

Public Relations Strategy in the Catholic Church: An Investigation on Ten Preferred Parishes in Enugu Urban

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Abstract

This review is an attempt to scrutinize the function of Public Relations Strategy in the religious mission of evangelization, employing ten preferred Catholic parishes as a folder revision. The purposes of the cram are to scan the traits and practice of Public Relations in Catholic Church with particular allusion to some preferred Catholic parishes in Enugu urban for the broadcast of the personality-image of Catholic parishes in Enugu Metropolis, to pigeonhole some communicative obstacles such parishes have walloped while applying Public Relations strategy, and advocate techniques for enhancing the actualization of Public Relations approach in and outside the selected Catholic parishes in Enugu urban. The result of the investigation indicated that 50% of the respondents opined there was a lack of serviceable Public Relations component in their parishes. 40% of the feedback argued they utilized video coverage to prop up the proceedings of their parishes, even as an additional 88.89% of the respondents held they make use of public Relations to spread the good news of Jesus Christ. There were other obstacles that hinder effective PR efforts which the review established, such as funding, lack of PR proficiency, the size of the Church and lack of knowledge. Resolutions submitted to overcoming such communicative imbroglio consist of: allotment of sufficient financial resources, leadership edification, and construction of consciousness and reformation of managerial formation. Inter alia, the investigation suggested that each branch in a Catholic parish ought to encompass Public Relations element separately from the Public Relations part of the Church. By so doing, every wing of the Church will exert a pull on prospective members of into the Church. The revision concluded that to avoid Catholic pastoral activities from being veiled in inscrutability, Catholic parishes no matter their size, ought to launch Public Relations components to broadcast pastoral proceedings utilizing the most broadly pertinent means of communication.

Keywords: .Public Relations .Preferred .Church .Strategy .Investigation

Introduction

Today, Christianity in the country has reached a crescendo since its inception in the 1880s. Scores of Christians and especially Catholics have steadfastly become assiduous to their religious craving for God. Consequently, people in their great numbers have now become adherents to God's injunction; hence the droving of inhabitants to places of worship. Accordingly, numerous parishes have been set up to enfold the entrée of lots of devotees. Enugu State encompasses scores of ethnic groups and houses of worship speckled all over the 17 local government area councils. There are also traditionalists and other adherents of other religions in these areas of concentration. For that raison d'être, the Church must become decisive in the use of the novel Integrated Marketing Communications Plan especially via Public Relations/publicity devices in all the parishes for effective

relationship with the diverse environment. Focusing on the relevance of publicity/public relations, the Church ought to employ it in the sponsorship of mutual interface, shared dependence and alliance between the ecclesiastic and ecclesiastical affiliates on the one side, and between the Church and the community on the other.

In fact, the rapport between the above entails immense undertaking and subtlety, in the course of professional communication tactic, which, of course could only be embedded through quality Public Relations civilization, in handling disquieting moment in order to win her support and approval.

In that regard, Ogasanya, (1984) quoting Haywood, is of the view that "today's public is more demanding and unless we use communication in a positive way, we will not receive the necessary understanding and support". They need therefore, to be well clued-up, mollycoddled, served and carried along at all times, if the best result is to be gained from them, through a socially responsible and acceptable performance based on mutually satisfactory two-way communication. In other words, the Church must fine-tune with the shifting internet and socially interactive world, so sophisticated and complicated. Thus, Baskin and Aronoff, (1998) argue that: "Public Relations is a profession in transition. In an environment of rapid social change, every organization must change or die. Public Relations practitioners must possess the communication expertise and social sensitivity necessary to help organizations adapt to their changing environment".

The indispensable ethics of PR should be pioneered on the floor of reverberating bond with the society of an association (the Church) via the feat of social characters that are commonly germane to both the Church and the public. Accordingly, Barnays, (1961) depicts PR as information given to the public, persuasion directed to the Public to modify attitudes and actions, and efforts to integrate publics of those of that institution's. the driving force in any organization Public Relations, PR efforts is, hence, rooted in the support, solidarity, cooperation and blessing of both the specific and general audience who are essential for the growth and development of the organization (Church).

Besides, Onaji (2001, p.23), defining Public Relations, asserts that "Public Relations is concerned with how and what others think about you as a person or an organization." This means that the Church should be cagey of both in-house and outside perception of her activities. Such observations could moreover be excellent or horrendous. The growth of Church rails profoundly on either of the elements stated above. If the hierarchy of the Church and members are seen as contemptible, the unenthusiastic analysis will impinge on its expansion. Conversely, any Church seen as idyllic will rouse enhanced membership. The idyllic ardor the immediate environment requires from the Church is a responsible and prized membership. Imperatively, Onaji (2001, p.29), advises that for the Church to remain admirable in the eyes of the public, it has "to generate good Public Relations and remain in good public view."

Furthermore, the Church must imbibe the meaning of PR as indicated by the British Institute of Public Relations (IPR) as "deliberate, planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between an organization and its publics" (Grunig & Hunt, 1984 p.7).

The Church can benefit from Belch & Belch's, (1998, p.578) acclaimed submission that identified PR as "the management function which evaluates public attitudes, identifies the policies and procedures of an organization with the public interest, executes a program of action and communication to earn public understanding and acceptance".

As a result, this review is an attempt to find out if the Catholic Church in Enugu employs PR devices in evangelization and human advancement, and the actual upshot on internal and peripheral perspectives.

Statement of Problems

Undeniably, organizations' expansion and sustainability are closely tied to efforts that will actualize three basic human worth, such as-good image, concern and incredible identity. The actualization of these ideals ought to be effectively done via shared self realization which is in the scrutiny of (Black, 1989) "involves doing good and getting credit for it". The need for the realization of PR nuts and bolts necessitates the uniqueness, the indispensability and the exigency of Public Relations application in the social order. Therefore, the Catholic Church in this clime has not been able to attune herself to the numerous gains of robust PR character in our environment judging her tasks in building, managing and sustaining the corporate image of organizations through her multiple efforts in the spots of information generation and sharing and monitoring, trend assessment, issues prediction, event management, conflict resolution and other numerous services and oversight tasks done by her.

Research Questions

1. What is the personality of Public Relations performance in the chosen Catholic parishes in Enugu urban?
2. What disposition do Public Relations contribute in the routine management of the preferred parishes in Enugu urban?
3. What are the plights linked with Public Relations Practice in the selected parishes in Enugu urban?
4. Propositions proffered for solving such crises?

Scope of the Study

The review is restricted to ten parishes within Enugu urban. The spots chosen for this scholarship are Enugu South, Enugu West, Udi, Enugu North and Agbani local council areas of Enugu Urban situated in the capital of Enugu State.

Literature Review

This section converses literary works pertinent to the reviewer's area of investigation. It has been discerned that marketing modus operandi are being applied by faith-based organizations in performing their activities in order to enable them attract and retain new members (Webb, 2012).

In fact, all affairs require Public Relations to endure in a cutthroat globe today. Doubtlessly, the Church can sustain herself and develop and also influence the neighborhood in which it is sited, if they employ proficiently Public Relations strategy in their idyllic struggle.

In that regard, Okereke (1993) characterizes Public Relations as "a top management function for company planning for positioning of organizations monitoring environmental trends and predicting their consequences."

The justification for Public Relations by any assemblage or connection is to have high-quality relations with her in-house and external vicinity. Corroborating this fact, Hendrix (2001, p.3) opines that "one way of defining Public Relations has been simply to invert the term so that it becomes "relations with public." Public Relations help organizations, be it governmental or non-governmental to achieve organizational objectives and facilitate desirable change. In the same line, Lattimore *et al.*, (2004,p.5), validate this arguing that "Public Relations is a leadership and management function that helps achieve organizational objectives...and facilitate organizational change."

A blossoming Public Relations approach sways the mind-set of persons or blocs optimistically in their businesses in a dependable style. Quoting Scott, M. Catlip and Allen H. Carter, Grunig & Hunt (1984, p.7) assumed that "Public Relations is the planned effort to influence opinion through good character and responsible performance based upon mutual satisfactory two way communication."

Public Relations as an element of marketing communication stimulates affability, trust and unswerving dealings. Positively, Adeyemi (1994), describes the personality of PR as "when customers know about your company through a systematic Public Relations programme, the goods and services are likely to be sold faster."

In his line of thought, Belch (1998, p.578) sees Public Relations activities as calculated to prop up marketing intents as "marketing public relations (MPR) function." In his words, Belch argues that "marketing objectives that may be aided by Public Relations include raising awareness, informing and educating, gaining understanding, building trust, giving consumers a reason to buy and motivating consumer acceptance."

Public Relations is all about retaining a first-class affiliation and broadcasting information to the public or clusters that have business to do with a group, and constructing excellent ambiance for promoting its products and services. According to the Encyclopedia Britannica (2007, p.780) Public Relations is concerned with creating a favorable climate for marketing good relations with merchants and distributors as well as placing products publicity and disseminating information to trade and industrial groups."

Public Relations protracts our convoluted, multitalented social order in order to clasp resolutions and have impact more productively by adding to shared indulgence amid blocs and enterprises. It hurls the affiliation between the hush-hush and public guiding principles in the most symbiotic synergy.

The vitality of a well organized Public Relations grips an extensive hodgepodge of organizations in the public including trade, civil unions, government assemblage, charitable links, foundations, sanatorium, didactic and devout establishments. (Gunig & Hunt, 1984:7) insist that to realize their ambitions, these organizations ought to build up efficient relationships with many diverse audiences or publics such as employees, members, customers, local communities, shareholders and other institutions and with society at large".

The implication of Public Relations in ecclesiastical pavilion results to a protuberance of the image and identity of the Church, as it shore ups associations to fabricate a reputation with a respectable and trusted image. In the eyes of the Catholic Church, the Church is seen as budding being, and her existence is powered with a good reputation in the windows of the community. In view of building corporate reputation, PR is seen by Haywood (1984) as the tool for the management of an organization's image and identity., hence in Churches PR can be understood to be a specialized manner of accomplishing good image in order to encourage achievement and expansion or the wellbeing of the Churches or her faithful on whose stead the public relations hard work is being completed.

Advertently public relations are vital to the booming integral development of the Church and by extension the neighborhood and also assists in guaranteeing and sustaining the corporate existence and continuation of the God's kingdom.

For the sustainability of the ecclesiastical image and identity in society, Church hierarchy has to be proactively and pragmatically handy in hauling out their evangelical efforts. Jefkins (1980) corroborates the above truism insisting that the efficacy of PR "is to aim at image making to foster a good image of an organization in the eyes of the public. That a bad image can be changed through a change in policy or activity and also as people learn more about the organization concerned."

Ecclesiastical form of Corporate Social Responsibilities CSR should bequeath social amenities to society such as pipe borne water, boreholes, free and qualitative eructation, maternity home, markets, hospitals and vocational centres, etc, to generate good image and convivial relationship.

Public Relations as a valuable device of communication is capable of empowering the Church in advertising her products or services and also in paving way for the

advancement of the publicity and press releases to public broadcasting and print media of communications in Enugu urban and beyond as the media has globalised the globe.

The Justification for Public Relations in the Church

The Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church (2003) describes the positivity of PR in evangelization as "to promote the Church in an effective, attractive and exciting manner. Developing and maintaining all communications of CRPC, recommending to the Executive and administrator about advertising effectiveness. Facilitating the publicity and news releases of media and assisting the senior Pastor to achieve his goals".

Another fundamental cause for ecclesiastical involvement in marketing communications especially through Public Relations is the effective dissemination of the good news of our Lord Jesus Christ to society in general. The Church media efforts take the appearances of televangelism, radio or print evangelization. Some churches are employing the social media or the internet in effective evangelization by selling their pastoral and developmental contents or message on Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, email, Smartphone and other online communities.

The utility of PR is further explicated by the Bishop's Institute for Social Communication Conference on "Church and Public Relations" staged in Singapore on September 1-5, 1997, which states that "Public Relations must not be distinguished only from a commercial tip but somewhat as a witness of Christians and Christian communities to the values of the Kingdom of God, a proclamation through Christ-like deeds ... above all, to live like Him in the midst of our neighbors of other faith and persuasions and to do His deeds by the power of His grace. Before all other techniques, the witness of life stays central."

The Church employs media communications in order to craft a bracing rapport of credence and buoyancy between her and her diverse communal ambiance through proper and well constructed publicity/public relations statements.

In a narrowed perspective, Greer (2003) perceives the level of Public Relations in a dissimilar way, whereby Public Relations imply broadcasting information to both its internal and external publics. "... is involved in disseminating information to church members and to the community via Sunday morning Announcements, public press releases and church Newsletters."

Besides, Public Relations as a veritable means of building trust and conviviality internally and externally, also creates good course of action and significant practice, candidness, impartiality, fiscal responsibility and substitution of the organizational headship with altruistic folks. Such Christian stalwarts possibly with will power may go a long way in re-ascertaining the image of the Church in society especially in times of crisis and lack of confidence among the powerful and ordinary members.

Ultimate Public Relations strategy is an epiphany of good quality arrangement and resonant performance via encouraging words and actions of charity, generosity, hospitality and kindness exercised in the promotion and defense of human rights and dignity.

Practicing high-quality PR, the Church must do the needful by choosing a new and influential cohort of self-sacrificing Church affiliates who are unswerving to the cause and doctrines of candor, justice, pecuniary answerability and tastiness.

The Church must empower her different assemblage and pious groups to practice PR in the promotion of internal and external information, the good news, love, truth, charity and opposition to modern day slavery, abuses, official corruption, extremism, official negligence and other societal ambiguities that are opposed to the gospel message.

Such organizations as the CMO, CWO, CYON, Legion of Mary, League of the Sacred Heart, the MOD, and a lot of others, can engross in PR via the use of public or private media outfits to broadcast press releases to the public, put together press conferences,

and engage in the publication of journals, newspapers, books spreading their organizational activities, and maximize the efforts of the Catholic Media Workers Association, Catholic Artistes and Entertainers of Nigeria, CAEN in the production of movies and information.

Methodological Perspective

In the course of investigation, the device employed in gathering data is self-administered opinion poll. The questionnaire encompasses four queries on an assortment of features concerning the topic of the revision. A total of one hundred and fifty (150) facsimile of the questionnaire were circulated to Rev. Fathers, Religious, Seminarians, Chaplains, Evangelizers, Cathedral Administrator, Secretaries, Chairmen of committees, Coordinators, Departmental heads, Unit heads and various group leaders in the ten fancied Catholic parishes. These individuals were comprised of the executive panel of these parishes.

The entire questionnaire were correctly filled and returned by the respondents.

Information scrutiny as well as outcome

Table 1. Utility of Public Relations Component in Parishes Where Accessible

Response	Computation	Proportion
The use of Video exposure of Church Events on TV	30	40.00
Telephonic and visitation style strategy engagement	15	20.00
Flyers	15	20.00
Placards	15	20.00
No rejoinder	75	-
Total	150	100.00

Majority (40.0%) of those who responded to the questions believed that Public Relations Unit, in their parishes exploited video reportage of religious events on home Television Station, particularly the Enugu State Broadcasting Service, ESBS, Channel 50 Enugu, to portray the affairs of the parishes and to generate concern and common indulgence between the parishes and their neighbours. The next respondents totaling 20.0% asserted that the use of effective Church PR strategy via cellular phone calls and visits helped them get in touch with new faithful and those converted newly. An additional 20.0% of the feedback held that the use of flyers during unique ecclesiastical events in their parishes to update both internal and external target audience. The last group representing 20.0% argued that they publish the evangelical efforts of their parishes by utilizing placards to muster both old members and society in general.

Table 2. The Utilization of Public Relations to Transmit the Message of Eternal Life

Response	Count	Percentage
Yes	120	88.89
No	15	11.11
No response	15	-

The majority of the total respondents to the review question representing (88.89%) attested to the application of Public Relations strategy as a strategy to flourish the Kingdom of God on earth, whereas 11.11% addressees opined the absence of Public Relations tools in transmitting the Good news.

Table 3. Predicament Connected with Public Relations Routine in Urban Parishes

Response	Count	Percentage
Lack of Financial sponsorship	135	34.62
Lack of Public Relations proficiency	120	30.77
magnitude of the Church	75	19.23
Lack of knowledge	60	15.38
Total	390	100.0

Examining the total figure of respondents, majority of them representing 34.62% blamed lack of financial sponsorship as the difficulty allied with Public Relations practice in their parishes, while 30.77% maintained that lack of Public Relations proficiency in the parishes was their setback. At the same time, a total of respondents representing 19.23% affirmed that the magnitude of the parish was the hitch. The outstanding 15.38% said that ignorance of the role Public Relations can play in the churches was their problem.

Table 4. Submitted resolution to solving the problems of Public Relations in parishes

Response	Count	Percentage
Apportioning of ample financial bequest	135	29.02
Educating of parish officers	120	25.81
Construction of consciousness	120	25.81
Reformation of decision-making charter structure	90	19.36
Total	465	100.0

Analyzing the total digit of respondents that replied to the consultation question, majority (29.02%) believed that the apportion of ample financial bequest for Public Relations units would crack the troubles connected with Public Relations performance in their parishes. However, 25.81% suggested that educating parish officers would unravel the evils besieging Public Relations observances in their parishes. An additional 25.81%

admitted that the construction of media consciousness concerning the vital task of Public Relations would be of immense help in solving. Furthermore 19.36% of the respondents recommended the reformation of the decision-making charter of the parishes which might become a panacea to the PR entanglement.

Research Findings

Table 1 indicates that 50.0% of the total figure of addressees failed to act in response to the interrogative inquiry in contrast to the outstanding 50.0% that completed it. For that reason the review query retorted to study question 1 and research goal I.

Indices shown in table 2 of the sum figure of anticipated addressees only 70.0% replied, whereas 30.0% failed to do same. A figure representing 88.89% of feedback applied Public Relations to broadcast the good news of our Lord although 11.11% respondents acclaimed that they did not make use of Public Relations to circulate the good news in parishes.

This consultation inquiry answered the exploration question II and research purpose II.

Table 3 indicated that the preponderance of respondents representing 34.62% established that funding was the quandary connected with the application of Public Relations in parishes, while figure 30.77% represented those who argued that lack of Public Relations proficiency was their problem. Still, 19.23% disputed that the dilemma connected with public Relations practice was the magnitude of the parishes. The rest of 15.38% blamed lack of knowledge of the task Public Relations can offer in effective evangelization in parishes.

Frankly speaking, this interview inquiry hence tackles study question III and research objective III.

Finally, table 4, is an indication of a majority of 29.02% alluding that allotment of sufficient finance would offer the required panacea. Secondly 25.81% recommended the training of parish officers in the expertise of PR practice. An additional 25.81% maintained that crafting awareness of the responsibility of Public Relations in parishes would eventually lead to the answer. The rest of 19.36% concurred that there was need to reform or restructure the executive arrangement of the parishes as the resolution to the plights coupled with Public Relations observation in parishes.

This interview subject matter deals with research intention IV and study question IV.

Propositions and Advocacy

As a follow up of the analysis performed an urgent need arose for upgrading in the spot of Public Relations in Catholic parishes in Enugu urban. The hierarchy of the Catholic Church stands to gain evangelically in Enugu urban when Public Relations culture is engaged in the day-to-day running of their parishes.

Considering the fact that 50% of the feedback did not demonstrate the presence of well-designed Public Relations component in their parishes, sound logic implies an urgent imperative to its application. Therefore, the under listed schedule and counsels ought to be fittingly performed in Catholic parishes in Enugu urban, to effect the mind-set from resentment to approval of the good news of the kingdom by prospective believers.

1. Public Relations is all about good relationships and a human flora and fauna, hence every right Catholic parish should employ the culture of a sound public relations strategy in order to generating complimentary image of the Church in society at large.
2. Every parish therefore, ought to institute corporate social responsibility efforts using Diocesan Pro-Credit Banks and Justice and Peace Commissions to establish social amenities such as farm settlements, hospitals, safe drinking water, affordable and quality education, motherless babies' homes, health insurance companies and small scale business to keep the jobless and hapless lessprivileged especially the youth in

- the society.
3. The sooner the Church hierarchy is empowered by a well deserved knowledge of the vitality of modern means of communication, the better for the Church and mission on earth. The review saw unawareness of the position of Public Relations in the Church as a quagmire to good human relationship or misunderstanding, hence, ecclesiastics and the lay faithful should be educated on the substance the role Public Relations exerts in Church expansion.
 4. Each department in the parishes ought to encompass Public Relations element notwithstanding the already existing Public Relations mechanism of the Church. The reason is that every wing of the parish can be a focus for prospective members.
 5. Parishes can benefit from door-t-door evangelization and while sharing their Church emblems, Bible and tracts in building good image and creating effective communal relationship.
 6. Finance is another major problem facing the practice of Public Relations in Christian parishes in Enugu urban, hence managers of such parishes ought to assign a levelheaded percentage of their resources to Public Relations efforts.
 7. Parishes representing the mother Church ought to erect sign-posts as vital guides-eye-catching and positioned in tactical areas where constituents and general publics can discern them.
 8. It is of utmost priority for parishes to employ the effective services of the media while carrying out both the spiritual and temporal works of mercy-funerals, pastoral visits, hospital and prisons apostolate, and charity visits to motherless babies' homes or during gifts to civil society or when donations are made to government or civil organizations.

Conclusion

There is no doubt about the enormity and importance of Public Relations in faith-based organizations. However it has been regrettable experience that, Public Relations has not been vigorously practiced in many Catholic parishes in Enugu urban. The major reasons for this kind of near-total lack of indulgence boil down to, lack of proper of media culture among ecclesiastical headship, ignorance, insufficient financial resources as well as lack of Public Relations know-h. All hope is not lost as, a few of the Catholic parishes who had employed Public Relations element in the organization of their parishes have revealed that a well positioned and effective application of Public Relations, have the potential to generate friendliness and reciprocated understanding between the believers and their surrounding neighbors of other faith. Due to effective PR practice, such parishes are very popular in and outside Enugu urban and the attendant Church growth. The world is full of mysterious and religious adulterators, hence the Church must highlight her activities to the glare of the public otherwise she will be misunderstood by the public. It is as a result, recommended that every parish in the Enugu urban, their size or strength notwithstanding, ought to employ Public Relations component in the service of the common good. It is the duty of such units to publicize Church activities using the most widely satisfactory means of communication. This strategy will help to clear any doubt enslaving any parish in the urban and beyond.

Today in the public relations is now an integral part of any successful organization just like computerization, and the Christian Churches cannot afford to be left out.

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