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EFFECT OF PUBLIC RELATIONS ON PRODUCTIVITY IN MANUFACTURING ORGANIZATIONS: A STUDY OF DANGOTE GROUP OF COMPANIES

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ABSTRACT

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This study investigates how public relations (PR) can improve productivity in manufacturing organizations, specifically on Dangote Group of Companies. The study analyzes the impact of public relations strategies like employee engagement, brand reputation management, and community relations and the crisis communication on the overall productivity of the organization. The study explores the internal and external communication practices of Dangote Group and the influence of these practices on operational efficiency, employee morale, and stakeholder trust through qualitative methods such as semi-structured interviews and surveys. PR brings productivity up through boosting the motivation of workers, mediating the concerns of various stakeholders, and restructuring obstacles when crises strike, say the results. In addition, the study demonstrates that PR efforts should be designed to be supportive if not tie-up the organizational goals in the day-to-day operations, stabilizing a positive environment for growth and success. The implications from this study highlight the essential influence of public relations as a strategic tool that can elevate productivity outcomes both internally and externally within manufacturing organizations, resulting in practical insights for improving PR practice within the sector.

Keywords: public relations, communication, environment, productivity, manufacturing organizations, motivation

Introduction

In the contemporary business environment, effective public relations (PR) has emerged as a strategic tool for enhancing organizational productivity, especially in large scale manufacturing firms. Public Relations is the management of an organization's relationship with its publics, both internal and external (Oparaugo, 2021). Or put in another way, it involves managing communications between an organization and its internal and external stakeholders to build mutual understanding and favorable relationships (Cutlip, Center & Broom, 2013). Public Relations operates by influencing actions, which are guided by a sense of responsibility and a careful evaluation of their potential consequences. Productivity happens to be the true measure of growth and so, PR can significantly influence employee morale, operational efficiency and corporate reputation. To this effect, guidance has been vested on the "Manufacturers Association" concerning the possible steps that are expected to boost productivity within the manufacturing subsector in Nigeria.

This study aims to enhance understanding of how public relations impacts organizational productivity, using Dangote Group as a study area. The findings may help improve productivity in manufacturing firms, especially by guiding the selection of effective public relations strategies. Much has not been done about the effect of Public Relations on productivity in terms of a manufacturing organization not to talk of within a certain organization. This synopsis seeks to examine the effects of public relations (PR) on the Dangote Group, a major player in Nigeria manufacturing sector based in Lagos. The company is used as a representative example of the manufacturing subsector. Understanding the relationship between PR and productivity is crucial, as both play a significant role in shaping how manufacturing organization's performance is assessed. Therefore, focusing on these two aspects is essential for driving improvement in productivity (Ayanda, 2018). By analyzing the actions that influenced productivity, it becomes possible to conceptualize and measure integrated productivity more effectively. A more accurate evaluation highlights the need for ongoing reassessment of both operational processes and the metrics used to measure them (Nwabuaku & Amaka, 2019). The boost in effort requires motivation actions, which are demonstrated through effective planning and efficient time management during work.

Public perception and communication strategies of an organization can either mar or improve the image of an organization.

This is based on understanding between organization and its publics. In the manufacturing sector, people have negative perception about loud noise from factories, air pollutions by big cars, effluent discharges, and industrial actions such as strikes, riots, lockouts, and fire disasters (Nwabuaku & Amaka 2019). Also, manufacturing sector in Nigeria has also faced persistent challenges including labor unrest, communication breakdowns, and low employee engagement, all of which can hinder productivity. Companies therefore need public relations department to manage perception and how to improve that perception. No organization can succeed in its objectives of improving profitability and service delivery to the satisfaction of its stakeholders without the support of the host community. This is particularly applicable to industrial organizations with a realization of the associated social cost at an alarming scale, the need for better corporate image and a positive public perception has never been higher. For industrial development, especially in Nigeria where some companies have either witnessed public protest because of fear that the companies will operate against environmental standard and against the public interest, it is necessary to examine and analyze the roles of public relations in a manner that will continue to improve mutual understanding between organizations and its public.

The scope of this study is limited to the Dangote Group of Companies, focusing on the impact of public relations on productivity within its manufacturing operations. The research will examine both internal and external PR strategies employed by the organization, analyzing their influence on employee performance, organizational efficiency, and stakeholder relationships. The study will cover a specific period during which PR activities were actively implemented, and its findings will be applicable to similar large-scale manufacturing companies within Nigeria and the broader African context.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Background

Productivity; is the ratio of output to input in the production process and is the key indicator of economic efficiency (Samuelson & Nordhaus, 2009). In manufacturing, productivity is often measured in terms output per labour hour machine efficiency. High productivity depends not just on machinery and skills but also, on workforce morale and communication-areas influenced by strong internal public relation. Manufacturing Company; it is an enterprise engaged in the mechanical, physical or chemical transformation of materials into new products (QECD, 2007).

In large-scale like Dangote a group, manufacturing operations are highly structured and invoke significant coordination across departments.

According to Heizer and Render (2014), productivity in such settings is heavily dependent on smooth communication, team work, and a shared understanding of organizational goals-functions where PR can make significant impact.

Public Relations; Public relations (PR) refers to the strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationship between organizations and their publics (Cutlip, Center & Broom, 2013). It encompasses a range of activities including; media relations, employee communication, corporate social responsibility, crisis communication and community engagement. (Grunig and Hunt (1984) identifies four models of public relations: press agency/ publicity Model, Public information model, Two - way asymmetrical model and Two-way symmetrical model is considered most effective for promoting mutual understanding and long-term engagement between organization and its stakeholders.

In the manufacturing firm, PR plays a vital role in shaping both internal perceptions among employees and external perceptions among employees and external perceptions among investors, consumers and regulatory bodies. When communication is clear and consistent, it fosters trust, transparency and loyalty, a key ingredient for a productive workforce (Wilcox & Camerron, 2012)

Researchers have increasingly recognized that non-technical factors, such as organizational culture and internal communication, play a significant role in influencing productivity (Ajayi, 2019). A motivated and informed workforce is more likely to demonstrate higher levels of efficiency and output, and PR can serve as a vehicle for motivation through strategic messaging and engagement.

Review of Past Works

There have been various studies that indicate the importance of public relations (PR) and its correlation with manufacturing organizations productivity. Samuel and Umoh (2023) explain that PR initiatives under the umbrella of strategic partnerships are key to enhancing organizational performance. For Dangote Sugar Company, good PR strategies enabled stronger partnerships that boosted productivity and operational efficiencies, all of which led to improved overall performance (Samuel & Umoh, 2023). This highlights that PR practices are not limited to managing a brand and extend to be a part of internal processes and optimizing them. Specifically, Nzeadibe (2021) discusses how the organization culture impacts the human resource management practices at Dangote Group, stating that an effective internal communication framework (a key part of PR) enhances employee engagement and productivity.

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This finding highlights that PR impacts organizational culture, contributing to an environment that enables collaboration, trust, and enhanced performance, thereby establishing a direct connection between PR and productivity outcomes.

In addition, Adeiza, Ibrahim, and Maishanu (2021) evaluate the performance of Dangote Cement Plc from the user's point of view, showing that community relations and corporate social responsibility (CSR), which are elements of PR (public relations), have a positive effect on customer satisfaction and as a result on productivity. This creates goodwill that has effects such as better market position and improved operational efficiency for the organization in the form of positive feedback from consumers and the public at large. This implies that good PR lead the PR department of Dangote Cement to execute community relations programs, aimed towards improving the stakeholder's satisfaction level. Asemah and Mariam (2023), researched the satisfaction level of Dangote Cement's community relations programs and identifying that effective Public Relation can increase the stakeholders engagement with the company as it is valuable to boost various aspects of productivity (Asemah & Mariam, 2023). Dangote, having built a good reputation through being friendly with local communities enjoys a positive public image that further correlates with its market share and subsequently its productivity. A paper by Dare (2022) investigated how different leadership styles drive performance in the Dangote Group and suggested that PR is an integral element of effective leadership. Communication by a leader through the means of PR channels often shapes organizational direction and inspires employees, ultimately leading to enhanced productivity. Those leaders who do not shy from transparent and positive communication can better and more fully align team goals to corporate objectives which will improve operational efficiency.

In the same way, Adolph (2022) explains that while multinationals such as Dangote have been exercising a type of geocentric staff recruitment policy, organizational performance also hinges upon how much of the workforce must be optimized through cross-cultural communication (somewhat referred to as PR). Global PR strategies can span these cultural gaps, improving the collaboration and performance of employees across multiple geographical regions. In fact, it plays an important role to stimulate productivity for multi-national manufacturing enterprises. Another recent article covering industrial policy and monopoly capitalism in Nigeria by Itaman and Wolf (2021) details how public relations strategies allow firms such as Dangote maneuverability at the regulatory level. Dangote is doing so by shaping favorable conditions for its business and indirectly tourist productivity by engaging with the regulators and public proactively.

Leadership and Performance in Organizations Leaders (Oluwatoyin, 2023). Whether you are a policy guru or a street-smart strategist, effective PR when allied with strong leadership, it can further optimize the decision-making process, and streamline communication flows. With this alignment of leadership with PR practices, organizations witness improved employee morale, better stakeholder engagement and overall productivity in the organization. Evidence from Dangote Group: Exploring the Impact of Tax Exemptions and Credits on Operating Cash Flows of Manufacturing Companies in Nigeria. The research highlights the ability of PR functions focused on corporate social responsibility PR and up-front commenting that leads to greater goodwill with the government and thus preferential tax policies, which are lower/cost zero or reinvested into productivity-enhancing initiatives.

Fernández-Vidal (2023), which investigates corporate diversification and vertical integration in Africa, using Dangote as a case example, illustrating its strategic use of PR to bolster its diversified business portfolio. And this is where Dangote Group's ability to remind the world of their achievements and innovations using various PR channels comes to play, strengthening its market position and boosting productivity in sectors. Iyobhebhe (2025) highlights innovation and organization competitiveness at Dangote Cement Plc and the vital role PR plays in promoting the company's innovative conventional practices to the public and industry stakeholders. This builds up a view of a future-oriented company, chutes competitiveness, and therefore growth through constant innovation and efficiency improvements.

These diverse studies produce the conclusion that public relations have a multipurpose function in maximizing productivity of manufacturing organizations. By supporting important aspects like employee engagement, stakeholder relationships and the company image towards the external world through strategic communication, PR also plays a significant role in the overall efficiency and success of the organization. Case of Dangote Group: An example of how PR Strategies can drive Performance and organizational productivity

Theoretical Framework

The study of public relations (PR) impact on manufacturing organizations and productivity. There are several theoretical frameworks (though the paper will discuss but a few) which can be used to explore the underlying mechanism of this effect.

And, one of the most important theories in public relations is called "The Excellence Theory" of Public Relations which focuses on mutual communication between an organization and its environment (stakeholders). Grunig & Grunig (2008) found that the most instrumental organizations, the ones engaging in two-way dialogue by allowing feedback to flow through to the organization and points of action, achieved the highest organizational performance. This concept implicates that specifically a PR strategy, based on mutual benefit and transparency, increases internal and external communication if effective and thereby aids to enhance productivity. This (ensuring communication is consistent, clear) helps to eliminate unnecessary misunderstandings and creates a better collaborative environment, ultimately leading to enhanced organizational efficiency.

Maybe a framework that is even more helpful than the above is "Social Exchange Theory", originally proposed in the 1960s by Blau (1964). Once forming a relationship with either an individual or organization, there is an expectation that both partners will continue to provide some element of value to each other. Within public relations, organizations enter into exchange relationships with their employees, customers, and other stakeholders. PR paves the way for gaining support, loyalty, and trust by adding value through CSR initiatives, transparent communication, and positive media coverage. On the flip side, organizations enjoy greater productivity because workers have more motivation to do well, customers have a greater chance of being loyal, and the organization is perceived positively by the public. Effective PR strategies thus not only serve to build external relationships but also keep employees motivated and boost morale — thereby driving productivity — across the board of the Dangote Group.

Last but not the least is Situational Leadership Theory (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969) states that leadership must follow the situation. Effective PR comes in to help such leaders by allowing them to communicate better with their various constituents. On the other hand, in a system as dynamic as Dangote Group, leaders must adjust their communication style to what is best for the organization and its stakeholders. Whether that's reassuring employees when the company is going through changes or investors when the market is falling, PR can help leaders talk with confidence and clear messaging that can help boost morale among employees and build confidence among stakeholders, two elements needed for productivity to increase. These theories explain how public relations can ultimately benefit the productivity of an organization. Explaining PR practices through these theories helps us gain insights into how communication strategies influence not only the public perception of an organization but also shape organizational culture, employee engagement, and its functionality overall.

Methodology.

The methodology for this study adopts a qualitative research approach, utilizing a case study design focused on Dangote Group of Companies. Data is collected through semi-structured interviews with key personnel in the public relations, human resources, and production departments of Dangote Group, as well as surveys distributed to employees and stakeholders. Additionally, secondary data is gathered from corporate reports, industry publications, and relevant academic literature. This approach enables the exploration of the impact of public relations on productivity from both the organizational and employee perspectives, providing a comprehensive understanding of how PR practices influence operational performance. Data is analyzed thematically to identify key patterns and insights that address the research questions.

4. Findings and Analysis

Table 1: Public Relations Strategies at Dangote Group (PR Strategies and Impacts)

PR Strategy	Description	Purpose	Target Audience	Channels Used
Community Relations Programs	Engagement through CSR activities, supporting local communities.	Enhance company image, foster goodwill.	Local communities, government	Social media, local events, press releases
Employee Engagement Programs	Internal communications to engage employees through feedback and events.	Improve morale, productivity, and loyalty.	Employees	Newsletters, internal communication, town halls
Brand Reputation Management	Managing public image through strategic media relations.	Strengthen brand trust and visibility.	General public, media	Media outlets, public statements, events
Crisis Communication	Handling negative publicity or crises	Minimize damage to	Media, stakeholders,	Press conferences, social

	with transparent communication.	brand and operations.	employees	media, press releases
Government Relations	Regular communication and collaboration with government bodies.	Secure favorable policies, enhance reputation.	Government, regulatory bodies	Direct communication, meetings, reports

Source: Adapted from various Dangote Group corporate communications and PR reports.

Interpretations:

- Community Relations Programs aim to enhance the local perception of Dangote Group by investing in community development, which boosts local loyalty and public relations.
- Employee Engagement Programs improve internal productivity by making employees feel valued, leading to better organizational outcomes.
- Brand Reputation Management strengthens the public trust in the company, contributing to its long-term success and competitiveness in the market.
- Crisis Communication** helps mitigate the negative effects of unforeseen circumstances, protecting the company's brand and allowing operations to continue with minimal disruptions.
- Government Relations** ensures that Dangote maintains favorable business conditions through proactive communication with regulatory bodies, which can directly impact production efficiency and market positioning.

Table 2: The Impact of PR on Productivity at Dangote Group

Impact Area	Description	Impact on Productivity	Evidence/Outcome	PR Strategy Contributing to Impact
Employee Motivation	Effective internal communication	Increases efficiency,	Higher employee morale and lower	Employee Engagement

	has boosted employee engagement.	enhances job satisfaction.	turnover rates.	Programs
Stakeholder Trust	Transparent communication with stakeholders fosters trust.	Facilitates smoother operations, reduces friction.	Stronger partnerships with suppliers and customers.	Community Relations, Government Relations
Public Perception	Positive brand image in the public eye due to consistent PR efforts.	Attracts more customers and improves market share.	Increased sales and consumer loyalty.	Brand Reputation Management
Crisis Management	Effective crisis communication minimizes damage to company reputation.	Helps maintain operations during crises.	Quick recovery and continued production during crises.	Crisis Communication
Market Positioning	PR has helped position Dangote as a leader in the industry.	Competitive advantage leading to increased market share.	Recognition as a trusted brand.	Brand Reputation Management, Government Relations

Source: Data adapted from Dangote Group's corporate communications and public relations strategies.

Interpretations:

- i. Employee Motivation driven by effective internal PR contributes to enhanced productivity by fostering a positive work environment and reducing turnover.

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- ii. Stakeholder Trust ensures the smooth functioning of operations, as stakeholders are more likely to cooperate when they trust the company, reducing delays and inefficiencies.
- iii. Public Perception has a direct impact on Dangote's market performance, with positive public relations leading to higher customer retention and increased demand for products.
- iv. Crisis Management minimizes disruptions during challenging times, ensuring that operations continue as usual, which maintains productivity even in difficult circumstances.
- v. Market Positioning boosts Dangote's competitiveness, enabling the company to maintain a dominant position in the market and continuously improve its productivity.

Discussions and Findings

The Public Relations Practice at Dangote Group significantly influences the organizational productivity. One of the main take-aways is that employee engagement programs, which are facilitated through effective internal communication, greatly improve employee morale, job satisfaction, and overall performance. A well-valued and well-informed employee is more likely to want to do his work sincerely, which adds to the overall productivity of the company. This finding is in agreement with prior research in the communications field, indicating that communicating to the employee is the root to keep engagement level high, eventually leading to the employee being such part of the organization that productivity has no bounds (Grunig & Grunig, 2018). One more major study finding is its influence on Dangote Group market performance from brand reputation management. The case highlights the importance of effective communication and media relations in reputation management, as the company used open and transparent communication with customers and media to foster a positive image and maintain consumer trust. Consequently, higher market demand for company products leads to higher production levels in manufacturing plants. Having good relationships with its internal stakeholders and external stakeholders allows Dangote Group to create a stable business environment, resulting in increased operational efficiency and sustainable growth. Finally, crisis communication became an essential tactic for reducing the impact of disruptions and sustaining productivity in difficult times. With effective communication in a time of crisis, the Dangote group's ravages were quickly overcome, as the organization moved swiftly to avoid damaging productivity. Data shows the company's crisis management and perception management ensures operations still continue while competition dies. The researchers urge organizations not to oversee their public relations strategies as external-facing tools, but as important elements internally,

providing organizational stability at a time when managers are being called upon to do more with less.

Conclusion

PR plans have a very superior and transverse impact or productivity on Dangote Group. Key points of PR are external influencing factors but also internal influencing factors making sure that the Dangote group of companies retains its competitive edge in the manufacturing industry as well as gets the most from its internal operations, employee experience, brand health management and crisis communication are three crucial activities. Data from Dangote Group clearly indicates that PR activities are strongly tied to business performance results. The prioritization of these aspects has fueled productivity across the board, from internal communications, to creating trust with stakeholders to managing the company's public image. Additionally, crisis management strategies have enabled the company to handle obstacles without sacrificing operational effectiveness. The findings emphasize a greater need to inculcate PR into the strategic fabric of the organization to augment its organic growth and sustainability. Key among the study was the recommendation for manufacturing organizations, with Dangote Group at the helm, to embrace public relations as a sine qua non for productivity enhancement as a competitive strategy. With a dynamic market environment influencing the financial viability of enterprises across the board, those who invest in a strong PR strategy have a much higher chance of making their operations both successful as well as sustainable long-term. And so public relations must be regarded as an integral part of an organization's strategy to attain optimal efficiency.

Recommendation

This study recommends that the Dangote Group play a vital role in the provision of public relations with a special focus on the provision of IPR and employee engagement initiatives. An even stronger internal communication culture will make everyone happy, increasing job satisfaction and morale which will translate into higher productivity levels. For instance, if there will be training for managers and supervisors, it would be a great idea if it will also include effective communication techniques so that employee relations will also benefit from this, making certain that the company's internal PR strategies are in line with the company's goals.

In addition, Dangote Group can work with strategies to build their digital PR that can be more effective compared to traditional media. In an era of digital

and social engagement, a brand promotion course can be a catalyst for leveraging online media to achieve desired results such as enhanced brand visibility, improved engagement, and stronger customer relationships. Also, insights on public perceptions gained from monitoring social media and mentions on discussion sites can offer the company valuable insights and enable it to respond and steer the company in the direction of a positive brand image. Finally, Dangote Group should create a more extensive roadmap for crisis communication that incorporates warning, training and immediate response plans. Although the company has handled crises well previously, formalizing a robust crisis communication plan will better equip the company to manage crises efficiently in the future. This can safeguard both its reputation and productivity in unexpected situations so that the internal functioning is not massively affected.

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