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Corporate Reputation Management of Selected Financial Institutions in FCT, Abuja

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Abstract

This study investigated corporate reputation management in two financial institutions—First Bank and Guarantee Trust Bank (GTBank)—within the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. The objective was to assess how public relations (PR) strategies, particularly social media use, contribute to reputation building and information management in these banks. A survey research design was adopted. Findings indicate that most respondents maintain social media accounts and that both banks deploy PR strategies for reputation management, including traditional channels (news magazines, online news magazines, and *News Tit-Bits*) and social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, among others). The use of these platforms has increased awareness of First Bank and GTBank in Abuja and fostered trust, acceptability, patronage, and believability of updates. The PR departments of both banks appear to be maximizing social media as a channel for communicating with target audiences, supporting counseling, information management, crisis management, and media and community relations. The study concludes that social media use by the banks 'PR departments has been effective in information management and in enhancing the image and reputation of the banks to some extent. The

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findings imply that bank management should recognize the strategic importance of PR units and ensure adequate funding to enable them to fulfill their responsibilities and activities effectively.

Keywords: Corporate Reputation; Public Relations; Social Media; Financial Institutions; Reputation Management; Stakeholder Engagement; Abuja, Nigeria

Introduction

Corporate reputation has received unprecedented attention from both academics and business community (Zhang, 2009; Jeng, 2011). However, a piece of successful experience in corporate reputation management in one country or area could hardly been replicated in another place due to its culture and environment-dependent characteristic, thus good corporate reputation is of great importance in corporate core competence (Zhang, 2009; Jeng, 2011). It may be defined as stakeholders 'overall evaluation of a company over time (Fombrun 1996; Gotsi and Wilson 2001;Helm,2010).

Reputation serves as a point of reference when judging the firm 's contribution to stakeholders 'own and the public 's welfare. Therefore, it is decisive for stakeholders 'contributions to the firm (Lewis, 2001). In the last decades a vast body of literature has emerged concerning the relationship between initiatives and organizational performance (Peloza & Papania, 2008). Despite all this attempt of research it suffers with major limitations.

It is therefore incumbent on management of institutions to develop an appropriate corporate reputation (Oyesola, 2007; Uadiale, 2010). Research in this important sector in dwelling its action on responsible behavior is necessary so as to maintain its competitive advantage. Despite the fact that business in developing nations have different system from those in USA and Europe. This information is very significant because organization need to recognized the important business ethics and reputation in their decision making process before they can apply then in business setting (Hsu, 2012).

Financial institutions rely heavily on customer satisfaction for loyalty. Previous research has shown that customers in the financial services sector find value from the quality of products, accounts, and services offered by the firm (Krishnan et al, 2002). However, since products delivered were not fully viewed as products by customers (due to

their intangible nature), the service accompanying the products becomes an important factor that determines the overall satisfaction with the firm (Krishnan et al, 1999). This findingprovesthe importance of a financial institution 's reputation. Overall, an organization 's reputation is as good as what they are seen to be by their clients.

Businesses that promote themselves online are trying to communicate with the world. Business communication and interactions (including those with customers) are accounted for by web surfers looking for a reputable company to do business with. When a customer makes a statement, especially on social networking sites, it has the ability to reach a larger audience, at a faster pace, with less effort, which can sometimes be a disadvantage for companies.

Reputation management is about building a sound corporate reputation and maintaining strength (Nakra, 2000). Argenti and Barnes (2009) state that blogs and social communities stand out as being the most impactful in sparkling the rebirth of business communication in terms of company exposure, sales and overall corporate reputation. Financial institutions must adhere to their values and image, and continue to protect it even when trying to bridge into new territories, like social media. In the field of Public Relations, the area of corporate reputation is particularly important because it is the communication practice that a company 's target audience can relate to the most.

Statement of the Problem

Before the consolidation of the banks prior to 2004, the financial structure is facing to a predictable collapse as a result of corruption, poor corporate governance, corporate reputation with issues related to high turnover and insider abuse (Cowry research, 2009). In line with this, Nigerian banking sector has witness a dramatic growth at post consolidation era but unfortunately the industry and the regulators are not sufficiently ready to sustain and monitor the growth particularly in relation to corporate reputation (Sanusi, 2010).

There are only a limited number of studies that examine factors which influence the corporate reputation of Nigerian firms. Although the corporate reputation issue has received substantial attention in developed countries, it has remained neglected in the developing countries. (Olayinka Marte Uadiale, 2010). It is clear that corporate reputation is a significant management decision as it greatly influences the owner 's equity return, performance as well as the market value of the shares. Therefore, business must enhance the corporate reputation to meet the changing demands of the diverse stakeholder.

This study seeks to address one of the limitations, previous researches have in connection to corporate reputations management in Africa and Nigeria. In this study, the aim to close this paucity of studies on corporate reputation management of select financial institutions in FCT, specifically; First Bank and Guarantee Trust Bank.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to assess corporate reputation management First Bank and Guarantee Trust Bankin FCT. However, the specific objectives are**:**

1. To determine the strategies adopted for corporate reputation by first bank and GT Bank in FCT

2. To find out how these strategies for corporate reputation management are used in first bank and GT Bank in FCT

3. To ascertain the effectiveness of this strategies for corporate reputation first bank and GT Bank in FCT

Review of Concepts

Under this heading relevant concepts will be discussed, as follows: concept of public relations and corporate reputation management.

Public Relations

Public Relations are the natural inclination of human beings to live in peace and harmony as social organisms. Man cannot live alone and therefore must associate with fellow beings. The purpose of Public Relations is to find the best way to develop and sustain such relationship. The basic assumption of Public Relations is that the safest grounds on which social relationship can thrive is knowledge and understanding of each other. (Nwosu, 1996)

Rex Harlow (cited in Nwosu, 1996) states that Public Relations is the distinctive management function which helps to establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, acceptance and cooperation between an organization and its public, involves management of problems and issues, helps management to keep informed and be responsive to public opinion, defines and emphasizes trends; and uses research and sound ethical communication techniques as its principal tools.

However, in 1978, professionals convened in Mexico where the popular Mexican statement was adopted by participants as a more plausible and simpler definition as cited in

Odozi (2007). The statement defines Public Relations as the art and social science of analyzing trends, predicting their consequences; counselling organizations leaders and implementing planned programme of action which will serve both the organizational and the public interest. The term relationship in Public Relations scholarship is defined as the state which exists between an organization and its key publics in which the actions of either entity impact the economic, social, political and /or cultural well-being of the other entity. "(ledingham & Bruning, 1998, p.62) There are five major Public Relations disciplines. Financial Public Relations, consumer Public Relations, crisis communication, Government Public Relations and internal Public Relations (IPR, 2012).

Corporate Reputation

Corporate reputation is a term that has been adopted by a wide range of disciplines. The concept has been studied from the perspectives of financial success, competitiveness, corporate responsibility, cultural representations, and risk management (Aula, 2010). From these various perspectives exists a variety of ways to define, categorize and measure the concept. An organization 's identity entails the constellation and manifestation of an organization 's competency, capability, resources and structure that enables it to innovatively create, develop and maintain its brand and entrench its reputation (Abimbola, 2009).

There 's no unambiguous, generally accepted definition for the term corporate reputation (Gotsi, & Wilson, 2001). Conducting an explication research on the term can help us generalize the concept in a more comprehensible and universal approach. Variables of reputation like the company 's brand, customer relationship management, trust, credibility, commitment and loyalty all play a significant role in the presentation and maintenance of a company 's image and its reputation. In other words, a company 's overall appeal is dependent on these variables for success.

Review of Related Literature

The Strategies Adopted for Corporate Reputation

A study by Nora Barnes (2008) revealed the following about how customer care online influences brand reputation given the widespread adoption of new media. That study surveyed individuals comprised mostly of respondents between the ages of 25-55 years where more than half classified themselves as college-educated. A third reported

income of over $100,000 and 21% with an income of less than 60,000. The results were as follows:

i. 70% reported they engage in this pre-purchase behaviour using social media to learn about the customer care offered by a company when considering a purchase.
ii. 84% reported that they consider the quality of customer care based on social media sites 'user opinions at least sometimes during their personal research and investigation when making a purchase decision.
iii. The respondents ironically shared that they too use social media to share their experiences "to protect others."

In this study, customers expressed getting some information from micro-blogging sites like Facebook and Twitter, as a resource in their product decision-making process. The most critical lesson that should be learned from this study is that customers are sharing their positive as well as negative experiences online. The information should also serve as an initiative for companies to take charge and be visible for direct communication with online customers for reputational purposes.

In 2010, Fiserv, a company that focuses on how financial services can use technology to help their clients, examined the current and future interest that consumers have in connectingwith financial institutions through social media. Their findings further proved the importancefor financial companies to be present on social networking sites. The following was found:

i. 94% of Generation Y (18-27 year olds), 90% of Generation X (27-43 year olds), and 78% ofboomers (44-61 year olds) engage in social media usage.
ii. More than 57% of the Fiserv survey respondents indicated that they had connected with a company or brand on a social networking site. Gen Y consumers connect to show their support of the brand-a key indicator of loyalty
iii. 46% read reviews from other customers
iv. 45% contacts customer service
v. 44% post reviews, complaints or questions

According to the Nielsen Company, consumers globally are spending more than five and a half hour on social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter, an 82% increase from December 2009 to December 2010 when they were spending just over three hours on these sites (blog.neilsen.com, 2010). The use of social networking sites shows that target

audiences can be reached immediately, and that members can trigger discussions about products and services within their network of family and friends.

In the U.S. the year-over-year growth in the average time spent by users on Facebook and Twitter were at a growth rate of 200% and 368% respectively. Twitter.com actually reigned as the fastest growing in December 2009 in terms of unique visitors, increasing by 79% from 2.7 million unique visitors in December 2008 to 18.1 million in December 2009 (blog.nielsen.com, 2010). Such availability of consumers should serve as an avenue for financial companies to want to be present on these sites to pinpoint their customers 'needs and concerns and build a strong and sustainable relationship.

Indeed, many sites may observe their users to be "addicted "to this new mode of networking judging by the frequency and time they spend on these online forums. Analyzing ways to network through listening and building relationships with customers can be a reasonable method that should be pursued by financial companies. Most business groups hold constant communication and good relations with consumers significant. Blogs, social networks, video-sharing platforms, search engine marketing and optimization, corporate websites and online newsrooms are all platforms that have been embraced and implemented by the most successful, innovative organizations while others have ignored them at their own risk and in some cases great detriment (Argenti & Barnes, 2009).

Theoretical Framework

Image restoration theory has been selected to serve as theoretical framework for the study.

Image Restoration Theory

Image is a concept that is fundamental to public relations; the notion that it is an impression shared by the target audience extends towards organizations, non-profit groups, for-profit groups, and government institutions (Benoit, 1997). Building on the pre-existing theory-apologia, image restoration focuses on the message choices. Its strategies are of two assumptions, with the first being that communication is an activity that is goal-oriented and the second assumption stating that maintaining a favorable image is the focal point of effective communication (Blaney, Benoit, & Brazil, 2001).

Benoit (1997), explains that image revolves around an individual, group of individuals, and corporations are perceived by the target audience. The perception is often informed by the message, actions, and behavior of the corporations alongside its

constituencies. It is significant to note that there exists the possibility of having more than one or two audiences with diverse and different interests, hence, the need to identify all relevant audiences and their interests and have it addressed with effective messages (Benoit, 1995). Image restoration theory (IRT) entails the use of communication strategies to rectify the negative impacts of a crisis (Benoit & Brinson, 1994; Brinson & Benoit, 1996). It serves as a framework that speculates how communications strategies can promote the success or failure of crisis management (Coombs & Schmidt, 2000).

The theory looks into the efforts that needs to be put together to rebuild a damaged reputation through its laid down restorative strategies (Benoit, 1995). The strategies identified by Benoit (1995) revolve around: (i) denial, (ii) evasion of responsibility, (iii) reducing the offensiveness of the act, (iv) corrective action, and (v) mortification. According to Benoit, denial implies that organization concerned did nothing wrong; hence, they are not involved in a crisis. Evasion of responsibility illustrates that the organizations has minimal responsibility for the crisis. Reducing the offensiveness of the act gets the target audience to perceive the organization or crisis with minimal damages.

Corrective action strives to repair existing damage that the crisis caused or prevent the crisis from recurring. Mortification strategies tend to make organizations take up the responsibility for the crisis, thereby issuing out an apology. In addition, Coombs (1998), describes crisis-response strategies into a concept; defensive-accommodative continuum. The concept of defensive-accommodative continuum illustrates how defensive responses seek to protect the organization 's end, while the accommodative responses seek to address the concerns of those affected by the crisis. However, the route recommended by researchers is to ensure that the response strategies are more accommodative and less defensive (Coombs & Schmidt, 2000).

METHODS

This research work adopts mixed method which deals with survey research design with questionnaire and Oral Interview. The population of this study constitutes staff, management, Public Relations Departments of the financial institutions. The population of First Bank plc. Abuja is 197 (According to the management record of First Bank plc 2022). GT Bank has a population of203 staff (According to the management record of GTB, 2022).The population of the two banks put together is 400 therefore the total population

of the study is 400**.**The technique to be used for sampling of the respondents is purposive sampling. Four hundred (400) questionnaires will administered to the management and staff of Public Relations Departments of the selected financial institutions.

RESULTS

Data presentation and analysis as done based on the 397 copies of the questionnaires retrieved out of the study population. Data presentation and analysis of questionnaire generated data is made up of the 400 copies of the questionnaire retrieved as follows:

Table 1. Showing how the selected Banks adopted Public Relations Strategies.

Responses	Frequency	Percentages
Strongly Agree	160	40.3%
Agree	120	30.2%
Somewhat agree	0	0.0%
somewhat Disagree	0	0.0%
disagree	90	22.7%
strongly Disagree	20	5.1%
Neither agree or disagree	7	1.7%
Total	**397**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2022

As seen from table 1 above which ascertains the banks adopted public relations strategies, 160 (40.3%) of the respondents strongly agreed that the banks adopted public relations strategies, 120 (30.2%) agreed while 90 (22.7%) disagreed. And 20 (5.1%) of the respondents disagreed whereas 7 (1.7%) of the respondents neither agreed or disagreed.

This translates to concluding that the banks adopted public relations strategies since the highest percentage fall between the respondents who strongly agreed and those who agreed. This in the overall means the banks have adopted public relations strategies for the management of their image, reputations and customer relations.

Tables 2: Showing how First bank and GTbank use social media channel as public relations strategy for their corporate reputation management than other platforms.

Responses	Frequency	Percentages
Strongly Agree	160	40.3%
Agree	120	30.2%
Somewhat agree	0	0.0%
somewhat Disagree	0	0.0%
disagree	90	22.7%
strongly Disagree	20	5.1%
Neither agree or disagree	7	1.7%
Total	**397**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2022

As seen from table 2 above First bank and GTbank use social media channel as public relations strategy for their corporate reputation management than other platforms. 160 (40.3%) of the respondents strongly agreed that the banks use social media channel as public relations strategy for their corporate reputation management than other platforms, 120 (30.2%) agreed while 90 (22.7%) disagreed. And 20 (5.1%) of the respondents disagreed whereas 7 (1.7%) of the respondents neither agreed or disagreed.

This translates to concluding that respondents use social media channel as public relations strategy for their corporate reputation management than other platform since the highest percentage fall between the respondents who strongly agreed and those who agreed. This in the overall shows that the banks find the social media convenient in managing their corporate reputation.

Table 3: Showing the strategies adopted for corporate reputation by First bank and GT Bank in FCT

Responses	Frequency	Percentages
Social Media	167	42.1%
Corporate Social Responsibility	100	30.2%
Customer Relations	90	22.7%
Media Relations	20	5.1%
Community Relations	20	5.1%
Total	**397**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Table 3 above examined the strategies adopted for corporate reputation by First bank and GT Bank in FCT, 167 (42.1%) of the respondents who are a majority said social media is the most used strategy adopted for corporate reputation by First bank and GT Bank in FCT, 120 (30.2%) agreed while 90 (22.7%) fall under the late majority. And 20 of the respondents with (5.1%).

This translates to concluding that majority of the respondents affirmed social media is the most used strategy adopted for corporate reputation by First bank and GT Bank in FCT. This in the overall improve practice and knowledge of social media by Public Relations Departments of First Bank and Guarantee Trust Bank in the zonal headquarters.

Table 4: Showing how the social media have been adopted as part of the strategies by public relations departments of First Bank and Guarantee Trust Bank in the zonal headquarters

Responses	Frequency	Percentages
Strongly Agreed	167	42.1%
Agreed	120	30.2%
disagreed	90	22.7%
Somewhat agree	0	0.0%

somewhat Disagree	0	0.0%
strongly Disagreed	20	5.1%
Neither agree or disagree	0	0.0%
Total	**397**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Table 4 above which show the adoption of social media by Public Relations Departments of First Bank and Guarantee Trust Bank in the zonal headquarters, 167 (42.1%) of the respondents strongly agreed that social media have been adopted by Public Relations Departments of First Bank and Guarantee Trust Bank, 120 (30.2%) agreed while 90 (22.7%) fall under the late majority and 20 of the respondents with (5.1%). This translates to concluding that social media have been adopted by Public Relations Departments of First Bank and Guarantee Trust Bank. This will in the overall improve practice and knowledge of social media by Public Relations Departments of First Bank and Guarantee Trust Bank in the zonal headquarters.

Table 5: Showing through which social media platform they interact with First Bank and Guarantee Trust Bank in Abuja and Nasarawa State.

Responses	Frequency	Percentages
Facebook	160	40.3%
Twitter	96	24.2%
You tube	90	22.6%
WhatsApp	25	6.3%
All of the above	26	6.5%
Total	**397**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2022

As seen from table 5 above which tries to ascertain which social media platform the respondents use to interact with First Bank and Guarantee Trust Bank in Abuja and Nasarawa. 160 (40%) respondents use Facebook for interactions, 96 (24.2%) use twitter, while 90 (22.6%) of the respondents use You tube. And 25 (6.3%) of the respondents use

WhatsApp, whereas 26 (6.5%) said all of the social media platforms serves as channel for interaction.

This translates to concluding that respondents are open to social media since the highest percentage fall between Facebook and twitter. This will in the overall improve the communication and interaction of between clients and the banks on social media.

Table 6: Showing how the required information about First Bank and Guarantee Trust Bank in Abuja and Nasarawa State are gotten on their social media handles

Responses	Frequency	Percentages
Strongly Agreed	167	42.1%
Agreed	120	30.2%
disagreed	90	22.7%
Somewhat agree 0	0.0%	
somewhat Disagree	0	0.0%
strongly Disagreed	20	5.1%
Neither agree or disagree	0	0.0%
Total	**397**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Table 6 above indicates that respondents get the required information about First Bank and Guarantee Trust Bank in Abuja and Nasarawa state are on social media. 167 (42.1%) of the respondents strongly agreed that they get the needed information about First Bank and Guarantee Trust Bank in Abuja and Nasarawa state via the social media platforms adopted by Public Relations Departments of First Bank and Guarantee Trust Bank in Abuja and Nasarawa state. 120 (30.2%) agreed while 90 (22.7%) of the respondents disagreed. And 20 (5.1%) of the respondents strongly disagreed.

This translates to concluding that social media is being put to proper use by the Public Relations Departments of First Bank and Guarantee Trust Bank in Abuja and Nasarawa state. This will in the overall improve the use of social media information and protocol department 's universities in north central Nigeria.

Table 7: Showing the degrees of agreement to how the use of social media by the Public Relations Departments of First Bank and Guarantee Trust Bank is satisfactory

Responses	Frequency	Percentages
Strongly Agreed	160	40.3%
Agreed	120	30.2%
Somewhat Agree	0	0.0%
Somewhat disagree	0	0.0%
disagreed	90	22.7%
strongly Disagreed	20	5.1%
Neutral	7	1.7%
Total	**397**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Table 7 show that the use of social media by the Public Relations Departments of First Bank and Guarantee Trust Bank is satisfactory, 160 (40.3%) of the respondents strongly agreed that the use of social media by the Public Relations Departments of First Bank and Guarantee Trust Bank is satisfactory, 120 (30.2%) agreed while 90 (22.7%) disagreed. And 20 (5.1%) of the respondents disagreed whereas 7 (1.7%) of the respondents remained neutral.

This reveals that a greater part of the respondents affirm that the use social media is viable and satisfactory in the dissemination of information about the universities. This in the long run improves mutual understanding between the universities and the public.

Table 8: **Showing the degrees of agreement on how the adoption of social media for information processing and dissemination by the Public Relations Departments of First Bank and Guarantee Trust Bank is highly interactive and effective.**

Responses	Frequency	Percentages
Strongly Agree	167	42.1%
Agree	120	30.2%

Somewhat Agree	0		0.0%
Somewhat disagree	0		0.0%
disagree	90	22.7%	
strongly Disagree	20		5.1%
Neutral	0		0.0%
Total	**397**		**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Table 8 indicates that the adoption of social media for information processing and DISSEMINATION by the Public Relations Departments of First Bank and Guarantee Trust Bank is highly interactive and effective, 167 (42.1%) of the respondents strongly agreed that the adoption of social media for information processing and dissemination by the Public Relations Departments of First Bank and Guarantee Trust Bank is highly interactive and effective, 120 (30.2%) agreed while 90 (22.7%) of the respondents disagreed. And 20 (5.1%) of the respondents strongly disagreed.

This reveals that a greater part of the respondents affirms the adoption of social media for information processing and dissemination by the Public Relations Departments of First Bank and Guarantee Trust Bank is highly interactive and effective

Data from Oral Interview

The oral interview was conducted with Nkiruka Harris-Ezethe, Zonal head, Public Relations First Bankand Haruna Musa, Divisional head Guaranty Trust Bank, North East/Central Nigeria Abuja. Most of the interview questions thrown at the Zonal and Divisional heads, Public Relations of First Bank and Guarantee Trust Bank were answered thus.

Interview Q1. What are the strategies adopted for corporate reputation by First bank and GT Bank in FCT?

The two heads of Public Relations First Bank and Guaranty Trust Bank in Nasarawa State and Abuja posits that their departments have:

Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter & Instagram handles which are being used for dissemination of information to the public, particularly clientsstaff, parents, prospective students. The social media handles are being used to create awareness about programmes

& activities of management. Most of the audiences are more active on Facebook compared to other social media handles, particularly Nasarawa state and Abuja banking communities.

The implication of this result is that the financial institutions are accessible and reachable via social media. The Public Relations Departments are the custodian of information and communication in the banks, as such owning social media handles add value and credence to their information function e.g news magazines, online New Magazine, News Tit-Bits, social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, among others project the image of the banks.

Interview Q2. How are these strategies for corporate reputation management been used in First bank and GT Bank in FCT?

The Public Relations Departments is an arm of the bank that serves as the first point of contact which people rely on for first-hand information. It is a reliable and credible source of information dissemination channel which handles chains of activities; as such adoption of social media becomes pertinent. The social media handles reach a very wide target audience who are staff, clients, prospective students among others, who wish to get information. The department has a multimedia desk/news media section that is responsible for handling the internet and social media activities

This translates to concluding that the banks use social media handles to carry out their activities. The implication of this result is that the banks are making important use of the social media. The use of social media handles aid to create more awareness about First Bank and Guarantee Trust Bank in Nasarawa State and Abuja. It has also created trust, acceptability and believability in terms of updates.

Interview Q3. How effective were these strategies for corporate reputation First bank and GT Bank in FCT?

Social media is beneficial and advantageous because of its spontaneity and the ability to reach all grades and also the capability to reach heterogeneous audience. It is cost effective against other media, it is very flexible to use, it is interactive, it is immediate and instantaneous in terms of feedback it helps as channels of information to clients, staff, parents etc. to have direct interaction and access to information about the banks.

This translates to concluding that the use of social media is cost effective, reaches large and scattered audience, has immediate feedbacks compare to other channels more

convenient for respondents because they can access all the information, they need about the universities just at anytime and anywhere they choose. The implication of this result is that the Public Relations Departments of First Bank and Guarantee Trust Bank in Nasarawa State and Abuja, have maximized the benefit of social media by being active and frequent on it for the common good of their banks. People rely on the social media handles for updates.

DISCUSSION

The findings are discussed in line with the research questions designed in chapter one to guide the study.

What are the strategies adopted for corporate reputation by First bank and GT Bank in FCT?

In response to this research question, data evidence revealed that majority of affirmed that First bank and GT Bank in FCT and Nasarawa adopted public relations strategies**.** Data in table ascertains that the banks adopted public relations strategies, 160 (40.3%) of the respondents strongly agreed that the banks adopted public relations strategies, 120 (30.2%) agreed while 90 (22.7%) disagreed. And 20 (5.1%) of the respondents disagreed whereas 7 (1.7%) of the respondents neither agreed or disagreed.

This translates to concluding that the banks adopted public relations strategies since the highest percentage fall between the respondents who strongly agreed and those who agreed. This in the overall means the banks have adopted public relations strategies for the management of their image, reputations and customer relations.

As seen from table 6 First bank and GT bank use social media channel as public relations strategy for their corporate reputation management than other platforms. 160 (40.3%) of the respondents strongly agreed that the banks use social media channel as public relations strategy for their corporate reputation management than other platforms, 120 (30.2%) agreed while 90 (22.7%) disagreed. And 20 (5.1%) of the respondents disagreed whereas 7 (1.7%) of the respondents neither agreed or disagreed.

This translates to concluding that respondents use social media channel as public relations strategy for their corporate reputation management than other platform since the highest percentage fall between the respondents who strongly agreed and those who

agreed. This in the overall shows that the banks find the social media convenient in managing their corporate reputation.

On the other hand, data from the interview corroborate the finding from the questionnaire. The two heads of Public Relations First Bank and Guaranty Trust Bank in Nasarawa State and Abuja posits that their departments have Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter & Instagram handles which are being used for dissemination of information to the public, particularly clients staff, parents, prospective clients. The social media handles are being used to create awareness about programmes & activities of management like creating a platform for engaging the relevant stakeholder groups; communicating the values and strengths of the institution; highlighting the benefits of the business combination; championing the various integrated marketing communications initiatives; organizing events-extra-ordinary General Meetings, Road shows and Investor Relations; Gathering intelligence, i.e. industry mood and regulator 's view; organizing social media campaigns; deliberating on efforts at reputation management to make the institution look extremely good through high level media relations activities (commissioned articles, editorial, interviews, performance and score card analysis).

Most of the audiences are more active on Facebook compared to other social media handles, particularly Nasarawa state and Abuja banking communities.

The findings agreed with Nwosu (1996) and Okafor (2006) position that the conventional roles of Public Relations includes Information and communication function serving as information and communication bridge between an organization and its various internal and external publics.

How are these strategies for corporate reputation management been used in First bank and GT Bank in FCT?

The second research question of the study was to find out the the Public Relations strategies adopted by First Bank and Guarantee Trust Bank are active. In response to this objective, the study found that the Public Relations Departments of First Bank and Guarantee Trust Bank in Nasarawa State and Abuja respond to all posts, majority 167 (42.1%) of the respondents strongly agreed that the Public Relations Departments of First Bank and Guarantee Trust Bank in Nasarawa State and Abuja respond to all relevant posts on social media platforms, 120 (30.2%) agreed while 90 (22.7%) of the respondents disagreed. And 20 (5.1%)of the respondents strongly disagreed. This translates to

concluding that the Public Relations Departments of First Bank and Guarantee Trust Bank in Nasarawa State and Abuja, respond to all relevant postson social media platforms. The implication of this result is that Public Relations Departments of First Bank and Guarantee Trust Bank in Nasarawa State and Abuja, are frequent and always online.

On the other hand, data from the interview corroborate the finding from the questionnaire. The two heads of Public Relations First Bank and Guaranty Trust Bank in Nasarawa State and Abuja posits that their departments have is an arm of the bank that serves as the first point of contact which people rely on for first-hand information. It is a reliable and credible source of information dissemination channel which handles chains of activities; as such adoption of social media becomes pertinent. The social media handles reach a very wide target audience who are staff, clients, prospective students among others, who wish to get information. The department has a multimedia desk/news media section that is responsible for handling the internet and social media activities.

The findings also agreed with Daramola`s (2003) argument that the components of Public Relations include community relations, media relations, employee relations, financial relations among others. And all this can be achieved via viable and active public relations departments which are social media inclined

How effective were these strategies for corporate reputation First bank and GT Bank in FCT?

The third research question examine whether social media as strategy adopted byPublic Relations Departments of First Bank and Guarantee Trust Bank in Nasarawa State and Abuja were effective in maximizing the benefits of social media by using it as a channel to communicate with their target audience. Table 14 show how cheaper and easier it is to access information about Public Relations Departments of First Bank and Guarantee Trust Bank in Nasarawa State and Abuja, majority 160 (40.3%) of the respondents strongly agreed that it is cheaper and easier to access information about Public Relations Departments of First Bank and Guarantee Trust Bank in Nasarawa State and Abuja, 120 (30.2%) agreed while 90 (22.7%) disagreed. And 20 (5.1%) of the respondents disagreed whereas 7 (1.7%) of the respondents remained neutral.

This translates to concluding that respondents have access to information on social media since the highest percentage fall between the respondents who strongly agreed and those who agreed. This will in the overall improve access to information on social media.

On the other hand, data from the interview corroborate the finding from the questionnaire. The two heads of Public Relations First Bank and Guaranty Trust Bank in Nasarawa State and Abuja posits that their departments 'Social media is beneficial and advantageous because of its spontaneity and the ability to reach all grades and also the capability to reach heterogeneous audience. It is cost effective against other media, it is very flexible to use, it is interactive, it is immediate and instantaneous in terms of feedback it helps as channels of information to clients, staff, parents etc. to have direct interaction and access to information about the banks.

This findings, agreed with Nwosu (1996) and Okafor (2006) position that the conventional roles of Public Relations includes Information and communication function serving as information and communication bridge between an organization and its various internal and external publics.

CONCLUSION

As averred earlier, the importance of Public Relations to banks 'reputation cannot be underestimated. It is very potent in image making, particularly in delicate times like the social media era. Banks are expected to maximally deploy it to build an enviable corporate image. Therefore, in line with the above review, the researcher concludes that commercial banks applied Public Relations strategies but it is just to a moderate extent. Based on the findings, the study concludes that the use of social media by Public Relations Departments of First Bank and Guarantee Trust Bank in Abuja has been effective in information management of the banks. The effectiveness is seen through counseling, information management, crisis management, media and community relations via social media. In other words, Public Relations people advice management on media related and other issues, a link between the management and by extension the banks and its publics (Internal and External), the custodian of information/ communication flow in the banks via social media handles, performance of protocol functions and oversight duties have enhanced the image and reputations of the Public Relations Departments of First Bank and Guarantee Trust Bank in Abuja to some extent.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the following seven recommendations are hereby made: the researcher came up with the following recommendations:

1. The banks 'management must recognize the enormous importance of their Public Relations units and ensure that adequate funding is made available for the units to effectively carry out their responsibilities and activities, e.g news magazines, online New Magazine, News Tit-Bits, social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, among others to help project the image of the banks.

2. The Public Relations units of the First Bank and Guarantee Trust Bank should always come up with very convincing Public Relations strategies that will exert enormous influence on their respective publics e.g Identification of public, Effective situation and trend analysis, Media Relations, Employee Relations, build confidence and command patronage from customers.

Public Relations Departments of First Bank and Guarantee Trust Bank in Abuja should adopt and maintain social media as a crucial tool in the management of First Bank and Guarantee Trust Bank in Abuja e.g Facebook, Twitter and instagram.

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