

Budgeting as the Backbone of Effective Media Relations Planning and Strategy

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ABSTRACT

Budgeting is seen by Media Relations Practitioners as the backbone of effective media relations. It is a process of creating a strategic plan and not the exact budget in itself and media relations practitioners must make a good strategic plan which must constantly be updated through consistent research on the media in order to be able to create a realistic and successful Media Relations Planning. This paper presents the process of formulating realistic public relations to successfully prosecute a successful public relations plan. Employing contextual analysis and relying largely on secondary data, the paper explores the concept of budgeting and media relations as well as the importance of media relations branch to public relations whose success depend largely on proper budgeting. The article is anchored in the system to explain the relevance of media relations in the attainment of the overall goals of corporate organizations. The paper concludes that budgeting is very important in the execution of any media relations planning or strategy because it helps in determining the potential and most likely the costs of all resources needed in the media planning process before the actual execution.

Keywords: Budgeting, Media Relations, Media Planning, Media Relations Budgeting Costing.

INTRODUCTION

There are various branches of public relations, among which include; community relations; employee relations; government relations; investor relations; amongst others. Media relations is that branch of public relations which constantly seeks to create, ensure, and maintain cordial relationships between an organization and the media, (Lattimore D., Baskin O., Heiman S., Toth E., 2009 & Babaleye, 2013). This is very important because the media is so strong in the extent of the impact it makes on the members of the society among who constitute the publics' of an organisation such that any information passed to these publics through the media can either make or mar the image of an organisation, (Babaleye, 2013).

The need to study the media and find out how to relate to and create a good image for an organisation through the media is what media relations are all about, (National Open University of Nigeria [NOUN], 2014 & Babaleye, 2013). In creating a mutually beneficial relationship with the media, there is a need for careful planning and this involves the concept of budgeting

which ensures that all logistics needed to constantly be in contact with the media are clearly identified and defined, (NOUN, 2014). This concept of planning and budgeting for the media is what this paper attempts to address.

The Concept of Budgeting

Estimating costs, revenues, and resources over a specified period in a way that reflects a future reading of financial conditions and goals depicts what a budget entails, (Business Dictionary, 2016). In MyMoneyCoach (2016) "Budgeting is the process of creating a plan on how to spend your money; this spending plan is called a budget, and creating this spending plan allows you to determine in advance whether you will have enough money to do the things you need to do or would like to do." In other words, budgeting is very important because of an individual, group of people, organisation, and even a country, are able to identify what they need or wish to do and to

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determine a number of funds it could cost them to achieve these needs or wishes.

Furthermore, the process of estimating this cost would be budgeting while the estimated cost can be said to be the budget. For instance, the budgeting process could be when a public relations practitioner identifies that there is need to organise a press conference due to a current crisis involving his organisation and then determines and calculates the amount of money it would cost to get both human and material resources ready for the press conference, but a budget may now be said to exist when the necessary resource and financial estimate for the realisation of the press conference have been calculated, fine-tuned, determined, completed, and approved by the Chief Executive Officer (C.E.O) of the organisation.

It is noted in My Money Coach (2016) that "Budgeting is simply balancing your expenses with your income, because if they don't balance and you spend more than you make, you will have a problem, and many people don't realize that they spend more than they earn and slowly sink deeper into debt every year." In order for an individual to refrain from being constantly in debt or find a way out of a current debt situation, it would be wise to create and adhere to a budget or spending strategy. (My Money Coach, 2016). Jefkins (1972) cited in NOUN (2014) agrees that "Budgeting is an essential in the planning of media relations activities because it is a necessity for the effective and economic accomplishment of a media relations task as well as the profitable engagement of consultants."

Budget is therefore seen by Nwanwene (1993) cited in NOUN (2014) as a "forecast of expenses which are to be expended in the administration of media relations programme/activities including the coordination and execution of such programme/activities." Hence, budgeting is very important because it can help not just individuals, but organisations as well as even countries in the world to always have money for the things they need because these things have been planned for and determined as achievable in the budget. Additionally, overspending and wastage of funds and resources could be avoided through proper budgeting.

The Concept of Media Relations

Media relations as a branch of public relation is indeed unique in itself, it involves using various traditional, outdoor, as well as new media to communicate to the public. Traditional media would be television; radio; newspaper; and magazine, outdoor media includes leaflets; posters; billboards; neon light; vehicles-in-transit; amongst others, while the new media include the Internet and world wide web (www) alongside social media outlets like Facebook; Twitter; Skype; YouTube; Linked-in; Instagram; amongst others. In order to understand how to interact with the public using these various media, there is a need to study them so as to understand the logistics involved in utilizing them. Tools for media relations generally include press release; press conference; media tour; media parley; press/information kit; interviews; personality broadcast; sponsorship; exclusive story; amongst others, (NOUN, 2014 & Babaleye, 2013). Media publications in media relations for both internal and external publics include: newsletters; supplementary publications (pamphlets, brochures, manuals and books); letters; inserts and enclosures; reprinted speeches; the grapevine; meetings; teleconferencing; Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV); Video film and slide presentations; displays and exhibits; amongst others, (NOUN, 2014).

Indeed, it's important to know for instance that in relating with journalists who gather, package, and report news, the media relations specialist should note that first and foremost, they take their information gathering and news reporting function to the society very seriously, (Lattimore et al., 2009). So there is a need to understand this among other things in the process of creating a link between the media and the organization. In other words, there is always need for research in media relations in order to have a know-how on how to plan effectively. According to Johnston (2016):

Media relations is one of the most tangible and visible areas of public relations practice. It requires specialised skills, expertise about the media and its practices, and an understanding of current affairs and issues. It uses the practical tools of the media release, media conference, and media kits, combined with management skills of advising about best practice within an organisation, and it is based on open relationships with journalists and other media professionals.

Johnston (2016) explains further that media relations provides a practical and thorough introduction to working with the media and that successful media relation is about clever, creative communication and respectful, professional relationships based on thorough ethical practice because it thrives on ways by which developing essential skills in working with the media can be made visible. The following definition by Nkwocha (1999) cited in NOUN (2014) likewise pinpoints the function of media relations in an organisation by stating that:

Media relations involve establishing and sustaining cordial relationships between an organisation and media houses/practitioners so as to ensure that organisations get sufficient and positive coverage of their products, services, and activities; and to explain an organisation's policies and actions to mass media practitioners particularly in crisis situations.

The media relations practitioner could be described as someone who always has his work cut out for him because he is expected to be abreast of current information about the media itself alongside its practitioners. Trending information circulating to the public through the media about his organisation shouldn't go unaware by him and he should even try to track any news on the organisation that he gives to the media be it through news releases, conferences, interviews, or any other means in order to evaluate the level of accuracy at which such information is presented to the publics through the media so as to quickly react in case of any misinformation. Media relations may thus be defined as the pursuance of mutually beneficial relationship between the organisation and the media, (Lattimore et al., 2009; NOUN, 2014; Babaleye; 2013).

Relationship between Media Relations Branch and Public Relations

The fact that media relations is a branch or unit of public relations is evidence of the relationship between media

relations and public relations (Lattimore et al., 2009 & NOUN, 2014). No wonder Lattimore et al (2009) argues that "Sophisticated media relations and publicity work form the backbone for public relations practice." Hence, the creation and maintenance of good rapport with the media continue to be symbols of public relations practice, (Lattimore et al, 2009). Therefore, most understanding of effective media relations work begins with a good knowledge of the relationship between journalists and public relations practitioners and this is another reflection of the relationship between media relations and public relations, (Lattimore et al, 2009).

Public relations is defined by Lattimore et al. (2009) as a "leadership and management function that helps in the achievement of organisational objectives, define philosophy, and facilitate organisational change." Public relations practitioners are specialists in the field of public relations and the success of the field may be attributed to them. Public relations specialists tend to work either as groups of independent specialists in a public relations firm or as groups of specialists in the public relations department of an organisation, either way; they can be said to exist in order to assist in the managerial function of an organisation where mutual understanding between an organisation and its various publics are improved upon for the smooth operation of the organisation, (Lattimore et al., 2009 & NOUN, 2014). Media relations practitioners are examples of specialists in public relations field, (Lattimore et al., 2009 & NOUN, 2014).

The various publics of public relations would include both internal for instance, stakeholders; staff; amongst others and external publics, for instance, community inhabitants; government; journalists; amongst others, (Lattimore et al., 2009; NOUN, 2011; Babaleye, 2013). In order for any organisation to run successfully, it needs the cooperation of all its publics both internal and external. This is because the activities of these publics has the ability to affect the operation of the organisation one way or the other and can be negative or positive depending on the relationship between both parties. For example, the operation of an oil company tends to have an adverse effect on its community people within which it operates because of the harmful effect of inhaling the oil produce it manufactures can have on human health; plus its ability to create environmental pollution amongst others.

Such organisation would need to have a strong corporate social responsibility policy where it compensates the community for putting up with all these, for instance, Shell, an oil company can be said to serve as a good example here because Shell offers scholarships for Niger Delta inhabitants because it drills oil from the oil-rich State and this contributes to environmental pollution in the State. Failure of such organisations as these to compensate their community could attract crisis where the community revolt and this crisis will also attract the organisation's other publics like journalists and government. Journalists will cover and give a report on the crisis and the government can because of the crisis create a new policy that will specifically affect the organisation.

All these can create serious problems for the organisation such that the smooth running of the organisation will be affected and hence; its objectives and aims may not be fully achieved. Another scenario is that profit rate could decrease as a result of the crisis and this can further affect some other publics of the organisation such as the staffs and investors. In a situation where the staffs' salary is no longer constant due to abridged organisational profit, staffs who are not loyal can resign; investors can also take a break because of lack of faith in the continued success of the operations of the organisation. In other words, just a little crisis can lead to a complete

breakdown of the organisation. Hence, the need for public relations practitioners to ensure a good link and mutually beneficial relationship between the organisation and its various publics without whom it cannot successfully operate.

Journalists happen to be one of those publics who could be said to have the capacity to aid in the smooth operation of the organisation and in order to interact with them, there is a need to understand how to go about it. This is why every organisation needs media relations specialists whose expertise revolves around good media relations. Outdoor and new media are useful means of communication but the traditional media cannot be ignored which is why there is a need to develop a good relationship with journalists. For instance, during any crisis situation involving an organisation; there is always need for a press conference and a successful press conference involves the presence of journalists, for example, the Dana Airline crisis in Nigeria where several people lost their lives when one of the Company's planes crashed. The media relations specialist knows when and how to effectively use the outdoors and new media of communication and when to use the traditional media, as well as when to combine the utilization of the various media.

In a similar vein, Lattimore et al, (2009) agrees to this while noting that "as the public relations director for a multinational corporation, if you find yourself at the focus of a national news story as a result of blogs by members of an environmental group in a variety of sites criticizing your corporation's handling of the cleanup of a toxic waste spill at one of your major plants in the Northeast, how do you respond? Is it directly to the media, through blogs, or through these and other means?" Of course, this can be said to be a good time to put the media relations specialist in the public relations department of the multinational corporation to good work.

Hence, the importance of media relations and consequent presence of media relations specialists in any organisation cannot be overemphasised. Even the efficiency of public relations as a field of life as previously noted by Lattimore et al. (2009) could be said to revolve around effective media relations because majority of public relations activity involves publicity and in order for publicity to work, various media have to be utilised holistically, which according to Babaleye (2013) is reflective of the use of the Integrated Marketing Communication (I.M.C.) concept. Moreover, news release as a tool of public relations goes through the media, the newsletter is a medium, and even billboards used to promote an individual is also a medium. Therefore, a solid relationship can be said to exist between public relations as an umbrella field and media relations as a cogent branch in the field of public relations.

Strategic Planning in Media Relations

In order to successfully create an effective media relations budget, you need to have a good media relations plan in process, it is important to strategize in media relations. Eleven steps to media planning success, according to Schwartz (2016) are as follows:

Estimate what you can invest in building your media relations program; time and budget: This will enable the media relations specialist to identify these programs and plan appropriate time, money, and resources needed to get them started, (Schwartz, 2016). For instance, creating and making a press kit available would be suitable for press conferences as it would give more comprehensive information on your organisation. Hence, a time has been established and funds

and resources needed to create these press kits needs to be estimated and placed in the budget.

Set goals: That is, determining your main program goals and how media relations can be used to achieve these goals, (Schwartz, 2016). For instance, one of your goals could be to create awareness of one of your company's products and possibly influence people's opinion of it.

Define realistic objectives, both output, and outcome: These realistic objectives can help serve as measures by which the media relations specialist can evaluate the success of his media relations plan, (Schwartz, 2016). For instance, the media relations specialist can try to envision what he hopes his media relations effort will generate.

Identify three or less primary target audiences: The media relations specialist should try to define each group's connection to each issue or story, what is important to them, and what they tend to read, watch, and listen to, (Schwartz, 2016). It is important to define your audience because this can help in the crafting of your key messages and identification of potential media through which you can effectively reach them.

Tell your story, pinpoint the key messages you're trying to communicate: This can be achieved by crafting your message of intent using a maximum of 25-word statement that can get the idea across alongside supporting messages of one to two sentences each, (Schwartz, 2016). It is, however, important to ensure the messages cuts across all communications because mixed messages can cause confusion, hence; consistency is of great value in the messages you pass across, your exact intention should consistently reflect in all of these messages, (Schwartz, 2016).

Build your media database/press list but include no more than 10 to 15 journalists: That is, the media relations specialist should identify key media which should include bloggers and alongside other online writers as well as the traditional media, (Schwartz, 2016). Also, the media relations specialist should track information on reporters who contact or cover his/her organisation as a way of staying abreast of issues and discussions on the organisation within the society. In order to do this, he can search for related stories through Google search engine noting identified sources and journalists' names, he can also exchange media contact lists with colleagues in the organisation, as well as read newspapers, magazines, watch and listen to television and radio respectively, (Schwartz, 2016).

Read, watch and listen to these media over a period of one month or more depending on schedule: This is where research comes into focus as this will keep the media relations specialist current on all things media as well as help him to pinpoint the major media that currently uncovers stories involving his/her organisation, (Schwartz, 2016).

Identify the best way to get journalists to cover your story: The media relations specialist should determine the most suitable way to get journalists to cover stories on their organisations and this could be either through news releases, press kits, newsletters, media tour, personal visits to media outlet, as well as on-air interviews, or other means, (Schwartz, 2016). However, each approach has its own advantages and disadvantages, but it is left to the media relations specialist to identify these strengths and weaknesses.

Craft your timetable: As Schwartz (2016) explained, in order to do this, consider external events, editorial calendars and date-based news hooks or clippings, (Schwartz, 2016). Additionally, the media relations specialist should chronologically organize key media outreach efforts through prioritizing and be realistic about what you can or can't accomplish, (Schwartz, 2016).

Define the work plan, roles and responsibilities: In other words, as a media relations specialist, it is important to keep in mind that everyone on your staff and your external supporters are communicators so you can involve everyone in your planning process to assist by giving them whatever information you hope they can help spread, (Schwartz, 2016). Additionally, it is important that the staff is carried along in the plan; newsletter and internal memo are good means by which they can be carried along because there is no real way of telling who in the organisation the journalist would want to have a conversation with, (Schwartz, 2016).

Continue to track; measure and fine-tune your plans: In other words, strategic planning in media relations should always be an ongoing process for the media relations specialist; it is a forever thing as one thing that would seem to be constant in life is change. So it's important to keep abreast of latest trends on everything media and evaluate the success of his initial plans as this could help the media relations specialist to incorporate new things in his media relations plan which can help in strengthening the success of his organisation's objectives.

Budgeting for Media Relations

It could be said that budgeting has been indeed very important not just for individuals but organisations as well. Budgeting in media relations is one of the many functions of the media relations specialist of any organisation and it requires strategic thinking. Budgeting will keep the media relations specialist well-informed on all things media as it will require research on various media and brainstorm on making possible set goals on how to establish a relationship with the media, the appropriate media to use for communication to the organisation's publics, as well as the most suitable format by which information can be communicated to the media in order to reach these various publics. As Nikolich (2016) asserted, "even the smallest Public Relations programs should include budget at least 25 hours per month budget for basic media relations, larger companies often budget hundreds of hours per month for this activity." He goes further to note that:

A good rule of thumb for a media relations specialist is to add up the universe of publications and assign an equal number of hours for media relations activities, for example; if your company needs to be in regular contact with 100 key reporters, reviewers and analysts, consider budgeting approximately 100 hours per month.

Essentially, as observed by Nikolich, (2016) "media relations budget should include such tasks as: monitoring editorial calendars; pitching stories to editors; following up on press releases; maintaining ongoing contact with key industry analysts; placing all feature articles and case studies; tracking product reviews and interview opportunities; and monitoring key publications, media outlets and online media to create

feature placement opportunities, and achieving all these cannot but come at a cost in terms of funds needed to attaining them, but with careful planning; budgeting for and carrying out these actions is quite achievable." A well-articulated budget according to NOUN, (2014) establishes "definite cost objectives for proper accounting practicality with little or no waste in programme elements," which is why Nwodu (2007) cited in NOUN (2014) argues that "budgeting aims at fixing specific costs to specific items."

The purview of any budget is largely dependent on the nature of programme as well as the specific items being budgeted for. However, Jefkins, (1972) cited in NOUN, (2014) identifies four purviews of budgeting in media relations practice as: Labour covering salaries (for both management and staff) and honorarium for consultants as well as other hired staff; Office overhead covering payment for rents and rates, telecommunications and insurance services, power supply and client liaison; Material cost involving stationeries, postages, photographs, printed matter, visual aids, exhibition stand, alternative power supply, vehicle and sundry material needs; and Miscellaneous which covers out-of-pocket expenses by staff members while carrying out official duties.

Miscellaneous expenses according to Nwodu, (2007) cited in NOUN, (2014) include unbudgeted but necessary transport fares, hotel bills, and entertainment allowance. Advancing a similar view, NOUN, (2014) explains that it is unfortunate that some unprincipled staff members hide under miscellaneous expenses to defraud their organisations, and this has led most management of organisations particularly in developing nations; to become indisposed to miscellaneous expenses, but a lot of them, however, moderate the negative effects of miscellaneous expenses by spelling out fix cost for most of the things that should constitute miscellaneous. Nwodu (2007) cited in NOUN (2014) summarises this common practice now in the following words:

The in-thing now is to fix a different transport, hotel and daily saving allowances (DSA) for different staff and consultants based on their varying official cadre or status and possibly the distance between where they work and where the programme will take place.

There is no significant difference between budgeting in media relations and other forms of budgeting, what would make it seem different is the area of specific things to be budgeted for in media relations, the structure is basically the same with those of other forms of budgeting, (NOUN, 2014). The format of presentation of the media relations budget would appear to be the structure, and NOUN, (2014) sees the format of a good budget as usually presented in a table which clearly indicate the serial number of specific items budgeted for; the quantity of the specific item needed; brief description of the item budgeted for; as well as the unit and total cost of each item budgeted for. Like any other budget, a typical media relations budget should encompass the following features as highlighted by Nwodu, (2007) cited in NOUN, (2014): Title of the budget; Item serial number; Quantity of item needed where necessary; Item name/description; Rationale for budgeting the item, where necessary; Unit cost of each item budgeted; Total cost of the items budgeted; and Total cost for all the items budgeted. Emphasizing the importance of budget, Johnston, (2016) explains that just as nothing goes for free, so also effective media relations does not come cheaply and an adequate budget is essential to achieving optimal results which will help the organisation to benefit and get maximum returns

from its spending, therefore; whether the media relations unit is given a particular budget to work with or asked to submit a proposal, a reasonable, reliable and achievable cost in the form of budget should be made.

Johnston, (2016) notes that a realistic budget becomes a lot easier to craft when the objective of the programme, the audience, message, channels of communication and activities are clearly identified, and a realistic plan of action must be presented with the cost of each activity, which would also mean that the need to maintain, increase or decrease the budget should be related to the current financial position or trend and projects of the organisation. He posits that the major areas that generate costs in media relations include: prints and production; exhibition; workshops and seminars; media briefings and conferences; advertising; transportation; sponsorship; supplements; and media coverage. According to Johnston, (2016) "most activities can have fixed costs of expenses, including taxes and services but a mandatory contingency not exceeding 15% of total cost must be added for any unexpected eventualities and this is mostly necessary because there is a clear distinction between direct cost and indirect cost as for instance, a hall booked for an hour for press briefing may extend to three or more hours, while an entertainment provision for the briefing of a number of journalists may witness additional attendance of some of them coming with their crews."

It is worthy of note that estimated budget by an in-house public relations department should somewhat differ from that of hired consultants' in public relations agencies which are expected because in-house public relations departments would overlook expenses on salaries and equipment as this may already have been provided them as staffs of the organisation, but effective budgeting plan should always seek to address the publics, media, message, problems, objective, and anticipated result, there should also be a time frame for activities in the budget, (Johnston, 2016). Importance of in-house media relations practitioners as posted by Johnston, (2016) reflects in the handling of some programmes by the in-house media relations practitioners as some programmes are sometimes better handled by them rather than by public relations agencies or Media Independent professionals. This is because, while hiring them may incur a consultancy fee and hiring of equipment, the in-house may only request for cost of maintenance of such equipment where available, but it is however expected that any well-equipped in-house media relations division should have such facilities as video, photo camera, public address system, television and video machine for viewing and editing, computer, Telephone/Fax machine, E-mail, and other relevant tools, (Johnston, 2016). In other words, consultants may need to charge for the hiring or the use of such equipment which may constitute an additional burden to an ill-equipped media relations unit.

Consultancy fees according to Johnston, (2016) tend to vary dependent on the reputation and size of the firms. Hence, consultancy charges could be hourly for executive time, monthly or yearly retainer ship may also be charged for a programme that would have to run for a year, some specific programmes did on an ad-hoc basis may also attract special fees depending on the bulk of work covered, (Johnston, 2016). However, be it in-house or consultancy, an acceptable and accountable mechanism should be put in place to monitor cost-effectiveness of the programme which may allow adjustment for the overall programme success, to achieve this; an intelligent resource may be allocated by the management to implement the media relations specialist advice. Specifically for a media campaign, considerations for the budget by

consultants according to Johnston, (2016) include advisory fees charged usually after the firm accepts the service; the consultants may charge the expenses to cover the days or hours of attending meetings, its research, and submission of the report. Another area considered as explained by Johnston, (2016) involves the implementation of the plan; even though some in-house staff may take over in this stage, the consultants may still be charged with the responsibility of implementing the plan using their recommendations in the report submitted as a kind of roadmap.

Johnston, (2016) explains that the operational costs for major aspects of the programmes should be stated and carried out and it may include core media relations activities like the issuance of the press release, media tour, photography, and the use of equipment (fax, telephone, information technology and courier services). The evaluation level is also important to both consultants and in-house department in the light that it is a stage which allows them to monitor the success of the programme and effectively achieving this involves carrying out secretarial assignments such as opening a file for press clips and sending media reviews to clients, (Johnston, 2016). The budgets for all the activities above according to Johnston, (2016) are measured on man-hours or on a daily basis. In emphasizing this point, Johnston, (2016) provides a typical media relations annual budget as shown below:

cost value	Press Release	3 x 12month	x
cost value	Feature Articles	2 x 12month	x cost value
cost value	Press Briefing	2 x 4quarters	x
cost value	Photo albums	2 x 4quarters	x
cost value	Video Recording	2 x 4quarters	x cost value
cost value	In-house publication	1 x 4quarters	x
cost value	Meetings	1x 12month	x
	Reports	1 x 4quarter	x cost value
	Contingencies	10% of the total	

Source: Johnston (2016)

Budget Breakdown

Publications

a. Monthly Bulletin	Unit Cost x 100 copies x12month
=	
b. Quarterly Magazine	Unit Cost x 100copie x 4quarters =
c. Hand book	Unit Cost x 1000copies x 1year =
d. Seasonal Cards	Unit Cost x 100copies x 4seasons
=	
	Subtotal=

Source: Johnston (2016)

Corporate Items

a. Pocket Diary	Unit Cost X 100copies x
1year	=
b. Executive Diary	Unit Cost X 100copies x
1year	=
c. Calendars	Unit Cost X 100copies x
1year	=
d. Address Book	Unit Cost X 100copies x
1year	=

Subtotal =
Source: Johnston (2016)

Media Activities

a. Media Chats/Courtesy calls	Gen.
Expenses X 12month	=
b. Press Conferences	Gen.
Expenses X 2annually	=
c. Research/Publication of Articles	Gen. Expenses
X 12month	=
d. Video Coverage(editing/dubbing)	Gen. Expenses
X 12month	=
e. Photo Coverage Album /Media	Gen. Expenses
X 12month	=
f. Entertainment/Media Reception	Gen. Expenses
X 12month	=
	Subtotal=

Source: Johnston (2016)

Equipment

a. Procurement of Media Equipment	=
b. Consumables (Cassettes, Films, Albums, Inks etc.)	=
c. Maintenance & Services of Media Equipment	=
	Subtotal =

Source: Johnston (2016)

Advertisements/Supplements

a. Newspaper Adverts/supplements	Rate X Pages
X 12month	=
b. Electronic Media Commercial	Rate x Slot
X12months	=
	Subtotal =

Source: Johnston (2016)

Information Technology (IT)

a. Web Site Development	=
b. Email Installation/Internet Connection	=
c. Web Hosting	=
d. Domain Name Registration	=
e. Internet Usage Training	=
f. Technical Support/ Maintenance	=
	Subtotal

Source: Johnston (2016)

Human Resources Management

a. Advance Training in Financial Public Relations & Modern Media Techniques	=
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b. Professional Seminars, Conferences & Workshops in media management

=

c. Annual Dues & Membership of Professional bodies, i.e., NIPR, NUJ, IPR etc.

=

Subtotal

=

Source: Johnston (2016)

Contingency

Miscellaneous/ Incidental Expenses 10% of the Total

=

GRAND TOTAL

=

Source: Johnston (2016)

Johnston, (2016) opine that the cost value may come in different forms and summarises that it may be the cost of “a single or combination of production cost, travel expenses, hotel accommodation, refreshments, man-hour and unit price of items and materials to be used, but some activities may be undertaken as often as required on a daily, weekly, fortnightly, monthly, quarterly, biannually, or/and yearly basis, however; it should be noted that in order to convince the client in understanding the significant of the programme, technical jargons should be avoided, and to disclose some technicalities wherever necessary, it should be attached as appendixes and or annexures.”

METHODOLOGY

This paper is expository in its attempt to examine budgeting in media relations and it employs contextual analysis relying largely on secondary data in the course of looking into budgeting in media relations. With the secondary data, the researcher was able to illuminate the attribute of budgeting as a tool for effective media relations planning.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The system theory as propounded by a biologist, Ludwig von Bertalanffy in 1928 serves as the theoretical framework of this paper, (Walonick, 1993). Simply put, the system theory according to Nwodu (2009) cited in NOUN (2014) states that “in a system, the whole is greater than the summation of its component parts.” This is evidence in public relations because the major goal of public relations is to ensure that all is well between an organisation and its various publics’ as this will help foster the achievement of the overall goal of the organisation. In other words, the overall aims and objectives of an organisation is greater than the aims of public relations because the ultimate aims and objectives of public relations is to help an organisation to achieve its overall aims and objectives.

System theory, according to Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff (1990) cited in NOUN (2014), is about:

A series of relationships among independent and dependent variables in which, changes in one or more variables are accompanied or followed by changes in other variables or combination of variables.

Nwodu (2009) also cited in NOUN (2014) captures the major premise of the theory where he submits that the theory postulates that:

A nexus of functional parts must come or be assembled together with each part functioning in a differential manner that complements, rather than contradicts the function or role of the other parts to the extent that a problem in one part affects the functioning of the whole which is the system.

The system is a complex concept so much that it is better to look at from the context of which it is needed or used. Hence, this paper looks at a system from the public relations perspective, and ultimately from the media relations perspective as well. The system within which these concepts operate is an organisation, in that public relations seeks to maintain a mutual understanding between an organisation and its various publics and media relations as a branch of public relations specializes in helping an organisation to understand and relate with one of these publics which is the media. All these are done in order to keep the system, that is; the organisation afloat, and this is reflective of the system theory which focuses on the assembling of the roles of the various parts within a system in order to achieve the goal of the system as a whole.

The Public Information and two-way asymmetrical models propounded by James Grunig and Todd Hunt are also found relevant to this paper, (Simpson, 2014). According to Simpson, (2014) the origin of the Public Information model can be traced back to the 20th century. It is a model which proposes a one-way communications method in public relations practice where feedback, opinion polls, and information from the publics are considered to be somewhat needed in constructing messages and news releases because the accuracy of the messages passed across by organisations is treated with utmost importance, (Simpson, 2014). To this end, the public information model is seen as relevant because even though it doesn’t see feedback from the publics as entirely needed, it agrees that there is a need for accuracy in messages passed across to the publics’ by organisations’ through media relations tools such as news releases and accuracy in information to the publics’ in any organisation can be said to be one of the major roles of media relations practitioners.

The two-way asymmetric model, on the other hand places emphasis on the importance of audience feedback more than the Public Information model. This is because feedback is seen by public relations practitioners as important in this model but the aim, however, is to influence attitudes of the publics in terms of recognition of the organisation as well as its services, ideas, or products, (Simpson, 2014). This model would, therefore seem to be relevant because it reflects the foremost roles of media relations practitioners in organisations in helping to create recognition for organisations alongside its services, ideas, or products, (Simpson, 2014). Additionally, because media relations specialists will have to make strategic plans on how to fulfill their roles to organisations and create proper budgets to fulfill same, they are expected to conduct constant research which would require appraisal of the media not only to be aware of the suitable media to use in achieving their plans but also to gain feedback regarding audiences opinions of their organisations, (Simpson, 2014). Moreover, obtaining

feedback through the media could be done through participating in discussion programmes or talk shows on the broadcast media where cogent issues as it affects the organisation is focused on and the audiences are encouraged to text-in or call in to give their opinions during the programme-air time. Programmes like these are usually paid for by the organisation which reflects the importance of planning and budgeting in media relations.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In the course of writing this paper based on secondary data, it was discovered that budgeting is the process of creating a budget and not the exact budget in itself and that media relations practitioners must make a good strategic plan which must constantly be updated through consistent research on the media in order to be able to create a realistic budget. It was also discovered that there is a close relationship between media relations and public relations not just because it is a branch of public relations but also because it helps to form the backbone for public relations activities. And for these activities to be carried out there is always a need for the media. Finally, based on samples of media budget plans in the article as revealed through the work of Johnston (2016), as explained in NOUN (2014), it was also discovered that budget structure for the media is virtually the same with every other budget structures in other fields but differs in the content it contains.

CONCLUSION

It would seem that public relations are an ongoing process, there is always need for public relations in not just an organisation but even in government. For instance, a lot of speeches read on-air by Presidents of countries, Governors of States, Senators, and so many other people in government are written by their public relations officers. Whenever they need to give a public statement, they are expected to be prepared to touch cogent areas members of the public will like to hear them talk about in their statements and are also expected to be ready to give answers to possible questions they may be asked during interviews.

In getting themselves ready for all these possibilities, their public relations officers have major roles to play, hence; the public relations practitioner should keep him/herself current at all times and this fact is especially true in the case of the media relations specialist as a public relations practitioner. He is expected to make realistic plans involving his organisation's interaction with various publics through the media and this is expected to be able to further enhance the ability of the organisation to achieve its set goals and objectives by promoting the image of the organisation, (Schwartz, 2016).

Additionally, the media relations specialist is expected to have the know-how as to the appropriate means by which he can communicate with the media and further enhance the media relations ability of his organisation, (Lattimore et al., 2009; NOUN, 2014; Babaleye, 2013). In order to achieve this, he must have a good plan in the process which can help him identify various resources needed to actualize media relations objectives of the organisation and this will help in setting a proper budget. He is expected to always fine-tune his media relations plans in order to always have realistic proactive measures in place with regards achieving the media relations objectives of his organisation and this will prepare the organisation for any crisis situation as such situations could be foreseen or plans on how to effectively handle it will have already been in place, (Schwartz, 2016; Lattimore et al., 2009;

Babaleye, 2013). Indeed, the media relations specialist plays a major role in an organisation and this implies that he should constantly make research and involve himself in strategic thoughts that can help him construct good plans which would help him to in turn create an effective budget for media relations activities of his organisation, (Schwartz, 2016).

Based on the foregoing, budgeting can be said to be quite important in the execution of any media relations planning or strategy because it can help in determining potential and most likely costs of all resources needed in the media planning process before actual execution, (Schwartz, 2016). Any efficient media relations practitioner would, therefore; probably need to take into cognisance all requirements for successful media relations practice by endeavoring to draw up a realistic budget that can encompass these requirements.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of the foregoing conclusion and findings, the following suggestions could be found useful:

- (i) Organisations management should endeavour to make necessary provisions that will accommodate expenses needed to conduct constant research on the media as it relates to their organisation by their media relations practitioners as this will help these practitioners to make strategic media planning that can offer them the road map on how to advise their management to relate with the media as well as reveal ways by which they can create mutual understanding between their organisations and the media.
- (ii) Media practitioners should always endeavor to make use of the media in a holistic manner in their constant effort to create a good image for their organisation with its various publics and this should include the use of the Internet and the social media because we are now in the technology age.
- (iii) Employing real media relations specialists in organisations and not just using media consultants in public relations agencies or Media Independent professionals all the time can help minimise costs expended for media planning in organisations.
- (iv) Media practitioners' advice on the media should be used as a guide for media relations in organisations.
- (v) Provisions should be made annually to adequately accommodate media budget of organisations and media practitioners should endeavor they are always up-to-date on the media in order to be able to create a realistic media budget.
- (vi) Media practitioners in the process of creating media budget for their organisations should try to be principled and not just use it as an opportunity to rip their organisations off because the success of their organisation is also their own success.
- (vii) Through effective auditing in organisations misappropriation of budget, funds could be minimized.

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