The Role of Public Relations in sensitizing public on Government Projects in Kenya: Case of Nairobi County

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Abstract

Public relations is a vital tool for the government because it emphasizes on democracy and good governance. This study sought to establish the role of public relations tools in sensitizing the public on government projects in government ministries in the Central Government in Nairobi. Specifically, the study examined: the effects of media relations on sensitizing the public on government projects in Nairobi County, Kenya; the effects of community relations on sensitizing the public on government projects in Nairobi County, Kenya; the effects of sponsorships on sensitizing the public on government projects in Nairobi County, Kenya; the effects of community events on sensitizing the public on government projects in Nairobi County, Kenya. For this study, the researcher used descriptive survey design. The target population comprised heads of departments in state corporations in Kenya which totals 162. This study was a census survey of all 162 state corporations in Kenya. The unit of analysis comprised all the state corporations whereas the unit of observation consisted of 162 heads of departments (Public Relations Officers) of each State Corporation, thus forming a sample size of 162 respondents. Primary data was collected using questionnaires as the main data collection instruments. The study also collected data using an interview schedule. SPSS version 20 was adopted in the analysis of quantitative data. Data was presented in the form of pie charts, graphs and tables. Themes were used to analyze qualitative data. The study found that media relations positively and significantly influence sensitisation on government projects; community relations positively and significantly influence sensitisation on government projects; sponsorships positively and significantly influence sensitisation on government projects and community events positively and significantly influence sensitisation on government projects. The study, therefore, recommends that stronger communication mechanisms should be installed and well integrated in the system to ensure easier and convenient dissemination of information to the public. PR department of any organisation contributes to its development and enhances customer’s satisfaction. In this line, the study recommends that strong and well
integrated PR department should be installed in an organisation and therefore should be sufficiently funded to ensure its success. Further, the study recommends that organisations should devise ways and means to maintain a long-term commitment with clients.

**Keywords:** Corporate communication relations, community events, media relations, public relations, sponsorship.

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**Introduction**

The need for Public Relations (PR) services worldwide has gained prominence in the last 10 years. This is as a result of the increased competition in foreign markets among multinational companies (Petersen, 2010). Western based multinational companies like the Coca-Cola, international banks and many more are expanding their businesses to hitherto unchartered territories while using PR to build relationships with their publics. As a result of the increased trade between nations of the world and need to sensitize, support and promote government development projects, practices of PR are becoming internationalised (Tindall, 2010).

According to Bernays (2013), Public Relations are described as a way of persuading the public to provide support to an institution, activity and movement. Former president of American PR association, George Meredith refers to PR as anything that contributes in attaining a suitable opinion (Hallahan, 2010). Though the main aspects of public relation dates back to the ancient Greeks and Egyptians, the public relations aspect today is a twentieth century phenomenon whose existence is largely from the advent of the industrial revolution in United States and Europe (Jaques, 2010).

In most situations, Public Relations are very critical in the resolution of conflicts among organisations and groups. Similarly, it is important to note that public relations also play an important role in achievement of the company’s goals, like