

The Era of New Media Technologies and the Challenges of Media Relations Practice in Nigeria

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KEYWORDS Africa. Globalization. Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). Mass Media. Organizations. Public Relations

ABSTRACT This study examines the fundamentals of Media Relations, an important aspect of Public Relations, which help to maintain credibility and mutual relationship with the various media of communication in Nigeria in the era of new media technologies. It provided the opportunity to qualitatively ascertain the import of new media technologies in the practice of media relations in Nigeria; establish the various contemporary tools for media relations and to determine the appropriate strategies of media relations. The revelations uphold the claim that new media technologies like the internet, mobile phones, videoconferencing among others which now overlap with the different media of communication due to technological innovations and convergence, have transformed media relations practice globally despite the various factors such as cyber crisis, low level of technology penetration, poor funding among others posing as challenges to effective media relations practice in Nigeria. Thus, the paper supports the theoretical perspective of development media theory and technological determinism theory. A clarion call was therefore put forward to all those directly or indirectly involved in the practice of media relations in Nigeria to merge resources together or separately and be actively involved in ensuring that the transformations brought about by new media technologies in media relations are explored and the entire benefits completely exploited by all the stakeholders in this regard.

INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly rising economic climate and increased competition, with cost rising and profit dwindling, it has become imperative as well as challenging for many organizations to not only make profit but also ensure that the public, internal and external, see them in a positive light. To achieve this, organizations need to adopt some measures to ensure that the reputation of their organizations' products and services are enhanced, at the same time establish and sustain mutual relationship with their public. One prominent way organizations globally can achieve this is through good Public Relations (PR) - a process / business of studying public attitudes, executing programmes of action and relaying information to the publics through a channels / medium / media, so as to earn public acceptance and good will. The Public Relations officer having this huge task ensures that the appropriate channel(s) of reaching the target publics is/are employed among many other channels.

It is a known fact that there are so many channels of communication the PR officers can use to execute his or her job, but the most prominent and common is the media. However,

since there are several media outlets, transforming daily, with increased advancement in technology, the Public Relations officer is left with the task of maintaining credibility and mutual relationship with the appropriate media so as to reach their public not just effectively but also positively. This is where the concept of Media Relations, an important aspect of Public Relations comes into play.

Some of the early descriptions of media relations are still being upheld in today's definitions even though the new media which brought about online media have transformed media relations practice. Igben (1997) defines media relations as a "persistent interaction with the media of communication in order to maintain exchange of newsworthy confidence and sustained public information." Baran (2004) observes that media relation requires that the "public relations professional maintains good relationship with professionals in the media, understand their deadlines and other restraints and earn their trust." Biagi (2005) adds that media relations is contacting news media, freelance writers and trade publications with the intent of getting them to publish or broadcast news and features about or originated by the organizations. She asserts that media relations

is simply responding to media request for information or spokesperson.” Similarly, Hanson (2005) states that media relations “is a two-way interactions with members of the press”, broadcast and online media – new media.

A more recent definition of media relations comes from Tench and Yeomans (2006). They note that media relations involves “managing relationships with media - all the writers and producers who contribute to and control what appears in the print, broadcast and online media.” From the foregoing, we can deduce that media relations is a two – way communication process that links employer or clients of PR practitioners with target public through the various media of communication. Furthermore, it can be seen as a means of establishing a rapport with media gate-keepers so that the media can present an organization to its publics in a positive light. This is because once an organization is well packaged and presented positively to the public by the various media of communication; this would boost her image before its public. In fact, organizations activities, however well – intended, cannot be known by the target publics in the absence of media relations function.

Media relations have the capacity to reduce ignorance as it concerns any organization. It can also prevent crisis in any society as well as ensures that the reputation of an organization is enhanced to boost public confidence. Media relations also supplies prompt and accurate information concerning any issues that is of interest to the public. Blond et al. (1996) cited from Tench and Yeomans (2006) write that the purpose of media relations is not to issue press release, or handle enquires from journalist, or even to generate a massive file of press cutting. The true purpose of media relations, they state is “to enhance the reputation of an organization and its products and to influence and inform the target audiences.” Nevertheless, Holtz (2002) argues that the role of an organizational media relations department is not to make company look good in the press, nor it is to keep the company out of the newspaper.

Ideally, the job of the media relations department is “to help reporters and editors to do their job.” This explains why Ajala (2005) notes that “good media relations can only be established if public relations practitioners have an understanding of the functions of the media

in the society.” The media, on the other hand, which now overlap with some of the contemporary tools of media relations as a result of their technological developments, innovations and convergence must continue to operate within the ambit of their functions to the society in which they operate.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

Two communication theories support the perspectives of this paper in the context under review among other theories that would have equally shared similar perspectives. They are the development media theory because it is one of the theories that “seeks to explain the normative behaviours of the press (media) in countries conventionally classified as developing countries” like Nigeria (Folarin 2005). The other theory is the technological determinism theory because according to Lievrouw and Livingstone (2006), technological determinism is “the belief that technologies have an overwhelming power to drive human actions” which leads to social change.

From the foregoing, it is evident that media relations practitioners in Nigeria must understand that new media technologies when properly harnessed are capable of transforming media relations practice. In fact, new media technologies, by their very nature, are drivers of social change, national development and organisational development. The various media of communication and their gatekeepers in Nigeria on the other hand, have responsibilities as well as freedom in their information gathering and dissemination task as posited by development media theorists, by ensuring that organisations operating in Nigeria are objectively and positively presented to the world. This is possible because of technological transformations of new media technologies which now overlap with some contemporary tools for media relations and the relationship between the media and organisations in the practice of media relations, which must be sustained and maintained mutually. It is this relationship that makes these two theories apt for this work.

CONTEMPORARY TOOLS FOR MEDIA RELATIONS

It is an acknowledged fact that the main objective of media relations is to establish

and maintain good relations with the media gatekeepers. This can be easily achieved when the appropriate tools are employed. Today, technological innovations and convergence have revolutionized existing media relations tools like press kits, news letters, news releases, facility visits just to mention but a few; thereby leading to the emergence of new and contemporary tools of media relations. This is not to say that these contemporary tools have replaced the 'old' tools but are used to complement each other for effective relations with the media. The contemporary tools of media relations remains those media / facilities that meet the changing trends associated with the 21st century thereby enhancing the practice of media relations. They include the Internet, webcasting, e-mail, video-conferencing, video news release, facility visits among others.

Of a concern in this 21st century is the fact that the influx of variety of contemporary media relations tools leaves the media relations department with the problem of choice. In this regard, Ajala (2005) provides some factors to consider in making the right choice. Some of these factors include "the media profile, the target public profile, time factor, competition and cost of the tool." All these factors if properly harnessed are very capable of guiding the media relations department of any organization in choosing any of these contemporary tools for media relations outlined and discussed below.

Internet

The Internet has ushered in a new age for media relations practice. Today, several organizations have corporate homepage and websites with informative and persuasive details about their products/services and the image of the organization is communicated to the media and their publics across the globe. This explains why Onabajo (2005) notes that "a professional website will improve organizations' image and enhance communication." He, however, advises that in creating an organizational website, the public relations/media relations department should ensure that the website designed for the organization exploits the interactive nature of the Internet, and enable a two way- flow of messages because getting information from the target audience is as important as informing them.

Furthermore, the Internet - network of computer networks, information superhighway online media; by its nature of converging with many other technologies incorporates other types of media relations tools commonly referred to as online media relations. Some of these are website newsroom, online news letters, online news releases, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), online monitoring among host of others. The list certainly, would be inexhaustible because daily new ones are emerging and this would continue as long as man is in existence.

Videoconferencing

This contemporary media relations tool "allows for a live discussion between a group of people in different locations by the use of linked telephones and video screen" (Olise 2008). Videoconferencing enables media relations practitioners to get linked with reporters and other media gatekeepers, to see and talk to each other from the convenience of their own conference centres or from meeting spaces, hotels, and offices other venues with the requisite video and telephone facilities.

One of the earliest examples of the use of a technology that metamorphosed into video-conferencing in media relations as Straubhaar and LaRose (2004) state was in 1982, when John and Johnson used the technology (video-conferencing) to reach hundreds of reporters in thirty cities breaking news and information about the Tylenol product tampering episode which cost the lives of seven people who ingested the tampered over- the counter medication.

Webcasting

Webcasting is a form of broadcasting production that incorporates streaming video and audio on the Internet. It is used to deliver a live press conference or event to the computer screen of target audience. In the case of media relations, a reporter or producer can watch from his or her desktop, laptop etc. viewing not only video but text and photos, participate in interviews if they are part of the package, then "download the Internet feed or run a tape to get excerpts for use in the on-air coverage," (Straubhaar and LaRose 2004).

Webcasting – broadcasting on the net, is first source of information for the media about an

organization. Nonetheless, Hanson (2005) states that a major limitation on webcasting is “the need to obtain permission to transmit materials on the web.” As it seems today, this might no longer be a limitation especially when one considers the proliferation of computer experts as well as Internet hackers which has led to the easy access and pasting of information on the net without seeking permission.

Video News Releases (VNRs)

Hanson (2005) defines video news releases as “a tape or digitalized audio and video messages that serve as a press release to the broadcast and online media.” The difference between news release and video news release is that video news release is accompanied with sound. They are not just read like news release in the print. Seitel (2007) states that “on the Internet, new release is delivered by email and should be shorter than their offline counterparts.”

Organizations can package and send video news release to media organizations especially for free and believe that they would be aired. Hanson (2005) argues however that to get a video news release on the air, it has to be more than a slick piece of video promoting the company but should be something that media organization want to air. He adds that video new release that looks like commercial or promotional films are unlikely to be broadcast, those that tell an interesting story and look like the video shot for the evening news stand a much better chance of getting on the air. This notwithstanding, media houses usually must edit the video news release once they found it does not suit their house style or would provoke public taste. Nonetheless, Adamolekun (2001) asserts that media relations practitioners should understand that video news release are “too commercial and too one – sided.” Nevertheless, video news release is still a very good tool of media relations because of its ability to present information through picture and sound

Electronic Mail - Email

The email is also a contemporary media relations tool. It is used in contacting the media with information about an organization. The e-mail is one the most popular features of the Internet, mainly for exchange of information

between computers through external telephone connections or wireless ports. Fitzgerald and Dennis (2005) note that with e-mail, “users create and send messages using an application on computers callers’ user agent.”

Although, the e-mail can be used by virtually all media relations practitioners to send news release to media gatekeepers even though media gatekeepers may not be comfortable with it especially when not solicited for. Moreover, the fear or worry of computer virus from e-mail attachment may affect their system if the virus is not detected before the attachment is uploaded. This notwithstanding, the e-mail remains a reliable and veritable media relations tool. Just imagine the Instant Messaging (IM), a product of the e-mail, which allows media relations practitioners to communicate with the media online as long as the reporters or journalist, editors etc is on-line at the same time.

Facility Visits

Organizations, can organize facility visits for journalists so that they can see for themselves what the company is doing. Adamolekun (2001) explains that public relations “sourced news are always suspected because it is difficult to have an objective and straight to the point account of an organizations performance if its spokesperson is making the presentation.” On the other hand, the publics are more charitable and sympathetic with the news of a third party they have no reason to doubt his or her sincerity.

Based on this, a facility visit organized for the media gatekeepers (a third party) would boost the image of a company and eliminate negative stories about the company. For example, in a situation when someone opens a bottle of a branded drink and finds or claims to find an insect inside it, the company may not be able to win back their customers mind through constant publications on the media. There may be need for the company to organize a facility visit whereby the company invite media gatekeepers – journalists and editors etc, from different media houses to their production section to show them the processing and packaging process of their drinks because seeing most times, is believing.

Other contemporary tools for media relations are press kit, computers, and electronic bulletin, e-news letters among host of others. Virtually

all the contemporary tools for media relations are products of technological advances in the communication media. Hence, it is not surprising that some of the tools overlap with most new media and are important, being accompanied with numerous benefits for media relations practice today.

THE IMPORTANCE OF NEW MEDIA TECHNOLOGIES IN MEDIA RELATIONS

Fidler (1997) defines new media as “all emerging forms of communication media.” Olise (2008) adds from a new dimension that new media have to do with the convergence of computer technology and telecommunications technologies. They are new communication technologies that combine the computers and telecommunication technologies and are used as channels for the dissemination of information to a heterogeneous audience regardless of time, space and distance. There are different examples of new media such as the Internet, mobile phones, videoconferencing, e-mail, chat rooms, online newspapers/ news-magazines among host of others.

These different types of new media have one way or the other affected media relations practice. Media relations practitioners while using new media can work more effectively and efficiently. This is because it has proven that new media help to increase work efficiency and speed as well as reduce cost. Moreover, new media enable media relations practitioners to communicate with the media in a new and creative ways which would go a long way in creating confidence in not just the media but their publics as well.

Other importance of new media in media relations practice are outlined and discussed below.

Enhance Two-way Communication

New media like the internet and mobile phone among others make for two –way communication which is the core aim of good media relations. Ayankojo (2001) recalls that “there are chat rooms for virtual discussion where users have opportunities to talk on-line” with the organizations having the websites. A message typed and sent within a chat room

appears almost at the same time on the computers of other users in the same chat room, 24hours daily. New media also encourage feedback and interactivity. Take the mobile phones for instance, these new media give media relations practitioners’ means to interact with reporters and get immediate feedback as the case maybe. In addition, the web, Rodney (2005) observes is “interactive in nature.”

Furthermore, Lievrouw and Livingstone (2006) state that new media give users the means to generate, seek and share content selectively, and to interact with other individuals and groups on a scale that was impracticable with traditional means.” In short, the immediacy, responsiveness and social presence of interaction in most new media constitute a huge opportunity for media relations practice.

Enhance the Development of a Positive Image

The mere fact that an organization has a website can boost the image of the organization not to talk of having an attractive, well organized and constantly updated websites. Moreover, having a website encourages international recognition. For instance, a company in Nigeria with an active website would definitely be recognized globally. People and media organizations would tend to associate more with companies recognized in a positive light globally. Moreover, considering the nature of the internet that helps to open the world up thereby reducing the world into an atomic village, there is a tendency that more people would come across a company’s profile which has a website than the ones that do not.

Ease Assessment of Current Corporate Image Position

The feedback mechanism in addition with the task on organizations and other bodies on the net to justify their actions and also explain their mission as well as their reactions on issues have made human communication a more robust activity (Adedina et al. 2008). Indeed, new media make it easier for organizations to be aware of what their publics think about their corporate image so as not to face the danger of having false assumption that they are favourable disposed to their public. Since most new media

have this feedback mechanism they can be used to relay to organizations what their public really think about them. This in turn can assist in pre-empting and eliminating misunderstanding and crisis that could have arisen.

Offer Ubiquity

The ubiquity nature of new media cannot be ignored. Baren (1997) in Ike (2005) believes that the “new communication technologies are often projected as a benefit to democracy because they permit greater citizen involvement.” Similarly, new media when applied in media relations, ensure greater involvement of the media because they are virtually everywhere. The Internet for instance, Cutlip et al. (2006) state represent “the most ubiquitous leading edge of what is a communication revolution.” In essence, media relation professionals using the new media like the Internet, mobile phones etc. would affect everyone in their societies.

Although several scholars have argued if the ubiquity nature of new media is a good thing; media relations practitioners would see it as a good thing especially since the new media are veritable tools which would enable them to communicate with different journalist from different media organization no matter where they are because new media are everywhere.

Make Planning and Implementation of Media Relations Easier

New media make the media relations process easier, faster and cheaper to a large extent. The e-mail and electronic bulletins board for example “can transmit message back to the source in a matter of seconds” (Rodney 2005). The media relations practitioners can use the Internet to carry out quick and cost effective research. After implementing media relations policies, those involved in the process can use new media to get feedback on how well the process is progressing. News releases can be sent to the media houses through new media technologies like the e-mail, mobile phone etc. All these are done faster, easier and cheaper with the aid of the new media than the traditional means.

Furthermore, new media eliminate the problem of distance and time; communicate better with the media of communication among host

of other importance. In fact, any organization that is not making use of new media technologies for media relations practice in this technological age would definitely find itself not moving with global trends, even if they are employing all the strategies of media relations.

STRATEGIES OF MEDIA RELATIONS

Organizations globally as well as media relations practitioners must adopt different strategies to be able to survive and succeed in this global competitive world. Thus, it therefore behoves on organizations’ media relations department to map out effective strategies for effective media relations practice. Essentially, media relations should be planned and implemented based on certain rules, principles and guidelines. All these make up the strategies of media relations.

Tench and Yeomans (2006) provide some basic rules for effective relations as follows:

- i. Act as a service to the media: answer questions, return calls before deadlines, provide information and context.
- ii. Accept the independence of the media; do not offer payment, do not ask for copy approval
- iii. Disclose your interest i. e., let the journalist know who you are representing
- iv. Be as available to the media when the news is bad as when you have good news to promote.

Contrary to one of the views of Tench and Yeomans (2006) that media relations should ‘act as a service’, it is our view that media relations as a practice should be a service to the media because that is the only way it will not interfere with the functions of the media. Furthermore, in dealing with the media, media relations practitioners should be honest, straight forward and have good interpersonal relations with media gatekeepers such as journalist, editors among others who cover and edit events which are related to their organization. Nonetheless, Bivin (2008) advises that in dealing with the media, the organizations media relations department should not “bombard journalist with a daily barrage of press release.” This is because reporters and editors who you bombard with your releases know this and are likely to stop releasing your information.

For the parties involved to be able to suc-

cessfully follow these principles, they would have to adhere to the guidelines of good media relations. Cuttip et al. (2006) provide some guidelines for good media relations as follows:

- i. Shoot Squarely:* The most important asset in dealing with the media is credibility which must be earned usually over a period of time. If you can not speak the truth for some legal / legislative reason then say nothing.
- ii. Give Services:* The quickest and surest way to give the cooperation of journalist is to promote them with newsworthy, interesting and timely stories, and pictures that they want when they want them and in a form they can readily use. Media relations practitioners who hope to place stories with new media must know and adhere to media deadlines rules
- iii. Do not Beg or Carp:* Nothing irritates journalist and editors as well as news directors more than the practitioners who beg to have stories used or complain about story treatment. If information is not sufficiently newsworthy on its own merit, to attract their interest, no amount of begging or carping can change the quality of that information.
- iv. Do not Ask for Kills:* Practitioners have no right to ask the media to suppress or kill a story. It is seen as an insult to media gatekeepers. However, if the media report inaccurate or misleading story, ask for a correction – rejoinder.
- v. Do not Flood the Media:* It is advised that you stick to what journalist will consider news, keep media mailing hot, current and send the most appropriate journalist at each news media.

Furthermore, every organizations media relations department should also conduct a research to know not just the objective of the media relations practice but also the problem if any. They should decide what the message should be and which channel / contemporary tool to use for the dissemination of the message to the media. They must also evaluate the entire process. In fact, the media relations department should plan the media relations process very well. This is because planning would eliminate unnecessary work, improve work efficiency, ensure that the objectives are achieved, demonstrates value for money and avoid any possible crisis in the future. Above all, planning through

the adoption of effective media relations strategies would help to reduce the challenges that may arise due to the changing trends in new media technologies.

FACTORS MILITATING AGAINST EFFECTIVE MEDIA RELATIONS PRACTICE IN NIGERIA IN THE ERA OF NEW MEDIA TECHNOLOGIES

Increasingly and daily, new media are becoming gateways for effective media relations planning, implementations and practice. Media relations practitioners globally, are now embracing new media due to the numerous benefits accruing from utilizing them and this has helped in effective media relations practice in this 21st century. Regrettably, as it seems, developing countries like Nigeria are still lagging behind in the development and utilization of new media in all spheres of life, media relations practice inclusive. Some of the factors responsible for this unfortunate development range from cyber crisis, corruption, Low penetration of New Information and Communication Technologies (NICTs) in Nigeria, poor funding of media relations department, lack of expertise to poor power supply.

Some of these factors are examined below.

Cyber Crisis

This is one of the major factors affecting media relations practitioners in their use of new media. As media relations professional, you are not only working for yourself, you are also working for an organization. Media relations professionals, therefore, should be careful not to make any mistake that could ruin, not just his or herself but the organization especially when using new media like the internet. The internet revolution came with its problem. It has the problem of human system failure, network problem, virus issues and many others. Campbell et al. (2009) note that “spam and spurious news” are some of the problems associated with the internet. This among other related issues constitute cyber crisis for effective media relations practice.

In this age of new media, it is very possible for anyone to wreck havoc, create a controversy or mar the image of a company or an individual in any small organization. Even a disgruntle

employer or small/large group of people can mar the image of an organization by pasting a controversial information on the net. This, no doubt would affect effective media relations practice negatively. However, prompt response to any such information online is one of the fastest means to combat cyber crisis.

Corruption

Corruption is another factor militating against effective practice of media relations in the era of new media technologies. In this regard, Okafor (2002) states that many forms of bribery were erroneously described as media / public relations practice “adversely affected the integrity of the profession.” In Nigeria for instance, it is commonly believed that some media gatekeepers ask for ‘white envelope’ in one way or the other before accepting stories and news release from organizations.

Sometimes, some journalist without recourse to professional ethics rejects stories that are newsworthy and attractive from organizations media relations department because of lack of incentive. It is not surprising therefore that occasionally, there have been issues of distrust or mistrust in media relations practice globally as manipulations of information has become the order of the day because of corruption. To tackle this issue, media gatekeepers must ensure that they operate within the confines of the ethics of their profession.

Low Penetration of New Information and Communication Technologies (NICTs)

The world is getting digitalized but generally less developed countries (LDCs) like Nigeria have low level of technology of penetration. Danaan (2006) states that “it will take LDCs many decades to a systematic, efficient and reliable ICTs” new media technologies. However, since most LDCs have realized that virtually all new technologies are needed in all aspect of life, media relations practice inclusive, they have started to take bold steps by making policies that would encourage the acquisition and utilization of the various new media. Nonetheless, Nigeria is still lagging behind when compared with countries like Ghana and South Africa, whose power supply history is very encouraging.

Furthermore, even the internet, e-mail and

mobile phones in Nigeria are not easily affordable, accessible and efficient. Take the e-mail for example; when messages with attachment are sent, opening the file takes a lot of time and sometimes may not even open due to the nature of the type of network selected in a bid to save cost.

One of the main reasons for this low technology penetration in Nigeria is the high cost of purchase and maintenance of most new media majority of new media are produced and designed in Europe, Asia and America and imported in Nigeria at a high cost due to the high foreign exchange rate with N150 to \$1. Therefore, it is time all hands must be on deck to help Nigeria overcome darkness.

Poor Funding of Media Relations Department

Media relations should be seen as investment. Unfortunately, most organization tends to ignore the proper funding of media relations department especially for the acquisition of new media. Ikpe (2005/2006) however asks “will some Nigeria organization be able to bear the cost of acquisition and maintenance of ICTs”? Indeed, inadequate funding also contributed immensely to poor media relations practice in this era of new media technologies.

Apart from acquiring and maintaining of new media, media relations department need finance for both planning and implementing media relations which are not readily available in most developing countries.

Lack of Expertise

Media relations practice in this era of new media technologies requires expertise for both in the practice and the use of new media technologies for media relations. It also requires adequate training of media relations department personnel’. This required expertise is lacking in most developing countries.

Okafor (2002) attributes this situation to the fact that early practitioners included people who “rose through the rank and graduates from other disciplines like Marketing, Psychology, Journalism, Linguistics etc. who did not receive any formal training in either public relations” or media relations to enable them function effectively in government and business organi-

zations. Even those who read Public Relations are not knowledgeable in all the new media usage and are not constantly trained in this regard. Regular training is the key to unlock this factor.

Even the few who may claim to have fair or good knowledge of new media usage for the practice of media relations are seriously hampered by the unsteady power supply problem in Nigeria. Most new media require constant and stable power supply. This, unfortunately, has been a mirage in Nigeria for a long time. All these factors if not properly handled can put the practice of media relations in this era of new media technologies in jeopardy.

CONCLUSION

Apparently the challenges confronting the practice of media relations in Nigeria in era of new media technologies are alarming and should not be ignored. Efforts at reducing these factors lie in the hands of all stakeholders involved directly and indirectly in the practice. These include the Nigerian government, media organizations, corporate organizations, government and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), individuals, as well as public and media relations practitioners among others. The situation requires advocacy for a deliberate and conscious government policies to tackle the various challenges and a clarion call to all the stakeholders for a way forward.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of this, the following are recommended as part of the ways to reduce and if possible eradicate some or all of the factors militating against effective media relations practice in Nigeria

1. Media relations practitioners need to ensure that the interpersonal relationship established with media gatekeepers must be sustained and maintained mutually as the media serve as the springboard for the advancement of the image of their organizations.
2. Organizations in Nigeria and others in mostly developing countries, as it seems are the ones lagging behind in frequent training of staff, must ensure that their staff are sent for regular training all over the world so as to keep them abreast with the changing

trends in communication due to the transformation brought about by new media technologies.

3. Proper funding of the media relations department is very essential since money is required to off set some media charges and for instant mobility of media relations experts. In fact without money those saddled with the responsibility of interacting with the media in order to represent and protect the interest of their organization may not be able to function as expected.
4. Organizations operating in Nigeria in the 21st century should have an active website. Apart from this, the site should be updated regularly with events happening in the organization especially those ones which pertain to their relationship with the media and the plan of action they intend to execute over a period of time in favour of their publics. In addition, there is need for quarterly or as the case may be, online survey through the organizations website in order to determine people and the media perception about them. Above all, media relations practitioners must be ready to use the benefit of the internet to their organizations advantage but must also be positioned to help their organizations deal with the crisis of the Internet.
5. Organizations especially in Nigeria where there is still no visible improvement in power supply despite government continuous claims and promise of providing regular power supply over the years should endeavour to generate their own source of power supply while hoping the government promises in their regard would eventually be realized.
6. Nigeria government must endeavour to provide a conducive atmosphere for organizations operating in Nigeria through steady and regular power supply and moderate taxation for the smooth operations of media activities and other activities.

Unarguably, if seventy-five percent of the above workable recommendations are put into action, media relations practice in Nigeria would be taken to unimaginable height. It would also ensure that the importance of new media in media relations are felt especially when the right contemporary tools are employed and the appropriate strategies adopted. Furthermore, when and if the recommendations proposed

herein are properly harnessed, it would equally go a long way to help Nigeria in her quest of becoming one of the leading economies in the world as captured in her vision 2020.

Therefore, all those directly or indirectly involved in the practice of media relations in Nigeria must be prepared to merge resources together or separately and be actively involved in ensuring that the transformations brought about by new media technologies in media relations practice are adequately explored and the full benefits completely exploited by all the organizations operating in Nigeria.

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