

**RIVERS STATE UNIVERSITY
PORT HARCOURT**



**ENTROPIC AND NEGENTROPIC COACTIONS IN
HUMANISTIC SETTINGS: THE PUBLIC RELATIONS
METIER AND ITS DYNAMICS**

AN INAUGURAL LECTURE

BY

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DEDICATION

To my late parents: Late Elder Joshua Ejekwu Amadi & Mrs. Eunice Ndukwuru Amadi. My adorable wife, Mrs. Adenike Abegail Amadi, my children Manuchimso Adeyemi Amadi, Bekwele Adebayo Amadi & Ruhuoma Adejoke Amadi.

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PROTOCOL

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of Senate,
Directors of Institutes, Centres and Units,
Teaching and Non-Teaching Staff,
Your Royal Majesties and Highnesses,
My Lords Spiritual and Temporal,
Students of the Great Rivers State University,
My Community members and Family friends,
Friends and all invited Guests,
Gentlemen of the Press,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.

1.0 Preamble

Vice chancellor Sir, it is an honour and privilege to stand before you today to deliver this inaugural lecture on the evolving landscape of public relations activities and the strategies for achieving organizational set objectives. As a professor of public relations and media strategist, I am humbled and energised by this opportunity to share my insight and research with this esteemed academic community.

Today's inaugural lecture is titled: **Entropic and Negentropic Coactions in Humanistic Settings: The Public Relations Metier and its Dynamics**. Firstly, it is the 103rd in the inaugural lecture series of the Rivers State University. Numerologically, the number 103 promises a new beginning, independence, leadership, creativity and self-expression.

Secondly, today's inaugural lecture is the first of its kind to be delivered from the Faculty of Communication and Media Studies and the Department of Public Relations and Advertising. An inaugural lecture is said to be a debt a professor owes the university and community at large. In deciding on what topic to speak about, a professor may choose from one of three general themes: the professor may (1) choose a general topic from which to provide fresh and stimulating insight of relevance to the audience; (2) talk about the development of his discipline or Department, especially where he occupies an endowed chair within that discipline or department; (3) focus the discussion on his research work and how the body of the work has contributed to knowledge. My topic falls under the

first category. The topic is timely because it will highlight and disclose the importance of public relations as a sure pathway to enduring harmony and balance in a polarised and turbulent world like ours.

Over the past decades, governments at all levels and corporate organisations have undergone a profound transformation, necessitating a critical re-evaluation of the tools, tactics, methods and mind set required for their growth. This abysmal performance of the organisations that instigated transformation can be attributed to neglect, misuse or misconceptions of the potency of Public Relations activities as an integral stream of an establishment.

The practice of public relations, however, began since the dawn of recorded history. According to Patrick Jackson, public relations evolved from the basic need of building awareness and improving human relationships which existed immediately God created Adam and Eve.

Adam and Eve were the first man and woman God created and put in the Garden of Eden. At the Garden of Eden, God instructed that Adam and Eve should eat any fruit from the trees except for the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and warned against the consequences of disobedience.

Adam and Eve disobeyed and ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, when God discovered and invited them, they (Adam and Eve) having realized they were nude, declined to appear before God in their naked state, **(Genesis 3:7-8)**. This portends that in public relations practice, appearance, image etc.

is a corner stone to garner public acceptability.

The implication was that they couldn't appear naked before God Almighty. According to Amadi (2003), the way one dresses can inject psychological undertone in the minds of the observers, hence can have profound effect on the person's mood and emotions. This is because good dressing addresses the dapper and above all boost self-confidence.

The manner an individual dress to school, party, workplace, church and other functions would positively or negatively impact on that individual, thereby creating a mental picture about who that individual is. The force of public relations was visible in the ancient Rome as evidenced in phrases like *Vox Populi, Vox Dei* (the voice of the people is the voice of God); and *Ves Publicae* (Public affairs). The study of rhetoric in Athens is often seen as the beginning of public relations as a social science based on research, planning, utilization of two way communication model and establishment of the congregation propaganda.

Before the development of communication technology, the Christian faith was spread by the missionaries using persuasion skills, the word of mouth. But with the invention of the movable type of printing press by Johanne Guttenberg in 1456, which heralded the use of Mass Communication technology, public relations were gradually pushed to the frontiers of modern civilisation.

2.1 The Web of Humanistic Settings

2.1.1 The Sociology of Man

Man by inclination is a social being. His entire existence is enmeshed in socialization. Living in isolation is alien to man. It is common knowledge that social connections have a positive impact on mental and physical health while serving to prolong life. The *phatic* nature of man finds expression here as illuminated by Walzawick, Beavin and Jackson (1969) in their classic notion that “**man cannot not communicate.**” The imputation here is that if you take away communication/socialization from man, he becomes like fish out of water. Greater insights in the light of the foregoing can be gained in contradistinction to solitary confinement.

Kling (2022) posits that man in his sociological web generates emotional energy. According to him, emotional energy is generated through interactions among two or more people. The inference however is that emotional energy is germane to man's intrinsic existence. Worthy of note is the fact that one's personality emerges as a result of significant social encounters that mark the sociological web. Collins (2023:5) refers to them as the “interaction ritual chains.”

The entire essence of life as summed up in the social system parameters is that people build up emotions in the course of interaction. The emotion so built up leads to greater awareness of self and the maximization of human potentials with the latter creating the pathway for self actualization. Life is vain without potentials and potentials become dysfunctional in the absence

of enduring social system parameters. Figure 1 below shows the social system parameters as the fulcrum for self actualization.

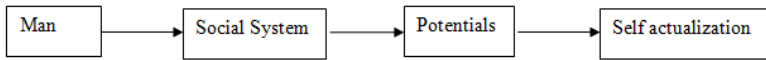


Figure 1: Social system parameters as the fulcrum for self actualization

Spirkin (2016) in his piece - *Man and Society* - looks at the nexus of interactivity in man's social frame.

As aptly described:

The key to the mysteries of human nature is to be found in society. Society is the human being in his social relations and every human being is an individual embodiment of social relations. He is influenced not only by modern mass media but also by the writings of all times and every nation (para. 6).

By reason of meta-analysis it is incontrovertible that man was never created to exist alone. Man was created to live in society with the building of cognitive capital as a compelling force. The Confucian paradigm sees man as “socially dependent.”

An in-depth look at the sociology of man unveils the fact that:

- i. Man's life consists of interactions and inter-relations

- ii. Man cannot live without associations
- iii. Man is a social animal
- iv. Man's mental and physical development are shaped by the society
- v. Society is home to man and man is home to society

As abstract as these may sound, the truth remains that there exists an intrinsic relationship between man and society. In his description of man as a social animal, Aristotle notes that man and society are closely inter-related, inter-connected, and inter-dependent. The binding force in this very interplay is communication because the relationship between man and society is wrapped around communication. Herein lies the sociological view of communication as a phenomenon that is inherent in human life in society. The sociology of man therefore is wrapped around the evolving nature of man as galvanized by the exigent force of communication. This interestingly is the essence of man as epitomized by human interactions, interdependence and influence.

2.1.2 Interdependence and Undercurrents

Man's interaction in society is not seamless. It is not devoid of rancour. It goes with a host of misunderstanding as occasioned by a divergence in frames of reference. Misunderstandings and dislocations characterize the optics of man and society. This becomes a puzzle to many. Man was not calibrated to live alone yet his interaction often triggers off a host of dissension and rift.

Many scholars posit that the relationship of man in society is determined by interest. Jones (2018) notes that poor communication is the cause of most misunderstandings in society. It is often difficult to comprehend the fact that incompatibilities make for peace while compatibilities fan the embers of controversy. Meng, Tang, Shein and Chen (2021) see this as the mystery of the cases where like poles repel and unlike poles attract. A basic explanation is that given by an online resource that when the unlike poles of a bar of magnet face each other the magnetic lines of force are in the same direction and hence unlike poles attract each other.

An extrapolation of this analogy to man and society shows that the greater the interdependence among people, the higher the tendency for undercurrents and disagreement. The irony is indeed beyond comprehension. The calibration of man is not to be alone yet in the course of his day to day interactions; he becomes entangled in multilateral face-offs, dissensions and conflicts. This truly is the inescapable reality which brings to fore the truism in the cliché that “*we must always disagree to agree and agree to disagree.*”

Zupata (2020) notes that “it is not just that misunderstandings are normal, they are inevitable” (para.6). Humans bring into every situation their own assumptions, expectations and experiences” (para. 2). In corroboration, Ankit (2020) opines that the most serious problem in the world is that people do not understand each other. It is not in doubt that misunderstandings in man and society are often ascribed to miscommunication. An explication situates it thus:

Failures in communication take place in various circumstances and conditions: at home, at work, between social and ethnic classes, between religions and nations. They can lead both to small complications or troubles in everyday life and large scale conflicts between societal groups and cultures (para. 4).

Hence, people are more connected than ever, yet they seem to stray only further from mutual understanding. It can therefore be said that interdependence breeds undercurrents? The conveyor belt is communication and its miscarriage breeds miscommunication and misunderstanding.

A condensation of studies in the subject area reveal the following as catalysts for undercurrents in the web of man and society:

- i. Misalignment of explicit and implicit meaning between the sender and receiver.
- ii. Asynchronous and synchronous channel output
- iii. Proclivity for negative interpretations and constructions (negative bias)
- iv. Unclear expectations/the common ground fallacy
- v. Emotional clouding – blurred lines in the assimilation of ethos, pathos and logos.

It is not in doubt that conflict is inevitable in man and society. It is also a fact that communication is key in sharing meaning and

engendering understanding. The way forward is to constantly build capacities that will break the walls of incongruities while enthroning congruence. Communication in the light of this can best be considered a centrifugal force.

2.1.3 Organizational Cracks/Stakeholder Infractions

Organizations exist as subsystems in a system with symbiosis as the rule of engagement. The input from the system perpetuates the subsystem with the output from the subsystem sustaining the system. Organizations are often enmeshed in the push and pull reverberations of environmental dynamics. How well an organization navigates through these waves determines its degree of success. A key factor in this interplay is a harmonious relationship with stakeholders.

Having a smooth relationship with stakeholders does not come cheap. Grayson and Dodd (2008) posit that organizations can no longer choose if they want to engage with stakeholders or not. The only decision they need to take is when and how to engage. They further note that situations arise when organizations do not actively engage but are forced to do so as a result of a crisis situation.

The scenario above is that of interdependence and with interdependence breeds discontentment. Infractions with stakeholders are constant optics in organizational dynamics. Meaningful engagement occurs when organizations, aware of the changes in the wider society and how they relate to organizational performance, choose to establish relations with stakeholders as a means to manage the impact of those changes.

Girigiri and Badom (2021) observe that good industrial harmony fosters development of the industrial system and ensures stability in the spheres of governance. Odoh and Molumo (2023) also note that industrial harmony is the key to an organization's progress, growth, and expansion. Organizations in their day to day operations experience disharmony and pay dearly for mismanaging it.

Nwuche and Amah (2016) in their description of organizational cracks aver that:

The workplace comprises people from different background. These individuals have different personalities, perceptions, values, behaviours, needs, interests but are brought together to contribute in the pursuance of certain goals but the inherent differences, the incompatibility of goals and the competition for limited resources mean that conflict would be inevitable (p. 24).

From a primary perspective, organizational cracks are often dysfunctional and arise as a result of miscommunication. Organizational cracks are inevitable no doubt but communication remains a constant in its moderation and remediation.

Stakeholder infractions are marked by situations where the interests or goals of different stakeholders in an organization are in conflict with one another. An online resource classifies

stakeholders as shareholders, employees, customers, creditors, host communities and lots more. It is obvious that different stakeholders would have different interests. Sometimes these interests may conflict among stakeholders and other times are at variance with the goals of the organization. A synthesis of extant literature in the subject area reveals that stakeholder infractions are:

- i. Common features of organizations
- ii. Borne out of divergent views and interests, values and claims
- iii. Premised on rules governing the organization
- iv. Triggered off by mistrust and distrust
- v. Anchored on poor communication.

It is obvious that organizational cracks and stakeholder infractions cannot be wished away because different people are bound to interpret information differently. It is not in doubt that each stakeholder has its own set of expectations and interests. It is common knowledge that these interests would always conflict.

By way of narrow casting, poor communication appears to be a common denominator. This may arise as a result of stakeholders not being adequately informed about organizational decisions or objectives. Ambiguities and equivocations in message conceptualisation may also trigger off infractions.

Without the fear of running round in circles, it becomes quite glaring to note that when people share environments, the development of stakeholder infractions assumes the inevitability curve. Grammatikopoulos (2022) argues that this is absolutely normal. According to him:

It is normal for rivalry, dispute and conflicting needs and goals to emerge when people are required to work and coexist with other stakeholders of an organization. Conflicts are inherent in the life of individuals, teams and organizations and this should be expected because conflicts are associated with interactions (p. 77).

As organizations constantly engage with stakeholders, infractions would most certainly emanate with intrinsic and extrinsic cracks. Mitigating the adverse effects of these cracks and infractions becomes a cause for great scholarly concerns.

2.2 The Concept of Entropy and its Antonym - Negentropy

Entropy as a term is akin to physical science, especially physics and primarily refers to the degree of disorder or randomness in a system. The *Oxford Dictionary* sees it as a lack of order and a predictable decline into disorder. From the social science perspective, it refers to an increase in the disorganization within a system. The synonyms may include disorder, chaos, confusion, disarray and lots more.

It is an adaption from the information/communication theory which sees entropy as:

A measure of the efficiency of a system (such as a code or a language) in transmitting information, being equal to the logarithm of the number of different messages that can be sent by selection from the same set of symbols and thus indicating the degree of initial uncertainty that can be resolved by any one message.

Dinga, Tanasescu and Ionescu (2020) observe that social entropy is modeled as entity that is laden with negative discrimination, economic inequality and corruption. By inference entropy in the social sciences connotes negativity. Issues of misinformation and disinformation are often explained away at the altar of entropy. By extension, organizational cracks and stakeholder infractions can be ascribed/attributed to entropy.

In Shannon and Weaver's *Mathematical Model of information*, entropy is classified as noise. Figure 2 below shows the mathematical model of information

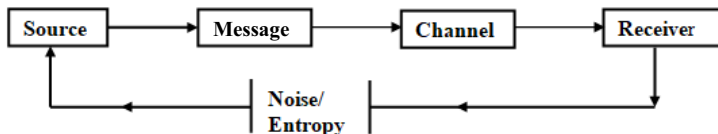


Figure 2: Shannon and Weaver's Mathematical Model of Information

Using the information flow model as reference, entropy measures average ambiguity and equivocation in a message. By way of description, entropy is a measure of disorder that affects all aspects of our daily lives. In the typology of this lecture, its inevitability has been seen to assume a pattern. What it means is that:

- i. Interdependence and undercurrents are inevitable
- ii. Organizational cracks and stakeholder infractions are inevitable
- iii. Entropy, chaos and societal disorders are inevitable.

God in His omniscience made a way of escape for mankind out of these negative inevitabilities. In the light of entropy, **negentropy** comes to the rescue.

Brey (2021) avers that thinking in terms of negentropy can help one fight against entropy and chaos in daily life. In his study, Brey (2021) found that:

When people keep the idea of negentropy in mind and make actions that limit or reverse energy loss, social systems are more efficient and effective. This might even make it easier for people to achieve larger goals (para. 6).

An online resource sees negentropy as occurring in a system that is less disordered and more ordered. Isa and Dumas (2020) explain that negentropy is used systematically as a synonym for cohesion while entropy is a synonym for repulsion.

Aslan (2023) espouses that negentropy is a term coined by Erwin Schrodinger (1944) in his book – *What is Life?* According to him:

Negentropy stems from the Greek words - “negation” and “entropy” which refer to the negation or reversal of entropy and represents the capacity of a system to counteract the natural tendency towards disorder. It describes the process of creating and maintaining order, structure, and complexity within a system. It encompasses the idea of organization, information storage and energy utilization to sustain and enhance the system's overall coherence (para. 4).

The major take home from Aslan's (2023) exposition is that negentropy presupposes order and organization. When stretched on a continuum of real and ideal, the presupposition of entropy becoming the real and negentropy becoming the ideal becomes ideologically incontrovertible. By extension, we live in a world of entropy with the desire to live in a world of negentropy.

2.3 A World of Entropy and the Puzzle of Hope

The Bible in the account of creation described the earth in **Gen. 1:2** as “formless and desolate.” This truly is a functionalization of the concept of entropy. Flipping through newspapers and poring through news channels will definitely leave an individual with the impression that the world is chaotic, turbulent and obtrusive. This undeniably can be attributed to the fact that we seem to have more bad news in the news media than good news. Even in basic journalism tutorials, the nursery rhyme has always been **“bad news is good news and good news is no news.”** The analogy often cited by way of animation is that **“dog bites man is not news but man bites dog is news.”**

On a realistic note, humanity is confronted with increasingly extreme situations in financial, sociological and ecological contexts. The theory of chaos simply suggests a high degree of unpredictability in a system governed by deterministic laws. In a simple phraseology, the world is gradually moving from stability to instability, from order to disorder. It is simply a world of contrasts where orderliness begets disorderliness and harmony begets disharmony. Truth is that entropy has engulfed our world. Viewed from a prism, organizations are going under, nations are at war with one another, the society has lost its moral compass and human beings are like sheep without a shepherd – ***there is a crack in the brick wall.*** This is entropy at play and the chaos theory in animation. Lagerkvist (2023) opines that:

Risks and conflicts, mediated suffering
and trauma have therefore merited

prominent empirical and theoretical work. The past decade has also seen important media anthropological scholarship on media rituals and catastrophes. Most recently climate change and ecological crises have drawn the attention of the fields of crisis communication, journalism, environmental communication and intuitive media philosophy (p. 3).

The summation therefore is that the world of today is disorderly, the media world is chaotic and literally on fire. The mediated political domain has itself become increasingly disordered. Regardless of how disheartening this may seem, the puzzle revolves around how the media would deal with a world so acutely ravaged by the improbable. Scholarly illuminations and animations have become so pertinent in the light of the foregoing. One may therefore ask: Is there hope in a world marked by entropy? The glimmer revolves around the doyen of communication studies – **public relations**.

Public relations as field of study has as its central goal, harmony, peace, congruence and order. Publicrelations are the negentropy that the world of entropy desperately needs. In an analogy devoid of sarcasm, it has often been said that every other discipline except public relations will fail when we go to heaven. Medicine will fail because there will be no sickness in heaven. Law will fail because there will be no quarrels in heaven. Architecture will become dysfunctional because God is

the Master Architect. Only public relations will thrive because there will be relationships in heaven. Herein comes the justification for a discipline so important but greatly undermined.

2.4 A Peep at Public Relations

Public Relations (PR) refers to the practice of managing communications between an organization and its various publics stakeholders, customers, employees, investors, government agencies and the media. It is a strategic communication process that aims at building and maintaining a positive image and reputation. Public Relations professionals employ a wide range of techniques and strategies to create favourable public perception and promote beneficial relationships. Some common Public Relations activities include media relations, crisis management, community engagement, internal communication, digital communication, event planning, corporate social responsibility activities, etc.

The main goal of Public Relations is to establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with key stakeholders. This involves effectively communicating the organisation's values, mission and goal, managing reputational risks and addressing any issues or concerns that may arise. One of the primary functions of Public Relations is media relations. PR Professionals work to cultivate relationships with media outlets to secure positive coverage of their organization. They pitch stories, organize press conferences, respond to media inquiries and may even write and distribute press releases to generate

favourable publicity.

Crisis management is another crucial aspect of Public Relations. The Public Relations professionals play key role in handling negative events that may impact and organization's reputation. This involves developing crisis communication plans, providing timely and accurate information and managing stakeholder perceptions during challenging times. Moreover, Public Relations play pivotal role in that employees are well informed of the organizational policies and aligned with the goals. Effective internal, communication helps maintain a positive work culture, boosts employee morals and reduce rumours and misinformation.

In the digital age, Public Relations have also embraced the use of online platforms and social media. Public Relations professionals manage an organizations online presence. The most acceptable definition of public relations is that offered by the British Institute of Public Relations [BIPR], they define public relations as a deliberate, planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics. Importantly, this definition suggests that public relations is the creation or establishment of mutual understanding between and organisation and its publics. It also suggests that public relations are not a haphazard process, it must be consciously designed and planned.

Another definition is that given by Cutlip, Center and Broom (2011) which sees public relations as a management function that identifies, establishes and maintains mutually beneficial

relationship between an organisation and its public upon whom its success depends. The last part of the definition '*upon whom its success depends*', is very important because this is one fact that very many organisations have not realised. Another definition of public relations is the one proposed by the first World congress of National public relations associations, held in Mexico in 1978, it refers to public relations as an art and social science of analysing trends, predicting their consequences, counselling organisational leaders as well as planning and implementing a program of action, that will serve the interest of not only the organisation but also that of its publics.

3.0 Mass Media

Public Relations is an offshoot of Mass Communication. This is because both fields have similar and common foundations and objectives. The mass media is the process of transmitting information, ideas, and attitudes to many people. The various channels of mass communication are:

1. Television
2. Radio
3. Newspaper
4. Magazines
5. Cinema
6. Internet – Social Media

Mass media involves the dissemination of messages and ideas to a wide range of people, often with the goal of influencing their opinions or behaviours. Thus, the study of Mass Communication is the scientific study of the mass media (machines), the message they carry (information, ideas, attitudes, etc.) and the audience (people they transmit these messages to). See figure 3 below shows the mass media channels and audience effects.

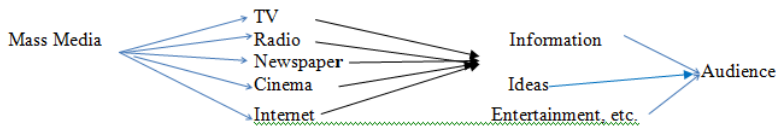


Figure 3: Mass Media Channels and Audience Effects

The Mass Communication is a very complex process, much more complicated than interpersonal communication. This is because every single message sent through a mass medium is transmitted through a system of machines and individuals tadded the gatekeepers. As Whetmore (1985: 5-6) says:

“In print, there are writers, editors, typesetters, distributors, and many more. In electronic media, there are script writers, actors, directors, and others. Each group becomes a source. The encoding process involves a media form like a book, radio, television set.”

The above supports the fact that in mass communication, in addition to an array of machines which take care of the mechanical production of the message which finally reaches the mass communication audience. In the print media for example,

these people include the;

1. Reporters who gather information and write the news story;
2. Editors who edit the story to make sure it is in the right shape devoid of mistakes;
3. The type-setters who ensure placing the news copy in the correct position;
4. The proof readers who make sure that the material lacks grammatical mistakes; and
5. The printers who ensure that the news material (copy) is printed according to the dictates of the organisation.

The above individuals, the news reporters, editors, type-setters, proof-readers, etc., are the best described as the media gatekeepers, and because it is what passes through their “gates” that can reach the target audience (people) as a message or newspaper content. Figure 4 below shows the gatekeeping role description in media outfit.

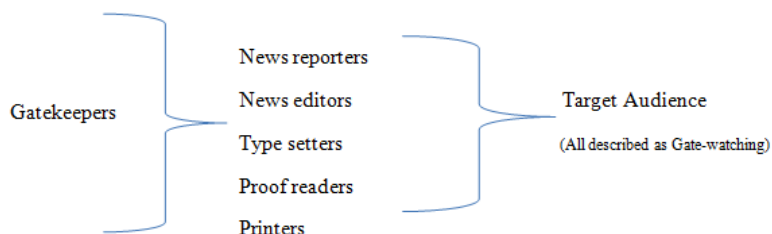


Figure 4: Gatekeeping Role Description

3.1 Gatekeeping Functions

The followings are some the important functions of the gatekeeping. They are to;

1. limit the information the audience receive by editing the information before it is disseminated;
2. expand the amount of information the audience receive by increasing the informational environment; and
3. re-organize or re-interpret the information to instigate behavioural change.

Elaborating on these functions, Bittner (1980: 11) underscores the importance of gatekeeping in mass communication when he opines that a gatekeeper: “has the ability to limit information we receive from the mass media. According to him, a magazine editor may “kill” or eliminate a feature story judged to be of little interest or importance to the magazine's readers. A reporter may edit a story... by deleting parts of the story he or she feels may be irrelevant. On the other hand, a gatekeeper also can expand information to the public by supplying facts, attitudes or viewpoints his or her audience would not usually receive. A gatekeeper also may reorganize or reinterpret the information we (the audience) receive. Facts may be rearranged or a new slant may be given to the story.

3.1.2 Gatewatching

Gatewatching is “the observation of the output gates of news publication and other sources, in order to identify important

material as it becomes available. (Bruns 2005, p.9). This regime is marked “high level of interactivity in online platforms which transforms the audience into gatekeepers”.(Shoemaker & Vos 2009, p.9). It is based on this development Ate (2023) harps that gatewatchers gather information on social media and decide the truth for themselves based on their own opinion. He argued that “citizen journalists extensively use gatewatching model in the art and science of selecting and dissemination their information”. (Ate 2023, p.7).

Ate and Ogunlade (2009), Iredia (2022), underscored the power of social media in mobilising the citizenry for holistic development. Today, “social media is connecting more people than traditional media”. (Ate & Ogunlade 2009, p.30). While Iredia (2022) opines that people employ social media platforms to speedily gather information and adjust to new methods of news processing, news packaging and news reposting, Foster (2012) argues that stories show up first in the new media and then are contextualised and validated by the conventional media. It is against this backdrop that Kuyunu (2020) notes that mainstream journalism have been made more accessible, open and collaborative courtesy of social media.

Ate (2023) highlights the parting points between gatekeeping and gate-watching regimes:

There is dynamic change in the way any manner of information is selected, filtered and sent for consumption to the audience. Unlike in the olden days

where information used to flow through the gatekeeping concept, today, citizens have become journalists due to technology, as every Tom, Dick and Harry have become journalists (Ate 2023, p.1).

Bruns (2005) provides the desirability and inevitability of gatewatching:

A variety of pointers to a range of alternative ways of seeing the news that slated to different user needs; and news sites built upon gatewatching serve as a century “safe” location to return to after exploring the surrounding hyper textual in various different locations. Their sites offer the user a sense of location, to avoid their feeling lost in the multitude of information available to them. (Bruns 2005, p.19)

Singer (2014) cited in Ferreira (2018) describes gatewatching as two-step gatekeeping. In other words, it is a new dimension or a new testament of the gatekeeping process.

3.1.3 Functions of the Mass Media

The mass media perform a number of functions which benefits the individual as a member of a society. These range from 'serious' informational and educational functions, to 'lighter'

functions like entertainment. Some of these functions will now be looked at more closely.

1. **Information:** This is the most fundamental function of the mass media and has already been referred to several times in this discussion. To inform simply means “to give knowledge to.” Information is knowledge, and knowledge is enlightenment, information is light. Citing the well-known British playwright, Tom Stoppard, Amadi (2018) emphasizes this as “information is light. Information on anything is light.” The information function is the most important function of the mass media. Every day of our lives, we are witnesses to the incredible power of the mass media to provide all sorts of information.

The information function of the mass media is all embracing and indispensable for the meaningful existence of members of the society. Through their various contents, the mass media collect, store, process and disseminate news, data, pictures, facts, messages, opinions, and comments which members of the public require “in order to react knowledgeably to personal, environmental, national and international conditions, as well as to be in position to take appropriate decisions”. In performing all these information-related functions, the mass media raise issues and create awareness on various topics.

2. **Entertainment:** This is another basic function of the mass media. In developed capitalist countries,

entertainment is one of the biggest services provided by the media, especially television. Even in developing countries where a deliberate effort is made to use the mass media for national development, and the media are therefore more information/education oriented in line with the requirements of development journalism. The entertainment function of the mass media is compelling. This functional objective of the mass media entertainment is generally regarded as that of providing diversion and escape from the harsh realities of life; offering relief from the tedium of day-to-day existence; and lessening the stress and strain emanating from a rapidly-changing world. Such mass media as the cinema, records, etc., are predominantly entertainment media.

3. **Education:** The mass media also play an important role in the education of members of the society. Education comprises intellectual development, acquisition of skills and capabilities, and the formation of character. The mass media are involved in the transmission of the knowledge necessary to achieve all three aspects of education, Education can be both formal and informal (or incidental); the mass media are involved in both types of education. There are primarily educational contents of the mass media aimed at formally imparting different kinds of skills and knowledge to media audiences. Books are a good example of this aspect of the mass media.

4. **Advertising& Marketing:** One function of the mass media which is becoming increasingly important in this global village is the economic function of advertising. The mass media performs this function for the people by bringing together buyers and sellers through advertisements. Through various forms of media, companies and organizations can reach wider audiences and promote their products or services.
5. **Socialization:** Mass media plays a role in shaping and influencing social norms, values, and behaviours. It helps individuals to understand and conform to societal expectations. In this sense, it contributes to the socialization process within society by providing individuals with information about social roles, relationships, and cultural practices.
6. **Opinion Formation:** Mass media can influence public opinion, attitude, and beliefs. It plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion on various social, political, and economic issues. Through news reporting, analysis, and editorial commentaries, the media can sway public opinion and influence the decision-making process.
7. **Agenda Setting:** Mass media has the power to determine what topics and issues are considered important and worthy of public attention. It can influence the public's agenda by prioritizing certain news stories over others and shaping the public's perception of various issues.

8. **Control and Surveillance:** Mass media can be used as a tool of control and surveillance by governments and other powerful entities. It can be employed to monitor and influence public opinion, disseminate propaganda, and suppress dissenting voices.
9. **Agent of Change:** Mass media has the potential to bring about social and political change. By providing a platform for marginalised voices and highlighting social injustices, it can help raise awareness and mobilize public support for social movements and causes.
10. **Economic Role:** Mass media functions as an industry, supporting jobs and contributing to the economy. It generates revenue through advertising, subscriptions, and other means.
11. **Status Conferral:** This is the role that mass media gives to a person, group of people, or event that makes these things seem significant or important. Whether justified or not, Status Conferral Function is a term created by Lazarsfeld and Merton when explaining the functions and the power that mass media has in our society. They have the ability to force so much information from anywhere, at any given time, about any topic; that they can make this topic seem like the most pressing matter to date. Subtle mentions of a person or seeing their face in a commercial make us think that the person is “worth” the mentions and that they are actually worth the attention, just because we are seeing their face or hearing their

voice constantly.

12. Crusading Function: Mass media serve as crusaders of policies in a society. When policy adoption is needed, the media is the channel through which such crusade is carried out. This is because when the media is flooded with a particular message, it is said to be crusading the message until it gets to all.

13. Correlation: Correlation tends to how the media presents realities that we consume daily. The data got through mass communication isn't level-headed and without any prejudice, etc.

3.2 The Field of Mass Communication and its Justification

The subject area falls within the purview of integrated marketing communication which is an offshoot of communication studies. The field of study features a convergence between marketing and communication with promotions as its progeny. Marketing communication involves the sharing of information as well as the dissemination of information about a company's products, services, ideas, etc. This sharing and dissemination of information can take the form of promotional activities in marketing. Promotion in this context is basically an exercise in communication.

An online resource – *Lumen* – sees it as the art of bringing together a variety of different communication tools to deliver a common message and make a desired impact on customers' perceptions and behaviour. In another instance it refers to all the activities or services among target groups. From an

encompassing perspective as espoused by this same resource, “it includes all the messages, media and activities used by an organization to communicate with the market and help persuade target groups to accept its messages and take appropriate actions” (Para. 4).

Oancee (2015) sees Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) as the most important communication trend adopted all over. It has no doubt been found to offer organizations the opportunity to communicate with their target groups through multiple channels such as advertising by mass media, sales promotion, direct marketing, public relations, online marketing etc. It is figuratively known as *the voice of the company*.

The central focus of integrated marketing communication includes but not limited to;

- i. establishing an image for an organization and its products;
- ii. persuading customers in the light of product benefit;
- iii. creating awareness about new products;
- iv. ensuring brand loyalty; and
- v. expanding market horizons.

The Edinburgh Business School Sees IMC as

A management process through which an organization engages with its various audiences. By understanding an

audience communication environment, organizations seek to develop and present messages for their identified stakeholder groups, before evaluating and acting upon the responses. By conveying messages that are of significant value, they encourage audience to offer attitudinal and behavioural responses (para. 4).

The central notion here is the need to understand customer dynamics in line with the emerging channels of communication. The essence of integration is to ensure that all communication approaches are intertwined with a view to projecting the same brand message.

With integrated marketing communication comes the need to explore innovative approaches that would enhance synergy and consistency. Scholars (Smith & Taylor, 2011) have enumerated the benefits to include the ability to:

- i. communicate the brand story across several/communication channels with a view to eliciting sensitization and mobilization;
- ii. enhance holistic monitoring rather than piecemeal and fragmented assessments; and
- iii. ensure discernible effectiveness and efficiency in message delivery.

The ancestry is traceable to the marketing mix which has to do

with the management of the elements that make for successful marketing. As summed up by Jerome McCarthy as the 4Ps of marketing, the elements include product, price, place and promotion. For the discourse under review, primal focus is on the fourth element promotion.

Promotion is that component of the marketing mix that is not only concerned with informing prospective buyers about the benefits of a product, but also persuades them to try it. The two things that underlie this definition are informing and persuading. Promotion comprises a mix of tools and they include personal selling, advertising, public relations sales promotion etc. A few elucidations may suffice:

- a. Personal selling: This is a form of interpersonal transaction. Here you have sales clerks, sales men etc moving about, introducing a product and trying to convince people to buy.
- b. Advertising: This is a form of mass selling or non-personal selling. Advertising is used to inform, persuade and remind customers about a company and its products.
- c. Public Relations: Many firms use public relations and publicity to complement advertising so as to inform consumers about its products and to help build corporate credibility and favourable disposition.
- d. Sales Promotion: This has to do with a short term

incentive that is designed to induce the sales of a product e.g. **BOGOF** – *Buy One Get One Free*.

All these elements are referred to as the promo tools. In this lecture we shall be looking at public relations because a basic approach to understanding marketing as the foundation for advertising and public relations entails an understanding of the marketing mix, how the elements of the marketing mix could be used proportionately and effectively to define the promotional strategy which obviously would employ the tools of public relations. The ideological construct of this lecture therefore can be inferred from the foregoing.

It is not in doubt that public relations is a useful tool in the light of IMC. The beauty lies on its ability to communicate with the publics by building trust around a brand or organization prior to launching customized brand messages. Public relations in the entire scheme is used to effectively communicate key messages to a diverse public. The strategy begins with an identification of a target audience and their drivers with messages tailored to resonate with their ideologies and nuances.

The place of public relations in the entire construct is anchored on the premise of evaluating public relations based on attitudinal measures and media content analysis. Smith (2008) outlines the role of PR in the light of IMC to include:

- i. finding out what people are thinking;
- ii. conceptualizing what to tell them;
- iii. streamlining the deliverables;

- iv. contextualizing their meanings; and
- v. reducing ambiguities and equivocations.

Lin and Lie (2018) affirm that the role of public relations in marketing is very important. Using the dynamics of a typical market economy as a framework, they aver that:

The competition between enterprises is fierce, and if enterprises want to win in the market competition, they should rely not only on technology competition, quality competition but also on information competition. Whoever gains a good reputation among the public will gain the initiative to compete. With good reputation as an intangible wealth, public relations vigorously improves the visibility of enterprises geared towards winning public understanding and praises (p. 8).

With proactive public relations, organizations can plan and execute strategies rather than having to narrowly focus on pedestrian notions. In contemporary times, the trend is to combine advertising, marketing, and public relations into integrated marketing communication (IMC). Under the integrated models, public relations works more closely with advertising and marketing to achieve consistent messages geared towards achieving cost efficiencies.

3.3 Public Relations Métier: Dynamics and Mechanics

Different schools of thought have argued for or against the practice of public relations as a full-fledged profession. According to the Mariam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary, a profession is defined as *a calling requiring specialized knowledge and often long and intensive academic preparation*. Generally, people make reference to only those that studied Law, Medicine, Engineering, Architectural Science, etc., as the only existing profession on earth. Perhaps it is so based on their perceived understanding of what a profession is or not.

The 6th edition of Webster Collegiate Dictionary describes a professional as an individual who is highly skilled and knowledgeable in a specific field or industry, usually through education, training, and experience. Professionals are typically committed to high ethical standards, actively pursue continuous learning and development, and often hold certifications or licenses to practice in their respective professions.

From the proposition of who a professional is, My Vice Chancellor Sir, I want to state that Public Relations is a profession in view of the following:

1. Educational Requirements:

Many universities and colleges offer specialized degrees and programmes in Public Relations, such as Bachelors, Masters, and even PhD in Public Relations, Communication, or Journalism in almost all the university in Nigeria including the Rivers State

University. These programmes provide students with the necessary knowledge and skills for a career in PR.

2. Professional Associations

There are various professional associations for Public Relations practitioners such as the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), the International Public Relations Association (IPRA), and the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) with chapters throughout the states in Nigeria. These associations set ethical standards, provide training and networking opportunities, and advocate for the PR profession.

3. Ethical Codes/ Constitutional Powers

PR professionals often adhere to ethical codes of conduct developed by their professional associations. These codes outline principles such as honesty, transparency, and social responsibility in PR practices.

4. Specialized Skills

Public Relations requires a unique set of skills, including media relations, crisis management, event planning, social media strategy, content creation, and stakeholder engagement. PR professionals undergo specialized training to develop these competencies.

5. Career Paths

PR practitioners can work in-house for companies, agencies, or non-profit organizations. They may hold

titles such as PR manager, Communications Director, or Public Affairs Specialist. Some also work as independent PR consultants.

6. Continuing Education

The field of Public Relations is constantly evolving, so PR professional often engage in on-going training, workshop, and certification programmes to stay up-to-date with industry trends and best practices.

7. Constitutional provision

In Nigeria, Decree 16 of 1990, contains the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations Practitioners Decree (now cited as Cap N114, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, LFN, 2004) is the primary legislation on Public Relations. It establishes Public Relations as a profession.

Section 5 of Cap N114, LFN 2004 provides that

The Council shall have power to do anything which in its opinion is calculated to facilitate the carrying on of the activities of the Institute under this Decree.

In accordance with the powers granted by this provision, the NIPR Council has made the following subsidiary legislations:

- a. Bye-Law No 1 of 1992 – the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations Code of Professional Conduct.

- b. Bye-Law No 2 of 1992 – Creation and Administration of NIPR Chapters.
- c. Bye-Law No 3 of 1993 – Public Relations Consultancy Bye-Law
- d. The Professional Standards Guide, 2004

3.3.1 The Matrix and Models

Okolo and Nebo (2017) see the operations matrix (op-matrix) as a schema that can guide actions in public relations practice. They note that the model highlights four major elements the PR manager should pay adequate attention to in order to achieve organizational goals. The model was propounded by James File. The beauty of the op-matrix borders on its ability to:

- i. outline the functions of PR in explicit terms;
- ii. align with complex PR scenarios; and
- iii. evolve a transactional offshoot.

The matrix has four basic elements that serve to functionalise the public relations process. Nwosu (1990) streamlines them as:

Information (Research): This is where the social surveillance role of PR is performed. According to Nwosu (1992), it has to do with:

- i. Information management
- ii. Information processing

iii. Information gathering

iv. Information retrieval

Based on the information aspect of the op-matrix, the PR officer can also do some issues management. The PR officer should equally sensitize everybody in the company. This could be described as social responsibility; that is trying to make the organization look socially responsible to its publics. Information is also regarded as input. The PR officer's ability to manage information will form the basis for the organization's operational success.

Communication: The basis for distinguishing the information component from the communication component is for one to perceive information as an idea that can be conveyed through communication. The PR practitioner must ensure good information management by adopting a two-way flow of information. Communication here therefore means the process through which information is disseminated.

Another emphasis here is that the PR man should be able to ensure a proper communication management. Communication as conceptualized in this model is goal oriented.

The op-matrix tries to ensure that:

- goals are achieved; and
- communication is efficiently managed so as not to get out of hand.

PublicAffairs: This involves a spectrum of activities. It also touches on the various activities the PR man must have to carry out like government activities and government legislations that involve the organization. The PR man should try to analyze these legislations, bring these legislations to bear on the organizations policies and determine what the organization can do to operate comfortably within these legislations.

Marketing: The information here is not that the PR man should overthrow the marketing manager rather the crux is that the PR man should try to apply aggressive marketing strategies to sell the organization to its publics. The essence here is that marketing compliments public relations. On the other hand, the philosophical truth is that marketers are consumer oriented and as such PR should use a consumer oriented approach to sell the organization.

The PR man should therefore try and work with and through marketers. It is also the duty of a PR man to attract consumers, members, clients, partners, shareholders etc. retaining them, taking care of oldsters while looking for new ones. This may be difficult but much success will be achieved through good PR.

The PR man should try and gain the support and respect of community leaders as well as opinion leaders, attend their functions and also respond to them in terms of need to show the cares. The PR man should also try to match up the competitors and win support for public legislations and company decrees or laws that may affect his organization while lobbying subtly for favourable legislations. He should also try to maintain the respect and loyalty of labour unions, repel false propaganda and

fight unscrupulous competition against his organization. This is where defensive public relations come in. The opposite of defensive PR however is offensive PR.

A distillation of the functions earlier outlined will show public relations as a fluid process with four overlapping basic steps in this regard. Cutlip and Center (2002) have described public relations as a four-step process. In describing further, they note that public relations practice may be likened to an iceberg. Three-fourth of it is unseen below the surface. The one-fourth – publicity that does show is too often taken for the whole iceberg. The unseen three fourths – research, planning, and evaluation are generally more important in the long run.

The above forms the premise for modern public relations practice because the public relations man, in a typical organizational setting, serves in turn, the role of the listener, counselor, communicator and evaluator. In the true sense, each of these roles is as vital as the other.

The Models

Of primary importance to the field of public relations are the composite asymmetrical and symmetrical models that serve to elucidate the core notions of public relations. An in-depth review of these models may be most pertinent.

A. Two-Way Asymmetrical Model

This model utilizes the tools of persuasive communication to influence the attitudes and actions of key stakeholders. Its core value is the integration of a feedback loop to allow public

relations practitioners monitor the effectiveness of an organization's communication. Grunig (1984) developed the asymmetrical and symmetrical models of public relations.

The notion of the asymmetrical model by Grunig (1984) implies that an institution or organization communicates in order to change the cognitions, attitudes or behaviour of another entity outside self. The central concern of this model it must be noted is the organization and its interests. Its complexity is drawn from the fact that it highlights the conflict of loyalty in public relations practice - loyalty to the organization and loyalty to stakeholders. The Golden rule of doing unto others what you would like them do to you holds sway here. The features include:

- i. The visibility of a feedback loop
- ii. Ethical advantages
- iii. Emphasis of professional virtues
- iv. Stakeholder consideration

In descriptive terms the model suggests that public relations should represent the client to the organization as well as the organization to the client. Grunig (1984) in an elaborate animation posits that:

When an organization, its dominant coalition or its public relations practitioners hold an asymmetrical world view, they presuppose the organization knows best. Furthermore,

they assume that the public would benefit by cooperating with the organization. They assume that if dissident publics had the big picture or understood the organization, these publics would willingly cooperate with the organization (para. 6).

The model in all ramifications presents a more scientific and persuasive way of communicating with key audiences. Research is key in public relations as espoused in the model. Through research, the attitudes and depositions of key publics are streamlined while providing a tilt for message creation. The downside however is that persuasive communication as used in the model serves to benefit the organization more than the public. It is a model that portrays skewed harmony based on the fact that it prioritizes the organizations objectives over the needs and concerns of its publics.

Scholars note that it is called asymmetrical because it is imbalanced in favour of the communicator – the organization – being that the organization undergoes no real change but simply uses the ideas that will resonate with the publics by way of persuasion.

Scholars (Grunig & Grunig, 1995; Grunig, Grunig & Hunt, 2002 and Petersone,2004) observe that practitioners employing the two- way asymmetrical model were involved in conducting formal research to better understand publics attitudes and behaviours and to better influence public opinion so as to create

consistency between public expectation and organizational objectives. This model serves the scholarly purpose of providing a peep into the different approaches organizations adopt in their practice of public relations. It provides very robust insight into the intricacies of persuasive communication and the underlying notions of influence while obviating symbiosis.

B. Two-Way Symmetrical Model

This presents a more functional model of public relations that is focused primarily on making sure that decisions made by an organization are mutually beneficial. The model embraces negotiations between an organization and its publics with the absolute goal of mutual understanding. The beauty of this model is that it deconstructs the view of public relations as manipulative.

Grunig (1984), the proponent, posits that individuals, organizations, and publics should use communication to adjust their ideas and behaviour to those of others rather than try to control how others think and behave. Symmetry in public relations really is about balancing the interests of organizations and publics; accommodation and collaboration. The model emphasizes:

- i. Ethical responsibility
- ii. Two-way flow processes
- iii. Unending feedback
- iv. Negotiation and resolution of conflicts
- v. Mutual understanding and mutual respect

Willacy (2016) observes that the two-way symmetrical model, as a public relations ideation, uses bargaining, negotiating, and strategies of conflict resolution to bring about symbiotic changes in the ideas, attitudes and behaviours of both the organization and its publics. Grunig and Grunig (1992) describe it as a “win-win” solution for both the public and the organization.

As conceptualized in this model, communication should not be used in a manipulative way. Persuasion should not be about compulsion but should be anchored on winning confidence. The catchphrase in this context as couched by scholars is that “**facts are the main persuaders.**” In this regard persuasion becomes a necessary tool rather than a manipulative component.

Childers (1989) sees it as involving negotiation and compromise. Freeman (2007) describes it as a process of engagement, dialogue, and negotiation. Lane (2007) posits that its aim is to give stakeholders the luxury of participating in the decision making process. In the light of this model, decisions are made after dialogue, deliberation, and collaboration have been accomplished.

Scholars (Grunig & Hunt, 1984, Grunig and Grunig, 1999, Champlain & Knoedler, 2006) see it as a standard of excellence and professionalism in public relations. The two-way symmetrical approach relies more on direct communication which can be spontaneously democratic because participation by all stakeholders is assured.

It is not in doubt that this model presents the normative ideal for

public relations since it explains how public relations should be practiced. This seems to be the premise upon which its criticisms lie. In the first instance, many see it as a utopian ideal that obviates practicality. This may be as a result of the fact that public relations is often misconstrued as manipulative. Some of the criticisms of this model include the fact that it is:

- i. too ideal to be real;
- ii. pretentious over stakeholder complexities;
- iii. designed to position public relations and organizations as powerful coalitions – organizational hegemony;
- iv. geared towards widening the inequality gap between multinationals and their host communities; and
- v. configured to portray public relations as fluid and theoretical.

In all these it is not in doubt that if properly applied, the two-way symmetrical model of public relations helps companies to adapt to changes in the environment. Having its strong point anchored on research justifies the fact that decision making as a public relations role will be all encompassing and all embracing.

Garg (2020) sees this model as a strategic way of communicating with an organizations publics. With the deployment of research as a tool, organizations gain a better understanding of stakeholder attitudes and behaviours with inherent benefits on message design and delivery. The projection here is for the practitioner to adapt it to organizational peculiarities. Garg (2020) sums it up thus:

The general objective of making shared comprehension between parties likewise is substantially more attractive for crowds in light of the fact that in human instinct nobody wants to be controlled. On the off chance that an individual is controlled or feels sub-par compared to someone else or association, they would not create trust and are probably going to pull back totally from a relationship (p 176).

Page (2023) sums up the two-way symmetrical models as the most sophisticated and ethical construct of public relations practice. Its merit is built on the thrust that it is anchored on dialogue which builds a sure path to goodwill, sustainability, and reciprocity. Deductively therefore the nuggets border on the fact that it:

- i. enhances credibility;
- ii. builds reputation;
- iii. engenders trustworthiness; and
- iv. instigates seamless adaptation to stakeholder needs and expectations.

By the inference the two-way symmetrical model draws its beauty from the cherished ideals of negentropy being a counter force to entropic practices of public relations as embellished in manipulation, exploitation, spin, and opaqueness.

3.4 Differentiating Public Relations from other Fields

People many a times are confused on what Public Relations is all about. They believe that the term Public Relations refers to

other concepts such as marketing, lobbying, bribery, magic, lip-service, propaganda, etc. It is important to state here that Public Relations is far from the former, rather Public Relations is a conscious, deliberate and well planned efforts made by an organization to ensure cordial relationships between it and its diverse publics.

1. **Marketing:** Public Relations focuses on building and maintaining a positive image for a company, organization, or individual through various communication channels and managing relationship with the public, media, and other stakeholders. Marketing on the
2. **Lying and selling falsehood:** Public relations are not about lying and selling falsehood about your product and organization. It is about denying every false statement that does not favour your organization and establishment. Public relations is about telling the truth all the time based on sound moral standard, good conscience and adherence to ethics of the profession. This means establishing credibility, which is crucial for maintaining positive relationships with stakeholders.
3. **Bribery:** Public relations practice is not about giving or taking bribe, not giving cola. It is a two- way communication, which leads to mutual understanding between an organization and its publics. Bribery is the act of offering, giving, receiving or soliciting of value with the intention to influence the actions of an

individual in a position of authority or trust. It is illegal and unethical and can have severe consequences. Bribery is the antithesis of effective public relation principles as it involves the exchange of illicit payments or other personal benefits in the exchange for undue influence or preferential treatment.

According to Transparency International in 2019, when bribery is framed as a form of PR, it distorts the fundamental purpose and ethical standards of the public relations profession. Rather than building genuine, mutually beneficial relationships, bribery seeks to manipulate outcomes and circumvent established processes and procedures.

4. **Magic:**Public relations is not magic, enchantment or paranormal. In the context outside entertainment, magic refers to the use of illusion, deception, to create the appearance of supernatural event. It is difficult to establish magic empirically or scientifically as a veritable and legitimate practice in business or professional contexts. Public relations activities, however, is based on high performance, quality performance and credibility in terms products, service, ideas, policies and practice. For this reason, all its (PR) are based on scientifically provable and empirical methods.
5. **Lip service:** Lip-service like the sycophant, refers to making insincere statements or promises without any

intention of following through with them. It often involves saying what people want to hear rather than being honest and transparent. It is also the practice of saying the right things or making promises without any genuine intention or meaningful action to back them up. The consequences of lip-service can be far-reaching, long-lasting and detrimental, as it erodes trust, undermines credibility and ultimately damages an organization's reputation which can be difficult to recover and rebuild. To avoid the pitfalls of lip-service, public relations professionals must prioritize authenticity, transparency, and accountability in their work.

6. **Propaganda:** Public Relations is based on ethical principles and values such as honesty, transparency and respect. However, propaganda in contrast to Public Relations as it involves the use of biased and misleading information, emotional appeals and persuasive techniques to manipulate people's opinions. It influences people's beliefs, attitudes or behaviours in a particular direction. It is typically used to promote a particular ideology, political agenda or commercial interest. The aim of the propagandist is to woo and blindfold his target audience for a cause.

4.0 – Managing Coactions – Public Relations Approaches and Methods

4.1 Cases and Simulations

It is not in doubt that public relations is the respite the world

needs right now. Bridges across world divides have to be built, brick wall cracks have to be repaired and broken fences mended. Public relations ride on cognition; and the mental pictures in our heads regulate relationships. Public relations are not just wishful thinking. It is a profession that accords tangibility to abstract notions. This is not just a farce but a stance borne out of empiricism. Below are some elucidations:

Amadi (2014) in a study – **Rethinking the PDP Membership Defection: A Case for Public Relations Principles as Remedial Tactics in Rivers State** – unveiled the propensity of public relations to engender harmony in the face of disharmony. Anchored on the Transfer Process Model using the instrumentality of survey, the study found that public relations is at its best when it is anchored on truth. Public relations is not all about making a bad situation look good. It is all about preventing a bad situation from happening. The postulation emanating from this study is that if political parties allow internal democracy to thrive then the brick wall cracks, entropy, and misunderstanding will be wholesomely mitigated.

The synthesis, from the foregoing, accords illumination to the advisory function of public relations. Public relations in this regard evaluates trends with a view to making smart contributions. These smart contributions come in the form of advisory. Most unfortunate is the fact that many Chief Executives do not heed to the counsel of the public relations man. This accounts for some of the misconstrued notions of public relations.

Sound public relations is to chart a pathway for peace and harmony by nipping entropic elements in the bud. It can therefore be said without equivocation that public relations is at its best when it is preventive rather than remediative. Sound public relations is all about quenching tiny sparks before they become full blown fire. Fire fighting as an approach in public relations is at its best counterproductive.

Public relations also finds expression in interpersonal engagements. Its application is omnibus in nature. Its effectiveness in interpersonal peace building and rapport was brought to fore in a study by Amadi (2017^a). In this study – **Tackling the Incidence of Divorce in Nigeria through the Application of Public Relations-** Amadi (2017^b) avers that marriage is the bedrock of culture, social, economic and political development of a country. Unfortunately, as inferred from the study, many families in Nigeria are currently troubled following the high rate of divorce. Secondary data from Paul (2014)^b as cited in the study ranked Nigeria high in child marriage and divorce with a projection of one in three failed marriages. As anxiety producing as this may sound, public relations comes as a succour. Plate 1 below showcases an entropic marriage.



Plate 1 – Image showing an entropic marriage

Amadi (2017^c) developed a public relations matrix geared towards stemming the incidences of divorce in Nigeria. Aptly described as *the marriage quadrant* the matrix highlights the under listed as core elements:

- i. Enhanced interpersonal communication among spouses
- ii. Empathy
- iii. Aesthetics
- iv. Decorum

Public relations utilizes communication in its day to day engagements. Communication is the only way emotions and thoughts can be conveyed. Communication in this regard is beyond transfer and encompasses sharing which is the pathway to rapport and mutual understanding. This has no doubt become

an essential ingredient in marriage. When communication is enhanced, differences melt away. The matrix therefore situates communication as a cornerstone in the simulation.

Communication in the study was found to beget **empathy**. **Empathy** is all about openness and candour. It means flowing from the next persons frame of reference. If the cultural perspective of communication is anything to go by, everyone comes into a communication encounter with a predetermined set of meanings. It is not in doubt that the conceptualization of these predetermined meanings are culture specific and culture bound. Mutual understanding in the light of this can only come as a result of empathy. This is what makes a receiver see meaning from the prism of the source. It is a tool in stakeholder engagement and when applied in interpersonal relationships such as marriage yields tangible dividends. It puts to rest issues of misunderstanding being that the meaning of a message as intended by the source of the message will be the same as interpreted by the receiver of the message. With empathy in marriage comes oneness of purpose and singleness of heart.

Aesthetics – In the context of the study, aesthetics describes an approach to what is pleasing to the senses especially sight. It has to do with a particular individuals set of ideas about style and taste along with its expression. As it relates to the subject matter, the ideological construct and a mental picture of a home has to be created or recreated in the physical to be functionally considered a home. In this light ideal must square with reality.

What this means is that role prescription in marriage must be

distinct without blurred lines of division. A father must fit the role of a father and a mother must fit the role of a mother. The catchphrase of aesthetics is that “*we must see the paw-pawness in the paw-paw.*” A man is at peace when the home is a home and a woman is at peace when the home is not far from the ideal. Public relations build the consciousness of the ideal and whittles down undercurrents.

The matrix sees the element of aesthetics as central. When beauty is created and recreated in its natural form, enduring harmony becomes inevitable because aesthetics engender harmony. It must however be noted that peace and harmony as enshrined above are the central focus of public relations.

Decorum – The field of public relations is transactional which means that marriage as functionalized by public relations is a process that highlights series of transactions, negotiations, agreements, disagreements, transmissions, and feedback among participants in a given communication context.

By explication, when you communicate with someone, you look out for his/her reaction. Is he/she interested in what you are saying? Does he/she understand your message? It is also important that one looks out for visual responses – a smile, eye movement and verbal responses. The public relations tilt of decorum as applied to marriage is an understanding of how any element in the process of communication can alter the entire communication relationship. Figure 5 below showcases the marriage quadrant.

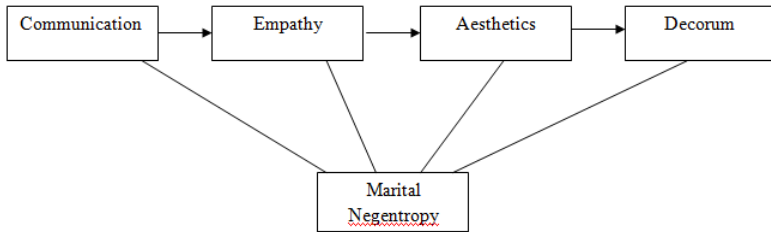


Figure 5 – The Marriage Quadrant – A Public Relations Approach to Marital Negentropy (Amadi, 2017)

If decorum is absent in the equation, marriage assumes the form of debate rather than dialogue where one must emphasize the rightness or wrongness of a point of view. If the marriage quadrant as propounded by Amadi (2017^b) is accorded its vent, then the high rate of divorce in Nigeria will assume a slope/decline.

Public relations is a change agent that serves as an effective tool in curbing societal menace. A hydra-headed monster in Nigeria today in the light of the subject matter is kidnapping. The adverse effects of kidnapping are too traumatic to comprehend. It is in the light of this that Amadi (2017^c) carried out a study – **Exterminating cases of kidnapping through the use of public relations.**

From a conceptual viewpoint, the study citing *Blacks Law Dictionary (10th Edition)* sees kidnapping as abduction geared towards the demand for ransom. It highlights incidents of harassment, molestation, inhuman treatment and a barring of access to medical care as some of the untoward sights and sounds of kidnapping.

Anchored on the two-way symmetrical model of public relations, the study unveils how public relations can be utilized to change hostility to sympathy, prejudices to acceptance, apathy to interest and ignorance to knowledge. The precursors to kidnapping were streamlined in the study as bad governance, greed, illiteracy, politics of wickedness and decay in moral values.

The study advocates for favourable legislation using the instrumentality of lobbying as a public relations function. In this regard, lobbying is seen as a form of advocacy with the intention of influencing decisions made by government and other agencies of public interest. By extension it includes all attempts to influence legislation and government officials. On a theoretical stretch, the study characterizes lobbying as being a:

- i. pervasive and important feature in the political system;
- ii. tale tell sign of brewing issues of high stake relevance/salience in the socio-political milieu; and
- iii. form of organized interests in democratic settings

It is unfortunate that lobbying has often been misconstrued as bribery and a host of other corrupt practices orchestrated in the form of favourable legislation with its justification anchored on the *Machiavellian approach of the end justifying the means*.

Lobbying as advocated by Amadi (2017^d) is built on clarity of

purpose, empathy, fairness and objectivity geared towards gaining mutual understanding and rapport. Lobbying it must be noted is a veritable public relations tool when guided with a sense of moral compass.

The recommendation of the study as borne out of the findings is the functional deployment of lobbying to ensure good legislation that will enthrone egalitarianism in governance while bringing to bear the dividends of democracy. By so doing societal ills will be curbed, moral decadence will be reversed and justice, fairness and equity will hold sway. This is the beauty of public relations as a tool for social change.

4.2 Post Election Infractions, Entropy and Negentropy (Peace Building)

Galtung (1990) sees peace building as a process that challenges the fundamental structures that have the potentials of generating conflict with the primary goal of reducing or eliminating such structures.

Leverach (1995) describes peace building as an enduring commitment which places emphasis on mobilization of resources including material, money, labour and associated strategies cumulatively designed to promote positive relationships. By implication, the essence of peace building is to translate existing relationships from negative to positive status on a sustainable platform.

Igben (2016) notes that:

The fundamental goal of public relations
in peace building and negotiation

process is to catalyze the process of peace building initiatives rather than discourage it by strategically influencing government policies and practices in relation to stakeholders' interest” (p.100).

Savrum and Miller (2015) aver that public relations can engender a reduction of violent conflict and the realization of democratic peace. Post-election peace building in this context draws expression from Giddens' theory of structuration. This theory however posits how alternative media (PR) can be used to notably create a new public platform, but also be used to implement the democratic principle of participatory political communication.

This no doubt is in contradistinction to the views of Yang and Ishak (2012) who observe that “contemporary news media produce news presentation from the perspective of special interests which influence the way in which information is filtered and presented” (p.182).

Giddens (1991) recognizes that:

When the interests of the mainstream media are too closely tied to that of special interest groups, the media can be used as tools for promoting, maintaining and reproducing systems of power and control. In situations of conflict, the mainstream media too often act to

reinforce entrenched attitudes, perspectives and positions which keep the conflict in deadlock (pp. 66 – 68).

Public relations in this regard can be used to elicit what Savrum and Miller (2015) refer to as the democratization of value creation that prescribes effective means of addressing the problem of conflict in divided societies. In this regard, peace is assured on the basis of institutionalizing a culture of shared values.

Post-election crises border on controversial issues. These issues are usually inveigled in emotions and sensibilities which combine to defuse enthusiasm on members of the competing groups to acquire facts surrounding the crises. According to Singh (2011^a) “such persons are often too mentally lazy to go to the trouble of reading and listening to the evidence on an issue. They are willing to accept the ready-made opinion of others or the oversimplified explanations of those who capitalize on the unwillingness of many to have rational discourse” (p.90). In the light of the foregoing, an important task confronting public relations practitioners is to dispel the indifference of the public toward controversial questions and to convert passive attitudes into active interests in the issues which concern the welfare of the public. As a corollary, Singh (2011^b) notes that “the public must not only be supplied with information for expressing logical opinions but the individuals comprising the public must be motivated to express their views and to participate in the opinion-forming process of their group” (p.90). These are factors that precipitate empathy and a convergence of divergent

frames of reference which combine to deescalate conflicts while enthroning peace. Public relations in this regard takes up the responsibility of moving stakeholders away from hotbeds and onto the path of resolution.

According to him, it is only modern public relations practices, strongly rooted in two-way symmetrical orientation, that have the capacity to create and sustain an enduring peaceful co-existence on a significantly long term basis. Public relations just create an open space for dialogue on a number of different issues at different levels and among diverse individuals and groups.

Public relations' role in peace building can never be overemphasized. In words cast on marble, the Peace building initiative platform notes that:

Public relations allow for a range of views and voices to be opened and therefore publicly expressed. In situations of disharmony, a narrow range of extremist views tend to dominate and credible information is tremendously difficult to access. During peace building, it is only effective public relations that can facilitate the expression of competing perspectives and by so doing create an enduring channel for public dialogue where free and open communication helps prevent the manipulation of populations

(<https://www.peacebuildinginitiative.org>).

Interestingly, through an unfettered flow of accurate and constructive information, public relations at different levels and parameters serves to engender sustainable agreements which advertently or inadvertently prevent leaders from manipulating such negotiations to secure their own power and position. This is the beauty of modern public relations as anchored in the tripod of candour, transparency and empathy.

The foregoing discourse has established a premise that public relations can indeed engender post-election peace building. Noteworthy is the fact that this becomes possible only when public relations is well managed. Ineffective public relations at its best is counterproductive and at its worst, deceptive. The pathway therefore is to ensure that the right strategy is put in place for public relations to assume its rightful role of enthroning peace and mutual understanding.

By inference, therefore, the negentropic approach developed in this lecture may serve as an effective public relations strategy for peace building in post-election Nigeria.

- i. **Research:** Public relations practice can no longer be devoid of research because we have entered an era of strategic thinking where decisions can no longer be made on hunches and speculations. Research helps uncover troubled spots long before they manifest. Research in the context of this convocation can illuminate needs assessment in an evolving political economy like Nigeria. A nations vision and mission can be built on these needs assessments and by

so doing, shape the political discourse and narrative.

The beauty of research in the foregoing context has been highlighted by Wilcox and Cameron (2009) who observe that:

Practitioners face a complex set of forces that must be monitored and taken into consideration. Simply put, the outstanding practitioner monitors for threats, assesses them, arrives at a stance and then commences communication efforts (p. 248).

The inference is that facts and figures fuel the dynamics of public relations. The aspirations and yearnings of the cognate groups that make up Nigeria can only be ascertained through research and not assumptions – public relations peace building to this end is anchored on research.

- ii. **Advocacy:** A core element in the kitty of the practitioner is advocacy. The Cambridge English Dictionary defines advocacy as “publicly supporting or suggesting an idea, development or way of doing something”. This in other words can be described as an act of recommending something.

In the context of post-election peace building, public relations can be used to draw attention to those things that bind us together as a nation rather than the things that create the divide. Heterogeneity has always been taunted as the beauty of our unity. Virtues like tolerance, love, resilience and perseverance

can be propagated through sustained advocacy. Long built bigotry and hatred can also be destroyed through advocacy. Advocacy in this regard can be viewed as a double edged sword that can enthrone ideal values while destroying divisive attitudes and values.

The beauty of public relations' instigated advocacy, in this regard, is that the motive will unequivocally be perceived as altruistic.

iii. **Lobbying:** Lobbying in an ideal sense, does not connote negative insinuations. Lobbying is organized and systematic. The practitioner in this regard lobbies for favourable legislations. On the front burner right now is the issue of electoral reforms as expressed through the Electoral Act: The lapses encountered in the 2023 election can be reviewed with a view to redressing them while setting the tone for more credible elections in the future. The pathway is to study the Act in its present form, enrich content where necessary, and lobby for inclusion and passage so as to create a platform for inclusive and sustainable electoral process come 2027.

iv. **Special events/festivals/convocations:**Public relations can be at the vanguard of special events that allow for inter-cultural, inter-ethnic, inter-religious appreciation and assimilation among others. A lot of disdain that border on intolerance is actually borne out of ignorance. Special events induce bonding. The ideals of National Sports Festival, Festival of Arts and Culture,

Independence Day lectures and lots more can actually be organized in a way that is devoid of political colourations. Special convocations on talk shop, symposia, etc can also be organized with a view to developing a roadmap for growth and sustainability. A lot of walls can be broken down if we form the habit of coming together rather than staying away from one another. The importance of special events as a public relation tool has been highlighted by Kaur and Saluja (2015) who opine that:

Special events are an important public relations activity because they satisfy the desire of most people to participate in an occasion to improve their knowledge and enjoy the stimulation of a crowd – the lights, sound, colour and movement involved(para. 1).

What this invariably means is that the quadrant recipe as outlined above is a win-win strategy that ensures fairness, equity and harmony in organic entities with dismembered constituents. This in lucid terms is the recipe for post-election peace building in Nigeria.

4.3 Public Relations and Image Making

The image people have about a particular concept or phenomenon goes a long way to shape their perception about such events, phenomenon or institution. This perception however, affects the attitude and behaviour of the people.

Therefore, there is need for institution, corporate bodies etc. to engage in conscious effort geared towards establishing positive image for the organization. To do this, public relations, no doubt, is a veritable tool to achieving good or positive image for institutions, organizations and so on. Based on this premise, organizations can employ effective public relations strategies to boost the people's perception of the organization and what it stands for. These perception, once positive, can alter the attitude of the people towards the message of the organization, thereby boosting the course of mutually beneficial endeavour.

At this point, one might wonder on how public relations can engineer good image? To understand this, a good look at the meaning of image and the type therein can really help our understanding.

According to Daniel Boorstin in his "The image: A Guide to pseudo-events in American" as cited in Turbey (2000, p. 1)

An image is synthetic. It is planned: created specially to serve a purpose, to make a certain kind of impression. (A person's image is) a visible public personality as distinguished from an inward private character. By our very use of the term, we imply that something can be done to it, the image can always be more or less successfully synthesized, doctored, repaired, refurbished, and improved, quite apart

from (though not entirely independent of) the spontaneous original of which the image is in the public portrait.

Today, image is used to convey what a person or an organization appears to be, which is sometimes very different from who/what they actually are in private.

There are various types of images which the public relations practitioners adopt with a view to project properly the required image sought, they includes;

The Mirror Image: This image is the one held by people outside the organization, and it may be based on experience or on poor information and understanding. Public relations deal with a world of hostility, prejudice, apathy and ignorance which could result in an unfair current image. The current image depends on how little or how much people know and in a busy world their knowledge will be less perfect than that of those people within the organization. For example, those living in a particular country know more about their own country than do foreigners living hundreds or thousands of kilometers away. This is the great communication problem of the third world.

The Wish Image: This is desired image, the one management wishes to achieve. Again, it is not so much a favourable or preferred image as a true one. For instance, when Gordon Selfridges opened his department store in Oxford Street, London, many years ago, he wanted people to think of his store as a place where they could enjoy shopping as a day's outing full of colour and pleasure, instead of the usual drudgery. The wish

image mostly applies to something new when outsiders are as yet completely uninformed.

The Corporate Image: Corporate image is the organization itself rather than of the products or services. The corporate image may be made up of many things such as the company history, financial success and stability, quality of production, export success, industrial relations and reputation as an employer, social responsibility and research record. Marks and Spencer plc has an excellent corporate image which has been established internationally. A corporate image is important in PR, the success of a new share issue often depends on the corporate image.

The multiple images: A number of individual, branches or other representations can each create a particular image which does not conform to a uniform image for the total organization. There can be as many images as there are, say, sales staffs. The problem may be overcome by the use of uniforms, vehicle liveries (decoration), symbols, badges, staff training and in the case of shops by the use of identical shops design, name displays, interior layout and display material, as seen with chain-stores. An airline is a good example of many devices to produce a recognizable corporate identity. The liveries of aircraft-such as distinctive tails fin designs-and the dress of air crews all contribute to this standard identity.

One important thing to learn from these classes of images is the simple fact that someone's image and public appearance can be consciously constructed and projected. This is why critics claim

that public relations' images create facades for people and organizations that are no more real than the false-front sets movie makers use to re-create New York City. And, just as movie makers want, and expect audiences to believe the images presented to them, it does not deny the fact that they are artificial and false by definition. So, these critics conclude, images and the public relations practitioners who use them are inherently deceptive and misleading rather than helpful and informative (Turney, 2000).

As much as we might want to defend public relations, we have to admit that the critics are right about some images, some partitions, and some public relations activities. There have in fact, been and probably will be more fraudulent, immoral, unethical, and even illegal uses of images by some public relations practitioners. But, they are the aberrations. A few instance of misbehavior do not mean that all images, all image-making or all public relations activities are inappropriate.

Turbey (2000), notes that “the mere fact that images can be constructed and can be manipulated does not necessarily make them bad. Modern life depends upon artificially constructed realities of all kinds.”

If the person who creates an image has an evil or deceptive purpose, then, depending upon how well he/she does in constructing the image, the image may end up being good or uplifting if the person who creates such an image is noble.

The greatest reason for being concerned about images shouldn't be their artificially or the fact that they have been constructed. It

should be how much correlation exists between the constructed image and the underlying reality that it is presumed to represent.

4.4 Host Community Engagements and the Pitfalls of Entropy

It is common knowledge that a major consideration that characterizes the location of industries is proximity to raw materials and market. When taken in aggregation it becomes obvious that while the market may be widespread, the source of raw materials is often localized. By being localized, communities come into play. Communities exert a lot of reverberations when it comes to industrial push and pull. Often times these reverberations come with a host of imbalances which in this context falls within the purview of entropy.

In everyday parlance, communities in the context of the foregoing are best qualified as host communities. This description however refers to a group of people who share a common identity such as geographical location, class and ethnic background. **Section 318 of the Petroleum Industry Act**, sees host communities as communities situated in or appurtenant to the area of operation of a settler and any other community as a settler may determine.

The political economy of Nigeria situates the Niger Delta region as playing host to so many upstream and downstream oil companies. This industrial engagement presents the optics of a cat and dog interplay. In the recent past, host community disturbances were among the sights and sounds of the Niger

Delta region. The case of Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria and the Ogoni ethnic nationality readily comes to mind. It has been the same sorry story across the Niger Delta region – some are untold while others are in the public domain. Whether told or untold the fact remains that the relationship between companies and their host companies is one that deserves more than just a cursory glance.

Nwosu (2017) notes that:

The environment in Nigeria's Niger Delta has been completely devastated by six decades of oil exploration, exploitation and ecological warfare by oil companies led by Shell, Exxon Mobil, Agip, Elf etc since the discovery of crude oil in Nigeria in 1956. There have been cases of oil spillage and devastating ecological damage which have crippled agricultural activities, fishing and the entire economic life of the people (p. 42).

Nwosu (2017) further notes that disputes arise from the use of the social environment by companies and aspirations on the part of the indigenes of the oil bearing communities in question who see their environment as a divine gift that ought to be enjoyed by them exclusively and uninterrupted especially in view of **Section 20 of the 1999 constitution.**

It is not in doubt that the oil bearing communities in the Niger

Delta region have been plagued by communal unrests involving the multi-national oil companies and the host communities probably due to the fact that the operations of these oil companies have engendered pain, poverty and squalor.

In an earlier development, Hamilton (2012) citing Okoko (1996) observes that “oil bearing communities are exploited and neglected by oil prospecting companies with oil exploration being the root of most social problems where host communities in frustration transfer their anger to the oil companies” (p.4).

Ejirefe (2017) affirms the adverse effects of oil exploitation and exploration by multinational oil companies on the oil bearing communities of the Niger Delta region. The study notes that this negligence has left the operation of multi-national oil companies in chaos due to the restiveness in these communities.

Tule (2018) notes that oil exploration in Nigeria's Niger Delta Region has in recent times been resisted by the host communities due to large scale environmental degradation arising from the exploitative activities of oil companies in the area. Izidor (2022) opines that the relationship between oil and gas corporations and host communities in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria have been marked by conflicts and crisis which have continued unabated and unmitigated” (p.298).

The inference from the foregoing is that the relationship between oil companies in the Niger Delta region in the past and present has been enmeshed in **entropy** as marked by hostilities and widespread infractions. Capital flight has also taken place and this accounts for the non presence of IOC's headquarters in

the Niger Delta Region.

It however appears that the approaches adopted by these companies to soothe the frayed nerves of the host communities appear counterproductive in the face of emerging dynamics. In a study by Rim-Rukeh, Ogbeni and Imide (2008), it was discovered that “most organizations operating in the Niger Delta region were perceived to be bad corporate organizations owing to poor community relations (pp. 645 – 657). Amodu (2012) in an exposition avers that:

This appears to establish a clear relationship between community relations practices of organizations and their level of exposure to crises. Ironically, huge sums of money are usually quoted to have been spent on such communities by oil companies in the Niger Delta (p. 7).

The study outlined some of the botched approaches by the oil companies to placate the host communities to include:

- i. Government intervention
- ii. Giving gifts to leaders
- iii. Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)/Global Memorandum of Understanding (GMOU)

From available data it appears the oil companies relate with their host communities from a distance with the overall data

pointing to the ineffectiveness of their community relations strategies. **Entropy** takes place in the absence of mutual understanding and rapport. Meta analysis in this light points to the failure of oil companies to respond to the needs of their host communities with the expression “... *the company would look into it*” as a common phraseology.

In every human relationship pitfalls of entropy abound. It takes a genuine commitment to enthrone peace for harmony to thrive. With deceit and manipulation comes entropy. The irony in the face of this realization is that many companies do not relate with their host communities in sincerity, openness and candour. Entropy does not allow for accommodation, negotiation, comprise and dialogue.

A respondent in the study of Amodu (2012) was quoted as saying:

They (Chevron) should come down to the community to discuss what we need and what we want to get; not that they negotiate with the people in the township and it doesn't affect us. Because those people will go and negotiate with them and thereafter, we that are suffering will not know anything. They have to come and hear our problem, to know what we are suffering (p. 172).

Scholars have however noted that the international oil companies have been courting disruptions to their oil

installations in the Niger Delta for decades through poor community relations and widespread environmental footprints of their operations. Akintunde (2016) opines that half hearted political diagnosis has resulted in ineffective solutions to the Niger Delta crisis. The 13% derivation principle, creation of the Niger Delta-focused institutions and the amnesty programme have not produced development in the region. With the current situation, commercial and development projects in the Niger Delta region will face significant implementation risks given the culture of militancy in the region.

Militancy in the region assumed the form it did in the immediate past by reason of the belief by the people that their communities are carrying the burden of development in other parts of Nigeria while their own human and material development needs are not being addressed. Scholars (Ugwuanyi, Obaje, Ohaeri, Ugwu & Ohagwu, 2014) uphold that environmental pollution associated with the oil exploration and lack of meaningful development in the region have been the source or the aggravating factors for the past agitations. Oil exploration and exploitation has led to family, intra –communal, inter-communal and inter ethnic feuds, conflicts and wars. The oil economy has disinherited and dislocated the local people who are dependent on the primary economics of farming, fishing and hunting. The bottom line is that there is a prevalence of fractured relationships between Niger Delta communities (host communities) and the international oil companies.

The observable thread from the foregoing scenario depicts series of host community engagements that are marked by

entropy in the Niger Delta region. It must however be noted that for every **entropy** there is a **negentropy**. Public relations is a field whose dynamics are embellished in **negentropy**. In the light of host community engagements, corporate social responsibility (CSR) often comes to play. When properly deployed as a public relations tool it engenders harmony, rapport, mutual understanding and goodwill. These interestingly are the vibrations of **negentropy**.

The Harvard Business School sees corporate social responsibility(CSR) as the idea that a business has a responsibility to society that exists around it. Society in the context of this definition would naturally include the host community. From a systems approach, the European Commission defines CSR as a concept that encourages companies to integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interactions with stakeholders on a voluntary basis. The World Council for Sustainable Development defines CSR as the continuing commitment by businesses to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce, their families as well as the local community and society at large.

Implicit in the definitions above is the propulsion towards harmony and balance. Emphasis it must also be noted is on ethical practices. When ethical considerations play up then fairness, justice and equity hold sway. It therefore means that there is the how and the how not to behave in a business environment. The word responsibility when viewed from the

prism of semantics presupposes role prescription. Knowing what to do and doing it is an act of responsibility. On the other hand, knowing what to do and not doing it at all at its best is an incontrovertible act of irresponsibility.

Riano and Yakovleva (2019) see CSR as focusing on accountability and transparency of corporate actions that include social, ethical, environmental and economic efforts which are often voluntary and placed within and outside of market and commercial transactions. Blowfield and Murray (2014) observe that CSR arose as a result of societal concerns about negative outcomes of business operations such as working conditions and environmental factors. The common denominator in this context revolves around host communities and by extrapolation the entire conspectus of stakeholders and publics.

Asemah, Okpanachi and Edegoh (2013) see CSR as the continuing commitment by businesses to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as the local community at large. They further note that:

Corporate social responsibility is about the integration of social environmental and economic consideration into the decision making structures and processes of businesses. It is about using innovation to find creative and value added solutions to societal and

environmental challenges (p. 45)

Scholars note that stakeholder engagement involves maintaining an open dialogue while ensuring partnerships through credible and trustworthy practices. It is not in doubt that CSR can effectively improve a company's relations with communities while allowing for business prospects.

Nimani, Zegiraj and Spahija (2022) see CSR as revolving around actions that are becoming more strategically significant to many businesses. They see it as having to do with a company's commitment to avoiding or eliminating any negative consequences on society while enhancing its long term position influence.

From a multi-modal dimension, CSR is often seen as a “win-win” for companies. This according to Yee (2012) means that “a firm can use CSR to improve its image while contributing to the society” (p.2). Besides these, there other advantages inherent in the effective deployment of CSR by organizations and they include the fact the CSR provides:

- i. Channels for the expression of stakeholder value
- ii. Sustainable frameworks for the maximization of profit
- iii. Enablers for organizational growth
- iv. Structural platforms for the projection of company values and core competences

There is an association link between companies with robust

CSR practices and favourable dispositions by stakeholders. Truth is that effective CSR practice by companies takes away the **web of entropy** in the business routines of most enterprises. Yee (2012) in his summation espouses that:

Corporate social responsibility plays an important role in positioning a firm. Positioning is the most influential factor that will determine the future of a firm. Even though CSR activities may cost the firm but their benefits far outweigh the financial outlay. Firms should not take the CSR efforts lightly because it will decide the company's future in increasingly competitive markets. (p. 5)

Data abound as to the huge benefits of CSR. It is common knowledge that consumers are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of corporate social responsibility. It has also been found that consumers actively seek products from businesses that operate ethically. Collier (2018) avers that businesses which show interests in wider social issues rather than just profits attract customers who help them operate sustainably.

The typology of CSR as developed by Collier (2018) streamlines the under listed as key performance indicators for businesses with effective and efficient CSR. They are:

- a. Improved public image

- b. Increased brand awareness and recognition
- c. Cost savings
- d. Competitive advantage
- e. Increased customer engagement
- f. Greater employee engagement
- g. All round benefits

Bucur, Moica, Ardelean and Otel (2019) posit that practicing corporate social responsibility brings added value to organizations through easier implementation of legal provisions and increased image of the company towards the community, NGOs, and stakeholders. They further note that through such activities, the private sector contributes to economic growth and social development bearing in mind the fact that in the long run social and environmental problems are brought to bear in the functioning of businesses. The effective practice of CSR by companies is therefore essential for the protection of human rights, environmental sustainability with enhanced social and community well being.

It is most unfortunate that many companies in their day to day CSR practices do not carry out a needs assessment in the execution of their CSR projects. They merely assume that host communities would make do with their giftings. This top-down approach has been found to be counterproductive across strata and demographics. Cases of dysfunctional projects especially in the Niger Delta region abound. Stakeholder engagement in

this light becomes a down-top axiom.

Entropy in host community engagement also manifests in the form of lack of a clear cut CSR strategy on the part of companies. A one size fits all strategy cannot engender **negentropy**. Planning is key in eliminating entropy using the instrumentality of CSR. It has been observed that in the light of the absence of a strategy many companies resort to divide and rule which unfortunately has led to a lot of unrest in many host communities. The idea of doing selective hospitality through chiefs and community leaders has also not helped matters.

CSR must be holistic and comprehensive so as to enthrone negentropy in the overall scheme of host community engagements. It is absolutely important to understand the demographics and psychographics of host communities. Anything outside this can only be likened to throwing punches in the air. This has been found to be the bane of many infractions in host community engagements especially in the Niger Delta region. The baseline however is to be guided by the corporate objectives and this should be a strict adherence by companies.

By way of nomenclature, corporate objectives are the overall intents that serve to provide direction for the activities of an organization in the pursuit of its goals. Inherent in this elucidation is the need to realize that the intent and activities must dovetail within the purview of the overall mission of the organization. Descriptively, corporate objectives provide the link between the defined activities/strategies. Corporate objectives will naturally lead to management by objectives

because in this regard the objectives may be broken down into specific targets for each department, host community and specific individuals. Herein lies the beauty of effective corporate social responsibility *as a negentropy to the entropic stakeholder engagement* of companies as often witnessed in the Niger Delta business clime.

4.5 Initiating Communication between Organizations and Target Publics

Organisations have diverse publics. The publics of an organization are institutions, establishments, government, agencies, community and individuals including employees who have direct dealings with its activities.

Public Relations professionals ensure that they convey the activities of their organisation to the target publics with a view to generate their continued supports and patronages. Figure 6 below shows the publics of an organization.

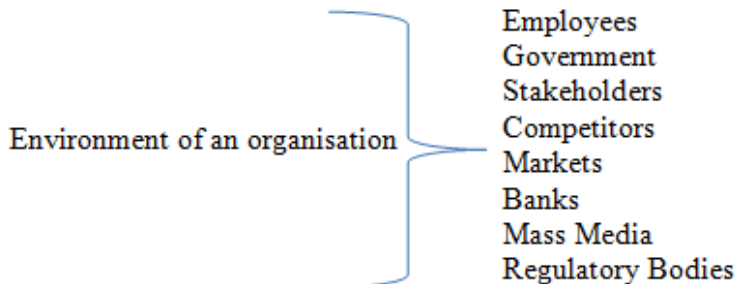


Figure 6: The Publics of an Organisation

Communication is described as the veritable vehicle through which individuals and corporate institutions establish relationship with each other. It is the life-wire of any transaction. Communication also is the process of creating, sharing, listening, and understanding messages between different groups of people through written and verbal formats.

Public Relations is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and its target publics by utilising various communication channels and strategies. The criteria to achieve the objective include;

1. **Development of Communication strategy.** The strategy outlines the objectives of the communication efforts with the followings;
 - a. Identifying the target publics (demographic/psychographic)
 - b. Determine the key messages that need to be communicated.
 - c. Developing a clear and concise communication strategy where the organisation's message is effectively delivered to its target publics.
2. **Working with the mass media.** The mass media is an important and indispensable means of reaching diverse publics. The mass media include the radio, newspaper, television, magazine, cinema, film, book, social media. It is described as the process through which information

are conveyed to the target publics. The mass media has the power to influence people's thoughts, ideas and their behaviour. As a social institution, the public relations professional work with the journalists and media outlets with the intention to secure coverage of the organisations activities by pitching story ideas, writing editorials, commentaries, press releases, conferences, and engage in radio talks, etc. The Public Relations professional can generate positive media coverage and raise awareness about the organisation among its target publics. Similarly, social media has also become an important communication tool for public relations professionals. By leveraging social media platforms such as X, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Bulk SMS, etc., Public Relations professionals can engage with their target publics in real-time, share content, and respond to feedback. Social media also facilitate creation of dialogue with stakeholders.

3. **Events and sponsorships:** An event is described as a public assembly for the purpose of celebration, education, marketing, promotion, or reunion. Event is classified based on the reason for which it is organised. It can be for social life cycle, education and career, sports, entertainment, political, corporate, religious, fund raising, or cause related events. The public relations professional utilises events and sponsorships to initiate communication with their target publics. It can create opportunities for face-to-face interactions with stakeholders. Sponsorship of events also provide a

platform for an organisation to showcase their values and commitment to the community and maintain trust.

4. **Celebrity Influencer:** Another important aspect of initiating communication in public relations is through the use of influencers/celebrities. Public Relations professionals collaborate with social media influencers, celebrities, artistes, footballers, or brand ambassadors to reach their target audience and promote their organisations message. By partnering with influencers who have large following and credibility in a specific industry or niche, public relations professionals can amplify their messages and reach a wider audience.
5. **Stakeholder Engagement:** Stakeholder engagement is a crucial aspect of organisational management that involves building and maintaining positive relationship with individuals or group that have vested interest in the organisation. These stakeholders can include employees, customers, suppliers, investors, government agencies, communities, etc. By engaging with stakeholders, the organisations can better understand their needs and concerns, align their strategies and operations accordingly and ultimately build trust and loyalty. As a means to improve organisational openness, the public relations professionals use the forum to communicate openly and honestly about key decisions, challenges, and performance metrics, an organisations commitment to ethical business practices and responsibilities and

corporate citizenship. Transparent communication build trust with the shareholder or stakeholders and reliable partners which can lead to increased support, collaborations, and advocacy. It is achievable only when the public relations professionals keep both the internal and external stakeholders engaged as they play major role in creating a cohesive organisational culture and fostering productivity.

- 6. Conducting Research and Analysis:** Research is one the major duties of the public relations professional. Described as fact findings, research tend to investigate the cause of an event and proffer workable solutions to ameliorate the situation. Research in Social Sciences like in Public Relations can be quantitative or qualitative. Public Relations professionals conduct research and analysis to understand the preferences, attitudes and behaviours of their target publics. Figure 7 below shows research approaches in public relations.

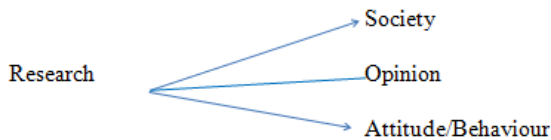


Figure 7: Research Approaches

By conducting a survey, focus group study, and market or audience research, Public Relations professionals can gather valuable insights that inform their

communication strategies. The data-driven approach helps PR professionals tailor their messages to resonate with their target audience/publics and achieve communication objectives.

1. **Meeting:** Meeting plays a crucial role in establishing effective communication between an organisation and its various publics. As a key component of public relations strategies, meetings provide a platform for the organisations to connect, engage and build relationships with different stakeholders, including employees, customers, investors, and community. Meeting bring people together in one place for the purpose of sharing information and discussing and solving problems of general concerns. Lots of advantages abound; meeting serve as a vital tool for organisations to disseminate information, exchange ideas, address concerns, and gather feedback from various publics. By assembling key stakeholders together, in a structural setting, organisations can ensure that messages are delivered clearly and effectively. Face-to-face interactions during meeting help to humanize the organisation, establish trust and create sense of transparency authentic communication. Meetings also provide an opportunity for organisations to receive real-time feedback, facilitate open dialogue and address any misunderstandings or conflicts promptly. Through active listening and two-way communication, organisations can demonstrate their commitment to understanding the needs and perspectives of their

publics, which is essential for building strong relationships based on mutual respect and trust. Organisations utilise various types of meetings to engage with different publics to achieve specific communication goals. Internal meetings such as staff meetings, team briefings, and training sessions help to align employees around organisational objective, foster sense of belonging and motivation, with a view to promoting teamwork and collaboration with the organisation. External meetings including stakeholder's meetings, shareholders gathering, press conferences, community forums, enables organisations to connect with external audience such as investors, customers, media and the general public. These meetings provide opportunities to communicate key messages, address issues or crisis, solicit feedback and build solid relationship.

- 2. Exhibition:** Exhibitions are powerful tools that organisations leverage as part of their public relations strategy to enhance communication with their various publics. By organising exhibitions, organisations can showcase their products, services, values, and expertise in a visually engaging and interactive manner, thereby fostering relationships, building brand awareness and establishing credibility with stakeholders. Exhibition serve as a unique platform for an organisation to engage directly with their target publics including customers, investors, industry professional media, etc., through visually appealing displays, interactive demonstrations,

product showcases and informative presentations: it enables organisations to communicate their key messages, highlight their competitive advantage and differentiate themselves in the market. Benefits of organising exhibitions as part of a public relations strategy is that these exhibitions propels increased visibility, enhance relationship with target publics, enhance market insights, enhance brand building and create measurable experience.

3. **Facility Visits:** Organising facility visits as integral part of a public relations strategy offer organisations a unique opportunity to engage with their target audiences, including customers, stakeholders, media and community members by showcasing their operations, capabilities and values in a tangible and immersive way. By inviting visitors to their facilities, organisations can effectively communicate their brand story, build trust and establish credibility while providing a behind-the-scene look at their operations. Facility visits serve as a major tool in the public relations toolbox, allowing organisations to connect with their target publics on a more personal and experiential level by opening their doors and welcoming visitors into their facilities, with a view to demonstrating transparency, authenticity and commitment and foster meaningful relationships with stakeholders. During facility visits, organisations can showcase their facilities production processes, quality standards and sustainability practices, offering a first-hand experience that conveys

their commitment to excellence and innovation. Facility visits also provides organisations with an opportunity to humanize their brand, introduce key team members and share success stories that resonate with visitors on an emotional level to foster trust, loyalty and advocacy among their target publics.

5.0 Summary

Contribution to knowledge in the light of this discourse has been established on two fronts – theory and practice.

1. From the dimension of practice a synthesis of this discourse has unveiled the fact that public relations provides a more robust platform for peace, rapport and mutual understanding when it assumes a bottom-up posture rather than a top-down tilt. What this invariably means is that when the core values of PR hold sway in informal and interpersonal settings as against formal and organizational environments, peace and rapport evolve naturally. More so, when aggregated on a sub-system basis, peace and rapport flow naturally in the overall system of man and his coactions. This approach is a departure from the norm and serves to add value to the body of knowledge by providing insight on the dynamics of peace in humanistic settings using the instrumentality of public relations.
2. Contribution to knowledge in the light of theory draws its essence from Grunigs Two-Way Symmetrical Model. By inference, this discourse has established that

the core elements of the Two-Way Symmetrical model can be seamlessly woven together using feedback as a congruence of values. By integrating feedback into the entire scheme of action and reaction the feeling of alienation begins to preempt a sense of belonging. A collective sense of belonging by every stakeholder will naturally drive away the negative forces of inhibition and non-compliance. It is not in doubt that once retrogressive forces are degraded in a system progressive forces assume centre stage. By imputation, this discourse has brought to fore the fact that Grunigs Two-way Symmetrical model becomes most potent when wrapped around the wings of feedback. When the ideals of this model are brought to bear in formal and informal interpersonal engagements, public relations assumes a centripetal curve that necessitates peace, rapport and mutual understanding. The catalyst for negentropy in humanistic settings is therefore preconceived in the foregoing.

6.0 Conclusion

From the foregoing discourse, it becomes quite incontrovertible that entropy is a constant in the daily run of action and reaction in humanistic settings. The dimensions are varied bearing in mind the fact that entropy finds expression in both formal and informal settings. Wrangling and rancour mark the sights and sounds of human engagements. Global media portrayals on the other hand show the world to be turbulent and chaotic.

Viewed from a systems approach the subsystems do not in reality enjoy synergy with the system. The political terrain is marked by entropy, economies all over the world are characterized by entropy. The inference is that entropy readily plays up when there is an infraction in the ideal. A juxtaposition of the ideal and the real in the coactions of man animates the concept of entropy.

There appears to be so much anger over growing social inequality and the cost of living, sinking faith in governments and institutions and increasingly polarized politics, together with a rise in activism and environmental concerns are generative triggers of entropy. Harmony in man's coactions appears quite elusive. Deductively therefore it appears that uncertainty as marked by entropy has become a daily part of man and his coactions.

The sensationalism of negativities in media circles has not in the least helped matters. Global media tend to focus on dramatic and violent events. The rule of engagement in journalistic circles is that war is better than peace, violence is better than non violence. Apparently, the tendency to focus on violence and conflicts and to further sensationalize them leaves one with the impression that there is no peace in the world.

Looking at theorizations in the field of communication and media studies, the propulsion is for the mass media to set the agenda for man in humanistic settings. The agenda so conceived should by reason of necessity rest on the pivots of advocacy by way of enthroning negentropic practices geared towards

dethroning entropic actions. In this regard, the mass media are guilty of reflecting reality through reportage rather than construct social reality through content. The reality so constructed through media portrayal should be on practices that engender negentropy.

In the present scheme of things, the mass media can either be agents of negentropy or enablers of entropy. Mass media content in the long run shapes public opinion and public opinion when allowed to thrive regulates man's interplay of action and reaction. In an information centered society, reality is often seen from the lens of the mass media. That reality therefore should be reality of peace (negentropy) rather than reality of conflict (entropy).

It is not in doubt that public relations bring a message of hope in an entropic world. The fact remains that the field of public relations is anchored on peace, harmony and mutual understanding. These interestingly are the forces of negentropy. When public relations become dysfunctional in the affairs of man, people begin to lose trust with daily misunderstandings as a common denominator.

Sound public relations is a sure way to peace in a chaotic world. The force of public relations is anchored on its propensity to establish control when a chaotic situation emerges. By responding to the different perceptions of the issue, public relations minimize infractions in humanistic settings. Going by the complexities of the world today where people and organizations cannot avoid trouble and violence completely,

public relations becomes a potent catalyst for peace and harmony. This is so because public relations builds trust in the midst of distrust.

By not incorporating, the tenets of public relations in the daily rounds of mans action and reaction creates a tense environment where people are not motivated to be productive while not being inspired to collaborate. In the long run, confusion becomes the order of the day while frustration becomes the end product. The forces of entropy in our evolving dynamics have created an uneasy environment marked by widespread unpredictability and instability. This truly is a gory situation.

It is obvious that entropic actions and inactions in humanistic settings may not be intentional processes but the fact remains that these actions in the long run derail relations, make goals harder to achieve, hinder advancement opportunities and impede overall optimization of human potentials as measured by the Human Development Index (HDI). As disheartening as this may seem, it has most unfortunately become the realities of our times.

As explicated in the book of **Ecclesiastes 7:29** “... *God made us plain and simple but we have made ourselves very complicated*” (GNB). In very explicit terms, the good Lord created a world of **negentropy** but man, in his coactions, has turned it into an **entropic** setting with desperate gravitations towards **negentropic** pathways.

7.0 Recommendations

Drawing from the unfolding discourse, the following

recommendations have become most pertinent:

1. Making empathy a way of life in humanistic settings:

There is a dire need to internalize the public relations virtue of empathy in mans daily run of action and reaction. Empathy is an organic force that defeats selfishness and greed. If empathy is allowed to thrive in the affairs of man, then humanity will experience peace like never before. Empathy recalibrates our lens of perception and makes one to really appreciate the next persons frame of reference in every communication encounter.

Much of the entropy we see in humanistic settings can be relegated to the backdrop on the instrumentality of empathy. Empathy in this context is both cognitive and emotional being that the propulsion is to take into consideration the next persons idiosyncrasies. Having empathy increases the likelihood of helping others and showing compassion. Interpersonal engagements lose their essence in the absence of empathy after all it is hard to relate to others without a clear understanding of their feelings. The peace the world desperately needs can best be delivered at the altar of empathy.

2. Stretching the frontiers of ethics in public relations:

The concept of ethics in public relations practice seems to be fluid hence the horde of misconceptualizations. Such misconceptualizations include spin, white washing, packaging etc. Practitioners can no longer

pretend that all is well seeing that even their very truth is often taken with a pinch of salt. Ethics guide behaviour and uphold value. The public relations ethics of integrity, honesty, trustworthiness and transparency appear to be mere figments without necessarily having a bite. This accounts for the infractions often encountered in host community engagements. If sound ethical considerations are incorporated into the day to day practice of PR then misunderstanding will naturally fade away. It is obvious that trust cannot be sustained if ethical values have not been internalized. Since the goal of public relations is to build rapport and goodwill upholding ethical considerations will naturally make it a reality. Ethics in public relations should not just be vocalized as a nursery rhyme but integrated into day to day practice. By so doing, integrity is assured and rapport guaranteed.

3. **Upscaling practice:** Public relations is a dynamic field and as such requires constant up scaling by practitioners. This means that dynamism in the field of research has to be internalized, dynamism in message evaluations must be assimilated as well. Practice in the light of this discourse must square with the realities of the time. Information giving is out and information seeking is the way to go. For community engagements, needs assessment is key. The PR practitioner in present times must not only learn to multi-task but must also know a bit about everything. Changes can only bring dislocations when proper adaptations are not made. Not

adapting to changes occasions entropy. There is therefore need to upscale practice so as to counter entropy in the system. We have entered the era of information technology and public relations practice is at its best when it is complemented by software and hardware configurations. This is therefore a call for practitioners to upscale their skills in ICT while bringing to bear the deterministic propulsions of Artificial Intelligence (AI).

4. **Deconstructing PR as an organizational phenomenon:** Public relations regardless of the prefix - *public*- should no longer be seen as an organizational phenomenon. It should however be seen as every persons business because the peace/negentropy we so desperately need can become second index if we all engage the virtues of PR in our daily interpersonal engagements. In this regard public relations should be seen as a way of life among a people. If everyone is conscious of building rapport and goodwill then the colours of entropy in humanistic settings will be completely obliterated. Perennial infractions in human relationships will no longer hold sway being that there is in place the consciousness to build and sustain peace. The truth is that negentropy is not just wishful thinking but a conscious act which accords purposefulness to our interpersonal engagements. When PR virtues are duly inculcated in mans daily runs, harmony, peace, and rapport will assume a natural curve thereby putting to flight the forces of entropy.

- 5. Mainstreaming PR practice in line with symmetrical nuggets:** Much of the entropy we encounter in mans daily run of action and reaction can intricately be tied to asymmetrical PR practices. It is common knowledge that asymmetrical practices breed manipulation and imbalance. Symmetrical practices on the other hand border on openness and candour with trust as a common denominator. Symmetrical practices engender negentropy. The call therefore is for symmetrical practices to be more widespread in formal and informal settings. Dialogue is the flagship nugget of symmetrical practices and this is a sure path to reducing entropy while strengthening the roots of negentropy. It is therefore not in doubt that the world we live in going by symmetrical nuggets, will most certainly be a place of equal opportunities where peace and justice run full circle.

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