Tourism Marketing in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria: Advertising and Public Relations in Perspective

Dr. Sylvanus Ikechukwu Nwodo
Department of Management Sciences (Marketing Programme).
Rhema University Nigeria, Aba, Abia State

Evelyn Dasimeokuma David (Ph.D Inview)
Department of Mass Communication,
Rhema University Nigeria, Aba, Abia State.

Dr. Onwubiko N. Dike
Rhema University Nigeria, Aba Abia State,
Department of Management Sciences (Marketing Programme)

Dr. Collins C. Awaeze
Department of Mass Communication,
Rhema University Nigeria, Aba, Abia State

Abstract: *Tourism is a very complex industry because of its multi-faceted activities which together produce the 'tourist product', and also because of the various subsectors that are in themselves industries, if considered independently. Its complexity lies in the tourism promotion in its various forms directed at large number of people in various lands of different socio-economic structures, having different needs, expectations and behavior patterns. Tourism competition is constantly growing as more and more destinations seek to attract tourists and more companies and organizations become involved in highly skilled business of destination planning, transportation, accommodation and catering for the tourists. Apart from the enormous oil and gas in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, it is endowed with a lot of festivals and cultural events that are tourist attractions, which qualifies it as a tourism destination; and exploring them would add to the socio-*

economic development of the area. One of such is the Amakama wonder tree and Ibeno beach, a subset of the Niger Delta. The numerous tourism potentials it exhibits indicate that it is a money spinner if adequately explored. This paper, anchored on Public Relations model and source credibility theory, relied on library and archival sources as methods to identify and highlight the tourism components in the Akamaka wonder tree and Ibeno beach as well as suggested steps that could be taken to boost the potentials inherent as a tourism product. The study concluded that despite the human activities and disruption of nature, strict measures should be taken to protect this tourist destination for development because both local and foreign investors would be attracted to the area to invest their money. We, therefore, recommended that adequate security measures should be put in place and enhanced for potential tourists, and more money should be allocated to the culture and tourism sector in the annual budgets of the states in the region, among others.

Key words: Tourism, tourism marketing, Niger delta, advertising and public relations

INTRODUCTION

About 90% of gross domestic product in Nigeria is contributed by the Niger Delta Region but the area is generally characterized with abject poverty, lack of infrastructure, and job opportunities (Bribena, 2017). The traditional occupations of fishing, farming, and canoe carving have been destroyed because of the activities of the multinational oil and gas prospecting companies. Consequently, the teeming youth population, being the worst victims, has turned the area to a theatre of crime and criminality. However, before the advent of oil exploration and exploitation activities in the Niger Delta, with reference to Bayelsa state, the Ijaw people have used the rich cultural festivals and heritage sites with farming, fishing, and canoe carving as economic activities with visitors coming to these sites as local and international tourists to provide and guarantee socio-economic sustainability. The region comprises about 1,600 communities in nine states, namely, Abia, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo, and Rivers, with more than 20 million people. According to Ekpo (2004), the Niger Delta is a geographical area measuring about 70,000 square kilometers; it lies in the southern-most part of Nigeria, stretching from the Nigeria-Cameroun boundary in the east to the Ondo-Ogun States' boundary in the west. The region is well endowed with abundant resources that include crops (arable, vegetable, ornamentals, and tree crops); fishery (fin & shellfish in fresh, brackish & saltwater); forestry resources (Mangrove Swamp Forest, Timber and Wildlife), natural lakes, and rich mineral deposits and human resources. Enehikhuere (2008) notes that "the Niger Delta area occupies a land space of over 20,000 square kilometers. Tourism destinations are many in Bayelsa state: the bronze head museum in Opume, Oligi museum, oil and gas museum in Oloibiri, mangrove museum in Sangana beaches: Polaku, Koluama, Odi, Famgbe, Sagbama, and Agge Palm Beach to mention a few. Other tourism attractions are; the Whiteman Grave yard and the British Consulate Building in Town Brass, Akassa Light House, and Akassa slave transit camp all in Brass Local Government Area

(LGA), Major Isaac Jasper Adaka-Boro Monument in Kaima, the Oxbow Lake in Swali in Yenagoa, Oki cultural dance and Iyantoru cultural dance in Okoroba in Ogbia LGA, the Asi cultural dance in Ekeremor, the Amasinghan cultural dance in Aleibiri, the Egbelegbele cultural dance in Amassoma, Abayasa Forest Reserve in Ndoro in Ekeremor LGA, Edumanon Forest Reserve in Ogbia LGA.

Bhatia (2006) asserts that development of tourism involves interaction with the residents and the external world, creating a strong desire and opportunity for people to visit and appreciate cultural, natural and artificial places of wonder. Ebitu and Uchechukwu (2012) emphasize that tourism development equally involves development of rich content messages, from credible sources through appropriate media selection that have a wider reach to seek patronage from outbound and inbound tourists. Osunbiyi (1999) opines that advertising is a controlled persuasive communication, paid for by identified sponsor (s), about products, services or ideas and disseminated through the mass media to a target group.. Furthermore, according to the Encyclopaedia Americana (1997), advertising is: The technique and practices used to bring products, services, opinions, or causes to public notice for the purpose of persuading the public to respond in a certain way toward what is advertised. Hence, we realize the importance of advertising and the affect it has on the Advertising must present the area to be visited as "the-place-to-visit", the benefits if any, and positive images of the area, as well as and modifying the travelers behavior, i.e., purchasing the memorabilia created by the venders of the sites visited. Therefore, it is a necessity, that the tourism professional use an optimal method of advertising to achieve his/her goals (Ibrahimi and Associates, 2009). Public relations strategies in this direction are catalysts that can bring favourable balance of actions in the sector. Public relation strategies are action oriented arsenals to lead and guide destination management organizations towards attainment of the desired image and results. Fill (2009) and Chukwu (2016) report that public relations strategies generate high levels of trust and confidence that single out public relations as an important technique use to reduce perceived risk. Thus, destination management personnel can employ public relations strategies to assist the development, improvement and revival of tourism activities and attractions in Nigeria. The major thrust of this paper is to look at the role of advertising, public relations and tourism development in the Niger Delta Region .

The Niger Delta area stands as a major source of income to the Nigerian economy. Ironically, this same region has been experiencing incessant instability due to underdevelopment, which, of course, has negatively been affecting the nation's economy. It then reasonably follows that anything that can ameliorate the lives of the inhabitants is worth academic investigation. One likely variable is to focus on other God-given gifts in the area that can be tapped, and that is, developing the abundant cultural festivals in the region into tourism products. Even though tourism is a money-spinner, yet it has not been fully explored in Nigeria. The Niger Delta area has a lot of tourism products that are bound to further open up the area for development. Public relations are one of the primary functions of tourism agencies' personnel (Bhatia, 2006). Yet there is no significant and remarkable effort to apply public relations strategies in the promotion, management

and administration of tourism by relevant tourism agencies in Nigeria. This has constituted a major setback or gaps that Nigeria previously known for renowned major tourism sites, ranch resort and other popular sites have depleted in value. Dilapidated social infrastructure like airports and airlines, road networks among others have affected movement of tourists while reputable traditional institutions have lost value. The problem of preservation and maintenance is fundamental because notable destinations known for their peculiar characteristics and beauty like Amakama wooden cave in Abia State, Ibeno beach in Akwa Ibom state and other popular historical heritage sites have been reduced to nothing while the extinction of Nigerian peculiar wildlife is vanishing rapidly. Despite the impressive impact of world tourism, the paucity of reliable data and information available on tourism assets remain a standard setback that is undoing the development of tourism in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study.

This study aims to establish that the Niger Delta area of Nigeria has a lot of ecological, cultural festivals and coastal tourist destinations that could be converted to tourism products, thereby becoming an extra source of revenue for the region; highlights the tourism potentials in the Amakama wooden cave in Abia State and Ibeno beach in Akwa Ibom state respectively and suggest ways on how to make it an acceptable tourism product to be patronized by both local and international tourists.

LITERATURE REVIEWS

Tourism Marketing

Tourism marketing can be defined as the systematic and coordinated efforts exerted by the National Tourist Organizations and the tourist enterprises at international, national and local levels to optimize the satisfaction of tourists, groups and individuals, in view of the sustained tourism growth (Adeoti,2020). Marketing in tourism is concerned with the needs of identifiable consumer groups. Marketing involves much more, including product/service development, place (location and distribution), and pricing. It requires information about people, especially those interested in what you have to offer (your "market"), such as what they like, where they buy and how much they spend. Its role is to match the right product or service with the right market or audience. Modern marketing is heavily based on the "marketing concept" which holds that businesses and organizations should (Alao,2019):

i). Design their products/services to meet customer needs and wants.

ii). Focus on those people most likely to buy their product rather than the entire mass market, and

iii). Develop marketing efforts that fit into their overall business objectives.

The important characteristics of marketing for services are (Ehmke,202):

a). Intangibility

b). Inseparability

c). Heterogenity

d). Perishability

e). Ownership

Features of Tourism Marketing

Since the nature of the service marketed is being highly intangible and perishable, a limited scope can be seen for creating and maintaining the distinctive competitive edge Effective marketing of tourism needs constant gearing up of infrastructure to international standards and presupposes its coordination with the tourism suppliers (Akinbinu, 2020):

i).Tourism is an intangible product. In tourism, certain facilities are made available for a specific time and for a specific use.

ii).There is close link between production and consumption of tourist services. Since consumption once begun cannot be stopped, the risk for the customer is high and his need for reliable pre-purchase information is strong.

iii).The tourist product cannot be provided by a single enterprise. Each of the components of a tourist product is highly specialized and together make the final product.

The main marketing functions in tourism sector include (Flur and Oltra,2020):

a).Market research

b).Product formulation and development

c).Analysis and selection of target markets

d).Distribution networks

e).Product promotion.

Tourist product can be analyzed in terms of attractions, facilities and accessibility (NWODO). Attractions are those elements in the tourist product which determine the choice of a particular tourist to visit one particular destination rather than another. Attractions could be in the form of areas of archaeological interest, historical buildings, scenic beauty, events, etc. Facilities are those elements in the tourist product which are necessary aids to the tourist centre. It complements the attractions which include accommodation, various types of entertainments, picnic sites, and recreation, etc. Accessibility is a means by which a tourist can reach the area where attractions are located.

Tourism Marketing Strategy

The tourism marketing strategy has been prepared with realistic, achievable goals and objectives that will maximize the opportunities provided to tourism operators within the Nigeria Tourism Industry. It is constructed in a manner that provides linkages with the marketing strategies of major industry stakeholders such as the Nigeria Tourism Commission (NTC), Regional Tourism Marketing Bodies and the National Parks and Wildlife Service (Akinbinu,2021). For instance, a tourism audit was undertaken as part of the study to identify the key assets within the Abuja Tourism Sector. This incorporated accommodation, transport and tour operators as well as attractions and natural assets in the territory. This examination found that there were gaps in the

provision of products and services within the industry particularly in the area of accommodation and visitor services. A market analysis identified key markets on a geographic basis as the Southern and Northern Nigeria markets, the interstate markets of South Western Nigeria and South Eastern markets. Consideration was also given to visitors behavioral and value segmentation as well as experiences provided in the identification and development of tourism markets. A number of recommendations were formulated including the formation of a formidable sector to focus on destination specific marketing and providing opportunities for operators to participate in clear and concise marketing activities based on precise identification of their target markets.

Advertising

Advertising refers to the communication of a message about a product, service, or idea through various media channels such as TV, radio, print, digital, or outdoor. It is a form of marketing communication that aims to persuade or influence potential customers to take action, such as making a purchase, trying a product, or changing their attitude towards a brand or idea. The concept of advertising involves a strategic process of identifying target audiences, defining the brand message, selecting appropriate media channels, creating compelling content and visuals, and measuring the effectiveness of the campaign. The goal of advertising is to create awareness, generate interest, and stimulate demand for the product or service being advertised (Albaladejo,2020). Advertising can take many forms, such as print ads in newspapers and magazines, commercials on TV and radio, billboards and posters, social media ads, search engine ads, and more. The messaging and creative elements of an advertisement can vary widely, from humorous and entertaining to emotional and informative. Effective advertising involves a deep understanding of the target audience, the product or service being advertised, and the competitive landscape. It requires a creative and strategic approach to messaging and visual design, as well as a focus on measuring and optimizing the results of the campaign. Ultimately, successful advertising can help businesses build brand awareness, increase sales and revenue, and create a positive image and reputation in the minds of their customers.

Advertising Role

Advertising plays several important roles in the world of marketing and business. Some of the key roles that advertising can serve are (Gourlay and Seaton,2021):

i).Creating awareness: Advertising can help introduce a product or service to potential customers who may not have been aware of it previously. By raising awareness, advertising can generate interest and stimulate demand for the product or service.

ii).Building brand identity: Advertising can help create a distinctive brand identity for a company or product, by associating it with certain values, attributes, or benefits. Effective advertising can help establish a brand's personality, voice, and tone, and differentiate it from competitors.

iii).Communicating product benefits: Advertising can help communicate the unique features and benefits of a product or service to potential customers. By highlighting the benefits,

advertising can persuade customers to consider the product or service and potentially make a purchase.

iv).Shaping consumer attitudes and perceptions: Advertising can help shape the way customers perceive a brand or product. By using persuasive messaging, emotional appeals, and memorable visuals, advertising can influence how customers think and feel about a product or brand.

v).Increasing sales and revenue: Effective advertising can lead to increased sales and revenue for a business. By generating interest, building awareness, and communicating product benefits, advertising can help drive customer acquisition and retention.

vi).Supporting other marketing efforts: Advertising can complement other marketing efforts, such as public relations, social media, and promotions. By working together with other marketing tactics, advertising can help create a consistent and integrated marketing message. Advertising Functions.

Advertising serves several important functions in the world of marketing and business. Which include (Adeoti,2020):

i).Informing: Advertising can inform potential customers about a product or service, including its features, benefits, and pricing. By providing information, advertising can help customers make informed purchase decisions.

ii).Persuading: Advertising can persuade potential customers to consider a product or service, by highlighting its unique benefits, solving a problem, or creating a need. By using persuasive messaging and visuals, advertising can influence customer behavior.

iii).Reminding: Advertising can remind customers about a product or service, by maintaining a consistent presence in the marketplace. By reminding customers about a product, advertising can help build brand awareness and increase customer retention.

iv).Building brand identity: Advertising can help establish and reinforce a brand's identity, by associating it with certain values, attributes, or benefits. By creating a distinctive brand identity, advertising can differentiate a brand from competitors and create customer loyalty.

v).Generating demand: Advertising can stimulate demand for a product or service, by creating interest and desire among potential customers. By generating demand, advertising can help increase sales and revenue for a business.

vi).Supporting sales efforts: Advertising can support sales efforts by creating a positive perception of a product or service in the minds of potential customers. By providing information and generating interest, advertising can help sales teams close deals and increase revenue.

Advertising Scope

The scope of advertising refers to the range of activities and functions involved in creating, delivering, and measuring advertising messages. The scope of advertising is constantly evolving, as new technologies and media channels emerge (Ketabchi and Mohammad, 2004). For example, the rise of social media has created new opportunities for advertising, such as influencer marketing

and social media advertising. As advertising continues to evolve, its scope will likely expand to encompass new forms of media and new approaches to engaging with consumers.

The Scope of advertising includes (Ketabchi and Mohammad, 2004):

i).Advertising research: Conducting research to understand consumer behavior, identify target audiences, and assess the effectiveness of advertising campaigns.

ii).Advertising strategy: Developing a strategic plan for advertising, including defining the target audience, selecting appropriate media channels, creating a messaging platform, and setting campaign objectives.

iii).Advertising creative: Developing creative content and visuals that communicate the brand message and resonate with the target audience.

iv).Advertising media planning and buying: Selecting appropriate media channels to deliver the advertising message, negotiating rates, and purchasing ad space.

v).Advertising production: Producing and delivering advertising content across various media channels, such as TV, radio, print, digital, and outdoor.

vi).Advertising evaluation and optimization: Measuring the effectiveness of advertising campaigns, analyzing data, and optimizing future campaigns based on insights and performance metrics.

Advertising Types

There are several types of advertising, each of which serves a different purpose and can be delivered through different media channels. Some common types of advertising are (Moradkhani,2014):

i).Print advertising: This includes ads in newspapers, magazines, brochures, flyers, and other printed materials.

ii).Broadcast advertising: This includes ads on TV and radio, as well as cinema and outdoor advertising.

iii).Online advertising: This includes ads on websites, social media platforms, search engines, and mobile apps.

iv).Outdoor advertising: This includes billboards, posters, banners, and other outdoor signage.

v).Direct mail advertising: This includes physical mailings, such as flyers, postcards, and catalogs, delivered directly to consumers' mailboxes.

vi).Product placement: This involves integrating a product or brand into a TV show, movie, or other form of media content.

vii).Influencer marketing: This involves partnering with social media influencers or bloggers to promote a product or brand to their followers.

viii).Native advertising: This involves creating sponsored content that blends in with the non-sponsored content on a website or social media platform.

ix).Guerrilla marketing: This involves using unconventional and often low-cost tactics to promote a product or brand, such as flash mobs or street performances.

Advantages of advertising and Disadvantages of Advertising (Moradkhani,2014):

a).Builds brand awareness: Advertising can help businesses build brand awareness by getting their name and message in front of potential customers.

b).Increases sales: Effective advertising can increase sales and revenue for businesses by encouraging people to buy their products or services.

c).Targets specific audiences: Advertising can be targeted to specific audiences based on demographics, interests, and behavior, allowing businesses to reach the right people with their message.

d).Builds customer loyalty: Advertising can help build customer loyalty by reinforcing a brand's message and values, and creating an emotional connection with customers.

e).Supports sales efforts: Advertising can support sales efforts by creating a positive perception of a product or service in the minds of potential customers.

Disadvantages of advertising:

a).Cost: Advertising can be expensive, particularly for businesses with limited budgets.

b).Can be ignored: Many people ignore or tune out advertising, making it difficult for businesses to get their message across.

c).Ineffective messaging: Poorly crafted advertising messages can be ineffective, and may even have a negative impact on a brand's reputation.

d).Ethical concerns: Some forms of advertising may be considered unethical, such as false or misleading claims, or targeting vulnerable groups.

e).Over-saturation: With so much advertising in the marketplace, it can be difficult for businesses to stand out and get their message heard.

Vary (2010) stated that advertising has economic, social, legal, and ethical aspects that businesses need to consider when creating and delivering advertising messages.

i). Economic aspect: Advertising plays a critical role in the economy by stimulating demand for goods and services, which in turn drives business growth and job creation. Advertising helps businesses compete in the marketplace by differentiating their products and services from those of their competitors. However, advertising can be costly, and businesses need to carefully evaluate the return on investment for their advertising dollars.

ii). Social aspect: Advertising can have a significant impact on society by shaping people's perceptions and attitudes toward products and brands. Advertising can reinforce social norms and values, but it can also perpetuate stereotypes or promote unhealthy behaviors. Businesses have a responsibility to ensure that their advertising messages are socially responsible and do not harm individuals or communities.

iii). Legal aspect: Advertising is subject to a range of laws and regulations, including those related to false or misleading claims, privacy, and intellectual property. Businesses need to ensure that their advertising messages comply with these laws and regulations, or risk facing legal consequences.

iv).Ethical aspect: Advertising can raise ethical concerns, such as promoting products that are harmful or targeting vulnerable groups. Businesses need to ensure that their advertising messages

are ethical and do not violate consumers' rights or exploit their vulnerabilities. This includes being transparent about product claims, respecting consumers' privacy, and avoiding stereotypes or offensive content.

Advertising and Its Role on Tourism.

There are various ways to increase the market in the tourism industry. The use of a brand name in getting the public‟s attention works well or method of regional cooperation in tourism (Rong and Mu, 2013), however, the use of advertising as the primary means of success requires a carefully analysis of the tools in the fields of scientific, social and economic behavior. Advertising is defined as the activity or profession of producing advertisements for commercial products or services (Moradkhani, 2014). The tourism industry must use advertising as the primary tool for its professional gain. The successful promotion of tourism in each country is based on cultural values, and the professionals understanding of advertising and its values. Professional advertising can be seen as a winning tool for the economic development both inside and outside of the given country. Inappropriate, insufficient, inadequate advertising can be waste of money and energy. The advertiser is required to identify the target audience and tourism and which will increase tourism, investments and other positive behavior dependent on the volume of the advertising aimed to attract the tourists. Discussion and results in tourism advertising, in print, television and radio stations, each stage has a specific affect on tourism industry. Each country's tourism industry can generally be measured by its ability and plan and after reviewing the country's interest and need for the industry; then strategies can be planned and improve the development of the industry (Ketabchi and Mohammad, 2004). Nevertheless, when is advertising not enough? How to plan an advertisement for a positive effect on the industry? The newest method recently used for advertising is slogans. However, an advertising slogan must five questions to answer. 1. What is the slogans value and its proposition? 2. Who will find the proposition meaningful? 3. How does the slogan differentiate the destination from those in the competitive set? 4. How is the message lively to be memorable? 5. Has the proposition been designed for the long term? (Vary, 2010; Pike, 2004). Propagation Strategy has two main pillars: spreading the message and selecting the desired media for the advertisement, most applications provide messages and the corporations did the media selection independently in the past. Most of the decision planning for media was secondary, as compared to the process of creating the message. Nowadays, a variety of media, and staggering costs, and focused strategy in marketing to target the tourist, has led to tasks for selecting the media that will become more important. The media is a way to convey your message to the market (consumer). The main objective of this program is to achieve a medium of communication with the client, and this connection should be done at a minimal expense but with maximum efficiency. To create a connection is a necessity to exist in the media or communication channel for promotional activities in the tourism industry; today's publicity and advertising costs, which can be expensive, should be viewed as a substantial investment and advancement towards the goals of your organization and national status. In conjunction with this goal, a significant increase in marketing and advertising should be considered. Clearly, we can say that the

marketing and promotional advertising is essential to the successful development of tourism industry (Ibrahimi and Associates, 2009).

Public Relations (PR).

Public relations in marketing is a company's use of tactics and strategies that generate brand equity, build a positive image, highlight product and service launches and updates and ultimately boost sales and revenue (Pike,2004). The definition of public relations (PR) focuses on communicating with the public to create a brand narrative and maintain a company's reputation and visibility. PR professionals earn media coverage by (Ibrahim and Associates,2009):
i). Building relationships with journalists and members of the media
ii).Responding to requests for information
iii).Writing and distributing press releases
iv).Creating and implementing social media strategies
v).Monitoring brand mentions and crafting responses
vi).Managing crises and negative attention
vii).Evaluating and leveraging promotional opportunities
viii).Organizing and attending event.
Public relations is a subset of marketing that focuses on earned media management. As a broader category, marketing includes (Alao,2019):
i).Earned media
ii).Paid media, like search engine marketing (SEM)
iii).Owned media, like your website or blog
iv).Email marketing
v).Content marketing
Public relations in marketing combines these two important business functions to create and share compelling stories, build relationships with your target audiences, and achieve your business goals (Emakunu (2021)).

Types of Public Relations

While marketing focuses on promoting products and services, the true meaning of public relations lies in reputation management. There are numerous areas of public relations that ladder up to this goal (Neliaku,2011):
i). Media Relations
Media relations is a big part of what PR professionals do. It involves developing relationships with contacts at media outlets who can get your message out to the public. They do this by creating compelling press releases and targeting them to the right journalists. It's mutually beneficial: Journalists get information from experts about stories that are important to them, and businesses get positive media coverage. Influencers are also a key part of a modern media relations strategy. In fact, our 2023 Global Comms Report showed that 43% of communications

professionals are relying on influencers more than they did last year – behind only paid and earned social media.

ii).Community Relations

Positive media relationships can help your business be perceived well by the general public, but it's also important to make sure you're reaching the local community – after all, you're a part of it. Volunteering, donating, and sponsoring local events can all help your company get involved and ensure you have a positive impact on the community. It's also an important way to communicate your values to your stakeholders and the broader public.

iii). Corporate Communications

Corporate communications is the process of communicating within your organization and with other businesses in your industry. It includes things like internal and external emails, newsletters, memos, speeches from executives, employee handbooks, and other resources. It sets the tone for all your communications.

iv).Crisis Management

While negative press certainly isn't new, even the smallest mistake today can quickly go viral – and big mistakes can take down a business. Recent events like Southwest Airlines' holiday flight meltdown, Starbucks' illegal union-busting, and the entire FIFA World Cup in Qatar are just a few examples of public relations crises. PR professionals are at the front lines of crisis communications and crisis management, monitoring and responding to social media comments, crafting responses from the C-suite, and leveraging their media relationships to amplify their responses and turn the negative into a positive.

Examples of Public Relations in Marketing

Within each type of public relations, there are various strategies that overlap with marketing, including (Vangeois,2010):

i). Events

Events are often considered to be both public relations and marketing. PR and marketing professionals may attend events, hosting the booth and interacting with potential customers. The overall goal is to maintain a positive relationship with the community and industry, but the desired outcomes are different: public relations will focus on promoting the brand as a whole and creating media buzz, while marketing will be interested in generating leads and making sales.

ii). Press Releases

Press releases are often thought of as the domain of public relations alone, and this is sometimes the case, especially when they're used to announce events, changes in management, or other company news. But they're also a great example of public relations in marketing because they can have a huge effect on sales when they're used to promote products or services. A press release announcing a long-awaited product update or the launch of a new line of products can instantly boost demand.

iii).Blogs

On the other hand, blogs are often thought of as the domain of marketing alone. They're a big part of a company's search engine optimization (SEO) strategy, and are often promoted on social media channels, which are both part of a good marketing strategy. But blogs also often address customer concerns, provide tips on how to use a product, showcase expertise, and share information about a company – all of which overlap with public relations.

iv).Social Media

Social media is a perfect example of both public relations and marketing, because it is typically part of any successful communications strategy. Both your PR and marketing teams might create and publish social media posts, depending on the content. That would fall in the realm of your owned media. The marketing team might run social media ads or influencer campaigns, which are paid media. And the PR team might leverage social media monitoring so they can be aware of and respond to any important events, garnering earned media.

Public Relations and Marketing: Better Together

Public relations and marketing together have more of an impact than either one of them alone. Today's media landscape is saturated with marketing. Not only are customers becoming more savvy to traditional tactics, it's harder to cut through the noise. Plus, customers today care more about companies being ethical, inclusive, and eco-friendly than ever before.

This new landscape means companies need to take a new, integrated approach to marketing – one that includes public relations. By using innovative PR tactics that earn positive media attention (and mitigate negative attention), companies can communicate about not only their products and services, but about their values. Public relations in marketing creates a new, deeper connection with customers (Mainoma, 2017).

Benefits of Public Relations for Marketing.

Public relations and marketing go hand in hand. The PR aspecot of a cmpany's marketing strategy can provide plenty of benefits that impact sales, like (Mainoma, 2017):

i).Building credibility

ii).Earning customer trust and loyalty

iii).Boosting brand awareness and brand image

iv).Reaching new audiences

Public relations also boosts your marketing efforts. For example, public relations might boost overall awareness and ensure your customers have a positive impression of your brand, so that when they see a paid advertisement, they're more likely to click on it. Or, a PR response to negative press might prevent your sales from plummeting. In short, PR "sets the stage" for how a customer will respond to your marketing.

Public Relations and Tourism development.

There are many definitions of public relations but for the purpose of this study, definitions related to the study were adopted. First, public relations are aspect of management science that is essential to the growth and development of tourism business, other business and non business sectors of the

economy. Modern public relations function as a catalyst that engineers the development of tourism as an environmental social programme. By means of definition, one of the most outstanding definitions is the Mexican statement of 1978 which refers to public relations as the art and science of analyzing trends, predicting their consequences, counseling organization leaders and implementing planned programmes of action which will serve both the organization and the public interest (Benson-Eluwa, 1999). Public relations is the systematized function that evaluates public attitudes and behaviour, harmonizes the goals, policies and procedure of an individual or organization with the public interest and executes a programme of action to earn public understanding, acceptance and supportive behaviour (Center, Jackson, Smith& Stanberry, 2008). Public relations could be referred to as a process by which organizations establish positive relationship that leads to positive behaviour (Neliaku, 2011). Public relations can fine tune and forge tourism relationship with distinct and relevant stakeholders who are capable to build and sustain strong socio-economic bridges that will propel tourism understanding and initiative to bring about positive changes in the standard of living of the people. Niger Delta region is a vast area richly endowed with ecological and cultural resources. The region offers a variety of tourist attractions such as extended and many rivers and ocean beaches ideal you summing and other water sports, unique and dowers wildlife, vast tracts of unspoiled nature from tropical forest magnificent waterfalls and climatic conditions in some parts particularly conducive for holidaying. Other attractions include traditional ways of life, local customs, rich and varied handicrafts and other colorful products depicting native arts and lifestyle and the authentic unsophisticated but friendly disposition of many of the Nigerian populace. Many of these best sites attractions located in the Niger Delta region include Obudu Cattle Ranch, the Kwa falls and Tinapa all in Cross River State; Oloibiri oil museum, State transit hall and Ogidi shrine in Bayelsa State. In Rivers State, there are the Isaac Boro Park, King Jaja of Opobo Monument, Port-Harcourt Tourist beach, Port Harcourt zoo and Okrika-Aquatic stadium. In Abia State, there exist the National War museum and monument, The Azumini Blue River, the museum of colonial history and the Arochukwu caves, to mention but a few. Interestingly, some of the state governments in the region have been battling to develop the tourism industry.

According to Gartner (2001), tourism is one of the most dynamic and rapidly growing sectors of the global economy with socio-economical dimensions worldwide; hence Vaugeois (2010) suggests that "tourism may be a more viable alternative for developing countries". Francis X. Hezel avers that "the success of national economies is driven by cultural factors more than anything else. The thrift, hard work, tenacity, honesty and tolerance are cultural factors that make all the difference" (as cited in Mainoma, 2017). According to Emakunu (2021), tourism has grown to become the third biggest industry in the world. It is on record that tourism destinations are increasing worldwide, and have opened up to and invested in tourism, turning it into an important driver of socio-economic advancement because it creates jobs and enterprises, export revenues, and infrastructure development. Tourism contributed 8.5% of Africa's GDP in the year 2018, this is equivalent to $194.2 billion. Africa news (2019) cites the 2019 Jumia Hospitality Report Africa

as reporting that this growth record placed the continent as the second-fastest growing tourism region in the world, with a growth rate of 5.6% after the Asia Pacific and against a 3.9% global average growth rate.

Documentaries and film shows and tourism development

This is a film, a radio or television programme that gives facts about an event or idea. It also has to do with documentation of a fact or programme for future purposes. Documentary gives records of or report on fact especially by using pictures or recordings of people or the event concerned. Film show has to do with a series of moving pictures recorded with sound that tells a story, shown on television or at the cinema or movie theater. It shows the moving pictures of real event and also serves as evidence for future purposes. Hence, tourism organizations that do not consider documentaries and film shows as important are heading to imminent failure and collapse. Therefore, documentaries and film shows are essential to the success of any tourism organization (Wood 2007). These will direct the attention of destinations management on tourists and help the organizations to determine what product(s) to supply that can satisfy the tourists. It is a mechanism that if put in proper perspective will enhance effective analysis of tourism trends, aimed at identifying the opportunities and problems. Awards and ceremonies and tourism development: Ceremonies are planned public or social occasion, often important, interesting and memorable. Ceremony can also be a public or religious occasion that includes a series of formal or traditional actions, awards, wedding or marriage. It is usually a joyous occasion and indeed, a celebration. Once in a while, somebody has to call on relations, friends, well wishers, colleagues and even the public to come together for a social function. Ceremonies are therefore important public relations package (Okoli 2007). Destination management organizations can also organize awards for something that somebody has done. Awards can therefore build a strong and good will image to the tourism organizations. The award presentation is another opportunity to sink in a public relations campaign message of the tourism organization. The essence of all these is to draw public attention on the rich cultural heritage of the tourism organization. Facility visits and sponsorship of discussion groups and tourism development: This is done to maintain contacts with professional bodies, women societies, youth clubs etc. The tourism organization can invite and sponsor relevant institutions for an excursion in order to have a firsthand look and experience about the natural places of wonder. Sponsorship of discussion groups by the destination management organization is designed to draw the attention of those involved (tourists) on the tourism products. Therefore, tourism organizations that desired to develop can achieve this by sponsoring relevant bodies like student groups, clubs, companies, religious groups etc for a facility visit. This will create a goodwill image about the tourism organization and its publics. The tourism sector needs tourists facility visit to aggressively put the information of the sacred tourism prospects right through sponsorship.

The Amakama Wonder Tree (wooden cave)

This is a wonder tree with a hallow inside, that is capable of accommodating up to twenty people at a time. It is claimed that the tree is as old as the Amakama community in Abia State and acted as a safe haven to the community during the inter-tribal wars and the slave trade era. The beautiful serene environment of the site is good for the construction of a standard tourism village. The trees are eight in number which represent the eight villages in Olokoro. When the Eze of Amakama died, the two villages - Umuokoroukwu and Obizi, started to quarrel over who the next King should be. And before the late King was laid to rest, the two trees of Umuokoroukwu and Obizi fell down at night and lay each of other. This implied that there was a big problem between these two villages. Consequently, they waited for the burial of the late king to be done before choosing the new King. All these trees were built up naturally; not man-made. It is believed that when entering the wooden cave, you should not go there with any charm or evil thoughts, for there will be a problem (Enemuo, Ogechi and Amaechi, 2015).

Ibeno Beach

Ibeno is drained by a number of rivers; on the Eastern and Southeastern part of the area is the Cross River which drained most part of the area. Also, draining the area is the Qua Iboe River which is the main drainage system of Akwa Ibom State. Ibeno is blessed with abundant surface water supply system. More so, increased rainfall amounts and intensities, storm surges and sediment supply from this drainage leads to greater rates of shoreline erosion. The porosity and permeability of the shoreline area affect the speed with which water can percolate into the ground. However, if the water moves underground, less runoff is generated thereby reducing the amount of surface erosion. Shoreline areas with more rain days tend to erode less than those with sand or silt.

Theoretical Framework

Public Relations Transfer Model
This model was propounded by Jefkins (2005). The theory demonstrates and explains the catalytic function that public relations can play in converting worst negative situations to favouralble situations that can benefit any system.

Negative Situation	Positive Situation
Hostility	Sympathy
Prejudice	Acceptance
Apathy	Interest
Ignorance	Knowledge

Public relations transfer model diagram.
Source: Jefkins, F. (2005). Public relations, Harlow: McGraw Educational.

This theory explains hostility to mean the existence of problems in an organization, the nature and the reason of the problems and on the other hand sympathy is the task that is most sorted and used to overcome this problem. Prejudice may be as a result of educational, cultural, social, religious, class influences and diplomatic misunderstanding. It is an established position that most publics of an organization hold strongly old ways of doing things. Apathy means loss of interest in issues and could be as a result of selfishness, lack of foresight, poor creativity and imagination. The truth about successful public relations information is that it must be interesting and of high value to motivate public. Ignorance is a common pitfall especially in the current dynamic and technologically advanced business world with customers taste changing continuously. The application of the hostility in the model subscribes that most western tourists are hostile and hate to visit Nigeria for various reasons. Prejudice exists in many different forms, like negative western media reportage that Nigeria is underdeveloped and primitive. Ignorance has traditionally deprived many people of the knowledge about attractive tourists products in Nigeria.

Source Credibility Theory
The theory was propounded by Hovland, Janis and Kelly (1996). The source credibility theory states that people are more likely to be persuaded when the source of a presented message is credible, reliable, reputable and widely acceptable. The high point of the theory in the study is that tourists tend to believe seasoned and reputable travel writers, editors and travel journalists including personalities from their home countries. Again, tourists believe strongly the stories written by travel writers who have visited beautiful destinations, witness fantastic festivals among other colorful events in such countries.

Benefits of Tourism Development in The Niger Delta
i).Economic benefits.
Tourism is a source of revenue generation, foreign exchange earnings, creation of employment and business opportunities for many inhabitants of an area where a destination is located.
Environmental Management and Planning benefits
The fact that the destination becomes a source of revenue generation makes the beneficiaries become careful concerning the sustainability of the environment, hence their income. This leads to education of tourists and inhabitants of the destination.
ii).Socio-cultural benefits.
Tourism is an instrument of peaceful co-existence peace. Travelling brings people into contact with each other and makes them to learn new things about nature and different cultures. As sustainable tourism has an educational element it fosters understanding between people and cultures and provide cultural exchange between guests and hosts. This increases the chances for people to develop mutual sympathy, tolerance and understanding and to reduce prejudices and promote the sense of global brotherhood.
iii).Strengthening communities.

Sustainable coastal tourism strengthens the bond between individuals of communities in many ways. For e.g. organization of events and festivals helps in strengthening bonds that holds members of communities together. The jobs created by tourism can act as a very important motivation to reduce emigration from rural areas. Local people can also increase their influence on tourism development, as well as improve their jobs and earnings prospects through tourism-related professional trainings and development of business and organizational skills. In the case of Niger Delta, many inhabitants can be involved in commercial canoe construction, working as tour operators and tour guides since they understand the terrain very well. They can as well work in restaurants, or establish their own restaurants and craft centers for souvenir production.

iv). Revitalization of culture and traditions.

Sustainable Tourism can also improve the preservation and transmission of cultural and historical traditions. Most languages are becoming endangered whereas language transmits culture. Cultural festivals reawaken interest in one's tradition and languages. Contributing to the conservation and sustainable management of natural resources can bring about the chances of protecting local heritage or to revitalize native cultures, which can be packaged in marketable forms as crafts and artifacts.

v). Encouragement of social involvement and pride.

In some situations, tourism also helps to raise local awareness concerning the financial value of natural and cultural sites. It can stimulate a feeling of pride in local and national heritage and interest in its conservation. More broadly, the involvement of local communities in sustainable tourism development and operation could be an important strategy for the sustainable use and conservation of the biodiversity.

Challenges of Coastal Tourism in Niger Delta.

The major problem of the coastline is over-congestion as thousands of people especially during holidays troop into the destinations without being regulated. This leads to inadequacy of the parking facilities. Visitation of many tourists with cars to the coastal environment (river-side) creates challenges of where to park cars and other vehicles. This unregulation of visitor number makes coastal areas vulnerable to pollution and destruction from human activities. The pollution comes in form of solid waste generated from the visitors to the environment. Visitors are not given proper orientation (in many of the destinations) on how to keep the area neat and tidy.

Besides, there are no provisions for safety measures. 'Lifesavers' are not available in many destinations. The attention paid by the government on the management and maintenance of coastal sites especially in Delta State is inadequate. There are no existing policies on management for recreation and, sustainability of resources therein. The problems of coastal tourism in the Niger Delta can be summarized as fear of insecurity, negligence by the governments, lack of awareness, inadequate infrastructure, hostility and frequent crises, water pollution due to oil spills, air pollution and sewage pollution. Others are flooding which include sea level rise, sand mining, land degradation, biodiversity loss, deforestation and mangrove loss, coastal and river bank erosion

(Okeke, 2003). Loss of natural habitat due to dredging of sand and sand filling of water bodies has led to loss of some natural habitat. Destruction of vegetation and sea turtles disturbance has also been noticed in the area. However, a turtle club has been formed in Akassa, Bayelsa state for the protection of breeding turtles. Management of coastal destinations has been challenging because of poor cultural attitude of inhabitants towards pollution. Wastes including human feaces are dumped inside same water bodies where fishing activities and recreational swimming are always carried out. Blast fishing is still embarked upon in many coastal areas of Niger delta (Ijeomah *et. al.* 2011). Operation of oil companies is continuously polluting the environment. Water fauna, mangrove and other vegetation are unsustainably harvested leading to coastal erosion. A fishing group once exploited ten individuals of crocodile, an endangered species in an expedition (Ijeomah and Oruh, 2012). The crux of the challenge is the operation of sea pirates, who attack coastal operators, rob them of their properties including boats and in many cases force them to jump inside deep waters even when they operators cannot swim. Those sometimes forced to jump inside the water include very old persons who though knows how to swim may not have the strength to do so at such old age. Though robbers also operate on land but that of water bodies is worse because almost every one that operates on land can walk on foot effectively unlike the case on water. Efficient and effective coastal tourism management should be geared towards tourist satisfaction and sustainability of tourist experience. With this, security of destination and tourists should be taking into consideration. Visitor number should be regulated based on space for parking vehicles or boats. Virtues of destinations including vegetation and cultural activities should be preserved.

CONCLUSION

Coastal zone globally is increasingly under pressure from human activities such as fishing, coral and sand mining, mangrove harvesting, sea weed farming, sewage disposal, urban expansion and tourism. Similarly, human activities which have profound negative impacts on coastal stability and shoreline change are dynamite fishing, over-harvesting of mangroves, coral and sand mining. Forests which help to stabilize coastline have also been threatened due to harvesting of mangroves for timber, fuel-wood and clearing for fishing resulting in habitat loss. As a result of the increased human population and oil exploitation especially oil-spills and gas flaring in the study area, anthropogenic impacts on the area have become severe overtime. Also, the ecological zones need to be maintained and not disrupted by human activities. Hence, the need for more advertisement and public relations practitioners in maintaining positive image of these tourist destination in these Niger Delta Regions.

Recommendations

There is also need for the tourism destinations' management to adopt internet as a method of advertising because most tourists identify this as a better way of creating awareness to the public for high rate of tourist flow in the destinations. The State Government should harness the

attractions and make the roads accessible for high rate of tourists flow and have a maintenance culture for the roads. In addition, state Government should develop the infrastructure that create conducive environment. Also, It is recommended that all tourist attractions be advertised using the mass media such as radio, television, internet. Finally, the Niger Delta region is prone to insecurity, therefore security should be enhanced for potential tourists and more money should be allocated to the culture and tourism sector in the region.

Contribution to Knowledge

The study documents the rich cultural traditions, festivals and indigenous lifestyles of the Niger Delta people, explores the role of tourism in improving local economies livelihood and identifies the infrastructure deficits (e.g., roads, hotels, security) that hinder tourism growth. The study also highlights the region's biodiversity, including mangroves, rainforests and wildlife; examines possibilities for eco-friendly tourism alongside industrial activities; proposes solutions for improving safety and security to attract more visitors and suggests strategies for branding and positioning the region for domestic and international tourists as well as recommending frameworks for public-private partnerships in the tourism sector.

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