CHRISTIAN SERVICE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION

TOPIC:

AN ASSESSMENT OF COMMUNITY RELATIONS PROGRAMME IN

ENHANCING CORPORATE IMAGE: A STUDY OF SELECTED HOSPITALS IN

THE KUMASI METROPOLIS

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A PROJECT WORK SUMMITTED TO THE CHRISTIAN SERVICE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE

AWARD OF A BACHELOR OF ARTS DEGREE IN COMMUNICATION STUDIES

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JUNE, 2015

STATEMENT OF AUTHENTICITY

We have read the University College's regulations relating to plagiarism and certify that this report is all our own work and does not contain any unacknowledged work from any other source. We also declare that we have been under supervision for this report herein submitted

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I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the project work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision laid down by the Christian Service University College (CSUC), Kumasi.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to provide evidence-based information on community relations activities and their contributions to corporate image of South Suntreso, Maternal and Child Health and Asafo-Agyei Hospitals.

The objective of the study was to find out if community relations activities can be used as a tool to build relationships between hospitals and community members.

The researchers used qualitative research approach to seek for the views of managers of Asafo-Agyei, South Suntreso and Maternal and Child Health Hospitals. Other participants whose views were sought included the Deputy News Editor of Angel FM, the Regional News Editor of the Daily Graphic, a broadcast journalist with TV3 Network, the communication Director with the Ministry of Youth and Sports and beneficiaries of community relations programmes organized by hospitals.

The Theory of Legitimacy was used in this study because proponents of this theory argue that corporation constitutes a form of social arrangement which requires legitimacy to maintain functional long term relationships with various communications on which they depend.

The results from the study established that, community relations activities play a role in building a relationship between members of the community and the hospital and therefore enhances the image and reputation of these hospitals.

The hospitals should expand their community relations activities to include organizing sensitization workshops for the media and the need to sponsor activities that will strengthen their image and create effective publicity for them.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to our families, lecturers and friends for their immense support throughout our study at the Christian Service University College (CSUC), Kumasi.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0   Background to Study

A key priority for a socially responsible business is to develop and maintain strong and mutually beneficial relationships between the organization and host communities. Businesses that take active interest in community well-being can generate community support, loyalty and good will. This is often referred to as building your "social license to operate", an important business objective for any business. [Brooks and Robben, 2009]

Businesses engaging in community relations or community involvement typically conduct outreach to the community aiming to prevent or solve problems, foster social partnerships, and generally contribute to the community quality of life. They also participate in community relations to help improve their business by getting valuable community and other stakeholder input. Businesses have relationships with host communities. As such, it is valuable to spend some time considering how to leverage relationships on mutually beneficial initiatives. It is possible to enhance business performance, profitability and reputation through community involvement efforts.

According to Tech and Yeomans [2006], companies are increasingly obtaining public recognition and visibility for their positive actions. For example, U K Business in the Community [BITC], a British business-community outreach charity promoting responsible business located in London has a Per Cent standard, which is awarded as a voluntary benchmark to companies donating at least one percent [1%] of pre-tax profits to community/societal

benefits. This is a clear indication that contributions from organizations and corporate bodies to communities in fulfillment of their corporate social responsibilities keep attracting the attention of corporate world. The Per Cent Standard results for 2004 indicate that 512 companies reported their investments through to the Per Cent Standard whilst in the same period, an amount of 934 million Euros was reported as a community investment in the area of cash donations, gifts in kind, employee time and management costs.

Tench and Yeomans (2006), report that in recognition of interest shown by various stakeholder-groups, employees, customers and particularly the financial community and investors,it is now common for large and small to medium sized enterprises to publish corporate literature and brochures giving details of their community activities and corporate social responsibility [pg. 98].

In this modern business environment, it takes more than a mere capital investment to ensure the survival and sustainability of corporate institutions. This is because, the competition is becoming keener by the day hence the need for proactive innovation to be able to survive the unpredictable business environment. One of the most suitable innovations is the use and deploymentof community relations initiatives. It is seen as an effective strategy used by public relations practitioners. A community relations initiative requires positive interrelation amongst all members in order to function smoothly and efficiently. This endorses the position of Brooks and Robbin (2009), who posit that giving back to the community needs to be part of the corporate culture and championed from the top and down

Modern day institutions including government and private hospitals in most cases embark on community relations activities such as the organization of free breast cancer screening, free weighing of children, free advice on breastfeeding related issue, health walks for members of a particular community, construction of boreholes, construction of school blocks and spraying of mosquito infected drains. In a broad sense, community relations activities can be classified as a component of corporate social responsibility which by extension is a tool the Public Relations practitioner uses to enhance the reputation of organizations.

1.1   PROBLEM STATEMENT

Karen Practor, the Vice president of Community Affairs and Government relations at Scholastic Incorporation (Broadway, New York) indicated in his local outreach programme that, since 1994, his outfit held as many as 980 community relations events. Also the organization participated at a national partner in scholastic book grant programme and distributed over 1, 833,000 books to children through 27 states in America". This speaks volumes of the importance of community relations activities in enhancing good corporate image.

A community relation builds and maintains strong and mutual beneficial relationships with communities. Many corporate organizations work tirelessly in order to achieve their target goals or objectives. Some of these institutions go as far as making donations and offering free services to various communities at the organizations' own expense.

In the case of both public and private hospitals, free medical services are often provided to host communities.

The hospitals also go as far as distributing free medical products and equipment as well as providing portable drinking water and educational materials to communities within their reach.

For example*, Peace and Love Hospitals* situated at Oduom in Kumasi undertakes free breast cancer screening for women of different backgrounds. In Ghana and more especially Kumasi, a number of hospitals carry out community relations activities every year. Some of these hospitals include *Okomfo Anokye Teaching Hospital*, *Peace and Love Hospital*, *South Suntreso Hospital, Asafo-Adjei Hospital, Maternal and Children Health Hospital.*

Even though carrying out community relations activities could be a good idea, however, the researchers want to find out if it is a good Public Relations strategy for hospitals particularly publicly and privately owned hospitals in the Kumasi metropolis to embark on community relations activities. The researchers expected the outcome of the study to provide insight into how community relations activities enhance the reputation of hospitals in the Kumasi Metropolis.

1.2 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was to provide evidence based information on how community relations as a public relations strategy can enhance the reputation of private and public hospitals in the Kumasi metropolis.

1.3   OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following objectives guided the study

1. To find out from beneficiaries the contributions community relations programme make in the realization of effective relationships by the hospitals and the communities.

2. To find out how community relations activities help to enhance the reputation of hospitals in the Kumasi metropolis.

3. To ascertain how community relations activities can be improved.

1.4   RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the contributions of community relations programmes in achieving the goals of private and public hospitals?

2. How does community relations programmes enhance the reputation of hospitals in the Kumasi metropolis?

3. How can community relations programmes be improved?

1.5   SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

It is our view that the research

1. Will reveal the need or otherwise for both private and government hospitals to continue to use community relations activities as a strategy in the realization of enhanced corporate image.

2. It will provide information on the usefulness of community relations initiatives in enhancing relationships between hospitals and host communities.

1.6   SCOPE OF STUDY

The study involved gathering data from various locations in Kumasi Metropolis where hospitals perform their community relations activities. It must also be noted that three [3] hospitals were selected for the study namely: Maternal and Children Health hospital, South Suntreso Hospital and Asafo Adjei Hospital. Public Relations experts and key health personnel, journalists from

media houses who reports on health issues constituted the group of people covered for the study. The scope of the study would be conducted between the month of October 2014 and June 2015.

1.7   DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

1.7.1   Community:

Center and Jackson (2002) defined community as a social organism made up of all the interactions among the residents and the organization with which they identify. (Sixth edition pg. 69). In this study, community is defined as a group of people with common or different social backgrounds who can be located within a particular settlement. Such group may not necessarily share common ethnic, religious, political, economic or social standing but co-exist within a particular geographical location.

1.7.2   Community Relations:

Center and Jackson [2002] again defined Community relations as an institution's planned active and continuing participation within a community to maintain and enhance its environment to the benefit of both the institution and the community. (Sixth edition pg.70).

For purposes of this study, community relations can be defined as a well sustained effort on the part of an organization to create a good working relationship between itself and the community.

1.7.3   Community Relations Programme:

Community relations programme refers to a group of activities put together by an organization with the sole aim of using same to benefit members of a particular community. These activities can be in the form of sponsorships, donations, awards, voluntary services, provision of packages

such as hospital equipment and services, etc. that are geared towards supporting the cause of the community members.

1.7.4 Assessment:

For purposes of this study, an assessment can be defined as an evaluation of a particular concept or findings with the view to establishing acceptable results.

1.7.5 Corporate Goal:

In this study, a corporate goal can be defined as a long term objective clearly defined by an organization with the intension of working towards its achievement. It is therefore the central focus of an organization thereby compelling the company to fashion out implementable measures to pursue it as the ultimate target.

1.7.6 Hospitals

Hospitals refer to a facility where medical services are rendered to the sick or individuals by medically trained professionals. Doctors, nurses, pharmacists and gynecologists are some of the professionals who by virtue of their training can offer medical services to the clients. These services may include medical advice, diagnosis of aliment, consultancy, counseling, prescriptions and direct administration of medicine to patients in a manner that would support or cure the sickness diagnosed.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0   INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of community relations and its related themes. It also explains some theories that are relevant to the study of community relations programmes. Under the literature review, researchers examine the community relations activities and their contributions in building relationships between community members and hospitals selected for the study.

2.2 Definitions and Processes of Community Relations Activities.

Googins, (1997) asserts that community relations is food for the soul of the organization and that it is no longer an afterthought or corporate window-dressing, community relations, as more chief executives are acknowledging, is now a serious, strategic aspect of business for American companies, a fundamental ingredient for the health of the enterprise.

2.3   Community Relations

According to Robbins (2003), organizations establish and maintain good relationship with their host communities. He said this relationship is expected to be a mutually beneficial one that results in community support, community loyalty, company goodwill and higher employee morale. Desatnik (2000) emphasizes on the importance of community relations as that "Community involvement builds public image and employee morale, and fosters a sense of teamwork that is essential in long-term success." Community relations include social outreach programmes corporations establish to build relations and foster an understanding of the role and responsibility a corporation has with its local community. Corporations reach out to the

communities they operate in through Corporate Social Responsibility programmes. Soderberg (1986) enumerates some programmes toward increasing community involvement and they include: taking an active interest in community problems, sponsoring youth activities, purchasing materials and supplies from local communities, encouraging community education and culture, making offices or other facilities available to community organizations, supporting local charity drives, and taking part in civic activities. Corporate social responsibility is an aspect of community relations.

The term Corporate Social Responsibility can be defined as the way firms integrate social, environmental and economic concerns into their values, culture, decision making, strategy and operations in a transparent and accountable manner and thereby establish better practices within the firm, create wealth and improve society (Hohnen, 2007, p.4).

There are several schools of thought concerning corporate social responsibility. According to Robbins (2003), a business is a part of a large society and, therefore, it has a responsibility other than just maximizing profits. Organizations operate in a society, therefore, they have to be concerned about the society`s well-being. Robbins (2003) further states that the core objective of a business is to make a profit, however, if a business is socially responsible it has to be concerned about the well-being of the society it operates in. However, scholars including Friedman (1970) question if organizations are required to take responsibility of social issues. He stresses that the sole social responsibility of a business is to boost its profits through legal ways and that donating an organization`s funds to the society is harmful to the organization`s profits as this reduces the organization`s profits.   Porter and Krammer (2011) on the other hand indicate that addressing social concerns could increase the level of company productivity, with subsequent positive effects on profitability, share value and company image.

This description clearly shows that community relation is a conscious expression of corporate will and that the motives behind it become visible to the public over time. The more free the activity is, the less it is necessitated by unfavorable events, the more the community will value it. Similarly, the less credit the company seeks, the more credit it will get.

2.4   Objectives of Community Relations

The goals and objectives of community relations were to facilitate public involvement by establishing relations with public officials, groups and organizations, and using their established procedures for distributing information on the project and requesting feedback on key milestone decisions.

2.5   The Concept of Reputation

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is "an obligation to pursue those policies, to make those decisions, or to follow those lines of action that are desirable in terms of objectives and values of our society (Bowen, 1953, p.44).

A "Reputation" is created by stakeholders and attributed to an organization (person or place), in response to their expectations of it. Reputation is a fluid concept. In addition, reputation is a perceptual construct, so simply proxy measures of the assets, performance or output of a particular organization will not be enough" (Cornelissen, 2008, p .76).

Corporate reputation affects the way in which various stakeholders behave towards an organization, influencing, for example, employee retention, customer satisfaction and customer

loyalty. Not surprisingly, CEOs see corporate reputation as a valuable intangible asset (Institute of Directors 1999).

Markham [1972] posits that favorable reputation encourages shareholders to invest in a company; it attracts good staff, retains customers and correlates with superior overall returns.

2 .6 Enhancing Company Image through Community Relations Programmes.

Community relations activities are the practical manifestation of Corporate Social Responsibility used by public relations practitioners to achieve set objectives which can include building of corporate image.

Fritz (2009) argues that organizations today are getting involved in CSR to enhance their corporate image. It is often argued that the reason why corporations engage in CSR is a certain level of self-interest, not considering if the act is strategically motivated by commercial reasons alone or whether it is also motivated by what might seem as an altruistic interest, (Moon 2001). Veradajan and Menon (2002) state that there are several objectives of CSR for corporate giving beyond altruism.

Companies seek to enhance their image in order to create a positive reputation that may also relate to higher long-run organizational performance. Bennet et al., (2006) explains that the main advantage of CSR are improvement of company image, attracting media attention, altering attitudes and helping the company's relationship with the government and impressing key decision makers. More CSR practices lead to an improved (or at least maintained) reputation, which causes the firm to continue to be a target of activism, the consequence of which is more commitment to CSR. From the point of view of the company, however, having a good reputation

can be a "double edged sword" or at least a potential liability when facing activists who seek the public limelight, (Rhee and Haunschild 2006).

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has become an important focus of attention among companies. A McKinsey global survey shows that 76% of executives believe that corporate social responsibility contributes positively to long-term shareholder value, and 55% of executives agree that sustainability helps their companies build a strong reputation, (McKinsey 2010).

2.7   Companies in Ghana and the use of Community Relations

Several organizations in Ghana undertake community outreach programmes. The one that immediately comes to mind is AngloGold Ashanti, a mining firm engaged in deep mining activities at Obuasi in the Ashanti region. Perhaps, the nature of activities undertaken by this company which basically have direct impact on human existence could be one of the reasons that underline the motive for AngloGold Ashanti to engage in community relations activities. Mining activities have direct or indirect effect on the immediate communities where the mining firm operates. One major task for a mining firm has to do with resettlement or relocation of community members, payment of compensation to affected community members and other health related issues that will be captured in the Environmental Impact Assessment document produced by the mining firm.

2.7.1   AngloGold Ashanti

AngloGold Ashanti is one of the gold mining companies in Ghana that uses community relations activities to execute its public relations practice. In its quest to protect its staff and

communities in its operational areas from scourging malaria, Mr. SrinivansanVenkatakrishnan, the Chief Executive Officer of AngloGold Ashanti said the company initiated what he called Indoor Residual Spraying programme[AngloGold Ashanti Malaria Control Programme] in 2005 with an initial amount of US$ 1.7 million. He said a remarkable feat was achieved when studies conducted in Obuasi saw a sustained reduction of about 76% in malaria cases. AGA is replicating the "Obuasi model" in its Western and Eastern African operational countries of Guinea, Mali and Tanzania. A trailblazer in social responsibility, the Global Fund upon series of assessment committed UDS$ 133million to AGA for a scale-up to about 40 districts in Ghana by 2015 (MDGs) four, five and six; reducing infant mortality, reducing maternal mortality and combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases respectively.

According to a publication captured in Business and Financial *Times* newspaper on Sept. 17, 2012, AngloGold Ashanti announces the launch of AngloGold Ashanti Obuasi and Iduapriem Community Trust Funds to support a long term sustainable development in communities in which it operates. The Trust Fund and AngloGold Ashanti were said to have donated 12 buses and 140 computers to schools in Obuasi and Iduapriem. (www.anglogoldashanti.com)

In further pursuance of community relations programmes, AngloGold Ashanti is on record to have been paying for water and electricity consumption for residents of Sanso and Anyinam, both suburbs of Obuasi. The MP for Obuasi, Kwaku Kwarteng is quoted to have said on Joy news on December 17, 2014 that such support constitutes a major relief for residents in those communities and any withdrawal would lead to a demand for compensations for the residents. [www.myjoyonline.com]

2.7.2 MTN Ghana

MTN is another company that engages in community relations activities. MTN Ghana deals directly with a larger section of its publics. This is because the company deals in telecommunication network which is patronized by over nine million (9,000,000) subscribers in Ghana. MTN also engages in several community relations programmes such as Y'ello Care. It stands to reason that since MTN sells airtime to its subscribers, conducting community activities can be one of the convenient ways of staying in touch with its subscribers. According to the mission of MTN Ghana, " building shareholders' value by ensuring maximum customer satisfaction through providing latest communication services, at the most economical rate while meeting its social responsibilities as a good citizen and providing growth prospects for its employees". This mission in its-self constitutes enough bases for the company to consider community relations activities as vital to its growth.

MTN has a Customer Relation and Customer Loyalty Model. Customer relations model deals with a desirable relationship that exists between the customer and the company. This relationship when well-built and sustained can lead to customer loyalty. Customer loyalty therefore refers to a level of confidence or trust that the customer has on the company. This model has contributed positively to the significant gains in market share of the mobile phone industry in Ghana by the company. For instance the company is making conscious efforts in establishing relationships with governments and community groups which constitute chunks of its customer base. With regards to government the company has set up a foundation to serve that purpose. The foundation in 2008 committed an amount of $600,000 for the refurbishment of part of the labour ward of the Korle-Bu Maternity Block. It has also contributed significantly to other sector of the economy e.g. sports. Currently, the company's Rally Round the Flag Promotion will contribute

significantly to course of The Black Star in the impending FIFA 2010 World Cup in South Africa. The company's involvement with the communities is evident in its participation in the celebration of local festivals in the country. This is done through the company's Y'ello Train programme. The Y'ello Train for instance was present at the Aboakyere festival in Winneba last year. (www.mtnghana.com)

2.8   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.8.1   Theory of Legitimacy

Corporations, as one kind of social arrangement, require legitimacy to maintain functional, long-term relationships with various communities on which they depend. The theory of legitimacy originated with Davis's (1973) iron law of responsibility. It states that a business is a social institution that must use its power responsibly. Otherwise, society may revoke it. Davis wrote, "Society grants legitimacy and power to businesses". In the long run, those who do not use power in a manner which society considers responsible will tend to lose it" (p. 314). Further, according to Dowling and Feffer (1975), a corporation is said to be legitimate when it is judged to be "just and worthy of support" (p. 123). Corporations that lose legitimacy face a variety of difficulties, ranging from punitive legislation to difficulties in hiring qualified personnel. The benefits associated with legitimacy, combined with social pressures toward conformity, generally lead managers of illegitimate corporations to act to improve the legitimacy of their companies (Nasi et al., 1997).

It is pertinent to stress at this point that society judges the legitimacy of a corporation based on the corporation's image. However, both the perceptions of a corporation and the expectations for the corporation can change over time (leading to changes in the legitimacy of the corporation)

without there actually being any change in the actual activities of the corporation. The corporate image (how it is perceived) and societal expectations are the important factors that must be managed. Sethi (1979) posited that if corporations ignore social expectations, they are likely to lose control over their internal decision making and external dealings.

Sethei posits that legitimacy problems occur when societal expectations for corporate behavior differ from societal perceptions of a corporation's behavior. Sethei suggests: At any given time, there is likely to be a gap between performance and societal expectations caused by business actions or changing expectations. A continuously widening gap would cause a business to lose legitimacy and threaten its survival.

This theory can be considered beneficial to our study because, the underling factor that appears to be important in this theory is corporate image. The theory cited several instances to support an argument that corporate image should always be seen to be positive in the eyes of the public without which the progress and survival of the company can be threatened. This feeds perfectly into our quest to find out if community relations activities can enhance this corporate image.

2.8.2   Stakeholder Theory

The stakeholder theory holds that effective management requires the balanced consideration of and attention to the legitimate interests of all stakeholders (Freeman, 1984), defined as anyone who has "a stake in or claim on the firm" (Hasnas, 1998, p. 20). This has been interpreted to include "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the corporation" (Hasnas, 1998, p. 20). It is perhaps more familiar in its narrow sense in which the stakeholder groups are limited to shareholders, customers, employees, suppliers, management, and the local community. Thus, stakeholder theory asserts that a business' financial success can best be achieved by giving the

interests of the business' shareholders, customers, employees, suppliers, management, and local community proper consideration and adopting policies that produce the optimal balance among them (Hasnas, 1998). Similarly, Welcomer, Cochran, Rands, and Haggerty (2003) posit that firms and stakeholders actively working together in hopes of mutual gain can have a significant impact on the firm. This viewpoint seeks to explain current corporate behaviour rather than to argue for a more moral position.

According to Mitchell, Agle, and Wood (1997), "Managers who want to achieve certain ends pay particular kinds of attention to various classes of stakeholders, managers' perceptions dictate stakeholder salience and various classes of stakeholders might be identified based upon the possession of power, legitimacy, and urgency" (p. 872). Wicks, Berma, and Jones (1999) examine the issue of trust between a firm and its stakeholders.

They suggested that managers through their behavior can help determine levels of trust in relationships between the firm and its various stakeholders. That is, trust between a firm and its stakeholders are an integral part of the strategy formulation process that will help smooth the relationship in the future. From this inclusive perspective, the corporation exists at the intersection of a range of interests; it is a node in a complex web of social relationships of dependency and expectation (Wood, 1994). From a managerial point of view, corporate success depends on an on-going process of stakeholder management in which the interests and demands of stakeholders are identified and dealt with appropriately (Freeman, 1984).

Working with stakeholders can lead to the articulation of a shared vision to resolve problems and to innovate solutions to gridlocked issues Welcomer et al., (2003). Similarly, Jones and Wicks (1999) have argued that firms that look after the interests of key stakeholders and behave in a morally defensive fashion will. All things being equal, achieve greater success in the

marketplace than those that do not. In this context, it is not social issues to which corporations respond but rather stakeholder issues (Clarkson, 1995). According to Carroll (1996), the important task for managers is to identify stakeholder groups (groups that share an interest) and determine the amount of power they, as a group, have.

2.9   RELATED STUDIES.

In a study conducted by Hayes in 2007 titled; "Community relations and the US army", the researcher sought to examine among other things how the US Army as a whole conducts community relations and identify how Army installations under Public Affairs Officers conduct community relations at lower level and how they utilize the press and other programmes to communicate with the local communities.

 The researcher used a qualitative method in the data gathering process. He dealt with two categories of participant. The first involved Public Affairs Officers of the US Army and the second covered news reporters who publish weekly and daily issues concerning the Army installations.

A population of 81 Public Affairs Officers was identified for use in the survey together with 90 news reporters. Out of the 81 Public Affairs Officers invitees 45, representing 56% completed the survey response whilst 5 out of the 90 reporters representing 5.5% completed survey response.

In the study, 88% of Public Affairs Officers said they engage local media on weekly or daily basis, 7% on monthly basis and others constituting 5% . A total of 96% respondents described the relationship between installation and surrounding communities as excellent.

It was established that the U.S. Army's Public Affairs Officers enjoy a quality working relationship with their local communities and the media. Public Affairs Officers utilized a number of successful techniques when interacting with both media and community leaders. The Army Public Affairs, however, were not organized from top-to- bottom to conduct robust community relations.

The findings recommended that Public Affairs Officers must harness available research tools and volunteers to increase the effectiveness of existing community relations programmes.

This work is relevant to our study because it gives an overview of how a community relation is vital to the survival of corporate organizations.

The gap, however, is that the study failed to examine how Public Affairs Officers could avail themselves of available research tools to increase the effectiveness of existing community relations programmes.

In a study by Apostolopoulou, Clark and Schuldt in the United States of America, (2006) on the topic 'Using community relations to build Pittsburgh Pirates brand, the study focused on the community relations programs of the Pittsburgh Pirates baseball franchise. The Pittsburgh Pirates are a Major League Baseball (MLB) franchise located in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA.

The objective of the study was to establish the role of the Pirates' Community Relations programmes within the team's overall brand management strategy and the perceived benefits of those initiatives. Qualitative research approached was used for data collection.

Data were gathered through primary and secondary sources. The primary source included interviews with both former and current team officials while the secondary source involved

collection of information from media campaign materials, web pages, newspaper articles and national publications.

It was established that the Pittsburgh Pirates, Community Relations programmes are considered an integral part of the team's brand (re-)building efforts that help deliver core brand attributes and create a positive brand perception.

The findings also highlighted that Community Relations initiatives can drive brand management efforts by generating awareness for the team; by projecting the image of a quality organization that cares for their fans and the extended community; and by strengthening the relationship with current and potential customers.

In our view, this study is more relevant to our topic because it reinforces the potency of community relations activities in projecting, building and helping to improve institutional support in the face of its publics.

The gap in this study, however, has to do with the fact that the study has not been extended to include other sporting activities such as volley ball, basketball, long tennis, table tennis and football clubs or even corporate organizations.

This study was conducted by Floride Hawkins Carpenter in the year 2005 at the University of North Carolina in the United States of America under the topic "the role of public relations in socially responsible business".

The purpose of the study was to explore the role of public relations in a socially responsible corporation to determine its influence and opportunities.

Its main objective was to examine how public relations is practiced in a socially responsible organization through a case study of a senior public relations manager during the development and implementation of a community relations programme.

This person was the director of corporate communications referred to as "Haley" at Benjamin Moore & Co., a leading manufacturer of architectural coatings.

Both quantitative and qualitative research approaches were adopted for use during the research. Continuous assessment over time was also one of the criteria employed for the study.

The researcher collected data using participant observation method. The exercise was done at the Moore's Manufacturing facility. 'Haley', who was being observed, spent 17 months as a consultant and a coordinator of events. The data collected indicated that Haley spent 50% to 60% of her time setting strategies and doing consultancy service for the company
In summary, the findings established that the public relations manager in this study was observed making a significant contribution to most manager role activities. She also demonstrated strong technical skills and the ability to play multiple roles simultaneously. Activities related to environmental scanning and stakeholder management were also evident.

The motivation to balance the needs of the organization with its publics was also clearly evident, and linked to the subject's personal values and the company's values of putting the needs of people first.
This orientation to the needs of people, both internally and externally, was further exhibited through the application of facilitation, negotiation and conflict resolution skills.

In our view, this related study clearly demonstrates the fact that one needs community relations activities as an instrument to engineer the accomplishment of public relations objective.

The gaps were that the participant observation was limited to only one person. Involving more than one person would have given one a broader view of research findings. It will be useful to find out how things work out in larger organizations where many stakeholders are involved.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

According to Oni (2003), research methodology is use to describe all methods involved in the collection of all information's required for a study. The chapter dealt with research methods, research design, study population which explained targeted accessible population, sampling size and sampling process and other guidelines that are needed in the data collection process. This chapter also covered ethics necessary in making this study an original research.

3.2   RESEARCH METHOD:

Research method offers a guideline or specification of procedures for analysing the data necessary to help identify a problem or to help solve a problem at hand, (Tull & Hawkins, 1984). This study used a qualitative research approach to gather data. Shank (2002) defines qualitative research as "a form of systematic empirical inquiry into meaning". Denzin and Lincoln (2000) explain that qualitative research involves an interpretive and naturalistic approach. "This means that under qualitative approach, researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or to interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them".

Bryman (2004) explains that, qualitative research method is the one that usually emphasises words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data (pg. 97-111)." "Research investigations that are primarily seeking non numerical form of data are called qualitative methods of research (Opoku- Amankwaa, 2009)". Thus, the researchers adopted the qualitative

approach in order to gather in-depth information and knowledge about how community relations activities help in enhancing corporate images of hospitals.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design guides the researcher to choose the appropriate data required for the study. It also helps one to answer the research questions effectively. Researchers used exploratory study design for the study. The main aim of exploratory design is to find out why Phelps, Fisher and Ellise (2007).

Davies, (2006) defined exploratory research as a methodological approach that is primarily concerned with discovery and generating or building a theory. Exploratory design also satisfies one's curiosity for the better understanding of phenomena. A research design will typically include how data is to be collected, what instrument will be employed, how the instrument will be used and the intended means for analysing data collected.

3.4 STUDY POPULATION

According to Amankwa-Poku and Graham (2009), population is the total number of subjects, people, concept or phenomena the researcher is interested in studying or researching about. The population of this study consisted of the Chief executive officers or Administrators of three hospitals (namely, Maternal and Child Health Hospital, Asafo Adjei Hospital and South Suntreso Hospital) and beneficiaries of community relations activities of these hospitals, media practitioners and public relations practitioners. These officials were the focus of the study based on their background, experience, knowledge and qualification.

All participants for this study will be assured of total confidentiality of the information they provide.

3.5 ACCESSIBLE POPULATION

The study made use of three (3) hospitals. They included;

1. Asafo-Adjei Hospital

2. The Maternal and Child Health Hospital and

3. South Suntreso Hospitals

The researchers also purposively selected three journalists working in the newspaper, radio and television industries. Six (6) community members who had benefitted from these activities were also part of the study. In all, a total of 13 participants constituted the accessible population for this study.

3.6   SAMPLING METHOD

The researchers used Non-Probability Sampling Method. This method enabled researchers to use their judgement in selecting participants to help answer questions set for the study. The use of the sampling method allowed the researchers to choose the participants based on their expertise or privileged positions purposely. According to Rubin, Rubin and Piele (2005), non-probability sampling allows exploring certain relevant and accessible artefacts for more in-depth analysis.

3.7   SAMPLING PROCEDURE

The researchers used purposive sampling method because of the need to select consciously institutions and individuals who had been involved in community relations activities and hence had the knowledge and information required for this study. For example; it is not all hospitals in Kumasi which undertakes community relations activities.

 In the same vein, it is only those who had ever benefited from these activities who could share their experiences with researchers. On the part of journalists, those who had been covering or participating in community relations activities were selected to speak to the issues. These participants were chosen because they had the relevant information the researchers needed for the study.

3.8 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT.

Data collection instruments are devices used to collect data such as questionnaire or computer assisted interviewing system (US Census Bureau, 2010). This study made use of an interview guide to collect data from participants of the study. The Association of Qualitative Research (2003) defines interview guide as an instrument used to collect data by asking people questions and following up or probing their answers.

 In-depth interviewing is a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a smaller number of participants to explore the expertise for a particular idea or situation, Boyce and Neale (2006). Interviews are classified according to the degree of flexibility as structured and unstructured. In structured interviews, the investigator asks pre-determined set of questions, using the same wording and order of questions as specified in the interview schedule whiles in the unstructured interviews also known as in-depth interviews,

the interviewer developed a frame work called interview guide, within which to conduct the interview Opoku-Amankwa (2009). The data for this interview was collected through the un-structured degree of flexibility.

Four different interview guides were used to collect information from the management members, one each for, Administrator, Beneficiaries, Media and the Public Relations Practitioner.

3.9 DATA ANALYSIS PLAN

Data collection was done in a manner that was convenient to all the parties involved. Some of the interviews were done through face-to-face interaction but others were done through telephone. Researchers used tape to recorders to record the conversations during the interview process.

Data collected were analysed manually. The analysis was based on the questions that answer the objectives for the study. The answers which were provided by the participants were grouped according to the objectives that researchers set for the study. Researchers looked out for similarities in the answers before analysing the themes that emerge.

3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to Sacconi (2004), ethics can be defined as 'obedience to the unenforceable.' The question about ethics is a matter of moral uprightness about acceptable rules or rights and wrong conducts in terms of social life and human engagement.

 Ethical issues relate to being clear about the nature of agreement that researchers have entered into with respondents.

1. The researchers sought the consent of the management of the selected hospitals before involving participants in the study. The letters specified the reasons for the interviews and why their organizations have been selected for the study.

2. All issues pertaining confidentiality were treated as such.

3. Sources have been acknowledged to avoid plagiarism.

4. In the process of the interviews, researchers sought the prior consent of participants before the conversation were recorded.

5. Researchers have made copies of the findings available to each of the four institutions.

6. Names of participants have not been mentioned in the study.

3.10 Brief History of Health Sector In Kumasi

The Metropolitan Health Services in Kumasi are organized around five (5) Sub Metro Health sectors namely, Bantama, Asokwa, Manhyia North, Manhyia South and Subin. The Metro Health Sector is led by its Director of Health Services who has the overall responsibility for planning, monitoring and evaluating the performances of the health sector in the Kumasi metropolis

In addition, there are over two hundred (200) known private health institutions and 13 Industrial Clinics in the metropolis. There are also 54 trained Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs), nine (9) Maternal and Child Health (MCH) points and 119-outreach sites. The Ghana Health Service working with the Private sector provides clinical and public Health Services.

3.10.1 Suntreso Government Hospital

The Suntreso Government Hospital was built and commissioned as the Suntreso Urban Health Sector on the 22nd November 1963 by Mr. L. R. Abavana. The then urban health centre was manned by Sister Baidoo, the Nurse in-charge. The maternity unit was added in 1973. In the year 2000 the facility was given a District Hospital status within the Bantama Sub Metro. In 2009 another specialist clinic, Mother and Baby Unit was added to the range of services the Hospital provides. This was under the Millennium Cities Initiative and the Israeli Consul in Ghana.

3.10.2 Maternal and Child Health Hospital

The Maternal and Child Health Hospital popularly known as the CWC or Kwashiorkor clinic is centrally located in the Subin-sub metro within the Kumasi Metropolis .it was built in 1910 by the then Gold Coast government. The Maternal and Child Health Hospital is one of the five Government Hospitals in the Kumasi Metropolis. The Maternal and Child Health Hospital in the Northern Sector is committed to the treatment and management of malnourished children 0-5 years of age who suffer from severe Acute Malnutrition (including Kwashiorkor, Marasmus and Miasmic Kwashiorkor), Anemia, HIV/AIDS and other related health problems.

3.10.3 Asafo-Agyei Hospital

The Asafo-Agyei Hospital was founded in November 1980 by a private medical practitioner Bishop. Prof Dr. Asafo-Agyei Anane Frempong, Today, Asafo-Agyei Hospital is a fifty-bed hospital built on a two-acre landscape site located at Daban, Kumasi. As a Health care provider,

the Asafo-Agyei Hospital has 12 main sections. These include the main consulting room, the outpatient department, and the ultra-modern laboratory, the dispensary/pharmacy, the piles clinic, the eye clinic, the treatment room, the ultrasound/electro-cardiograph unit, the theatre, the maternity unit (female ward), the male ward and a snack bar.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The data collected were to answer the research questions posed. The data for the study were obtained from three (3) hospitals, six (6) beneficiaries, three (3) media houses and one (1) public relations practitioner. Two of the hospitals are public ones and one a private hospital. They are all sited in the Kumasi metropolis, Interview guides were used to assist researchers to collect data from all participants, they include: South Suntreso, Asafo-Agyie and Maternal and Children Health Hospitals.

This chapter presents the demographic information of participants, organizations and their responses to specific questions that answer the research objective.

The objectives of the study were:

1. To gather insight from beneficiaries of hospital community relations programmes and the contributions of these programmes to the relationship between hospitals and communities.

2. To gather insight into how community relations activities help to enhance the reputation of hospitals in the Kumasi metropolis.

3. To ascertain how community relations activities can be improved by the selected hospitals for the study.

4.2 DEMOGRAPHICS OF PARTICIPANTS

Participants were thirteen (13) in number. They included the following people;

1. Three (3) administrators/managers of the four hospitals.

2. Six (6) beneficiaries of the community relations activities organized by hospitals.

3. Three (3) journalists from television, radio and print houses who have ever covered or participated in the community relations activities undertaken by the hospitals.

4. The public relations director with the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

4.4   JOB TITLES OF PARTICIPANTS

The job titles of the participants are as follows;

- Administrator for Maternal and Child Health hospital

- General Manager of Asafo-Agyei hospital

- Head of Health Information for South Suntreso hospital

- Director of Public Relations at the Ministry of Youth and Sports

- Deputy News editor for Angel fm

- Ashanti regional editor for Daily Graphic

- Broadcast journalist with TV3

4.5   To gather Insight from Beneficiaries of Hospital Community Relations Programmes and the Contributions of These Programmes to Relationships between the Hospital and Communities.

According to Freeman (1984), the traditional role of business as an economic unit in society over the last decade has been challenged. Longsdon and Wood (2002) posit that corporations are faced with increasing expectations to play more active roles. They are challenged to act as good corporate citizens and become more actively involved in social wellbeing of communities they operate in. Therefore, the researcher sought to gather insight from beneficiaries of the hospital community relations activities and the contributions of these programmes to relationships between hospitals and communities.

In order to solicit answers to this research objective, the following questions were asked by the researchers:

1. Please, tell us the kind of hospital outreach programmes you have ever benefitted from (i.e. community relations activities)?

2. After benefiting from these activities organized by the hospital, how does that affect your relationship with the hospital?

3. How does it help you as an individual and the community as a whole?

4. Have your perception about the hospital been affected?

5. How will you assess the relationship between the hospital and beneficiaries of this programme?

When participants were asked to mention the kind of community relations activities they have ever benefitted from, the following activities were mentioned by all the participants; health walk, general health screening, health advice, screening on sexually transmitted diseases, counseling on premarital sex, testing of High blood pressure and piles diagnoses

Researchers asked a question as to how the communities relationships with the hospital have been affected after participants benefited from activities organized by the hospital and the response from a participant who benefited from South Suntreso Outreach programmes was that: "***After benefiting from these activities they have helped me to constantly visit the doctors so that I can continue to enjoy good health***''

The next question was how the community relations activities help the participant as an individual and the community as a whole. He said as an individual, he has benefitted from community relations programmes which include free medical screening and in most cases free consulting. He said he knows that one needs to be healthy and strong to be able to work and since the health programmes help him to be healthy and strong. "People may not notice the immediate benefits that go to the community but one cannot run away from the old saying that "healthy people build a healthy nation".

The third question was whether his perception of the hospital has been affected and he said yes, to him he first thought the hospitals were only profit oriented but now he can see that they are into social responsibility programmes.

A participant who took part in activities organized by the Asafo Adjei Hospital was asked to assess the relationship between the hospital and herself and she said: *"after the outreach programme the doctors asked me and other participants to contact the Asafo Agyei hospital ant time we want to undergo any medical checkup. This creates a long lasting relationship between me and the hospital. Some days later, I also received a message through my email commending me for participating in their outreach programme. The email further reminded me to come to the hospital if I want to under any checkup. I think this relationship comes about as a result as the piles sensitization programmes the hospital organize for us.* She said it was through the outreach programme that she got a lot of information about piles including the causes and how to prevent the disease.

Another participant from the same hospital was asked to mention the kind of hospital outreach programmes she has ever benefited from and this was the response. "I have benefited from free health screening exercise.

Responding to a question as to how the relationship between the hospital and members of the community has been affected by the community outreach programmes, one participant who took part in an outreach programme organized by the Maternal and Child Health hospital said the programmes created a platform for him to make friends with some doctors and other health officers. He said he can now contact these people for assistance if he has any health problems. To him, this is an opportunity for him to have easy access to health personnel who will continue to guide him on health related issues.

In a response to the same question, a participant who took part at the HIV/AIDS Awareness programme organized by South Suntreso Hospital said the outreach programme has made her

have confidence in health personnel at the hospital. According to her, she now has the belief that when she comes to the doctors with any virus they will be in a position to help her. When asked whether her perception about the hospital has been affected after the programme, the same participant said No; her perception about the hospital has not been affected.

Answering a question as to how the outreach programme helped the participant as an individual and the community as a whole, this participant who benefited from South Suntreso Outreach programme said the programme made it possible for him to know his HIV\AIDS status, his sugar level and that it has allayed all fears that he used to have about his health status and he believes the same goes to other members of the community who took part in the programme. " In response to the same question, a participant of South Suntreso outreach activities said such activities brings about a cordial relationship between the community and the hospital.

4.6 TO FIND OUT HOW COMMUNITY RELATIONS ACTIVITIES HELP TO ENHANCE THE REPUTATION OF HOSPITALS IN THE KUMASI METROPOLIS.

It was pointed out from the beginning of this work that researches were seeking to find out the role community relations activities play in the relationship between the community and health institutions which engage in these activities. Closely related to community relations programme is the Corporate Social Responsibility. According to Flynn (2002), the benefits associated with CSR include; an improvement of financial performance, enhancing of brand image and its reputation, increase in sales and customer loyalty and an increased ability to attract and retain employees.

In order to assess this objective, the following questions were asked:

1. Do you undertake community relations in the community in which you operate?

2. What benefits does your hospital stand to gain from organizing these activities?

3. What will you say are some of the reasons/objectives that account for embarking on community relations activities?

4. How will you assess the contributions of these programmes towards enhancing the corporate image of the hospital?

5. Describe the ways in which your image has been enhanced as a result of your activities?

When the question was asked as to whether the hospitals undertake community relations activities in the communities in which they operate, all the three management members from Asafo-Agyei, Maternal and Child Health and South Suntreso hospitals answered in the affirmative.

A question on what kind of community relations activities the hospital organize for the public was directed at the General Manager of Asafo-Agyei Hospital who disclosed that the hospital undertakes free health screening annually on piles and other related activities. According to him, Asafo-Agyei has a programme called 'Giving back to the community ''. This means that the facility has an obligation to provide free health services to people within its catchment area every year. He further revealed that the hospital is about to start a programme called "Piles Awareness Creation". This programme, according to him, will have the potential to further boost the image of the hospital.

The Administrator for the Maternal and Child Health Hospital was asked the same question and he said their facility is a specialist hospital which deals with maternal and child health issues. Their outreach programmes are educational campaign on issues relating to the Ear and Throat (E and T). He explained that there is a health team of nurses and doctors put together to handle E and T issues. The team undertakes what is referred to as ''School outreach programme''.This programme, according to him, is carried out once or twice every week in schools in their catchment area.

On his part, the Head of Health Information at the South Suntreso hospitalin his response to the same question said their outreach activities include immunization, health education, health promotion and what he calls periodic health campaign durbars. He indicated that the hospital organizes community relations activities as part of the facility's core responsibility to ensure that members of the community within their catchment area have good health, stressing that the health of the people is the concern of the hospital. According to him, the outreach programme is to prevent a situation where due to lack of knowledge people will wait until their health situation is deteriorated before reporting to the hospital.

Responding to a question as to the reasons that account for embarking on the community relations programme, the General Manager for Asafo-Agyei hospital said the land for their hospital was acquired from the people in Daban catchment area and that it is not everybody who can access health care. In this light, the owner of the facility, Dr Asafo-Agyei decided to assist people in the community by instituting this programme which he said forms part of the hospital's Corporate Social Responsibility because without the community the hospital will not be there in

the first place. Beyond that he said the people have supported the hospital by patronizing the services of the facility.

'*'We have also realized that people are ignorant about their health because we have been receiving cases upon cases from our catchment area which we believe should not have occurred in the first place if people were aware of what they are supposed to do in terms of their health''.* According to the General Manager, the hospital does what he calls "Assessment and evaluation" every year to see the number of cases which should not have occurred in the first place. "We have therefore designed the programme to reach out to the people to educate them on common diseases like malaria, diabetes and blood pressure".

 In answering the same question, the Head of Health Information at the South Suntreso Hospital**,** however, said organizing community relations programmes for the public forms part of the core responsibility of the hospital. According to him, the hospital has a duty to periodically educate the public on communicable and other related diseases. The reasons for their outreach programmes are similar to that of the Maternal and child Health hospital which seeks to work towards saving lives of its publics.

Answering a question on what the hospital stands to gain by organizing outreach programmes, the General Manager of Asafo-Agyei gave this response*; "It's simple. It's an indirect marketing strategy". it is an indirect marketing strategy because first of all, hospitals don't advertise so getting closer to the people even though they have not attended Asafo-Agyei hospital or come to seek our services but, you have them trying to show I have these kind of services at the hospital because the communities are expanding and a lot of people are strangers in our*

catchment area so as and when we embark on these community project, then people will get to know that Asafo Agyei hospital provides these services", he emphasized.

In an answer to the same question directed at the administrator of Maternal and Child Health hospital, he said their facility can cultivate a good corporate image for itself through their outreach programmes. He said their records indicate that a lot of people come to them for their health needs instead of going to other places such as Okomfo Anokye Teaching Hospital (KATH). He said the fact that more people are coming to the facility shows that their facility is becoming the alternative and not because the queues are long at KATH. He explained further thatthe Maternal and Child Health hospital needs to live up to its mission of working to save lives. He disclosed that Ghana Health Service has a mission and a vision and that is to save lives and their facility was living up to that core responsibility of saving lives.

The Head of Health Information at the South Suntreso hospital on his part answered the same question but he indicated that the facility is looking at a situation where the health needs of the public will be promoted. He said the hospital is working through its outreach programmes to reduce the rate of health problems such as maternal mortality, infant mortality, sexually transmitted diseases and other related diseases. The Head of Health Information also disclosed that the hospital embarks on community relations activities to educate the youth against pre-marital sex which gives rise to teenage pregnancy. He said if the hospital succeeds in addressing these challenges facing its publics, people will see the facility as a human centered facility.

The next question was to find out how the hospitals assess the contributions of community relations programmes towards enhancing the corporate image of the hospital.

It was first directed at the Administrator of Maternal and Child Health who indicated that their outreach programmes play a role in enhancing their image. He said the focus of the health facility is not on the well to do in the society but the less privileged. "*That explains why people in schools are able to identify Maternal and Child Health hospital to come for health assistance when they have maternal and child health related problems*", he narrated. This, he said is due to their outreach programmes that created the awareness. According to the Administrator, the hospital uses their daily attendance on the hospital's "Out patience Attendance" (OPD) as one of their standards of measurement. He said increase in attendance at the OPD means that their message during the outreach programme is being received well. Making comparative analysis in that direction, the administrator said the attendance at their OPD in recent times is the same as that of Tafo Hospital, which according to him, is not a specialist hospital. The administrator rejected an assertion by the researchers that increase in OPD attendance could also be interpreted to mean that more people are getting sick. He said it rather implies that people come to their facility with the slightest sickness due to the education carried out through their community relations activities.

In an answer to the same question, the General Manager of Asafo Agyei Hospital gave this response*: "In every business, if you want to grow, you need to plan and if you don't plan, you will plan to fail. We have our strategic development plan and the outreach programmes are part of the hospital's marketing strategic plan. We are controlling a market and this market is piles so these things help us to promote our hospitals as well as enhance our image across the length and breadth of this country. When people bring proposals or they want to collaborate with the hospitals to undertake certain projects, we are always available to assist them embark on those projects. It helps us to send a certain signal to the public that Asafo Agyei hospital is*

there and if you have challenges, the hospital is there to assist. In terms of promoting our image, these projects help us to get there", he remarked.

The Head of Health Information at the South Suntreso Hospital, however, put the perspective of the hospital in this form when the same question was directed at him; *"We have indicators that we use to measure as to whether we are achieving our target or not. We have been given national targets. Family planning for instance, we are sometimes given a target to reach let's say 12% or 15% of people accessing family planning service a year. This will show at the end of the year whether we are doing well or not or whether we are benefiting or not. When we are benefiting it means more people are coming for family planning services. If teenage pregnancy is coming up, it means what you are doing is not helping. We find out if ladies are not delivering and whether they are doing abortion"*

He further pointed out that the hospital also uses practical scenarios where institutions like churches make follow ups to invite the hospital to organize similar outreach programmes for their church members to determine whether the image of the hospital is affected positively or negatively. This is how he puts it; *For me, the benefits outweighed the disadvantages because if you look at the indicators, every year we have at least some percentage increase and the way communities, like churches will invite you to embark on a health talk, it shows that they appreciate what you are doing"* Using statistical analysis to explain how the hospital assesses the contribution of community relations activities towards the enhancement of its image, the man in charge of the hospital's health information puts his explanation in this context; *"Family planning for instance, in 2013, we had low family planning percentage of 2.5% of the population accessing family planning services. Let's say we had 5% for the whole year but this year, we are now in June less than half a year but we have achieved more than 5%. This is*

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because we are sending family planning to their doorsteps. It shows a major boost in our corporate image", he concluded.

4.7   TO ASCERTAIN HOW COMMUNITY RELATIONS ACTIVITIES CAN BE IMPROVED BY THE SELECTED HOSPITALS FOR THE STUDY.

According to Googins (1997), community relations is food for the soul of the organization and that it is no long an afterthought or a corporate window-dressing. It is in line with this that the researchers sought to ascertain how community relations activities can be improved by the selected hospitals for this study. To be able to make headway in this direction, the following questions were asked to assist the researchers achieve the objective of the study:

1. Have you ever covered or participated in any community relations programmes/ activities organized by a hospital? Mention the hospital.

2. What objectives do you seek to fulfill for them when you covered their activities?

3. Can you share with us your impression about such community programmes which you took part in or covered?

 4. What is your view on the kind of benefits that the community relations activities can bring to bear on the enhancement of the hospital's corporate image?

5. If you were given the chance to provide recommendations to these hospitals on media exposure and coverage, what will be your recommendation?

When the question was asked of the journalists whether they have ever covered or participated in any community relations programmes/ activities organized by any hospital, all the media practitioners answered in the affirmative. They mentioned Asafo Agyei, South Suntreso,

Maternal and Child Health hospitals and several others as some of the health institutions whose community relations activities they have participated.

Our first participant was the Deputy News editor of *Angel FM* who was asked to share her views on the kind of benefits that the community relations activities can bring to bear on the enhancement of the hospital's corporate image. She intimated that community relations activities have been very helpful because in the rural areas, residents may have one disease or the other but may not be registered members of the National Health Insurance Scheme and may not have money on them for the Cash and Carry System. This circumstance, according to her, will rather compel the affected person to stay at home till the sickness becomes fatal but with the outreach programmes where hospital authorities go to the people to treat their diseases it brings some form of relief to the victims. In her view, the hospital will be the eventual beneficiary of these activities because the people will see the hospital as a caring one.

When the same question was directed at the Ashanti regional News Editor of *Daily Graphic*, he said community relation activities play a major role in promoting corporate image of institutions and that explains why health facilities continue to embark on various outreach activities for members in communities in which they operate. He said during health walks for example, doctors and nurses interact with members of the communities thereby creating good corporate relationships between these members and the health facilities. He noted that the feedback from members of the community also helps the hospitals to know if money being used was administered well and also helps build their public relations.

A broadcast journalist with TV3 Network who was the last journalist to respond to this same question said maternal mortality talk was the last community relations activity he covered for the Maternal and Child Health hospital. He said they got to know earlier on that people in the area were not aware of the mortality rate and had no knowledge as to what causes that so they were found of engaging in activities which resulted in they getting affected but after the talk, people there became aware of it and adopted a set of mind change on the issues. *"Reasonably, it is expected that people from this background will be appreciative of the efforts of the hospital", he concluded.*

The journalist said now the community knows that the hospital is not profit oriented only but also offers some support for those in the community and this enhances the hospital's corporate image. Since according to him, the activities helps in building the reputation and image of the hospital, it also makes them credible.

They also said data gathering should be a major factor to consider when such activities are been organized. So when this is done it will help the hospital to know for example that maternal mortality rate is spreading in the area and will also help them to know the next step to take in their next outreach programme.

When the question was first directed at the Deputy News Editor of Angel FM as the kind of recommendation she would have made if her views were sort by the hospitals on media exposure and coverage of community relations programmes, she said she would have advised the hospitals to shift. their focus a little bit to other areas such as providing sponsorship to other programmes like football, volley ball and other entertaining programmes and not to rely only on organizing

health activities. She said she believes in catching the attention of the media and the general public by doing good rather than paying for the general advertisement.

In an answer to the same question, the Ashanti regional editor Daily Graphic also said the reason for which he was invited to the activities is to provide publicity for the health institutions he thinks that in as much as hospitals are benefitting from the media coverage, they should also invest more in media activities like organizing educational programmes for members of the media to educate them on the activities of the hospitals. He also recommended to the hospitals to do more documentaries rather than concentrating on activities like health walks.

On his part, the broadcast journalist at TV3 Network called on the hospitals not to concentrate on using the media for only sending their intended message across to their publics but also organize health programmes and workshop for the media to become abreast with some of the developments as far as their public health activities are concerned.

To have a fair idea of how public relations practitioners think about community relations activities and its contributions in relationships between community members and hospitals, the researchers decided to seek the input of the Director of Public Relations at the ministry of youth and sports. He was selected by the researchers because of his involvement in similar programmes as part of his schedules. He was asked the following questions:

1. From the public relations perspective, would you say community relations activities play any role in enhancing the image of corporate organizations? Briefly explain the reasons for your answer.

2. Is it important for hospitals to embark on community relations programmes for reputation purposes? Why?

3. How would you respond to the assessment that community relation activities are waste of resources and should not be encouraged?

He was first asked whether community relations activities play any role in enhancing the image of corporate organizations and he said Community relations activities do play a role in enhancing corporate image because every corporate organizations has its community members as its main publics they relate to and they need to build a good relationship with such communities. He said with hospitals in particular, they have the general public as their client so they are the people they relate to. So they need to have constant relationship with them so as to remain proactive regarding public sensitization. "***Sensitizing the community members with issues in relation to their health contributes to the reductions in the number of patients that visit the hospitals on daily basis***". He intimated.

When asked to explain if it is important for a hospital to embark on community relations activities for reputation purposes, the Director of Public relations at the Ministry of Youth and Sports said; ***"the hospitals are there to take care of our health needs and so when we are healthy it is to their credit and when many people visit the hospital, it creates pressure not only on the infrastructure but also on drugs and other important resources. I am sure it is not the joy of a medical doctor to come to work and meet a long queue waiting to be served, so people need to know their basic needs and how to take care of very simple things".***

This, he said presupposes that community relations activities if properly organized will directly benefit the community members who will intend develop good perception about the hospital by seeing it in a positive light. "So in effect community relations activities are important" he concluded.

In response to a third question as to whether community relations activities are waste of funds or not, the public relations practitioner was emphatic that it is important for hospitals to have an enlightened publics on issues about their health instead of waiting for certain things to occur before visiting the hospitals. He said in that instance it is only appropriate that outreach activities are used to create the platform for the public to benefit from the hospital.

He said he will not buy into the argument that community relations activities is a waste of funds because of the key role it plays in the entire health delivery system. "*It is important to get enlightened publics. As they say ignorance is a disease and in the long run it costs. When people are enlightened and educated to know their health needs it places them at a privileged position to take care of themselves. These activities also create a room for a sort of relationship to exist between the hospital authorities and its community members. It makes the people will feel free to seek for medical assistance when they face any health problem instead of waiting for things to get worse before reporting to the hospital*".

The responses from all the participants suggest that community relations activities is vital. Whilst the beneficiaries made comments that show their appreciations of the outreach programmes organized by the hospitals, managers of the hospital appears to think that such outreach programmes provide the platform for them to strike some relationships with the community members.

The three journalists and the public relations director at the ministry of youth and sports also hold the view that both the hospitals and the community members drive some kind of mutual benefit from community relations programmes.

This endorsement of the views of some researchers, According to Robbins(2003), organizations establish and maintain good relationship with their host communities. He said this relationship is expected to be a mutually beneficial one that results in community support, community loyalty, company goodwill and higher employee moral.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1   INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the study was to provide reliable information on the assessment of community relations activities in enhancing corporate image: a study of selected hospitals in the Kumasi metropolis.

The objectives of the study were;

To find out from beneficiaries the contributions community relations programme make in the realization of effective relationships by the hospitals and the communities.

To find out how community relations activities help to enhance the reputation of hospitals in the Kumasi metropolis.

To ascertain how community relations activities can be improved by the selected hospitals for the study.

5.2 DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

Data analyzed in the chapter four are presented below:

5.2.1 To gather insight from beneficiaries of Hospital Community Relations programme and the contributions of these programmes to relationships between hospitals and communities

The findings obtained from participants who benefitted from community relations activities carried out by Asafo Agyei hospital, Maternal and Child health and South Suntreso indicated that

community relations activities play a role in building a relationship between the community members and the hospital. This corroborated the positions of researchers such as Robbins (2003), who posit that "business is a part of a large society and therefore it has a responsibility other than just maximizing profits".

Participants, particularly beneficiaries of activities of these hospitals made it clear that they have been affected positively by the activities of these hospitals. Also the activities have enabled them to make friend and strengthened their relationship with the hospitals. This outcome affirms the importance of outreach programmes as highlighted by Desatnik (2000), assertion that" Community relations includes social outreach programmes corporations establish to build relations and foster an understanding of the role and responsibility a corporation has with its local community"

5.2.2 The Assessment on how Community Relations Activities help to Enhance the Reputation of Hospitals in the Kumasi Metropolis.

The researchers sought to find out whether community relations activities help to enhance the reputation of hospitals. The responses given by the General Manager of Asafo Agyei hospital, the Administrator of Maternal Child Health and the South Suntreso hospitals established that the community relations activities play a role in enhancing the image of the hospitals.

The response from the General Manager of Asafo Agyei hospital indicate that beneficiaries from their outreach activities always develop some trust in the hospital concerning the services they render thereby making the hospital trust worthy and credible.

The Administrator of Maternal and Child Health gave responses that suggest that community relations activities make it possible for their facility to gain the confidence of the publics who

prefer the services of their hospital to bigger ones. This falls in line with Porter and Krammer (2011) who maintain that "addressing social concerns could increase the level of company productivity, with subsequent positive effects on profitability, share value and company image"

5.2.3 To Ascertain how Community Relations Activities can be improved by the Selected Hospitals for the Study.

The researchers sought the views of participants on how community relations activities can be improved by hospitals. The findings established that the hospitals should also sponsor other programs like football, volleyball and other entertaining programmes as a way of improving on their community relations and not to rely only on organizing health activities.

The researchers noticed that the hospitals are content with the results they get from their outreach programmes but it was established that participants want hospitals to expand their activities to include building of media documentaries and organizing of workshops to educate members of the media on the activities of the hospitals.

Researchers also found out that beneficiaries are happy with the hospitals that organize outreach programmes. They concluded that this could be due to the fact that the participants are the direct beneficiaries of the community relations activities.

The findings also revealed that media practitioners who take part in community relations activities do not use their platform to get feedback from beneficiaries of community relations programmes and when they do at all such feedback is not communicated to the hospitals. Researchers believe that feedback is necessary because community relations activities need to be

planned. This endorsed the definition of community relations by Center and Jackson (2002) who says community relations is an institution's planned active and continuing participation within a community to maintain and enhance its environment to the benefit of both the institution and the community.

The Deputy News Editor Angel FM gave a recommendation that the hospitals should also sponsor other programs like football, volley and other entertaining programmes and not to relay only on organizing health activities. She said she believes in catching attention of the media and the general public by doing good rather than paying for the general advertisement. She thinks one kills two with a stone.

5.3. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results the researchers recommend that:

- The hospitals should expand their outreach programmes to include sponsoring sporting activities which can serve as a platform for further publicity.

- The hospitals should also organize workshops for media practitioners to educate the media on health related issues.

- After organizing any community relations programme, hospitals should make a follow up to get feedback from participants or beneficiaries so as to enable the hospitals make proper evaluations of the success or otherwise of the programmes organized.

- There should be a legislation by government to compel all hospitals to embark on periodic community relations activities. This will make it possible more people to benefit from such activities.

5.3.1 Recommendation for Future Studies.

The researchers want to make the following recommendations for future studies:

- Researchers should expand the focus of the research to include more hospitals especially hospitals in the region.

- Researchers can also look at community relations activities at other corporate institution instead of focusing on health facilities.

5.4 LIMITATIONS

The study could not cover all hospitals that undertake community relations activities in the Kumasi metropolis due to time constraint and lack of resources.

Researchers could not also have face-to-face interviews with the media practitioners, beneficiaries of community relations activities by hospitals and Director of Public relations at the Ministry of Youth and Sports. The interviews were rather conducted via telephone.

The findings by the researchers cannot be generalized since the situation in the other hospitals may not be the same as the hospitals chosen for the study. Conclusions are only limited to the three hospitals where the study was conducted

5.5 CONCLUSION

The study concluded that community relations activities play a role in building a relationship between members of the beneficiary communities and the hospitals involved. This is because it was established that beneficiaries of the outreach programmes are happy with what they get from the hospitals through these programmes.

It is also the position of the researchers that the hospitals involved would have benefitted more if the hospitals had taken advantage of feedback through community relations programmes. The conclusion of this study confirms that, the theory of legitimacy which says corporations as one kind of social arrangement requires legitimacy to maintain functional long term relationships with various communities which they depend.

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APPENDIX I

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR ADMINISTRATORS AND CEO'S OF SELECTED HOSPITALS WHO UNDRTAKE COMMUNITY RELATIONS PROGRMMES.

1. Do you undertake community relations in the community in which you operate?

2. What kind of community relations activities do you organize for members of the public?

3. Why do you organize such community relations activities?

4. What benefits does your hospital stand to gain from organizing these activities?

5. What will you say are some of the reasons/objectives that account for embarking on community relations activities?

6. How will you assess the contributions of these programmes towards enhancing the corporate image of the hospital?

7. How do you organize your activities? Is it with the help of your employees, community members or people are hired to carry out some of them?

8. Describe the ways in which your image has been enhanced as a result of your activities?

9. How do you fund your community relations programmes?

10. Have these programmmes/activities contributed in any way to the enhancement of your image?

11. Please tell us how your image has been enhanced.

12. Do you have a formal policy on your community relations programmes?

13. What are the specific objectives?

14. Do you think organizing these activities make you credible in the estimation of people in the community?

15. Do you organize these activities just because you want to be seen as a responsible organization?

APPENDIX II

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE BENEFICIARIES OF COMMUNITY RELATIONS

PROGGRAMMES

1. Please, tell us the kind of hospital outreach programmes you have ever benefitted from (i.e. community relations activities)?
2. What in your opinion are the challenges to these activities?
3. Have these activities made you respect people such as doctors, nurses etc. who work in hospitals? How?
4. Were you already aware of the hospital before these activities were implemented?
5. What is your stand on the continuation of these programmes?
6. What in your opinion account for the organization of these activities?
7. After benefiting from these activities organized by the hospital, how does that affect your relationship with the hospital?
8. How frequent do you think they should embark on these projects?
9. How does it help you as an individual and the community as a whole?
10. Were the members of the community involved in the programme? How?
11. Have your perception about the hospital been affected?
12. What kind of activities do you want the hospital(s) organize and or prioritize? Why?
13. What are some of the benefits?
14. How will you assess the relationship between the hospital and beneficiaries of this programme?
15. Were you (community) consulted before the role out of these activities?
16. Would you prefer that you are consulted before the roll out is done? Why?
17. Do you support the hospitals in these activities? Please, how?

APPENDIX III

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR MEDIA HOUSES WHO HAS WITHNESS SOME

COMMUNITY RELATIONS PROGRAMME

1. Have you ever covered or participated in any community relations programmes/ activities organized by a hospital? Mention the hospital.

2. How will you describe your relationship with the hospitals?

3. What objectives do you seek to fulfill for them when you covered their activities?

4. Can you share with us your impression about such community programmes which you took part in or covered?

5. Explain to us the kind of activities which were organized by the hospital.

6. What is your assessment of the feedback from readers/viewers/listeners to these activities?

7. Do you communicate the feedback to the hospitals? What has been their reaction?

8. What will you say are some of the media coverage benefits that the community members and the hospital stand to gain?

9. What is your view on the kind of benefits that the community relations activities can bring to bear on the enhancement of the hospital's corporate image?

10. What is your opinion on the notion that community relations programmes when given media exposure can contribute to the enhancement of corporate image?

11. What views or concerns about these community relations activities were expressed by beneficiaries when they come on your platform?

12. What has been the effect of the media coverage of these activities

13. What media benefits do the coverage of these activities offer these hospitals?

14. Does media coverage help in enhancing the image of these hospitals? Please, how?

15. If you were given the chance to provide recommendations to these hospitals on media exposure and coverage, what will be your recommendation?

APPENDIX IV

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER WHO HAS WITHNESSED A COMMUNITY RELATIONS PROGRAMME

1. From the public relations perspective, would you say community relations activities play any role in enhancing the image of corporate organizations? Briefly explain the reasons for your answer.

2. How can hospitals use community relations activities to improve their image?

3. Is it important for hospitals to embark on community relations programmes for reputation purposes? Why?

4. How will you assess the benefits of these activities/programmes to the community members?

5. From the public relations perspective, what role do community relations activities play in building a good relationship between hospitals and the beneficiary communities?

6. What in your view should be taken into account when hospitals intend to organize community relations programmes?

7. How often should hospitals organize community relations activities?

8. How would you respond to the assessment that community relation activities are waste of resources and should not be encouraged?

9. Briefly explain both the short and long term benefits of these activities to corporate organizations

10. In terms of image enhancement, what are the advantages a hospital with community relations programmes has over a hospital without these programmes?