, 2002).

a. Strengths

- i. *Access to vast information*: the new media provide easy access to vast information, thereby solving the problem of ignorance. They bring information from across the world in a matter of seconds. This is particularly useful to PR practitioners because they can always evaluate themselves by the world standard. They can also source for information and models that can be useful for their campaigns. More importantly, PR can access a vast (if not unlimited) audience with its messages.

- ii. *Fast information circulation*: through the use of the new media, information can be gathered and distributed much faster. This is highly beneficial to the PR practice because practitioners can always be sure that their messages will be promptly received by their target audience. Also, PR can bypass the mediating role of the media and reach its various publics directly since the Internet is free for all.
- iii. *Picture materials are available on demand*: the new media have succeeded in combining the attributes of both the print and the broadcast media. Pictures that help to clarify issues or illustrate the extent to which an organisation is willing to serve its publics are easily available on the net. Through this, interested publics can seek and retrieve graphical information that will aid their understanding of the organisation.
- iv. *Target marketing*: the new media make target marketing and audience specialisation possible. This means that through the use of the Internet, it is possible to select a particular segment of the population and communicate with them. An organisation may make an arrangement with popular website operators who can grant them access to the demographic classifications of those who visit the site. Through this, the relevant publics can be identified and communicated with directly. It can also be done directly by encouraging people to visit the website of the organisation.
- v. *It is ultimately cheaper*: the new media is about the cheapest of all the media of communication. This is because messages are sent and received at a relatively low cost. For PR practitioners, it is not necessary to pay each time information is placed on the net once the initial subscription has been paid. This factor, therefore, provides PR with a cost effective way of distributing its messages.
- vi. *More user-friendly and interactive*: the new media is more user-friendly because it provides enough room for people to express their vast variety of taste and need for information. Every individual can determine exactly how much information he/she is interested in retrieving. The new media is also the most life-like among the

media of communication because it leaves room for a high level of interaction. Feedback can be sent and received almost immediately and there is also provision for live chats. Since PR is all about building and sustaining relationships, the new media provide the best opportunity for the achievement of its purpose.

b. Limitations

Every technology created to solve a problem usually creates some other problems to be solved. This is how technology has developed over the years. The Internet is not an exception. Though invaluable to public relations practice, the Internet has some limitations that must be carefully managed for effective results.

- i. *Speedy information circulation*: it is quite interesting to note that one of the best assets of the new media can also be one of their greatest liabilities. Information travels very fast on the Internet, hence, any false information posted about an organisation or errors made by the PR department, travels equally fast causing a lot of damage. It also means that any potentially problematic material once sent cannot be retrieved. This can be a major problem for PR because negative information can destroy the image of the organisation they represent.
- ii. *Potential health risks*: it has been discovered that new media can pose potential health risks to users particularly those risks associate with electromagnetic radiation (Clear & Weideman, op.cit). Because of this, PR cannot afford to rely completely on the new media because health conscious people may stay away from it as much as possible.
- iii. *Piracy of electronic information*: the Internet is still evolving, hence efforts are still being made to create effective ways of protecting electronic information. In the mean time, electronic information is being pirated and this can have an adverse effect on PR since its messages can easily be accessed and tampered with.
- iv. *Information overload*: the audience is bombarded with much more information than they can manage. A lot of unsolicited information

is forced on the audience thereby giving them the stressful task of eliminating the unwanted ones. The problem here is that some useful information may be deleted along with the junks. Public Relations, therefore, has the great task of making its messages distinct and relevant.

- v. *Creation of information gap*: the advent of new media tends to widen the gap between the information rich and information poor people. The people who find the new media easily accessible will derive utmost benefits from them while those who cannot access them will be deprived of the information. The effect of this on Public Relations is that some people will know a lot about its activities while some others will know little or nothing about them.

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Some Other Relevant Books

- ◆ Writing for Mass Communication – *Hugh W. Cunningham*
- ◆ Theories of Mass Communication – *Babatunde Folarin*
- ◆ Fundamentals of Human Communication – *Des Wilson*
- ◆ Mass Media in Nigerian Democracy – *Fred I. A. Omu et al*
- ◆ Issues in Applied Communication – *Babatunde Folarin*
- ◆ Element of Journalistic Style – *Babatunde Folarin*
- ◆ Merchants of Discontent: Critical Issues on Advertising – *Muhammad S. Rabiu*
- ◆ Introduction to Print Media – *Des Wilson*
- ◆ Issues in Media Practices – *Nkereuwem Udoakah*
- ◆ Free Press and Society: Dismantling the Culture of Silence – *Bayo Oloyede*
- ◆ New Perspectives in Applied Communication – *Des Wilson*
- ◆ Development Communication – *N. Udoakah*
- ◆ Rural Community Newspaper: Principles and Practice – *Solomon G. Anaeto et al*
- ◆ Development Communication: Principles and Practice – *Solomon G. Anaeto et al*
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