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ISSUE 001

ExperiencingPR

Perception Management

**PERCEPTION
MANAGEMENT IN THE
AGE OF FAKE NEWS**

**HOW PR PROFESSIONALS
CAN BECOME INDUSTRY
THOUGHT LEADERS**

**THE EFFECTIVE USE OF
PERCEPTION MANAGEMENT
STRATEGIES FOR A POSITIVE
NATIONAL IMAGE**



ExperiencingPR
ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2023

A PUBLICATION OF NIGERIAN WOMEN IN PR



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50 YEARS OF BREWING TOGETHERNESS FOR A BETTER WORLD
CHEERS TO ANOTHER 50 !

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Letter From The Editor

Another Journey of Impact Starts Today

When Nigerian Women in PR was established in 2019, it was a passion project to actualise my long-time desire to be in a community of female public relations professionals. In my mind, I could vent and share about how alien pitching stories were in our clime, and have empathetic listeners who would understand my struggle to articulate exactly what I do as a public relations professional without my mum saying “oh, so like a journalist?”

But we have evolved; now more than a passion project, Nigerian Women in PR is on a structured trajectory to deliver impact projects, programs and host conversations in line with our objectives to: be a resource hub for learning and professional development; support the continuous relevance of Nigerian women in the local and global PR industry; to platform their results; and just as critical, to join the advocacy to promote the understanding and value of public relations as a profession.

Our Experiencing PR Annual Conference, and by extension this magazine, is one of such impact projects we have designed in line with our fourth objective to promote the understanding and value of public relations. Experiencing PR is a business conference that is not for public relations professionals only. In fact, our target delegates are business professionals and public office holders who need to see PR at work, listen to their colleagues who have seen the impact of public relations, and be enlightened about this professional by their peers. After all, a cardinal principle in public relations is that third-party validation – or testimonials, to the non-initiates – is the proof that a product or service is as good as the owners say it is.

By design, Nigerian Women in PR is an organisation that will continue to deliver many ‘firsts’. In 2019, we started a

#PRin30Seconds program where young professionals shared why they love PR in a 30 seconds video. A version of this initiative became a global campaign early 2021; Experiencing PR itself is the first of its kind anywhere in the world; our Reverse Mentorship Program – carefully designed through a focus group survey – the first of its kind for women in the profession, has now been replicated in Asia and Europe. This magazine, which we are describing as an always-on PR resource, is another in our line up of firsts. It is not an industry magazine. It is a business resource for public relations professionals, business executives, and public office holders who want to leverage public relations strategies and insights to improve outcomes in their respective endeavours.

As a gendered-organisation, we constantly need to defend our reason for having two major events that are open to both men and women: The Experiencing PR Conference and the PR Job Fair. Our answer is quite simple: our focus is beyond conversations; it is about the impact we can deliver directly to our women. We believe strongly that there are many organisations focused on discussing the issues and challenges women face in their various professions. For Nigerian Women in PR, the way we show that we are a female focused organisation is in the way we support our women, given our clear insights into the challenges that they face. That is why in this ExperiencingPR Magazine, we launch the first Global Directory of Nigerian Women Owned/Led PR Firms.

The Directory is one answer to the gender pay-gap in the PR profession. Female founders in the PR industry have peculiar challenges – they know the work but start out with a very limited network and no ‘boys club’. Because they are bootstrapping their firms, there is limited funds to invest in building

a fully optimised website that will get them on page one of a Google search. With this Directory, potential clients now have a resource where they can identify brilliant Nigerian female PR founders. A Google search is an attempt at gender equality, but our Directory is an effort at ensuring gender equity – ensuring that each individual has the resource required to help them succeed. We publish this as the world celebrates Women’s History Month as our tangible impact contribution to the #GenderEquity conversation in public relations.

This first edition of the ExperiencingPR Magazine explores the theme of perception management, with article contributors from Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya and Russia. We celebrate the speakers and volunteers who supported us to deliver the 2023 edition of the Experiencing PR Conference, and feature five iconic Nigerian women who have given their all to the Public Relations profession.

Enjoy!



Tolulope ‘Tolucomms’ Olorundero
Editor-in-Chief & Founder, Nigerian Women in PR

Experiencing PR 2023 Conference Speakers



Mimi Kalinda

Co-founder, Africa Communications Media Group (ACG)

Mimi Kalinda is a global communications expert with 25 years of experience in developing, implementing and measuring impactful strategies across Africa, Europe and the United States.

In 2012, Mimi co-founded Africa Communications Media Group (ACG), Africa's leading, pan-African public relations and communications agency headquartered in Johannesburg, South Africa, supporting clients across Sub-Saharan Africa. She also led the global communications team for Innovations for Poverty Action and the Global Development Incubator (GDI), headquartered in Washington, DC.

As an award-winning communications consultant, she was part of the country branding efforts for Ethiopia and the Invest in Morocco campaigns. Previously, as FleishmanHillard's Africa Lead, Mimi was part of the team that won PRISM Awards for the Barclays Africa "Prosper" campaign as well as the African Union's campaign against Ebola, for which her team raised USD\$51 million. She also worked for Weber Shandwick, where she managed social impact accounts, such as the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Innovation Prize for Africa. As the Global Director of Communications for the African Institute for Mathematical Sciences (AIMS), she was an integral part of the historic launch of the Next Einstein Forum (NEF).

Mimi sits on the board of the AKO Caine Prize and Catalyst for Growth (C4G), a solution launched by JP Morgan and Dalberg to support entrepreneurs across Africa. She serves on the advisory board of Africa Works Ventures, a Hong Kong-based consultancy. She is also a member of the Africa Brand Counsel, and advises policymakers and private sector leaders on Africa's reputation and how the continent's brand equity can be leveraged for its economic development.



Dr Yemi Kale

Chief Economist as well as Head of Research at KPMG Nigeria

Dr. Yemi Kale, who is a Partner and the Chief Economist as well as Head of Research at KPMG Nigeria, is the former Statistician-General of the Federation and Chief Executive Officer of the National Bureau of Statistics. At KPMG Nigeria, he leads the Firm's view on Macroeconomics and enhances its growth agenda by both supporting and originating engagements involving modelling and econometrics. He is also responsible for leading KPMG's research team.

Dr Kale holds several domestic and international awards for performance and excellence including a B.Sc. in Economics (First class honours) from Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia, M.Sc. (with distinction) and Ph.D. in Economics from the London School of Economics and Political Science. An alumnus of the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, Dr. Kale worked as an equity analyst at Goldman Sachs and as a quantitative analyst at Merrill Lynch Financial Services from where he became Group Head of Research and Investment Strategy at Investment Banking and Trust Company Plc. (now Stanbic IBTC Bank plc). Later, he held the position of Special Adviser to the Minister of Finance and subsequently, Technical Adviser to the Minister of National Planning. He was later appointed Statistician General of the Federation and Chief Executive Officer of the Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) in 2011 and became the first chief executive of the NBS to be reappointed for a second term when his tenure was renewed by President Buhari in 2016.

Dr Kale is a fellow of the Nigerian Statistical Association and a fellow of the Institute of Chartered Administrators and Researchers of Nigeria among others.



Odunayo Eweniyi

Co-founder & Chief Operations Officer, PiggyVest,

Odunayo Eweniyi is the co-founder & Chief Operations Officer, PiggyVest, the largest digital savings and micro-investment platform in Nigeria. She previously co-founded pushcv.com, one of the foremost job sites in Africa with the largest database of pre-screened candidates. She has 8 years' experience in Business Analysis and Operations. She's an award winning fintech entrepreneur who is working for diversity equity and inclusion in fintech and technology as a whole.

She has also co-founded other organisations such as The Feminist Coalition - a group of young Nigerian feminists who work to promote equality for women in Nigeria and First Check Africa - a female-led angel fund that invests in women in African tech.

In 2022, she was selected as a Bloomberg New Economy Catalyst; and she won the Forbes Africa Technology and Innovation award. She is also a 2021 TIME100 Next honoree. She was named one of Forbes Africa 30 under 30 Technology in 2019 and one of 30 Quartz Africa Innovators 2019. She was named one of the 2021 Class of Social Shapers by the Malala Fund. In 2019, she was named SME Entrepreneur of the Year West Africa by The Asian Banker's Wealth and Society and she is the youngest Nigerian on Forbes Africa list of 20 New Wealth Creators in Africa 2019. She was also one of the featured speakers at the World Bank-IMF Annual Meeting in 2019.

She is one of Business Day's Spark 2019 Women to Watch and made the World Women in Fintech Power List for 2017; the YNaija Most Influential People in Technology 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020; she is a 2018 Westerwelle Young Entrepreneurs fellow; and she is a recipient of The Future Africa Awards Prize in Technology 2018.

Experiencing PR 2023 Conference Speakers



Tokunboh George-Taylor

Managing Director of
Hill+Knowlton Strategies Nigeria

Tokunboh George-Taylor is the pioneering Managing Director of Hill+Knowlton Strategies Nigeria, one of the world's leading global communications companies. Tokunboh draws upon over 29 years of experience in the communications sector and her areas of specialisation include Public Relations, Advocacy, Public Affairs, Community Relations, Marketing and Branding in the Telecoms, Information Technology, Finance, Education, Energy, Oil & Gas Sector.

Before joining H+K Strategies, Tokunboh spent over 14 years at integrated energy group Oando Plc in Lagos where she was part of the Group Leadership Council, heading up the Corporate Services and the Corporate Communications/CSR divisions. She has worked with local, regional and global clients such as Canon, Visa, AppZone, Netflix, Twitter, LaLiga, Eat'N'Go (Dominos, Pinkberry, Cold Stone), Eko Atlantic, OVH Energy, GE Healthcare, GE Power, Western Digital, GBfoods, Bolt, Standard Chartered Bank, FBN Quest, IHS Towers, NowNow, Hogan Lovells, Procter and Gamble, NLNG and Shell on executive development and media training, internal and external communications, advocacy, strategic guidance, stakeholder engagement and campaign development.

She is a member of the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR), Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR), Public Relations Association UK (PRCA) and Institute of Directors (IOD), amongst other several illustrious corporate board responsibilities.



O'tega Ogra

Group Head and Director of
Corporate Communications at BUA Group

One of West Africa's leading strategic communications & marketing executives, O'tega Ogra is currently the Group Head and Director of Corporate Communications at BUA Group – African food, mining, manufacturing and infrastructure company, and Nigeria's second-largest conglomerate.

O'tega Ogra began his career as a Field Officer for HIV/AIDS and Reproductive Health with the German Agency for International Development (GIZ) through the Federal Government of Nigeria Multisectoral Women Empowerment Programme in North East Nigeria after receiving his degree in Public Health from Babcock University, Nigeria. He then joined GTBank in 2008 and later, Wema Bank, where at the age of 24, he became the youngest person to oversee the corporate communications function for a bank in Nigeria.

Widely acknowledged as one of the best crisis managers and reputation management experts in the industry across sub-Saharan Africa, O'tega is the recipient of several awards including "Outstanding Corporate Communication Person of the Year award 2021" at the Marketing Edge Annual Brands and Advertising Awards of Excellence, "Corporate Spokesperson of The Year (2021)" at The Industry Awards, and the "Corporate Communications Professional of the Year (Manufacturing)" at the 2021 Brandcom Awards. In 2022, O'tega was also recognized amongst the 100 UN Most Influential Persons of African Descent (MIPAD) Under 40, and the PR Power List Nigeria (2022). O'tega currently sits on the Executive Committee of the Advertisers Association of Nigeria (ADVAN) and is also on the board of advisors for SWA Sports. In his spare time, O'tega invests time in charitable initiatives, provides mentorship to young marketing professionals, and consults for HNIs, politically exposed persons and luxury brands.



Temitope Oguntokun

Legal and Corporate Affairs Director,
International Breweries Plc

Temitope Oguntokun is the Legal and Corporate Affairs Director of International Breweries Plc (a member of Anheuser-Busch InBev (AB InBev) - the world's largest brewer). She is a business leader with over two decades experience spanning Corporate Relations, Journalism, Government Affairs / Policy Advocacy, Strategic Communications/Marketing Comms, Sustainability, Change management, Overseeing Board/Company secretariat and general business management.

Her stakeholder management skills, in strategic advisory roles have been beneficial to Boards, CEOs, Directors, cross-functional teams, government, communities and other senior stakeholders to deliver on strategic projects which have verifiable direct contributions to businesses and a better world. She has provided services for national and multinational organisations in different industries, within multicultural contexts and across value chains – hence having behind her a track record of personal achievements and awards for her contributions and impact.

Temitope has a Masters in Communications, Media and Public Relations from the University of Leicester (UK), a Post-Graduate Diploma (PDG) in Communication Studies from the Lagos State University and Ordinary & Higher National Diplomas in Mass Communication from The Polytechnic Ibadan. She is a Council Member, Sustainability Professionals Institute of Nigeria (SPIN); Fellow of the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) amongst others, including sitting on Boards of some NGOs. Temitope loves to lead from the heart and supports people & talent development. Coaching, Mentoring, Volunteering are Temitope's personal contributions to national development.



Omasan Ogisi

General Manager, Corporate Affairs
at MTN Nigeria

Omasan is the General Manager, Corporate Affairs at MTN Nigeria, Africa's largest provider of communications services, connecting over 74 million people in communities across the country, with each other and the world.

She's a top-notch business leader and multifaceted professional with over 19 years' experience driving bespoke public relations; high-impact communications; value-based marketing and sales strategies; as well as leadership success across West and Sub-Saharan Africa. She is stimulated by the dynamism of organisations in emerging markets and the power of story-telling to build bridges and promote shared value.

Omasan joined MTN from Ericsson where she rose through the ranks, to 6 senior leadership positions in the space of 9 years, across the Marketing and Communication functions - earning a reputation for execution excellence and results in the Swedish multinational. In her immediate past position as Head of Communications, she was responsible for improving Regional Public Relations and Corporate Visibility, Internal Communications, Sustainability and Corporate Responsibility in 43 Sub-Saharan African countries.

She holds a Bachelor's degree in Urban and Regional Planning from Ahmad Bello University, Zaria and a Master's degree in Business & Information Technology from Westminster Business School, London.

As committed as Omasan is to her work, she is even more enthusiastic about people. She belongs to that special category of 'people person' leaders who promote the personal touch as the most important ingredient for building a winning team.



Odion Aleobua

Chief Executive Officer,
Modion Communications

Odion Aleobua is an international award-winning Public Relations and Marketing Communications professional, passionate about creating avant-garde communication solutions and breaking new grounds. Before founding Modion Communications, a 360 degrees boutique PR firm, he was Head, Communications and Brands at Forte Oil PLC (now Ardova PLC.)

For almost a decade, he handled Strategic Media Engagement, Public Relations and Investor Relations across two continents and three Stock Exchanges for Oando PLC, Nigeria's leading indigenous integrated energy solutions provider.

Since its inception in 2015, Odion has led Modion Communications to provide strategic, creative and insight-led advisory to multi-billion dollar brands, corporates, government agencies, startups and individuals, in the Oil & Gas, Governance & Policy, Aviation, Finance, Tech, Mobility, Education, Renewable Energy, Lifestyle and Manufacturing among other sectors.

A recipient of notable industry honours and recognitions, Odion has also guided the Agency to clinch multiple local and international awards, including the highly coveted Platinum SABRE Award for 'Best In Show' in Africa - the first by a Nigerian PR agency.

An avid reader and follower of new media trends and technologies, he also offers bespoke executive training and business advisory to individuals, boards and institutions in various capacities.



Bidemi Zakariyau Akande

Founder of LSF PR

Bidemi Zakariyau Akande is the founder of LSF PR, a Pan-African PR agency with core competencies in corporate communications, technology, and consumer brands.

Bidemi brings over 10 years' experience at agency leadership level. Over the years, Bidemi has shown a passion for strategic excellence and communications effectiveness to her role at LSF.

Bidemi is listed on PProvoke Media's 8th Innovator 25 EMEA list, an annual initiative that features remarkable innovators who are addressing the industry's challenges with ingenuity and creativity to make meaningful and lasting change at time when it's needed more than ever."

Recently named one of the Top 50 PR Professionals in Nigeria and Top 50 women in marketing and communications, Bidemi is a three-time SABRE Awards jury member – the world's largest PR awards programme, dedicated to benchmarking the best PR work from across the globe. In 2018 she was listed on Forbes Africa's annual 30 Under 30 list (Business Category)

Bidemi sits on the board of Rele, a leading art gallery focused on exporting local African talent to the rest of the world, with locations in Nigeria and the United States.

Experiencing PR 2023 Conference Speakers



Prof. Dr. Ana Adi

Vice-President of Quadriga University of Applied Sciences, Berlin

Prof. Dr. Ana Adi is the Vice-President of Quadriga University of Applied Sciences in Berlin where she is also currently teaching and researching. Prior to her role there, she has held lecturing and research posts in the UK, Belgium and Bahrain. She is the host of Women in PR, a podcast series featuring interviews with women that have embraced PR and made it shine. She is currently engaged in an international Delphi study exploring projections and reflections on the future of PR and their social impact.



Adedoyin Jaiyesimi

Co-Founder of The Comms Avenue

Adedoyin Jaiyesimi is a Communications Advisor, Corporate Trainer and the Co-Founder of The Comms Avenue, a capacity building and networking platform for communications professionals across Africa with over 1000 professionals from 20 African countries in its mission-driven community.

With over 11 years of professional experience that cuts across a variety of industries and sectors, Adedoyin is also a part-time lecturer for the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (UK) programme at the University of Nairobi, Kenya. She is the Author of the book, From Clueless to Success – a collection of 20 backstories from her journey as a communications professional.



Adaoha Vivian Njemanze

Founder and Principal Consultant at NOVVA Media & Communications

Adaoha Vivian Njemanze is a Communications Consultant with a decade of experience in Public Relations and Communications. She is the Founder and Principal Consultant at NOVVA Media & Communications. As a result-driven specialist, she has consulted across multiple sectors and developed content for top brands.

Founding Volunteers - Nigerian Women in PR:



Oluwatomi Lawal



Olubunmi Isiolaotan



Oluwaseun Olorundero



Mallam Mukhtar Zubairu Siraj, fnipr

President and Chairman of The Governing Council,
Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR)

Mukhtar Zubairu Sirajo, born August 1st 1965, is a graduate of Mass communication from Bayero University Kano, Nigeria. He also holds a Masters in Conflict Resolution. He worked with the The Pen Newspaper in Kano and the New Nigerian Newspapers in Kaduna in the early '90s. In 1993, he was invited by the then Governor of Kaduna State, Alhaji Dabo Mohammed Lere to join his government, reorganize and head the Media and Public Relations Unit. Between 1993 and 2007, he would go on to serve seven successive governors of the state variously as Press Secretary, Director, Press and Public Relations, Senior Special Assistant to the Governor on Media and Publicity, Special Adviser, Media and Public Relations to the Governor and Director General, Media and Publicity.

He holds the record as the longest serving Public Relations Adviser to the Government of Kaduna State and second longest serving in the country. On leaving government services in 2007, he floated and has been the CEO of Abmax Media & Communications Ltd, a Media and Public Relations Consulting firm.

From 2009 to 2018, he was a member of the Governing Council of the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR), during which he served as Vice President from 2013, before eventually being elected as President and Chairman of Governing Council of the Institute, last year. He is a Fellow of the Institute.

Perception Management: The Key to Transformative Leadership | Sadey Simeon

Introduction

In today's world, perception is everything; it can make or break personal or brand reputations. For leaders, shaping and influencing perception is essential to achieving goals and bringing about meaningful change. It is then interesting to know that perception management is often overlooked or addressed at the surface level when leadership strategies are discussed, especially since it is a crucial aspect of the process.

(Leadership and Perception, Mike Myatt). This statement sums up my thoughts in totality.

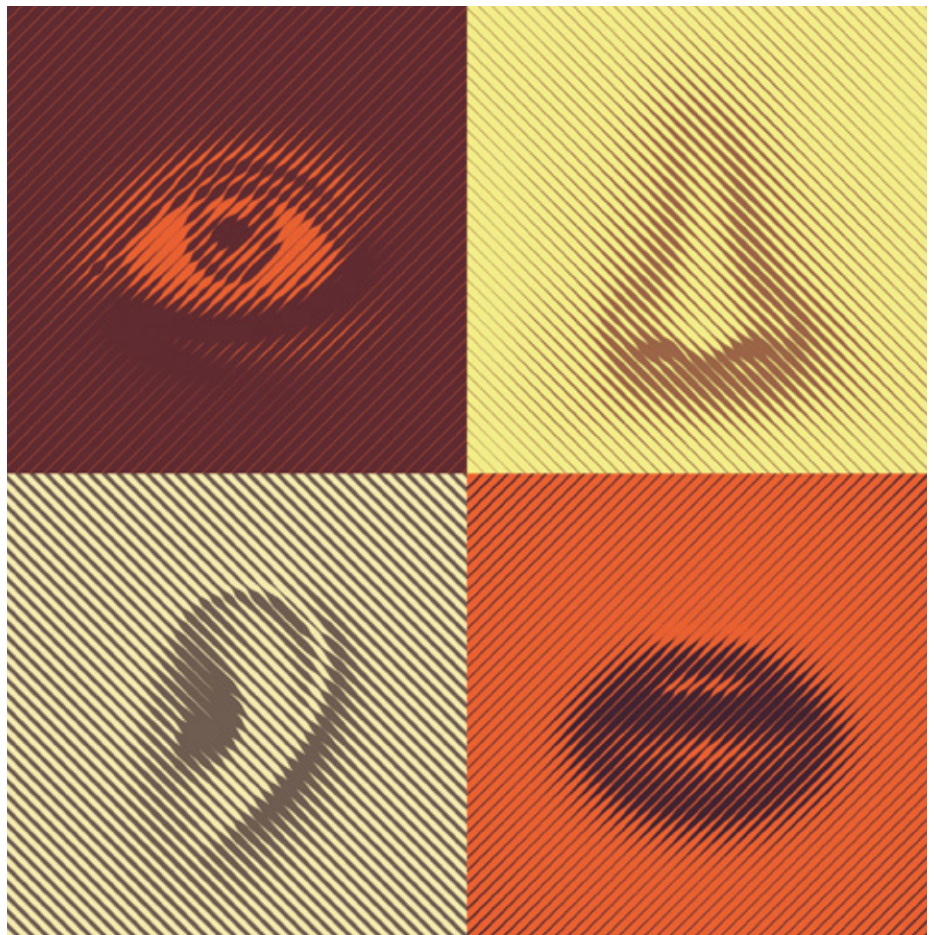
Understanding Transformative Leadership

For those new to the term, transformational leaders are leaders that are understood to encompass four dimensions - idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration for their followers (Grossman & Mazer, 2021). These

In this article, I will explore the relationship between perception management and transformative leadership and how perception management can help leaders drive transformational change within and outside their networks.

Whenever the word perception is used, the context is always supported by the idea that the perceived reality is perception. However, once we dig deep into this definition, it immediately becomes clear that perception is open to interpretation and differs from person to person. It is also greatly affected by environment, experience, interest, and expectations. Sometimes, it can even be hereditary.

Unfortunately, many people (read leaders) are too myopic to see this; they understand their perceptions but find it hard to tolerate that of others. I belong to a school of thought that postulates that your perception of yourself, especially as a leader, only sometimes translates into your stakeholder's perception of you. In the words of Mike Myatt, "success as a leader has very little to do with your perceptions, but rather it has everything to do with the perception of others"





leaders focus on inspiring and motivating followers to achieve their full potential without micromanaging them. They encourage them to take ownership of their individual roles and perform tasks to the best of their capabilities.

It involves identifying and satisfying employee needs, assessing their motives for doing the work, and valuing them. It does not refer to leaders who go by the book. Instead, it focuses on the outliers who understand that the answer is always outside the box, and people can only find that if they feel seen. It is a proven form of leadership that encourages employee commitment because employees who feel a sense of ownership at the workplace will likely choose to stay and continue doing the work.

The Importance of Perception Management in Transformative Leadership

Perception management is essential for transformative leaders because it allows them to shape the perception of their vision and goals. It helps leaders overcome resistance to change and inspire followers to take action.

Some people believe that transformative leadership is perception management. Let me explain.

A transformative leadership strategy has one end goal. Yes, it helps to ensure that every employee feels like an essential part of the puzzle. Still, the end game of most transformative leadership strategies is to help employees develop leadership characteristics and ultimately turn them into leaders.

How best to do this than to manage their perceptions? And do you manage their perceptions?

Let's backtrack to how people form perceptions. We already know that perception differs from person to person, and several external factors significantly affect people's perceptions. But even with this understanding, you realise that the entire process of forming a perception is eerily similar. We have access to different information or input, filter them differently, and ultimately arrive at different perceptions and make different decisions. For leaders, the easiest way to impact employee perception is to study their process of forming said perception. Understanding where and how your employees get and filter their information makes it ultimately easier to influence

and impact them enough to achieve your goals.

Effective perception management enables transformative leaders to align their vision with their followers' and stakeholders' beliefs, values, and aspirations and mobilise them toward a common purpose.

Strategies for Perception Management in Transformative Leadership

Transformative leaders can use several methods to manage perceptions, including communication, storytelling, branding, and stakeholder engagement. Each approach has advantages and disadvantages, and the right mix of strategies depends on one's goals and target audience.

Here are some strategies for perception management in transformative leadership:

Communicate Effectively:

Transformative leaders must be adept at communicating their vision, values, and expectations in a clear, concise, and compelling manner. They must use various communication channels, such as speeches, emails, social media, and face-to-face interactions, to convey their message and engage their audience.

Build Trust:

Perception management requires trust-building between the leader and their followers. Leaders must demonstrate integrity, transparency, and accountability in their actions and decisions and create a culture of trust and collaboration in their organisation.

Listen Actively:

Transformative leaders must listen actively to their followers and stakeholders, understand their concerns, and incorporate their feedback into their decision-making process. This helps to build a sense of ownership and commitment among the stakeholders toward the leader's vision.

Create a Sense of Urgency:

Transformative leaders must create a sense of urgency around their vision and goals to mobilise their followers and stakeholders toward action. They must demonstrate the speed of the situation and the need for change to inspire people to take action.



Provide a Clear Path Forward:

Transformative leaders must provide a clear roadmap or plan of action toward achieving their vision. This helps to create a sense of direction and purpose among the followers and stakeholders and enables them to see value and relevance in the leader's vision.

Celebrate Success:

Transformative leaders must celebrate successes and achievements along the way, both small and large, to maintain momentum and motivation among their followers and stakeholders. This helps to reinforce the value and relevance of the leader.

Consistency:

Transformative leaders need to be consistent in their actions and decisions. This helps build trust and credibility and enables leaders to avoid negative perceptions. It can also lead to clarity and confidence among stakeholders.

Personal branding:

Transformative leaders need to develop their personal brand. This involves building a solid reputation and image that aligns with their values and vision. A strong personal brand can help build trust and credibility, enabling leaders to control the narrative around their actions.

Manage external perceptions:

Transformative leaders need to be aware of external perceptions of their actions and decisions. This includes understanding media coverage and public opinion. Leaders should be prepared to address negative perceptions and proactively manage external perceptions.

Lead by example:

Finally, transformative leaders should lead by example. Their actions and behaviours will significantly impact how others perceive them. Leaders should model the behaviour they want to see in their followers and be consistent in their actions and words.

Effective perception management can help leaders drive transformational change by inspiring followers, overcoming resistance, and creating a sense of urgency. By shaping the perception of their vision and goals, leaders can evoke a shared sense of purpose and inspire followers to take action.

Often, people hold on to the theory that perception never or rarely ever equals reality. That is true; however, it is easier to influence the perception of the other if you understand how they form those ideas. We can then agree

that the key to transformative leadership is to embody the qualities you want in your stakeholders and influence their perceptions to ensure they align with the overall goal.

In conclusion, perception management is essential for leaders who want to lead disruptive and transformative organisations. By using strategies that involve communication, storytelling, branding, and stakeholder engagement, to shape the perception of their vision and goals, leaders can inspire followers, overcome resistance to change, and drive meaningful, transformational change.

BIO

Sadey Simeon

Sadey Simeon is an accomplished marketing and communications manager with extensive experience across industries. She currently serves as the Marketing and Communications Manager for Casava Microinsurance, a leading microinsurance company in Nigeria.

Sadey's career in marketing and communications spans over a decade, during which she has worked with some of the most reputable companies in Nigeria, including Microsoft, Jumia, and Airtel. Prior to joining Casava Microinsurance, Sadey worked as a content strategist for one of Microsoft's leading partners in Nigeria.

In addition to her marketing and communications expertise, Sadey is also an accomplished leader with a track record of building high-performing teams. She is passionate about mentoring and developing young professionals and has been recognised for her outstanding leadership skills. Outside of work, Sadey is actively involved in community development initiatives and volunteers to support non-profit organisations that focus on women and youth development. She is also an avid reader and enjoys travelling to new places to experience different cultures.



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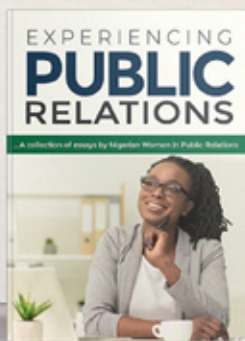
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Perception Management | Obinna Inogbo

Perception Management is identifying political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental trends to counsel one's client; taking the best steps of action to keep that client making a living and making them looking good why doing it! Looking good for whom? For the client's employees, directors, customers, the new and traditional media, the local, state and federal government, their industry regulator, their bank and several other relative internal and external stakeholders. And after all this, the perception manager must evaluate all they did to show the client and justify why they should be retained.

those Presidential meetings, international media highlights and staff satisfaction? Your client will act like you never did it and ask where their money is going!

Perception Management is a management function just like the Human Resources department or the IT department. It is the all-seeing eye which watches for internal and external threats and thwarts them before they become problems. A great perception manager is proactive and not reactive. He or she doesn't allow themselves to be caught off guard by a crisis unless it's an Act of God.

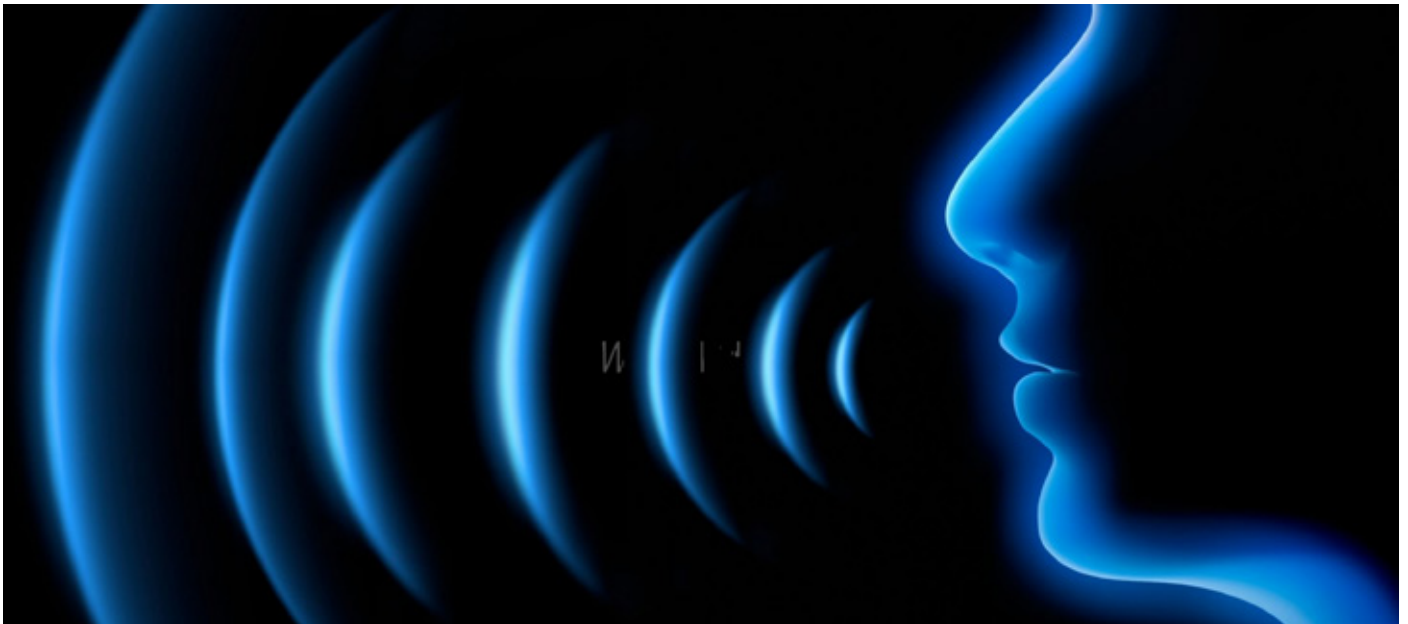
Who do work for? Personalities, Brands, Companies and Governments.

Personalities doesn't always mean celebrities or public figures. There are CEOs or business owners who would like more visibility or more opportunities to be seen in order to attract more business. You enjoy those entertaining interviews your favourite celeb gives, right? Yep, we taught them how to do that. You wonder how your state governor walked away unscathed from that scandal? We controlled the narrative and made the media tell it.

Yep, we perception managers are constantly proving ourselves. You can keep staff resignations the lowest its ever been, get your client's CEO a meeting with the President and have the world's media proclaim they're the best thing since sliced bread and your client is still likely to ask what you've done for them lately!

The reason why we're constantly proving ourselves is because what we do takes months to produce results. When a client hires you, they won't see changes in their company until 3 months after. 6 months after they'll see more; a year later they're practically ready to marry you and then 18 months later they will put you on their company organogram. Oh, but don't get comfortable! Remember





Do you know that your Coca-Cola, iPhone, Toyota and TM Lewin shirts have lives? They're not breathing like you and I but they are alive and can die if not managed by the perception manager. Why do you think when you want a soft drink you automatically think of Coke? The perception manager has written countless stories about Coke in the newspapers, pushed for Coke to be advertised globally and pushed for Coke to sponsor the World Cup where the Coke logo will be seen by billions in the stadiums and on TV. When you buy an iPhone you're buying cool because the perception manager played a role in advising the manufacturer on the look and feel; he or she knows what the public wants in a phone because they've identified what the public wants. Toyota is the most-bought car brand in Nigeria, not by mistake, but because it's seen to be durable. Perception managers have worked overtime to highlight its advantages, mainly fuel economy. TM Lewin shirts are the office shirts of choice for the Nigerian man because they've created an affordable cotton shirt in different colours, perfect for our hot weather. TM Lewin wouldn't have known this had their perception managers not told them that the corporate Nigerian man is stylish and likes a bargain.

Sometimes a local, state or federal

government wants citizens to buy into an idea. For example, election participation. Perception managers can be hired to select the eligible public and identify the best means of persuading them.

There's a big difference between you saying you're the best and someone else telling others you're the best.

Perception managers are hired to make sure the latter happens. Simply put, perception management is third party endorsement that increases your income and reputation. We aren't cheap so get your money up if you want a perception manager to help improve your bottom line, keep your stakeholders happy and make you look good simultaneously. You can't do it on your own because you don't know what we know so don't even try!

BIO

Obinna Inogbo

Obinna Inogbo is a public relations business owner and practitioner. He founded the PR agency Worktainment Limited in 2017 and is a member of the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations.

After working as a copywriter and human resources administrator in the mid to late 2000s, he started work at Channels Television in 2009 as an assistant TV producer. There he co-produced over 300 episodes of the popular talk show Sunrise Daily. Between 2010 and 2017 he worked stints for several entertainment companies such as HiTV and Spice TV as a TV producer; and as a scriptwriter for hit Nigerian TV series such as Tinsel and Meet the Adebajanos.

As the principal of Worktainment Limited, he successfully helped position the business brand of Kawai Technologies into one of the Financial Times' Africa's Fastest Growing Companies in 2022; between 2017 and 2019 he successfully helped position the personal brand of Simi Drey a Nigerian-British broadcaster and actress.

Worktainment Limited won the 2022 Most Customer-Focused PR and Brand Engagement Agency of the Year at the Africa Finance Awards; the Agency was also nominated for Best Innovation In PR at the 2022 Lagos PR Industry and Gala Awards.



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How to Make Imposter Syndrome Work for You

| Gemiene Mueni



We've all felt disconnected from a significant client or project. And if you're like me, you work even harder, clocking in longer hours to prove you're worth it, which depletes my energy leading to burnout. Most people, even the most successful among us, have moments of self-doubt, especially in the workplace. But that doesn't take away from your work or accomplishments. In self-doubt, it's easy to think you're the only one who's ever felt like a fraud or out of place. Maya Angelou, a prizewinning

author, admitted to feeling like a fraud after publishing her 11th book. She said, "Uh-oh, they're going to find out now. I've run a game on everybody." With this in mind—and the knowledge that you're not alone in this battle—let's look at how men and women from different walks of life have made impostor feeling work for them and how you can do the same and elevate to the next level.

One random Tuesday afternoon after a crazy morning, I decided to pop by

Carol Ngunjiri's office. Carol is the Head of Media Production at D&R studio and's produced shows like The Real Housewives of Nairobi(RHON), Sol Family, This is Love, and many others. We started catching up about our shenanigans, projects we were excited about, and some we were stuck on. Our conversation spilt over into the evening, and I just started to wonder if she felt the same way I do... as Maya phrases it, just running a game on everybody. And she said "me too" on everything I asked her, and I felt a sense of relief and settled in the chair even further.

Simply put, imposter syndrome is the belief that you are not as competent as others perceive you to be. It's the experience of feeling like a phoney worrying about being "found out" and believing that you are only here out of luck. Carol was the first person I'd had that conversation with because of the "shame" attached to it. It was a rare opportunity to talk about these feelings and discover that I am not the only one who feels this way.

Michelle Obama, the former First Lady of the United States, felt she didn't belong when her school counsellor told her she wasn't "Princeton material." She said, "I still remember that feeling of doubt, that feeling of another adult placing a barrier on me that I didn't even have for myself." But Michelle overcame her doubts with a simple plan: hard work. "I decided to put my head down and let my work speak for itself," she said.

Even Albert Einstein, a renowned scientist, felt like a swindler. Tom Hanks, an actor with two Academy Awards and known for his role in Forrest Gump, doubts his abilities. In a Fresh Air episode to talk about his new film, A Hologram for the King, "No matter what we've done, there comes the point where you think, 'How did I get here? When are they going to discover that I am, in fact, a fraud and take everything away from me?'" he said. Let's bring it home.

The talented Actress Lupita Nyong'o said in a Time Out article in 2016, "I go through acute imposter syndrome with every role. I think winning an Oscar may have made it worse. Now I've achieved this, what am I going to do next? What do I strive for? Then I remember not getting into acting for the accolades; I got into it for the joy of telling stories."

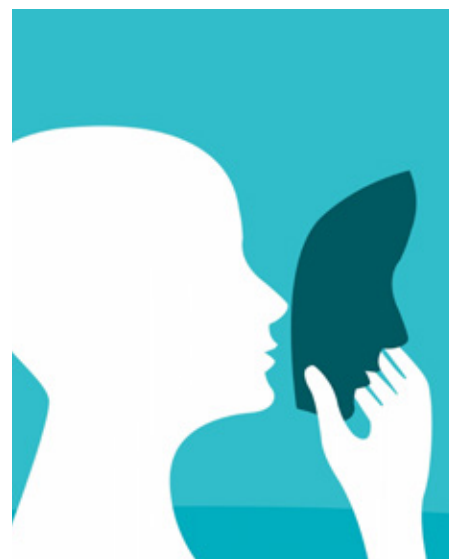
The bitter truth is that this feeling of imposter syndrome might never go away, but we can find a way for it to work for us. So, the next time you feel it creeping up on you, first name it for what it is – impostor syndrome and notice how your body responds and the thoughts that come to you, "I'm useless, and people will know", for instance. To name it is to start to gain control over it and recognise that it is a complex condition that you can – with practice – overcome.

Once You've Identified the confidence culprit, tell someone you trust to talk about your self-doubt. Choose someone who sees you outside of the work environment. They can identify when those feelings of fear are irrational and remind you of your strengths. During the conversation, note your progress & verbalise it. One of the most effective ways to overcome imposter syndrome is by taking regular self-accounting. This could be going through your resume/profile, client testimonials etc. Embrace the fact that you got yourself to where you are. You've earned your spot—your

accomplishments are proof of that. Ask the tricky question: What would you do if you weren't afraid? Write it down, say it aloud, tell someone else, and do it. The worst that can happen is that it doesn't work. So what? Do the work and keep going.

Take a risk. Our increasing impatience with ourselves seriously depletes our ability to recognise that we are works-in-progress, moving along learning curves all the time. We tend to freeze the frame when we feel nervous, make a mistake or sweat to achieve something, and then we damn ourselves for not being up to the job.

Although you may feel lucky to be in your current position, you must remember that luck alone cannot account for your entire career. Hard work and determination are the reason you have gotten this far. So, in moments of doubt, remember to stop comparing yourself to others, separate fact from fiction, account for your many achievements and accept failure as an opportunity for growth. You may not always feel confident, but it doesn't mean you aren't meant to be there! You are fantastic, and go kick some doors wide open.



BIO

Gemiene Mueni

Meet Gemiene Mueni, -a PR & Communications consultant with over 3+ years of experience in the industry, passionate about helping remarkable brands tell their stories through earned, owned, shared and paid media. Regarding PR, she believes that Passion, Creativity & Innovation are essential. That's why she loves brainstorming fun, innovative & campaigns geared for change that engages audiences and leaves a distinctive mark.

With a keen understanding of the ever-changing media landscape, Gemiene has a proven track record of securing high-profile media coverage for her clients. She has worked with various remarkable brands, from D&R studio, Sauti Sol, Inua Dada, SHOFCO, Everstrong Capital and many others, helping them build brand awareness, launch new products, and manage crises.

When Gemiene's not busy crafting PR strategies, she's trying out new baking recipes and drinks, spending time with her family & friends, or re-watching her favourite series. She's a Full-time gladiator. With Gemiene on your team, you can rest assured that your brand will be in good hands - and you'll probably have a lot of fun along the way!



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Perception Management in a Post-Truth Era: Navigating the Challenges of a Complex Landscape

| Edward Israel-Ayide



the narrative around their brands. In this environment, the need for effective perception management has become more critical.

Understanding Fake News and Its Impact on Perception

Before delving into the influence of Fake News on brand perception and practical techniques for combating it, it is vital to define perception. Perception, in broad terms, relates to how individuals see or interpret information, and several factors, including personal beliefs, experiences, and biases, impact it.

With the advent of the Internet and the ubiquity of social media platforms, the era of fake news presents new challenges for businesses, public office holders, and public relations practitioners worldwide. Perception has also become especially important in an age where false information can spread quickly and significantly impact public opinion.

Introduction

We are in the post-truth era, where “objective facts have less influence in defining public opinion than those that appeal to emotion and personal beliefs”. This phenomenon, coupled with social media fever and growing internet penetration, has made fake news a pervasive and potent force that can sway public opinion, affect the reputations of individuals and organisations, and even impact geopolitical relations between countries.

Fake news and its impact on perception are not new. From the infamous Yellow Journalism era, which inadvertently led the US into the Spanish-American War, to the 1938 broadcast of the radio drama “War of the Worlds,” which created widespread fear in the US, history is replete with instances of how disinformation can have real-world consequences.

The proliferation of social media has made spreading fake news and disinformation easier. With the click of a button, false narratives can be shared with millions of people within minutes. This has led to a situation where even reputable media outlets and organisations need help to control

Fake news is any false information created and spread to mislead or deceive the public; it can be spread through social media, traditional media, and other online platforms. The impact of fake news can be significant, leading to negative perceptions of individuals, organisations, and even countries, as we have seen above.

To effectively manage perception, it is critical to understand the key drivers of public opinion and how to influence them. Several factors can influence public perception, including social media, traditional media, and individual biases. These biases can be challenging to overcome, but it is essential to recognise their impact when managing public perception.

The Power of Social Media in The Era of Fake News

Social media has become a dominant force in shaping public opinion, with billions worldwide relying on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram for news and information. However, social media also presents unique challenges for perception management.

False information can spread rapidly on these platforms, leading to reputational damage for businesses and public figures alike. To counteract this, PR professionals must be vigilant in monitoring social media channels, identifying false information quickly, and crafting a rapid response strategy that corrects the record.

Despite Loss of Credibility, Traditional Media Still Matters

While social media is a powerful tool, traditional media outlets such as newspapers, TV news, and radio still hold significant sway over public opinion. However, the rise of fake news has eroded trust in these sources, leading to a fragmented media landscape where it is increasingly difficult to distinguish truth from falsehood. For instance, 56% of Americans believe that "Journalists and reporters are purposely trying to mislead people by saying things they know are false or gross exaggerations."

To counter this trend, brands and public relations professionals must seek to establish rapport and trust with journalists, give correct information, and proactively counter misleading narratives in the media. Moreover, they must adapt appropriately and remain abreast of media consumption trends.

By adopting a multifaceted approach to media relations, PR professionals can help ensure that their clients' messages are accurately conveyed to the public and that their reputations remain intact in an increasingly complex media landscape.

Strategies for Managing Public Perception

In today's fast-paced and interconnected world, the rise of social media and the proliferation of news sources has

made it more challenging for brands to manage their public perception. The widespread dissemination of fake news and misinformation has led to a loss of trust in traditional media sources, making it even more critical for organisations to be proactive in shaping their narrative.

But, with the right strategies, brands can develop a favourable public perception and protect their reputation. By monitoring media channels, communicating with their audience, and providing factual information, they can overcome the challenges of the fake news era and emerge with a solid and respected reputation.

It involves a multi-pronged strategy that includes real-time listening, analysis, strategising, and timed response. Ultimately, staying vigilant, authentic, and adaptable to the ever-changing media landscape is the key. Here are some practical strategies for managing public perception:

Transparency and Authenticity are Key

In the age of fake news, authenticity and transparency have never been more critical. Consumers and voters are increasingly sceptical of brands and public figures and demand transparency and honesty in all communications. To build trust with audiences, brands must be honest and open about their practices, admit mistakes, and take responsibility for missteps.

Authenticity is also critical, with audiences responding positively to brands and public figures who are genuine to their values. Brands then must be open and honest about their practices and communicate authentically. When people feel they can trust an organisation or individual, they are more likely to believe what they say.

In 2017, Pepsi faced backlash after releasing an ad that many people found tone-deaf and offensive. The company quickly responded by pulling the ad, issuing a public apology, and engaging in a dialogue with consumers to understand their concerns. By being transparent, authentic, and responsive, Pepsi was able to mitigate the impact of the controversy and rebuild trust with its customers.

Social Media Monitoring

Social media can be a powerful tool for managing public perception but also a liability, so it is required for brands to continuously monitor social media chatter so they can track false information and respond quickly to correct them.

Because social media is the modern and fastest form of word-of-mouth, it has become a new battlefield. According to a Nielsen survey, 77% of customers trust the advice of family and friends when seeking information about new items. Because of this, social proof, as this online version of word-of-mouth marketing is called, cannot be overstated.

Beyond monitoring, social media platforms also provide opportunities to communicate with audiences, share accurate information, and respond to comments, messages, and reviews. This helps create a solid connection with your audience and demonstrates that you respect their input.

Engage with Traditional Media

Traditional media can still be a powerful tool for managing public perception, and brands need to engage with traditional media to share accurate information and correct any false information. Building relationships with journalists and media outlets that cover their industry or topic is also helpful. By providing accurate and timely information, brands can establish themselves as trusted sources and increase the likelihood of positive coverage.

PR professionals can also leverage traditional media to build positive perceptions by highlighting the positive impact of brands on the community, industry, or society. However, it's important to note that traditional media is just one piece of the puzzle in managing public perception.

During his election campaign, French President Emmanuel Macron faced a barrage of false information, rumours and conspiracies spread on social media and traditional media. One spread the vile rumour that Mrs Macron had been born a man.

Perception Management In A Post-Truth Era: Navigating The Challenges of A Complex Landscape

The Macron campaign was able to counteract these false narratives by leveraging social media to engage with voters directly, using targeted ads to spread accurate information, and partnering with trusted journalists to provide accurate reporting. By being proactive, strategic, and authentic, the Macron campaign overcame the challenges of the fake news landscape and won the election.

The Importance of Addressing Concerns Promptly

In today's connected world, information may spread rapidly. Taking care of issues as soon as they develop is crucial. This involves having a crisis communication plan and responding promptly to negative comments or feedback on social media. If problems are addressed promptly, they will likely have less of an effect on public opinion.

By acknowledging and addressing public concerns, brands can demonstrate their commitment to their stakeholders and protect their reputations. It is also essential to be transparent and honest in these communications, as attempts to cover up or downplay negative incidents can backfire and further damage your reputation.

Educate Your Audience

Another strategy for managing public perception is to educate your audience on your solutions, processes and activities. This empowers your audience to make informed decisions about you and your industry. When businesses are transparent about their processes, products, and services, customers are more likely to trust them.

Increased trust has been linked to growth in customer loyalty and positive word-of-mouth advertising. By providing comprehensive information, companies can also differentiate themselves from their competitors and establish themselves as industry leaders in the eyes of their customers. Overall, educating your audience can help manage public perception and build a positive reputation for your business.

Seek Professional Help

The management of public perception can be challenging, and there are instances when it may be essential to seek the assistance of a professional. PR professionals can assist businesses in managing their public image and combating fake news or misinformation. Brands can also collaborate with other types of experts, such as attorneys and cybersecurity specialists.

Working with a public relations professional can guide businesses in handling difficult situations that could negatively impact their reputation. They can help businesses develop effective communication strategies and respond to any negative press promptly and appropriately. PR professionals can also provide valuable insight into how the public perceives the company and suggest ways to improve its image.

Another reason seeking professional help is essential is the potential legal implications of negative press. False information can cause significant harm to a business, leading to financial losses and even legal action. Working with lawyers specialising in reputation management can help enterprises to protect their brand and reputation by taking legal action against those who spread false information.

Cybersecurity experts can also help businesses mitigate the damage caused by incorrect information spread through social media or other digital platforms by tracing the source and taking steps to remove it.

Summarising it all

Overall, managing perception in the age of fake news is a complex task that requires vigilance, authenticity, and strategic thinking. Transparency and authenticity have never been more critical, with consumers and voters demanding honesty and openness from businesses and public figures. While social media has become dominant in shaping public opinion, traditional media outlets still hold significant sway.

By following actionable strategies like monitoring social media channels, building relationships with trusted journalists, and being transparent and authentic in all communications, businesses, public figures, and PR professionals can navigate the challenges of the fake news landscape and build trust with audiences. With these strategies, organisations can successfully manage their public perception, even in the face of misinformation and false information.

BIO

Edward Israel-Ayide

Edward Israel-Ayide, a public relations and marketing communications professional, is the Founder and Head of Communications & Strategy at Carpe Diem Solutions, an agency that employs storytelling strategies to help brands build trust with their audiences.

Edward leads a team of communications strategists, content specialists, and media relations experts who advise C-Level executives and decision-makers on strategies for increasing their share of voice, managing reputations, building trust and creating culturally connected brands.



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Perception Management | Akinde Jesutofunmi Temitope



The COVID-19 pandemic has changed how businesses operate and communicate with their audiences. With the rise of social media, companies have a powerful tool to manage perception during crises. The COVID-19 pandemic has presented unprecedented challenges for businesses, governments, and individuals worldwide. As a result, effective crisis management has become more critical. Collaboration and cooperation were effective in successful crisis management during the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes working with stakeholders such as employees, customers, suppliers, and the wider community to mitigate the impact of the crisis. For example, businesses may need to collaborate with suppliers to ensure a steady supply of materials or with customers to understand their changing needs and preferences.

Crises management is a critical organisational function. Neglecting it can have consequences on stakeholders, losses for an organisation, or end its existence. Crisis management is preparing for, responding to, and recovering from a crisis. It involves a series of activities and strategies designed to minimise the impact of a crisis on an organisation, its stakeholders, and the public. It risks assessment and analysis, emergency planning, communication planning, and response and recovery operations.

Social media remains an essential tool for businesses and individuals to shape and influence their image. Perception management through social media involves creating and maintaining a positive image, building relationships with target audiences, and promoting a brand or individual's values and strengths.

It is a learned skill to ensure that the message you want to communicate is understood clearly. It depicts what people interpret when they hear about you or what we think of people, situations, or anything based on how they affect our stimuli or what we feel for and about them. Perception management helps businesses manage their reputation by

monitoring conversations about them online, in the media, or through other communication channels. By tracking and responding to negative comments or reviews, businesses can maintain a positive reputation and build customer trust.

The first step in leveraging social media for perception management is to create a comprehensive social media strategy. This involves identifying the target audience, developing a brand voice, and defining key messages. It is essential to create a content calendar and post regularly to ensure a consistent engagement with the audience.

Monitoring social media mentions is also crucial for perception management. This involves tracking conversations about a brand or individual on social media using social listening and sentiment analysis tools. Responding to feedback appropriately can help build a positive reputation and address any concerns.

Engaging with the audience is essential for building relationships and promoting a positive image. Responding to comments and direct messages on time can demonstrate that the brand or individual values their audience. Using social media as a platform for conversations and building relationships can create loyal followers and advocates for the brand or individual.

Sharing positive news and accomplishments is an effective way to build a positive image. This can include product launches, awards, and positive customer feedback to create a positive perception and reinforce the brand's or individual's values and strengths.

Visual content is more engaging and memorable than text alone. Using images and videos to convey a brand's message and showcase products or services effectively shapes perception. Visual content can create emotional connections and help audiences remember the brand or individual.

Partnering with influencers who align with the brand values and a strong following

can help amplify the message and reach new audiences. Influencers can also help create buzz and promote positive perception through endorsements and collaborations.

Authenticity is key in perception management. Being transparent and authentic in messaging and actions can help build trust and strengthen the brand's or individual's reputation. Avoiding hiding negative feedback or portraying the brand or individual in a way that is not true to their values is crucial.

In conclusion, leveraging social media for perception management requires a comprehensive strategy that involves monitoring social media mentions, engaging with the audience, sharing positive news, using visuals, leveraging influencers, and staying authentic. By taking these steps, businesses and individuals can create and maintain a good image and build relationships with their audiences.

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BIO

Akinde Jesutofunmi

Akinde Jesutofunmi is a public relations specialist passionate about helping brands connect with their audience through effective storytelling techniques. She currently works with SoMediasolutions, a public relations agency in Lagos, Nigeria.

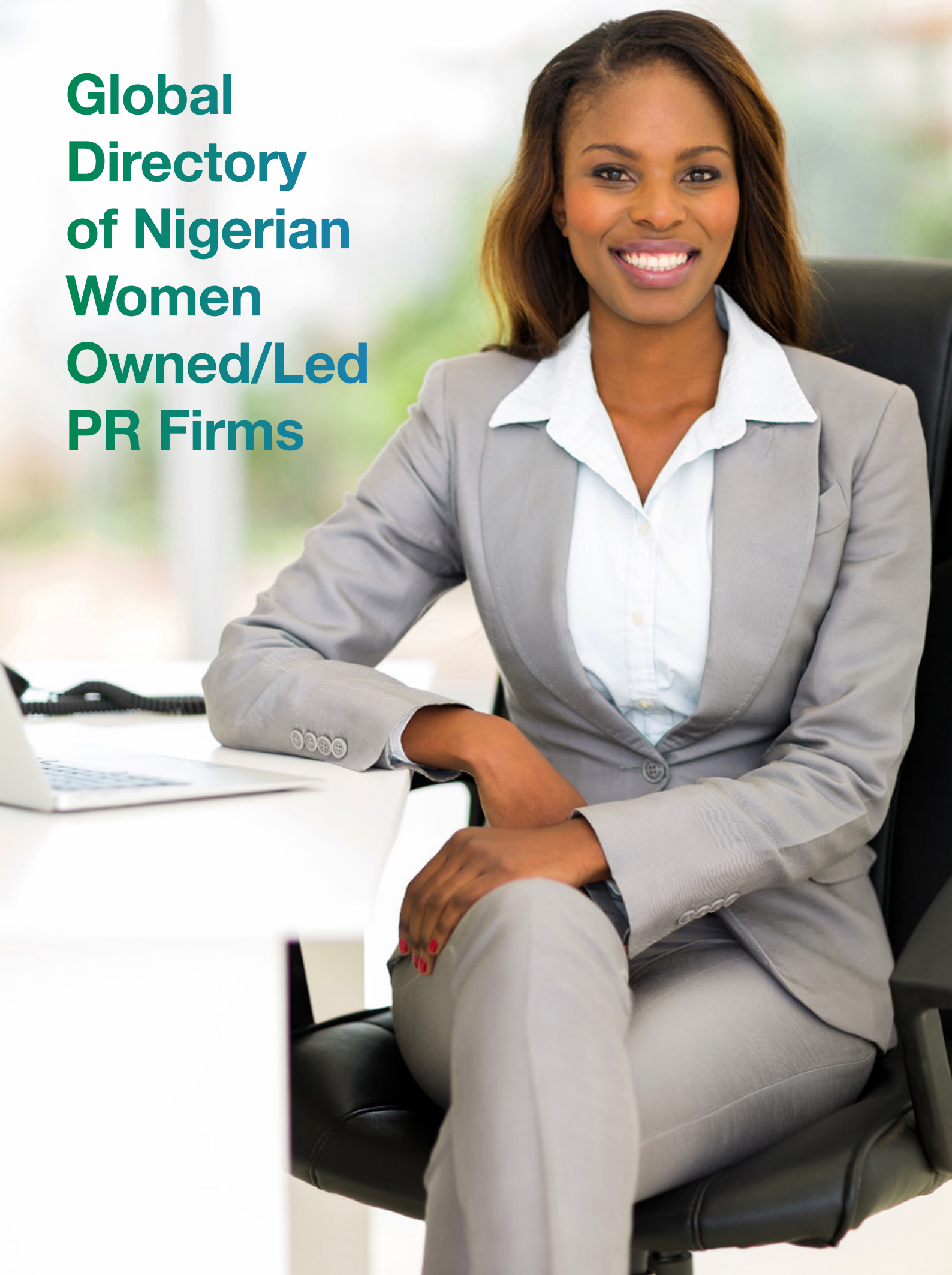
Tofunmi holds a first class degree in Communications and Media studies from Afe Babalola University and is a member of the Nigerian Institute of Marketing.

She enjoys the experience of working with diverse brands and the opportunity to make impact.



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Global Directory of Nigerian Women Owned/Led PR Firms



Global Directory of Nigerian Women Owned/ Led PR Firms

Abiola Bonuola Communications

Lagos, NG

Name of Founder/Firm Lead	Abiola Bonuola
Email Address	hello@abcs.africa
Website	https://abcs.africa/

Technology PR and Events

ABCS provides content creation & marketing, event PR, crisis & reputation management, influencer and celebrity engagement, media engagement, and social media engagement to clients across the tech industry, AI and cryptocurrency.

Content Creator Specialist

Lagos, NG

Name of Founder/Firm Lead	Opeyemi Obembe
Email Address	opeyemi.obembe2019@gmail.com
Website	

Advertising and Marketing

Opeyemi Obembe is a Public Relations & Advertising Professional and a content creator specialist with hands-on experience in branding, social media management, content creation & curation, content writing & graphics design.

A'Lime Media Limited

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Name of Founder/Firm Lead	Emilia Asim-Ita
Email Address	alimemedia1@gmail.com
Website	www.alime.media.com

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Name of Founder/Firm Lead	Jennifer Obiekwugo
Email Address	jenniferobiokwugo@gmail.com
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Name of Founder/Firm Lead	Kemi Olawoye
Email Address	stories@bora.com.ng
Website	LinkedIn- https://www.linkedin.com/company/boracommunications/

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Name of Founder/Firm Lead **Oluwabukola Jegede**

Email Address **jegede.or@gmail.com**

Website **www.thegiantcreative.org**

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Name of Founder/Firm Lead **Salisu Kafilat**

Email Address **reign.digital1@gmail.com**

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Name of Founder/Firm Lead **Obianuju Lilian Ikegbune**

Email Address **ujulilyan@gmail.com**

Website **www.instagram.com/thelifestylebrandconsult**

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The Lifestyle Brand Consult is a PR and Communications agency that Strategically and creatively tell Brand stories.

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Name of Founder/Firm Lead **Satira Osemudiamen**

Email Address **satira@satiramediaandpr.com**

Website **www.satiramediaandpr.com**

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Satira Media and public relations is a strategic communications agency established to enhance the reputation and commercial value of personal brands, organisations and events within the hospitality, entertainment and consumer goods industries in Africa.

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Lagos, NG

Name of Founder/Firm Lead **Ifeoma Areh**

Email Address **oma@wildflowerpr.com**

Website **www.wildflowerpr.com**

Digital Communications, Media Production and Brand Management
Global Brand, Communications & Management Consultant; TV & Digital Content Producer.

Stephanie John and Associates

Lagos, NG

Name of Founder/Firm Lead **Uche Ajene**

Email Address **uaa@stephaniejohn.ng**

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How PR Professionals Can Become Industry Thought Leaders

| Ayishat Olanrewaju



One of the significant roles of a PR professional is to maintain a beneficial relationship between an organisation and its public. And as PR professionals, there might be the tendency to perform this duty day in and day out while forgetting to work on your brand. Professionals should not only aim to improve the organisations they work for but also improve themselves, keep growing, and build an impactful career.



One of the impactful ways professionals can stand out in their industries is to become thought leaders. You would likely mention two or three industry thought leaders if asked to name the top five professionals in your industry who provide value. Why is this so? Most likely due to the following factors:
They show up regularly to deliver value.
They are well-known for impacting their industry.
They are top industry performers and do well in communicating effectively.

And so, as a professional, it is imperative to ensure you effectively position yourself to deliver value to your ideal audience regularly. Therefore, becoming a thought leader is essential. Becoming a thought leader has several benefits, including:

- Being recognised in your industry for your unique opinions and stances on issues.
- Improvement in your brand awareness and brand credibility.
- Having access to opportunities, partnerships, and collaboration.
- Becoming the go-to for expert advice in your industry.
- Getting invited to share more of your opinion and value.
- Having better access to potential clients and customers, and so on.

So, what is thought leadership?

It is the ability to communicate your knowledge, including your skills, expertise, experience, and education, to



add value to the lives of others. The basis of thought leadership is adding value. You must add value to become a genuine thought leader.

What are some of the traits of thought leaders?

They are experts in their chosen field.
They share their unique and valued opinion.
They are honest.
They seek to add value.
They keep learning about their industry.

How can you become an industry thought leader?

Here are some things to consider:

Be clear on the value you want to deliver

If you don't, you are not a thought leader. You must be clear on the area you want to focus on and how you want to help, lend your voice, or positively impact others. You must be able to choose a niche or an area you are knowledgeable about.

Set clear goals

Now that you are clear about the area you want to focus on, you need to set clear goals concerning your personal brand. What do you want to achieve with your thought leadership? State these goals clearly.

Write your story and be a great storyteller

You have a story, and it is essential not to neglect it when building your brand. Your story might just be what someone out there needs to hear or read to move to the next level of their lives or be a better version of themselves. In addition, you must be able to tell your story in an impactful way. Learn to become a better storyteller.

Who are your target audience

Who will benefit from the value you hope to deliver? Don't be generic, be specific and ensure you understand these people and their demographic and psychographic details.

Choose your platforms carefully

It is one thing to want to deliver value and know your target audience, and it is another thing to be able to reach them. A great way to get your target audience is by choosing the right platforms where you can find these people. Conduct your research to find the best platforms to reach your target audience.

Choose the suitable content formats

Some of the content formats you can consider include articles, features, eBooks, interviews, reports, videos, podcasts, etc. When choosing your content formats, consider your platforms and target audience.

Have a content production process

What content creation process can you draw up forums that can help you? For

instance, will you batch your content and schedule them in advance? Will you create your content on the go? How will you come up with the content? Here, you can also think of how you will repurpose long-form and valuable content from one platform to another platforms.

Create a schedule you can realistically follow

Consistency is vital as a thought leader. However, consistency should be based on what you can realistically keep up with. Develop a consistent content schedule for your personal brand. Stay true to your voice: Remember that a critical aspect of being a "thought leader" is your voice. And so, stay true to your voice and don't try to mirror another person's voice.

Measure

Without a system to measure what is working and what isn't, you might be oblivious to your growth and areas of improvement. And so, have a measurement system in place.

Are you ready to become a thought leader? It would help if you incorporated the above strategies.

BIO

Ayishat Olanrewaju

Ayishat Olanrewaju is a Brand & Communications Expert with over six years of experience helping brands communicate with their target audience online and offline. She's a certified brand manager focusing on brand strategy, professional writing, content marketing, and digital media. She has also worked with both individuals and corporate brands locally and internationally. Ayishat is the Founder of Corporately Lucid, a Digital Media Agency in Africa, and African Freelancers, an Online Community of Freelancers in Africa? She is a PhD Candidate in Media and Communication at Pan Atlantic University, Lagos.



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The Effective Use of Perception Management Strategies for a Positive National Image

| Adedoyin Jaiyesimi



The first time I travelled to a country in Europe was decades ago. While I was thrilled to be abroad, I was also shocked. I was shocked that there were tons of homeless people on the streets. I was even more amazed when I eventually travelled to the United States (U.S.). Could this be the same U.S. that was painted like heaven to me? I believed that being in the U.S. would be equivalent to being in paradise, but I was shocked that the country was not as perfect as I had thought it would be.

Some years ago, if you told an average Nigerian about the not-so-great parts of the U.S., they wouldn't believe you. Thanks to the strong perception of the country they had in their minds - a perception reinforced by the media, which portrays the U.S. as a land of opportunities.

Let's flip this story and come back home.

When people think and talk about Nigeria and even Africa, the negatives tend to come up first. We hear about corruption. We see the news of how some Nigerians in a country misbehave, and somehow;

all Nigerians are perceived to behave that way. What is the difference between us and the nations of the West? One big difference is in how they successfully manage perceptions about their country.

No nation is perfect, and creating a positive national image should not be left to chance. This is where leveraging perception management strategies comes in. This is not about spinning or masking the true identity of a nation. It is about shaping the impressions and associations that people have when they think about the nation. It's about ensuring that audiences, both internal and external, have a balanced perception of what the country represents.

The first step to achieving this is to understand what the current perception is and why it exists. Knowing where you are will give better insights into the gaps and what needs to be changed. This can be done through surveys, polls and focus groups conducted nationwide. For a nation like Nigeria, where perception tilts towards the negative, this will present an opportunity to dig deeper into the root cause of the issue.

After understanding the current perception, the next step is to define how you want the public perception to change. That plan must cover these essential elements of perception management:

Perceptions of the nation

This covers the image, reputation, and identity the nation wants. While the idea is tied to specific associations that the audience has in their minds, reputation is the overall judgement of what the nation is and what it isn't. This means that steps must be taken to fix the nation's image in the eyes of citizens and critical audiences. This will have an impact on the reputation and overall identity of the country through constant reinforcing of messaging that is consistent with the image being portrayed and answers the question, 'Who are we as a nation?'

Symbolic Actions

How the institutions that represent the nation behave must reinforce competence, trust, and integrity. Reality must match the image being portrayed. Again, the goal of perception management is not to whitewash the image of a nation. Instead, it presents an opportunity to engage with key audiences, get their feedback and ensure coherence in their experience when they interface with agents and institutions representing the nation. This means that service delivery in the public sector ought to become more seamless, with minimal hassles, for example. It also means that the needs and interests of citizens should be taken into account and met at different levels. All of this will have an influence on reputation.

Spokespersons

This is a critical component of the perception management strategy for any nation. Spokespersons are the people who are perceived by the audience to represent or speak on behalf of the nation

and arms of government. Spokespersons must be strategically selected as they will be instrumental in conveying the key messages that align with the positive image to be portrayed, and they also make a significant impact on how the nation will be perceived. Spokespersons must be seen to be competent, reliable, and empathetic. They must also behave with integrity - telling the truth and keeping promises. One of the fastest ways to create a negative perception is for spokespersons to tell lies or try to distort the truth, especially in this present age where it is easy to detect inconsistencies. Spokespersons must also provide accurate, open, and thorough communication about important matters that affect the citizens. Perhaps, most importantly, spokespersons must be able to listen, take on feedback and criticism and implement changes where required.

Audiences

Finally, it is essential to determine how different audiences will be reached and engaged. A nation is filled with individuals in different age groups, social classes and so on. Different strategies will be needed to reinforce the positive image and critical messages that are important for them to have. Yet again, this underscores the importance of engagement and feedback. It is necessary to carry them along and deal with any issues.

Creating a positive national image is something we urgently need to work on as a nation. While we need to make these positive perceptions in audiences within and outside the country, these perceptions must be constantly reinforced through reality-based actions. Avoiding dissonance in what is said, what is done and what is experienced is critical. There also needs to be a constant loop of positive action, feedback, and intentionally reinforcing the right narratives.

I hope it is apparent that this is not a one-off thing. Instead, it is a commitment to shaping who we are as a nation and living out that positive identity in every way possible by leveraging the right perception management strategies.



BIO

Adedoyin Jaiyesimi

Adedoyin Jaiyesimi is a Communications Advisor, Corporate Trainer and Co-Founder of The Comms Avenue, a capacity-building and networking platform for communications professionals across Africa with over 1000 professionals from 20 African countries in its mission-driven community.

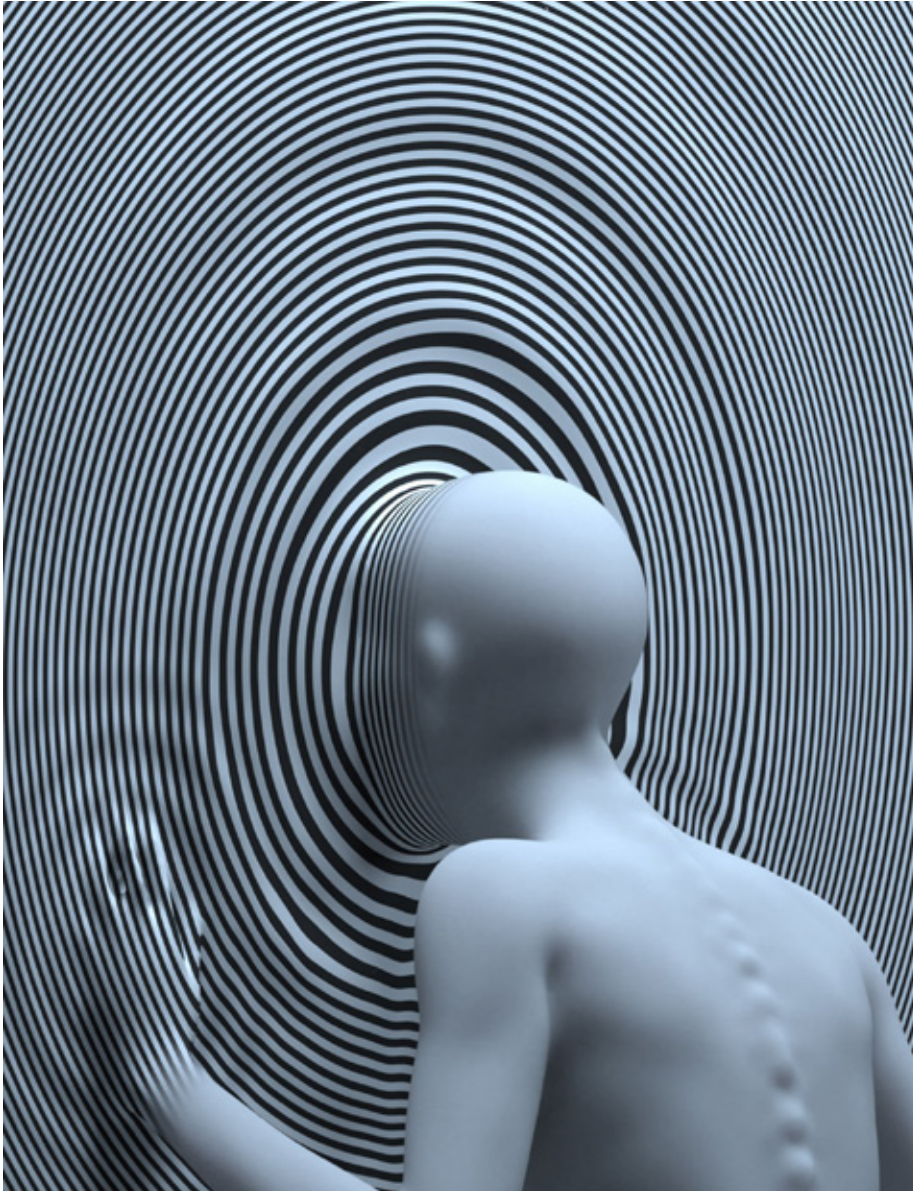
With over 11 years of professional experience across the corporate, development and philanthropic sectors, Adedoyin is also a part-time lecturer for the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (UK) programme at the University of Nairobi, Kenya. She is the Author of the book, *From Clueless to Success* – a collection of 20 backstories from her journey as a communications professional.

Adedoyin has a master's degree in Corporate and Marketing Communications from IE Business School, and she currently serves as the Vice President of the IE Nigeria Alumni Board. She is also a member of the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC).



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(Mis)Managing Perception | Olufemi Adeyemo



Organisations have typically managed perception by marketing, branding and packaging themselves in a powerful and relevant way to their external audience, understandably so, since the future of a business depends on successful marketing vis-à-vis objectives, markets, channels, budgets, and so on.

However, today's reputation economy, fostered by digital, mobile and social channels, underscores the impact of customers' engagement beyond traditional marketing, thus implying that brand growth requires much more than out-noising the competition.

Talking about competition, a particular businessman made the case that "If you don't manage your brand, somebody else will do it for you and that somebody will likely be your competitor." As improbable as it seems, it is usually the result of an 'inside job'. You see, when business owners and their teams live in a bubble, believing that relationships with their brand community (particularly customers) are flawless, they fail to recognise that the power of a brand lies in the minds of customers- what they've felt, seen, heard and learned about the brand as a result of their experiences over time.

Essentially, "A brand's power derives from the goodwill and name recognition that it has earned over time, which translates into higher sales volume and higher profit margins against competing brands." (businessdictionary.com). Indeed, research and practice suggest that marketing is not a battle of products, services or ideas but of perceptions, i.e. more profound, more nuanced perspectives from the brand community.

While eyeballs, clicks, views, likes, the share of voice, and such are significant brand metrics, all the marketing in the world can be damaged by one broken brand promise, leading to worrying data like this one from Harris Interactive/ RightNow: "Over 80% of customers quit doing business with a company because of a bad customer experience." And the impact of a negative perception of a brand echoes in Digimind's report: "Over 80% of reputation damage comes from a mismatch between the buzz and the reality." Conversely, when an organisation's external communications and actions align with an internal culture and systems designed to deliver on its promise, the brand resonates with authenticity.

Perception management is about establishing credibility. In 'What Makes Brands Great' Chuck Brymer stressed that "Brands are based on promises and trust; hence they must be credible. Customers grant companies the right to provide them with what they need. As Adam Smith wrote... in The Wealth of Nations: "Money is merely a claim on goods and services." Today we know that customers who experience a breach in the trust will take that claim elsewhere." Mystified that "companies invest big advertising dollars to drive traffic but offer little reason for the customer to stay or return", marketing guru B.J. Bueno called it Revolving Door Syndrome".

Such an own goal underscores Kate Zabriskie's insightful perspective that "The customer's perception is your reality"; which resonates across management and marketing thought-whether Peter Drucker's conclusions in the 1950s that: "the purpose of a business is to create a customer" and "The customer is the foundation of a business and keeps it in existence. He alone gives employment" or Lynn Hunsaker's assertion several decades later: "Customers make paychecks and budgets possible... shareholders leave when customers leave, not the other way round."

In other words, how your customers feel about your business, expressed through the share of wallet, repeat purchase, word-of-mouth, and so forth, is what makes it a going concern; a fundamental attribute being that solid consumer confidence leads to increased sales.

Therefore, the success of your business

depends on what customers experience and say about you, not just what you say about yourself.

For instance, several years ago, a University of Michigan study on customer service found that McDonald's, which served 68 million customers per day in the US (almost 24% of the population at the time), promised to provide outstanding service, quality, value, cleanliness while having every customer in every restaurant smile. However, that brand promise was eroded by slow service, rude employees, unclean restaurants, missing products/wrong orders and being out of Happy Meal toys. Consequently, on any given day, 11% (7.48 million) of those 68 million customers were dissatisfied with their visit. More than half of them (over 3.74 million) cut back on visits to McDonald's and told as many as 10 others about their unsatisfactory experience.

Because McDonald's is a top brand, it is easy to scoff at the finding until one realises that by reneging on its brand promise, it undermined its goodwill and performed below its 'brand capacity'. Scott M. Davis and Michael Dunn discovered then that "Poor customer service may be costing McDonald's up to \$750 million per year in lost business."

Putting the age-long debate 'Is perception reality?' in the context of Zabriskie's view mentioned above, the customers' perception (dissatisfaction) was McDonald's reality (\$750 million per year in lost business). While three-quarters of a billion dollars in potential revenue per year did not appear in the company's books, the damage to its goodwill may never be recovered. Without a doubt, perception is mismanaged when organisations fail to understand that a brand is sustainable only when the customer consistently experiences its promise.

It is not uncommon for the C-suite to split hairs over a quantitative measurement like revenue, a lagging indicator (after the fact); attention must equally be given to a qualitative measure like customer satisfaction, a leading indicator. As Ryan Stuart poignantly observed, "If you have unhappy, dissatisfied, or disloyal customers... chances are the business isn't going to prosper moving forward."

Organisations must prioritise getting the customer experience right, not because customers are unreasonably fussy or complicated to please, but because brands made those promises in the first place.

With the potential to improve brand equity (the bankable value your brand has acquired from its ability to attract and retain customers), one can say that true competitive advantage lies in customer experience, which, in the words of Tom Knighton, is the competitive battleground where business is won or lost.

BIO

Olufemi Adeyemo

A brand experience and strategy consultant, Olufemi Adeyemo is also a visiting faculty at Pan-Atlantic University's School of Media and Communication (SMC) and a faculty instructor on the leadership and organisation track at the Joseph Business School, both in Lagos, Nigeria. A skilled writer, speaker and trainer with a background in political science, mass communication and qualitative research. He has written speeches and presentations for CEOs, senior executives and board-level directors at private and listed organisations. He has ghost-written topical and biographical books and published articles in national newspapers and online media.



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Creating Pragmatic Brand Perception Through Corporate Social Responsibility

| Pheobe Pappoe 

Undoubtedly, it is considered that a company's brand is its promise. Almost every business treats its reputation as its brand; therefore, this must reflect in what the company can deliver to its customers and what value the customers can expect from the company's products and services.

In this context, let's describe branding as using social responsibility to create a differentiation instead of a specific name, logo or other elements that constitute a brand.

Brand perception, on the other hand, refers to the way consumers and potential customers think of a company. Positive brand perception can promote customer loyalty and help a company grow its customer base.

Presently, about 70 per cent of consumers make purchasing decisions with brands they feel are dedicated to giving back, particularly with causes they also believe in and support.

Social responsibility programs have become a part of business strategy, and these actions establish the company's presence in the minds of consumers and the general public.

Do you know that CSR is not limited to donating cash or other material items? Taking time off your busy schedules to do collaborative and volunteer work is all part of CSR. It plays an instrumental role in establishing a perception in the minds of the external public.



Positive Press & Staff Involvement

For an effective outcome, colleagues at all levels of the organisation must be involved to demonstrate a united front. This also boosts morale and adds enthusiasm to the work, thereby increasing productivity. Social responsibility needs collective efforts and implementation, although it may be a management initiative. Social solid responsibility policies have proven to be an effective way for many companies to generate positive press. The media reports for societal good; therefore, social initiatives gain more attention. The media also use their channels to inform and educate their audience about the company's "good works". This is an organic way to advertise the company.

Associating your CSR with your Brand

In as much as you want your company to be a responsible one, your CSR efforts must correspond with your brand messaging and values to create a perception in consumers' minds. To integrate your CSR activities with your brand, communication materials must have the same look and feel to inspire instant brand recall among the public; your CSR efforts should be easily associated with your brand. Believe me or not, social responsibility, when done right, also sets companies apart from their competitors. The best way for businesses to nurture their good reputation is to put more effort into improving their corporate social responsibility.

CSR as a Business Strategy

Undoubtedly, over the years, social responsibility has demonstrated its value as a crucial component of corporate strategy. This is why even the world's largest corporations spend millions on CSR annually. It is also comfortable to refer to social responsibility as a management strategy because businesses are increasingly using it to impact society constructively. Furthermore, as consumers become more conscious of the social and environmental impact of their products and services, CSR has become an essential factor in attracting and retaining customers. Consequently, incorporating CSR into business strategies can enhance consumer loyalty and a positive

brand image and help companies establish a good reputation while conducting their everyday business operations.

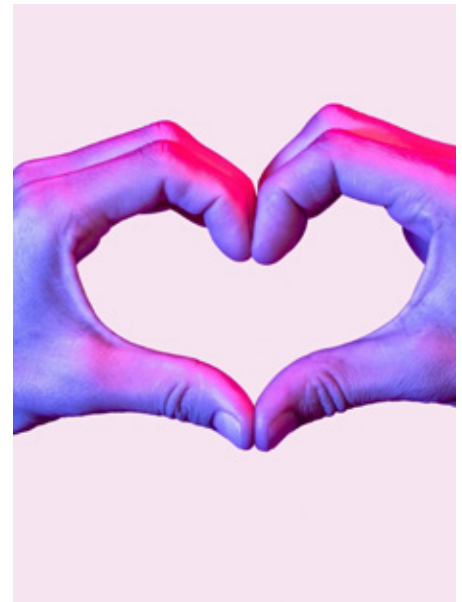
While it is a fact that businesses operate to maximise profits, maintaining a good relationship with society in that they function is still vital; companies that can demonstrate having a social conscience are seen to have greater chances of success, and that is where social responsibility comes in. In addition, CSR initiatives can also attract and retain top talent, as employees are increasingly seeking out companies that align with their personal values and have a positive impact on society.

By prioritising CSR, businesses can create a more engaged and motivated workforce

Companies can promote themselves as socially responsible by using public relations and marketing strategies highlighting their commitment to ethical and sustainable practices, which can attract and retain customers who value those principles.

Projecting your CSR efforts

Another area that could be explored is using digital media and influencer marketing to further project companies' excellent CSR efforts. Many consumers, including myself, believe experiential and emotional benefits are essential in cementing our loyalty. That's where social causes and charitable organisations that your brand supports come into play. Customers who connect emotionally to a brand will recommend it more than those who do not. This business-customer relationship must be built on shared values and a sense of purpose. Your brand can positively impact society and build a loyal customer base by supporting social causes and charitable organisations. This not only increases sales but also improves the market reputation of your brand. Customers are becoming more aware of the impact of their purchases on society and the environment. By aligning your brand with social causes, you can capitalise on this trend while distinguishing yourself from competitors who are solely concerned with profits – thereby creating a pragmatic perception in the minds of the public.



BIO

Phoebe Pappoe

Phoebe Pappoe is a Communications & PR Consultant with nearly a decade of experience in public relations, corporate communications, corporate social responsibility, event planning and management, media relations, digital PR, advertising, and content creation. She is currently a PR Consultant for Abjel Communications in the United Kingdom. She has acquired practical experience in executing communications-related activities for multinational clients including Gold Fields, UNICEF, Wilmar, HMD Global, Yabsat, AirFrance, Kosmos Energy, ExxonMobil, Google, Unilever, Guinness Ghana among others during her stint with Ogilvy Ghana Ltd.

She is also the immediate-past Corporate Communications Officer for United Bank for Africa Ghana who oversaw internal and external communications.

During her stint at both Ogilvy and UBA Ghana, Phoebe's stellar contribution won her employers and clients international and local awards, including SABRES, Chartered Institute of Marketing Ghana, Global CSR & Sustainability Awards, Institute of Public Relations Ghana PR Excellence Awards and more. She's a member of the Chartered Institute of Public Relations UK, Institute of Public Relations, and Women in PR Ghana.



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The Role of Perception Management in Politics Today

| Temidire Bada



Interethnic conflict and the military dictatorship dominated Nigeria's political scene throughout the 1990s, leaving the nation unprepared for the democracy we enjoy today. Since the Obasanjo administration began civilian rule, the country's political climate has been on an up-and-down roller coaster, beset by corruption, greed, an unstable economy, and succeeding governments that have struggled to forge a sense of national unity and inclusivity. As the age of

technology evolves, the rising stance of perception management has begun to significantly impact how we participate in and observe politics in Nigeria today. Call it the new political era; this new dawn has imprinted young Nigerians, which is apparent during election seasons. The voters learning, experiences, and political socialisation primarily influence this awareness. Citizens no longer act solely as voters; they are political consumers.

What Changed?

Politics in Nigeria has taken on new forms over the past several years. Voters' decisions are now influenced by every statement and action made by political candidates, opponents, supporters, and political parties. Politicians continually search for innovative ways to interact with people in the most effective political communication.

Digital disruption gave birth to the age of media savvy and active populace swayed by trends, emotional appeal, and social capital. With over 32.9 million active social media users in Nigeria and a statistic of only 25 million voters in the 2023 elections out of 93 million registered voters, it became evident that citizens on social media will constantly challenge the government's actions, thereby forming alliances and building social construct. Cases like the ENDSARS campaign in 2020 and the Twitter ban, which left young business owners penniless, made a significant impact in the political sphere we have today; the actions of the government left an impression on an age group which included new voters and "undecided" voters a simple choice – change of government.

The objective of political impression management implies that politicians and political parties can improve the perception they give to their audience. Consequently, these political candidates can adjust their perceived personalities to meet voters' expectations. From Kashim Shettima's outfit at the 2022 Nigerian Bar Association Conference to Bola Tinubu's 'Emilokan' slogan to Peter Obi's soft vibe, relatable demeanour, and 'New Nigeria' chants, the style has become increasingly important than genuine debate. Charisma, personality, tone, language style, and the impression politicians leave on the public have become the foundation of public opinion and conversations. For instance, people say the Vice President, Professor Yemi Osibanjo, represents the 'ideal' political personality through his charm, social

appeal, modern ideology, and intelligent and relatable speeches.

Politician often employs perception management to gain and maintain voters' support, especially during election campaigns. Political parties and candidates use various strategies to create a positive image of themselves and a negative image of their opponents. This can involve messaging that highlights the party's achievements, promotes its policies, and appeals to the emotions and aspirations of the electorate. It can also involve negative campaigning that seeks to undermine the credibility and reputation of opponents.



However, in light of the 2023 Nigerian elections, most of these strategies, which included smear campaigns, didn't work, as perception and actions became determining factors for most voters.

Perception management is a tool that can be used to anyone's advantage, be it in a brand development study or even in crisis management situations when faced with a scandal or controversy. Most politicians and their teams use perception management techniques to minimise the damage to their reputations and maintain the support of their constituents. This is done through crafting messages that aim to reassure the public, deflect blame, or shift attention to other issues. By creating a positive image of themselves and their parties, politicians can build trust and establish themselves as credible leaders who can be relied upon to deliver their promises.

Take Home

Brand Loyalty is Real
Officeholders, like providers of goods and services, want their stakeholders'

loyalty to repurchase their products, seeking to repeat their tenures. For a political party to be successful, it must create, build, and maintain a brand identity that can translate to loyalty. There are many indicators that political branding- reinforcing an agenda and creating a distinctive impression- always works. A comparative example is the All Progressives Congress (APC) relevance in Nigeria despite the substantial negative press.

Stay Informed

Understanding human psychology will always have a significant impact on perception management. Perception management is often used to respond to events and issues. Public Relations professionals and political strategists can learn from this by staying informed, monitoring trends and consumer behaviour, and being prepared to respond quickly and effectively to emerging issues and concerns.

Hiring Credible Professionals

The public relations management teams are supposed to be hidden instruments of political power. The result is seen in their respective principals' poor representation and de-marketing. Politicians and significant public figures sometimes undermine the vast knowledge and experience of a credible public relations consultant. This has been apparent in some of the selections of government media advisers and their understanding

of the basic communication skills with the general public.

The ultimate goal of perception management is to influence thoughts and convey or deny selected information skillfully. As the old cliché says, 'Perception is everything'; it is essential to know that perception is transmitted through communication; therefore, any organisation or political leader looking to create a lasting impression must have a strong perception strategy in their arsenal.

BIO

Temidire Bada

Temidire Bada earned a degree in Mass Communication from Olabisi Onabanjo University, where she developed a passion for strategic and corporate communications.

Following a brief period in journalism, she currently serves as a Public Relations Associate at NOVVA Media and Communications, where she utilizes her skills and experience to provide exceptional results to clients from diverse backgrounds.



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Cultural Ambassadors: How to Create Positive Perception in the Workplace as a Foreign Employee

| Varvara Astapova



A sum of parts creates a whole, and the whole often becomes more than this sum.

The principle aptly describes how perception about any brand emerges. The components of brand perception can be illustrated by the formula below:

(Actions + Messages + Tones) x (Channels + Timeliness) = Brand Perception

First, it is what a brand does in the public space. Second, it is how a brand speaks about what it does and how facts are served to the audience. And third, it is where and when this cumulative information is communicated to the audience, whether it still has relevance and can be heard/seen fast enough to make an impact.

Creating a desirable brand perception

is double challenging when a brand operates in a new environment. For members of foreign teams, challenges arise as they are tasked to build their employee brand while adjusting to the environment and its inherent communication patterns, beliefs and biases.

As practically an outsider-turned-insider by employment, a foreign employee

has the strenuous task of becoming an insider by acceptance by the new team authentically. And often, foreign employees are associated with the national brands of their home countries. Team members tend to extend their established (and not positive, for negative biases settle down faster in people's minds) perception of these countries to foreign employees. As a result, adaptation takes longer; all team

members feel tension and discomfort, and divisive lines split teams stalling workplace productivity.

My own professional story informs my subject matter experience. I have been the only foreign employee among the team members of Nigerian origin. Moreover, we have been working in B2B communications — the field that speaks loudest about the importance of self-presentation. What is even more, I am a Russian — an employee from a country whose national brand has faced a massive blow due to its geopolitical actions and falling relatively short on PR efforts in the last years. Stemming from that, the general public and even professional circles consciously or subconsciously have been cringing at everything somehow associated with Russia's national brand.

In my case, I have been quite lucky as my Nigerian team members are open-minded PR professionals who understand the nature of perception and appraise me by my skills instead of national affiliations. However, negative biases may be strong enough to affect the collective morale, especially when a team has little to no expertise in communications.

To let my colleagues see my positive sides before they defined me through their lens and course-correct myself early enough, I devised several strategies that enhanced all five components of the brand perception formula above.

ACTIONS

Be proactive in learning about the local context of your workplace. When you are the one to enter a new environment, you are a guest, not a host. Passively waiting until everyone understands "how you do it" is hardly a sustainable option to earn acceptance. Ask questions whenever you notice something differs from what you are used to and show curiosity. What is the idea behind a particular way of doing things? Why does it matter? Should you act the same, and can you bring anything new to the order? If you expect your colleagues to understand you without proactivity in understanding them, your expectations will remain futile.

MESSAGES

Speak the local language. Not only literally but figuratively. A language is a cultural code, and adapting to it is a crucial step to becoming an insider. Even if you internally disagree with the communication style (e.g. official emails are more courteous than you are used to backing home), imitate it, at least initially. Once you break the ice, you can propose constructive novelties. The first thing first, and your first thing, is to make yourself trustworthy and respectful to those who welcome you.

TONE

Sound empathic. You do not have the same experiences as your colleagues, and you will likely not be able to fully sense the local peculiarities if you are in their country for a short period or especially a remote worker. If you notice that they are facing challenges different from yours, acknowledge it for yourself and think about how you can best optimise your co-working process. And if you see they are going through something that affects your productivity and can propose a solution, share the information via private channels first.

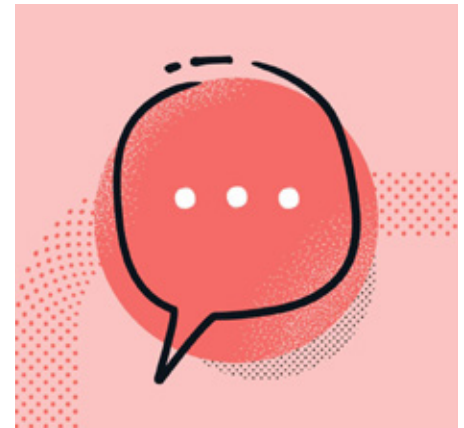
CHANNELS

Reach out to your colleagues beyond the workplace. It is barely achievable to learn what your team members live through if you interact only while completing work tasks. Engage them in conversations about their culture, local ways of doing things and good behaviour at work. You will definitely learn what can aid you in stakeholder management.

TIMELINESS

Work on positive perception from the very start. Once you join a foreign team, make efforts to adjust all components above from the first day. Time, tide and positive brand perception wait for none.

As part of a foreign team, you act as a cultural ambassador of your native country. How you position yourself projects onto all representatives of your



nation as your colleagues look at you to shape their vision of all your nationals, especially if you are the only comparative example. And though you are likely unable to increase the financial value of your nation's brand, you can contribute your fair share.

BIO

Varvara Astapova

Varvara is a certified political scientist specialising in marketing political communications with practical experience in B2B public relations, social research and project management. Varvara is keen on emerging markets and working in purpose-driven multinational teams focusing on sub-Saharan Africa.

She has been serving as a Communications Associate at Mosron Communications, a B2B public relations firm based in Nigeria, for several years, which has significantly advanced her knowledge of communication in a multicultural environment.

When she is not working, Varvara loves reading and writing industry articles and sharing her thoughts on Twitter as @VaryaAstapova.



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Perception vs Reality: Do your Values Match Their Perception?

| Praise Paul-Kayode



Imagine making a mess of your room while preparing for work; I'm talking foundation brush on the floor, five different shirts on the bed, perfume and lotion somewhere around the corner, and the rest of your belongings littered. Now, you get to the office only to hear your colleagues whisper or tell you upfront, "I like how organised you always look, 'you're always so put together and neat, 'see how clean you look". Some people might laugh in their minds and think, "if only they saw my room", while other people like me might feel a sting of guilt and probably reject the compliments in their minds. Why do these compliments poke your conscience? It is because they do not match your reality.

When a person focuses more on how they are being perceived and puts effort into making sure they are seen a certain way and not so much on if they have the right values, on if what they claim to offer has substance, the imbalance in concepts would eventually rip off the façade.

A company, for example, cannot want to be perceived as customer-oriented when they neglect its customers, give no ears to their complaints and make no efforts to solve their problems. Having the right perception in the eyes of the public is a good thing, but having the right perception and knowing it is a result of the correct values and principles your company uphold and the right services your organisation deliver is even better.

Perceptions are not just created overnight; they are prompted or brought about as a result of the actions of an organisation, both internally and externally. Organisations must align their values with their perceptions if they seek long-term outcomes such as customer loyalty and word-of-mouth marketing. Perception management emphasises reshaping or reconstructing the perception of the target market or niche to fulfil the desired motive or get favourable outcomes, but before all that, how about making sure what you offer or claim to offer has substance, that it's not all just words and that the image you hope to create in the minds of the consumers matches your reality and values.

One of the ways organisations can match their values to their perception is through communication. Communication is critical when trying to align values to perception; the public or target market needs to know what your offers are, what your principles depict and how you operate; they also need to know your challenges. The audience's feedback is also essential to ascertain that the message is understood. The company or organisation also has to be accessible; the public needs a go-to person, someone they can tender complaints to or make suggestions and enquiries within the organisation.

Still, transparency is a pertinent factor; organisations and companies must be open, transparent and honest while communicating. It was earlier stated that even challenges should be shared with the public. When a company is going through a crisis or facing a problem or two, they still need to show up, and it is not the time to hide or go MIA (missing in action). Having press conferences or releasing press statements can help alleviate the public's worries and make them know the organisation is on top of the matter.

The public must know that the organisation is fully aware of the situation and is creating measures to tackle it. Waiting it out and praying something

more controversial pops up in the news so that people can forget is not an option; the public need to know the details of the situation and be informed on what is being done to address it. They need to feel that you still have their best interests at heart, even during a crisis; their feelings result in and build good perceptions.

Another vital factor is maintaining good customer relationships through the services you offer or even through simple, fundamental interactions and greetings. Research has shown that most perceptions are judged based on first impressions. A smile and a polite answer can do much more than expected. Publics and clients need to feel that your organisation values them more than their profit or what they stand to gain. A warm reception might be all a client needs to feel valued and return to your organisation.

BIO

Praise Paul-Kayode

Education:

1st degree in mass communication at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

Short note on myself:

I have never been great at writing or talking about myself; I do know, however, that I'm passionate about making an impact in the world, even in my own little corner, being a part of or contributing to the greater good, I know it's a bit cliché, but this is what gives me a sense of value. If what I'm saying, writing or working on does not improve the world or help someone somehow, I find it meaningless and a waste of time.



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The PR Job Fair

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For programme sponsorship, partnership or general enquiries, please contact us:

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From the APRA President's Desk



Dear Delegates,

I bring you greetings from the Executive Council and, indeed, the entire membership of the African Public Relations Association (APRA). My name is Yomi Badejo-Okusanya and I am the President of the African Public Relations Association, which is the umbrella body for the practice of public relations in Africa. APRA was established to foster unity, interaction, and the exchange of ideas among public relations practitioners on the continent.

The theme before us today, "Beyond Crisis: PR for Perception Management in Business and Public Affairs", is one that touches the inner fabric of our very existence as an association. Our continent continues to be plagued by negative perceptions and representations that have been the defining characters of Africa and Africans in the minds of many people. While the mainstream media has been blamed for much of Africa's negative perceptions, little has been done to investigate how we, as Africans, have actively assisted in maintaining negative perceptions of Africa. As an association, we believe that Africa's current and future development will be determined by how Africans perceive themselves and how they wish to be perceived.

As long as Africa behaves as it currently does, negative perceptions will persist in the minds of many people. And as long as negative perceptions persist, Africa's goal of locally driven, inclusive, and sustainable development will remain unattainable. As a result, it is critical for Africans to take ownership of their narrative and actively work to change negative perceptions of Africa by promoting positive stories about the continent and highlighting the continent's strengths and potential. By doing so, Africa will be able to attract more investment, strengthen partnerships, and ultimately achieve its development goals.

Fortunately, some Africans have begun to take the initiative in promoting a positive image of the continent. Our association, for instance, has been able to gather PR professionals across the continent and beyond under one roof in various locations at various times to push forward the unified African agenda of selling a 'Positive Africa'. Our most recent gathering was our 33rd annual conference, which was held in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, in May 2022 and was a huge success. The 34th edition, tagged APRA Zambia 2023, is set to take place in Lusaka, Zambia, in May 2023 and will provide us with another opportunity to advance our continental agenda for public relations. I am looking forward to receiving you in person.

More must be done to ensure that this development is sustainable and has an impact on how Africans define themselves and how the continent is portrayed. As public relations professionals, we are well acquainted with the concept of perception management. Perception management entails not only improving Africa's image in the eyes of the world but also empowering Africans to take control of their own narrative and tell their own stories. It entails breaking down stereotypes and promoting a more nuanced understanding of the continent's diverse cultures, histories, and accomplishments. Africa's positive portrayal will continue to rely on Africa's concerted efforts and desire to portray Africa and Africans in a different light.

APRA recognizes the importance of effective public relations in crisis management and perception shaping, particularly in today's fast-paced and ever-changing world. We hope that by attending this conference, public relations officers will be equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to change the narrative of Africa and Africans in the media and public sphere, resulting in a more positive portrayal of the continent. Only by working together can we create a more accurate and fair representation of Africa that reflects its diversity, potential, and progress.

**I wish you all a great conversation!
Thank you.**

Sincerely,

**Yomi
Badejo-Okusanya**

President
Africa Public Relations Association (APRA)



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Celebrating Five Iconic Nigerian PR Women



Nkechi Ali-Balogun

One of Nigeria's foremost female PR practitioners and the Principal Consultant/CEO at NECCI Limited.



Prof. Chinyere Okunna

The first female Professor in Mass Communication in Nigeria. She was also the first female Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences in Nnamdi Azikiwe University.



Yeye Adenike Sobajo

Astute politician, distinguished Fellow of the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations and a life-long women advocate.



Henrietta Yakubu

First female General Manager, Public Affairs of the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN).



Grace Abosede Ojougboh

Head, Media and Public Relations at the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC).

Nigerian Women in PR Corporate Partners



Women in PR Ghana

A professional networking organisation committed to educating, mentoring and empowering female PR professionals and students. It was established in May 2017 as a not-for-profit organisation.



The Comms Avenue

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Circle of Global Business Women

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Public Relations and Communications Association (PRCA)

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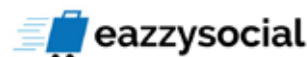
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Africa Communications Week

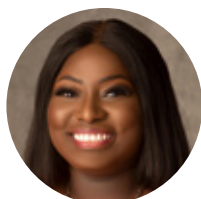
A global movement building bridges between communications professionals committed to Africa's transformation.



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Experiencing PR 2023 Volunteers



Opeyemi Obembe

Opeyemi Obembe is a Public Relations & Advertising Professional and a content creator specialist with hands-on experience in branding, social media management, content creation & curation, content writing and graphics design. She is an astute digital communicator.



Satira Osemudiamen

Satira Osemudiamen is a multi-sectoral public relations professional and principal consultant of Satira Media and Public Relations Limited. She has over nine years' experience managing strategic communications for organisations, public figures and C-suite Executives. Her professional mission is to amplify key messages for organisations and individuals.



Mabel Adeteye

Mabel Adeteye is a classically trained corporate communications and public relations expert with over 13 years' experience covering marketing communication, brand design and management, digital media marketing, events planning and management, CSR and sustainability. She holds relevant certifications from CIM, NIPR, CIPR, IESE and LBS.



Omotoyosi Ajayi

Omotoyosi is constantly adding long term value to the bottom line of brands through Marketing, Strategic Communications, and Public Relations – tools for reinforcing value proposition. She currently heads the marketing and public relations team at BlueSquare Limited, a property development company in Lagos, Nigeria.



Elizabeth Adebajo

Elizabeth is a dynamic and results-driven communication and public relations professional with close to a decade of experience in the industry. She has worked with a range of organizations from start-ups to established corporations, helping them to build and maintain strong relationships with their stakeholders.



Ugochi Iloмуanya

Ugochi is a prolific Corporate Affairs professional and Event Management expert with about 8 years combined experience. She is currently the Corporate Affairs Lead, West Africa at Upfield, the largest plant-based food company in the world.



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- Contribute to the conversation: share your programmes, projects and thoughts about environmental sustainability and citizen participation online with the hashtag #trashyourtrash and tag @ngwomeninpr

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