

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**POSITION, STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS
AMONG SELECTED PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL CLUBS IN GHANA**



FAROUK NII TETTEH NETTEY

JULY, 2017

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**POSITION, STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS
AMONG SELECTED PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL CLUBS IN GHANA**



**A THESIS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA
STUDIES, FACULTY OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES, LINGUISTICS AND
COMMUNICATION STUDIES, SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF
GRADUATE STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA IN
PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD
OF MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY (BUSINESS COMMUNICATION)
DEGREE.**

JULY, 2017

DECLARATION

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, Farouk Nii Tetteh Nettey declare that this dissertation, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted in part or in whole, for another degree elsewhere.

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of Dissertation as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

NAME OF SUPERVISOR: Mr. Kwesi Aggrey

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am immensely grateful to Allah for everything. I would also like to express my profound gratitude to my supervisor, Mr. Kwesi Aggrey for his guidance and patience throughout this work. I further extend gratitude to all lecturers of the Department of Communication and Media Studies — Dr. Andy Ofori-Birikorang, Ms. Joyce Mensah, Mr. Asare Okae-Anti, Ms. Christine Hammond, Ms. Abena Abokoma Asemanyi, Mr. J. E. Allotey Pappoe and Mr. Tim Acquah- Hayford for their guidance and academic support. I am further thankful to Mrs Gifty Tetteh and Administrative staff of the department for their support and prayers.

My gratitude also goes to Accra Hearts of Oak, Kumasi Asante Kotoko FC, West African Football Academy (WAFA), Liberty Professionals FC, as well as all the people I interviewed. I am most grateful for the time and attention. I am also thankful to my course mates, the class of 2017 for all the advice.

I cannot overlook the tremendous support and encouragement extended to me by my Mother, Hajia Zeinab Nettey, My Father, Mr. Akai Nuhu Nettey, My Sister, Lawyer Aasiya Nettey, My Big Brother, Jameel Nettey and My Best Friend, Barikisu Timi Musah, who have helped shaped my life in diverse ways for the better. May God bless you all.

Finally I am grateful to all the authors whose work I cited for this study.

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my Father Askia Nuhu Nettey and My Mother, Hajia Zeinab Nettey for their support.



TABLE OF CONTENT

Content	Page
DECLARATION	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	ii
DEDICATION	iv
TABLE OF CONTENT	v
ABSTRACT	viii
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION	1
1.0 Background to the Study	1
1.2 Statement of problem	4
1.3 Objectives of the study	5
1.4 Research questions	6
1.5 Significance of the study	6
1.6.1 Delimitation	7
1.6.2 Operationalisation of Terms	7
1.7 Organisation of the study	8
CHAPTER TWO	9
LITERATURE REVIEW	9
2.0 Introduction	9
2.1 The concept of Public Relations	9
2.3 The roles and functions of Public Relations in Football Clubs	13
2.4 Locating Public Relations within organisations	15
2.4.1 The environment	17
2.4.2 Strategy	17

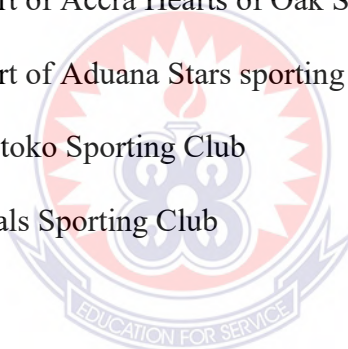
2.4.3 Organisation:	17
2.4.4 People	17
2.5 Public relations as a Top management Function	23
2.7 Public Relations and sports	24
2.8 Sports Marketing	26
2.9 Sponsorship in sports	28
2.10 History and Development of Football in Ghana	29
2.11 Brief history of the selected Ghanaian football clubs for the study	30
2.12 Theoretical framework	32
2.12.1 Relationship Management Model	32
2.12.2 Relationship Cultivation Strategies	34
2.12.3 Relevance of the Relationship Management Theory to the Study	35
2.13.1 Excellence Theory	36
2.13.2 Relevance of the Excellence Theory to the current study	38
CHAPTER THREE	39
METHODOLOGY	40
3.1 Introduction	40
3.2 Research Approach	40
3.3 Research Design	41
3.4 Population of the study	42
3.5 Sampling method	42
3.6 Sample size	43
3.7 Data Collection instrument	44
3.8 Interviews	44
3.6 Techniques for Data Analysis	45

CHAPTER FOUR	47
DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION	47
4.0 Introduction	47
4.1 Analysis and Discussions of the Findings on how Public Relations is structured and positioned in Football clubs in the Ghana Premier League (GPL)	47
4.2 Analysis and Discussion of what constitutes Public Relations Practice in Football Clubs in the Ghana Premier League	66
4.3 Analysis and Discussions on the Nature of Communications in Football Clubs in Ghana...	68
4.4 Chapter Summary	77
CHAPTER FIVE	78
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	78
5.0 Introduction	78
5.1 Summary of the findings	78
5.2 Conclusions	80
5.3 Limitations of the Study	81
5.4 Recommendations	81
5.5 Summary of Chapter	82
REFERENCES	83
APPENDIX I	90



LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1.1: Is an Ideal organogram of an organisation indicating PR as a management Function	18
1.2: The organogram of a corporate management organisation indicating public relations as a director status	19
1.3: Public relations department structured by functions	21
1.4: Public relations department structured by tasks	21
4. A	48
4. B	50
4.C Organisational chart of Accra Hearts of Oak Sporting Club	52
4.D Organisational chart of Aduana Stars sporting club	53
4.E Kumasi Asante Kotoko Sporting Club	55
4.F Liberty Professionals Sporting Club	56
4. G	58



ABSTRACT

The study investigated the functions, position and structure of Public Relations in professional Ghanaian Football clubs. It essentially looked at how the football clubs defined the function and roles of Public Relations. The study was qualitative and a multiple case study design was employed for the data collection. Five clubs namely, Accra Hearts of Oak, Kumasi Asante Kotoko, Aduana Stars, Liberty Professionals and West African Football Academy (WAFA) from the Ghana Premier League were purposively sampled for the study. Data were thematically analysed from the perspective of the Excellence Theory and Relationship Management model. These theories specify how Public Relations makes organisations more effective in the organisation and management of their publics. The study found among others that Public Relations was used by management of the clubs as a tool for maintaining relationship with their publics through media relations and also their understanding of PR was limited to some few roles and functions. The study also show that the Public Relations Officers of the clubs mainly played the technician role and sometimes communication facilitator's role based on the clubs' understanding of PR. The study also established that the clubs used channels such as telephone calls, memos, meetings and emails for their internal communication and mass media (radio, television and newspaper) and social media as channels for external communications. The study found that the clubs managed issues and their image mostly through the mass media in order to either attract sponsors or establish and maintain good relationship with their sponsors. However, it was established that non-performance and lack of success on the pitch were hindrances to attracting sponsorship.



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background to the Study

According to Lamb and McKee (2005) no formal organisation is an island. Each is composed of an internal system of social networks, and each exists within a framework of interrelated systems of relationships with key stakeholders such as competitors, consumers, sponsors, regulators, and the media. Lamb and McKee (2005) therefore, argue that Public Relations, as the name suggests, relies heavily on its relationship with its stakeholders and publics of an organisation and, the effective practice of Public Relations is integrally bound to the health of an organisation. As such, it provides the avenue for the organisation to effectively monitor, interact and react with other key groups within the organisational environment. Public Relations is thought of as the communication and action tool on the part of an organisation that supports development and maintains a mutually beneficial relationship between the organisation and the groups with which it is interdependent.

The above definitions and concepts of Public Relations therefore shows that Public Relations, as a subsystem within an organisation, plays an important, role in ensuring that organisations meet their overall aims and objectives. Davis (2004) argues that many organisations do not show Public Relations as an independent role. This view may be because of the multiple functions of Public Relations, from events organising to marketing or service management. However, Public Relations can contribute to the success of every function of the business; be staff relations, marketing or even finance. No activity conducted by any organisation can succeed if understanding is lacking, which is why Public Relations relates to the total communication of any organisation, both inside and outside (Davis, 2004).

Sports, like poetry or dance, has always been part of socialisation among human beings and this can be traced back to ancient Greece (Mendell, 1984). Over the years, sports has been known to be one of the most popular leisure activities for people all over the world and has moved from being just a social activity to become an important economic phenomenon with football taking center stage in world and African sports (Pannenborg, 1976). Football started as a primitive mob activity which was a violent and disorganised game, with very few rules and unlimited number of players who represented whole villages in a heated contest (FIFA, 2011). The game of football has however evolved into a well-organised sport with rules and regulations for procedures for both on and off the pitch. According to Bridgewater and Stray (2002), football is not just a beautiful game, it is a global and highly visible business whose customers are intensely loyal to their chosen brand although estimates of the size of the global sports business vary, it is variously valued as the 11th largest sector in UK with a 3% of GDP.

Between 2005 and 2006, the total income of the “Big 5” European football leagues (English Premier League, Spanish La Liga, German Bundusliga, Italian Seria A and the French League 1) stood at \$18.54 billion of which the English Premier League (EPL) was the largest single contributor generating \$2.9 billion (Deloitte & Touche, 2007). Based on the above, it is clear that football’s economic benefit as a business enterprise is enormous. However, the world of business is characterised by fierce competition, and in order to win new customers and retain existing ones, organisations have to distinguish themselves from the competition while creating and maintaining positive image at the same time (Cutlip, Center & Broom 2009). In this regard, Public Relations plays an important role in the survival and successful operation of sport organisations (Stoldt, Dittmore & Branvold, 2012).

A positive public image helps create a strong relationship with the customers which, in turn, increases an organisation's bottom line (Delliote, 2011). Football clubs, like many organisations require effective Public Relations in various and diverse ways to help keep a good healthy relationship with both the internal and external publics. Public Relations is seen as a vital part of maintaining an organisation's image and communicating the organisations message to its customers, investors, stakeholders and general public (Grunig & Hunt, 2000). Bridgewater and Stray (2002) also maintain that Public Relations should be part of sports organisation and administration process at all levels, whether handling major sponsorship and media rights deals, events, promoting stars, promoting team unity, among others. Public Relations is equally important to a sports organisation as it is to the athletes, coaches and general managers and owners. Unfortunately, however, relatively little attention seems to have been given to the role of Public Relations in football clubs. Exceptions include Curtin and Gaither (2006) who, writing from an international perspective, noted the value of Public Relations to sports business and pointed out that the topic (Importance of Public Relations to sports organisation) is overlooked in international Public Relations texts. The scholars, Curtin and Gaither (2006) note that sports can unify nations, promote social change and affect the national psyche, making it a powerful cultural agent (Curtin & Gaither).

Sports marketers such as Shank (2002); Chadwick & Beech (2006) took some interest in the field but it was Hopwood (2006) who introduced Public Relations perspectives to sports marketing and the role of Public Relations in sports marketing in her study of Public Relations practice in English County Cricket (Hopwood, 2006). Sports management and event management texts have therefore not given Public Relations the attention it deserves. It is therefore important to note how necessary it is to gain competitive advantage when it comes to commercialisation of the game. It however

seems that football still battles to define the functions and the role of Public Relations, let alone positioning the discipline. This study, therefore, seeks to investigate the role that Public Relations plays within the selected football clubs in the Ghana Premier League.

1.2 Statement of problem

Public Relations is vital in the promotion of the image and reputation of every institution, including football clubs (Hopwood, 2006). Davis (2004) argues that the Public Relations industry simply lacks credibility; people just do not take the industry seriously. Davis (2004) further stressed that the discipline might be regarded dispassionately as being positively beneficial to society but also questions why organisations are reluctant to let Public Relations' professionals "beat their collective drum". Public Relations is usually assigned solely 'low end' tasks, given roles that invariably underestimate its value (Davis 2004). Therefore, the home for Public Relations functions is still not clear in most organisation and particularly Ghanaian football clubs. In this regard, Al-smith (2011) is of the view that the "low end" tasks given to Public Relations within some football clubs in Ghana could be a contributing factor for these clubs not meeting their main objective -- attracting and retaining football fans.

It appears however, that football clubs in Ghana still battle to define the functions and the roles of Public Relations. The studies on football related research in Ghana (Otoo, 2014; Ohene, 2014) have concentrated on the history, economic, technological and marketing components of football in Ghana. Otoo's (2014) study examined the importance of sports to nation building, highlighting the history of football and its economic benefits to the country while Ohene (2014) looked at how the use of the

internet, specifically social media, could be used to market football clubs in Ghana.

While there appears to be a dearth when it comes to research with regard to the functions and role of Public Relations within football clubs in Ghana, there is a plethora of work on that same topic in the European circle. The European studies available (Garcia, 2011; Goskel and Serarslam, 2015) examined the benefit of Public Relation when effectively used in football. Garcia's (2011) study examined how Public Relation was solely used to whip up public interest in the unveiling of Cristiano Ronaldo in Real Madrid Football Club (FC) in Spain. Goksel and Serarslan (2015) reviewed the usage-styles of new media as a corporate communication instrument in Turkey. This study will therefore focus on the position, structure and functions of Public Relations within selected football clubs in Ghana.

1.3 Objectives of the study

In order to understand the functions and roles of Public Relations and analyse Public Relations practices among Ghanaian football clubs, the following objectives were formulated to guide the study.

The objectives of the study are to:

1. Investigate the position and structure of Public Relations (PR) practice in five Football Clubs in the Ghana Premier League (GPL).
2. Investigate the functions of PR in five Football clubs in the Ghana Premier League. (GPL)
3. Investigate and describe the nature of communications employed by public relations practitioners of the GPL Ghana

1.4 Research questions

The study was guided by the following research question:

1. How is Public Relations structured in Football clubs in the Ghana Premier League (GPL)?
2. What constitute Public Relations practices in the Football clubs of the GPL?
3. What is the nature of communications employed by Public Relations practitioners of the selected football clubs in the GPL?

1.5 Significance of the study

The assessment of the position, structure and functions of Public Relations among professional football clubs in Ghana is necessary particularly to sports clubs in understanding how the Profession is perceived in football clubs in Ghana, how fans respond to it and the general contributions public relations has on the respective clubs.

Football is important to Ghana economically and socially in terms of its aid to development and helping alleviate poverty (Otoo, 2014). Aside its entertainment benefits, it brings the country together especially during international tournaments. It is therefore important that Ghanaian clubs make use of PR in order to enhance their football clubs image. Also, the findings will also help in informing policy especially in the professional practice of Public Relations in football clubs in Ghana and sports in general.

The findings of this research will serve as a guideline and standard to aid football clubs in Ghana to develop structures within their clubs in order to adapt and realise the full potential of PR in sports. The research will also unearth the practices of Public Relations on the ground as presented by officials of the football clubs.

1.6.1 Delimitation

This study focused on the nature and functions of Public Relations among professional football clubs, specifically football clubs in the Ghana Premier League. That is, how Public Relation is practised in the professional football clubs and the effects of Public Relations on the sports organisation. The findings of the study were limited to the response the researcher gathers from the selected football clubs. With the aim of understanding the nature and functions of Public Relation in professional football clubs, clubs that have been in the Ghana Premier League for a minimum of two (2) seasons, were selected by the researcher. The researcher was convinced that football clubs that have been in the GPL for the specified period of two (2) seasons have gathered adequate understanding of management of the club and the value of Public Relation in the club.

1.6.2 Operationalisation of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the researcher has operationalised the following terms;

I. Football Clubs

Football clubs that earn their living by engaging in football activities and participating in organised football and have public followership owing to their success or perceived excellence in their fields of endeavor will be referred to a Professional football clubs (PFC)

II. Top Clubs

Teams in the Ghana Premier League (GPL) that have won at least 5 trophies in the Ghana Premier League is referred in this research as Top Clubs.

III. Middle Level Clubs

Clubs that have won at least 2 premierships titles and have not been relegated in the last five seasons of the Ghana Premier League Middle level clubs.

IV. Bottom Cubs

Clubs in the GPL that have never won any premiership title but have been in the premiership for a minimum of two seasons.

V. League

This refers to the Ghana Premier League

1.7 Organisation of the study

The study was organised into five chapters. Chapter one embodied the background of the study, the objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, delimitations and the organisation of the study. The second chapter presented a review of literature on the study and delineated the theoretical framework underpinning the study. Chapter three presented the methods and procedure used for the collection of data for analysis. Issues discussed under this chapter comprised the research approach, research design, population, sample and sampling technique, data collection instruments, reliability and validity, data collection procedure and method of data analysis. The fourth chapter was dedicated to the findings and discussions of the study. Chapter five presented the summary, conclusions from the findings and make recommendations for further studies.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of Public Relations practice and tactics relevant for application in football clubs. It assesses their relevance to the achievement of organisational goals of football clubs. It also discusses findings of studies relevant to the practice of public relations in sports clubs in an attempt to fill some gap in literature that deserves attention. The chapter also deals with the theoretical framework that guided the study.

2.1 The concept of Public Relations

It is difficult to arrive at a common definition of Public Relations (PR) because it has a wide application field and can be implemented with different objectives in public and private sectors. According to Wilcox and Cameron (2009), Public Relations is usually defined according to some of its visible techniques and tactics, such as publicity in a newspaper, a television interview with an organisation's spokesperson, or the appearance of a celebrity at an event. People usually fail to understand that Public Relations is a process involving many subtle and far-reaching consequences. Public Relations includes and stretches into research and analysis, programming, communication, policy formulation, and feedback from identified publics. Public Relations practitioners most often operate from two distinct levels. They operate on the first level as advisers to their clients or to their organisation's top management, and the second level as technicians who produce and broadcast messages in multiple media channels across board (Wilcox & Cameron, 2009)

Public Relations is a rapidly developing field as an academic discipline and also as a

practice. It is however interesting to note that there are complex views which consists of absurd concepts, terms, structure, process and findings in its field (Davis, 2004). Scholars like Davis (2004) have argued that the position of Public Relations is not very clear in most organisations. Wilcox and Cameron (2009) aver that Public Relations practitioners have long been known as intermediary between organisations and all publics whom the organisation deals with.

Public Relations has been defined in many different ways. The definitions are ever evolving alongside the evolving roles and functions of the profession. Earlier definitions of Public Relations emphasised press agency and publicity (Grunig 1984) whilst more modern definitions incorporate the concept of engagement and relationship building (Cutlip, Center & Boom 2009).

One of the early forerunners of public relations, Bernays (1928) defined public relations as the attempt by information, persuasion and adjustment to engineer public support for an activity, cause, movement or institution. Bernays (1928) postulates that the Public Relations practitioner is the agent working with both the modern media of communications and group formations in society in order to provide ideas to the public's consciousness. His definition centred on one way communication system that aimed at persuading publics and not necessarily getting feedback from public. His definition can be categorised under the ancient or outmoded definitions of public relations (Wilcox and Cameron 2009).

However, Harlow (1976: P. 23) set the tone for the modern definition of public relations. He defined public relations as “a distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain lines of communication, understanding , acceptance and cooperation between an organisation and its public; involving the management of

problems or issues; helps management to keep informed on and responsive to public opinions; defines and emphasizes the responsibility of management to serve the public interest, helps management keep abreast of and effectively utilize change, serving as an early warning system to help anticipate the trends; and sound and ethical communication as its principal tool.”

National and international Public Relations organisations have formulated various definitions of Public Relations. For instance, the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA 2011) avers that Public Relation is the deliberate, planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding of an organisation and its publics. This definition stresses largely on the importance of having and keeping a good relationship with identified publics. According to Wilcox and Cameron (2009:P. 42) the British Institute of Public Relations (BIPR) defines public relations as, “influencing behaviors to achieve objectives through the effective management of relationships and communication.”

One of the normative functions or aim of Public Relations is to inform the public, prospective customers, investors, partners, employees, and other stakeholders and ultimately persuading them to maintain a certain view about the organisation, its leadership, products, or of political decisions (Seitel, 2007). In other words, the purpose of public relations is to impress upon the audience to embark on a certain belief and action.

Wilcox and Cameron (2009) therefore, emphasise that there are key words to remember in the above definitions such as: deliberate, planned, publics, stakeholders, and management. The term deliberate as used in this context implies that public relations activities are intentional. They are designed to influence, gain understanding, provide

information and obtain feedback and reaction from those affected by the activities. The word “planned” also implies that Public Relations activities are organised. These key terms therefore mean that solutions to problems are discovered, and logistics are thought out, with activities taking place over a period of time. Seitel (2001) reinforces this view by indicating that the definitions of Public Relations will always differ, but almost all will agree that good Public Relations requires a firm base of theoretical knowledge, a strong sense of ethical judgment, solid communication skills and, above all, an uncompromising attitude of professionalism.

However, in sports clubs, some scholars such as (L’Etang 2006; 2013) & Waters, (2013) argue that since little attention has been paid to the area of sports Public Relations, its definition and concepts have been misconstrued to mean something closer to marketing. Garcia (2011) stresses that Public Relations main locus in sports clubs is to build relations and generate goodwill towards the clubs whilst marketing is concerned with sales and treating their publics as “customers” or “clients”. Garcia’s (2011) study discovered the importance of Public Relations to sports clubs, specifically, football clubs if the roles and functions of PR are utilised properly. According to Sebbale (2011) Sports clubs in Ghana have been unable to distinguish between the functions of Public Relations and Marketing which reinforces L’Etang’s (2006, 2013) and Waters’ (2013) argument that due to the little attention paid to PR in sports clubs, its definition and concepts have been largely misconstrued which has resulted in the merging of PR and Marketing departments in most Sports clubs. In the Ghana Premier League, it is common to see that football clubs merge communication and administrative functions into a single unit/department (Sebbale 2011).

2.3 The roles and functions of Public Relations in Football Clubs

Seitel (2001) avers that although modern Public Relations initially developed as a tool used in power struggles in developed countries like the United States of America (USA), its role in present day society is vastly different because we are living in a complex society and are confronted by a knowledge explosion which is fueled by advanced technology, and thus changes the role of Public Relations. In short, as institutions have grown larger, they have been forced to refine their methods of communicating with their publics. Today, the role of Public Relations practitioners therefore is to interpret institutions to the publics they serve and to promote both the image and reputation of these institutions. Garcia (2011) talking about functions of Public Relations in sports clubs purported that changes brought on by globalisation in the media landscape have transformed sports teams into increasingly complex organisations that need to build and maintain relationships not only with their fans, but also with other audiences including shareholders, government and sponsors. However, according to L'Etang (2006), Public Relations (PR) is most prominent in sport when it is being pressed into service to smooth over an indiscretion or scandal that poses a threat to the club, the player, or the sport. L'Etang (2006) further argues that Public Relations tend to be underutilised in sports and often takes the form of an ad hoc response after an incident has occurred, designed to change public perception of the incident and limit damage to the organisation. Hopwood, Kitchin and Skinner (2012) however, believe that PR should be able to serve more functions in a sports club apart from just being pressed into service to smoothen over an indiscretion or scandal that possess a threat to the club. Hopwood, Kitchin and Skinner (2012) put together functions expected of Public Relations in a sports organisation as espoused below;

1. Sports Relationship Management

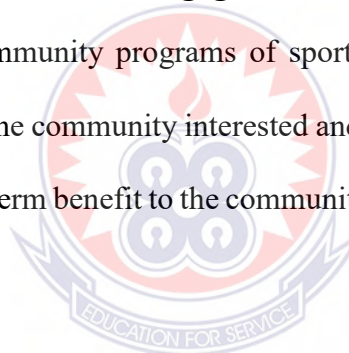
Sports organisations are required to manage their publics through a strategic approach to relationship management. Public Relations Officers are required to develop and maintain relationships with key publics' (Hopwood, Kitchin & Skinner 2012).

2. Sports Social responsibility

Despite the increasing commercialisation and professionalisation of sporting practices, sports clubs need to consider their impact on their wider international, national and local communities. The principles of corporate social responsibility (CSR) must be applied at all times (Hopwood, Kitchin & Skinner 2012).

3. Community Relations and Engagement

The development of community programs of sports organisations/clubs is aimed at getting young people in the community interested and engaged in active sports activity. This function has a long term benefit to the community and the club (Hopwood, Kitchin & Skinner 2012).



4. Crisis communication

This function of sports Public Relation is instrumental to sports organisation especially when they suffer a crisis situation. The onus to manage crises situation falls directly on the public relations practitioner in the sports organisation (Hopwood, Kitchin & Skinner 2012).

5. Public Image Strategy

Public Relations strategists in sports clubs will work with top executives in the club to craft an overview of how the company wants to be perceived, and how it is going to project a positive image. This can involve focusing in on exactly the right message, and

then deciding on the broad outlines of a campaign to disseminate that message (Hopwood, Kitchin & Skinner 2012).

6. Media Relations

Talking with the media is a core function of Public Relations department. Public Relations professionals field questions from reporters, arrange for interviews with key individuals in the organisation and write press releases to make the media aware of the sports clubs events or achievements (Hopwood, Kitchin & Skinner 2012)

7. Handling Emergencies

Sometimes as the sports clubs is struck by a disastrous event that ruins its public image. Public Relations professionals decide how the club will repair the damage to its image, communicate how it is dealing with the problem and regain control of its message (Hopwood, Kitchin & Skinner 2012)

Garcia (2011) further postulates that, in order to maintain a sustainable and continuous relationship with committed mass of fans, another avenue where fans can be permanently engaged is required. This reinforces Sebbale's (2013) argument that, Sports clubs in the Ghana Premier League have to ensure that the fans are constantly kept occupied with the clubs activities and information.

2.4 Locating Public Relations within organisations

Tench and Yeomans (2006) argue that apart from all the external and internal considerations, the location of public relations within an organisation depends on a variety of other factors such as the position of the most senior practitioner, the tasks allocated to the discipline, and how it is situated in relation to other disciplines. The position of the senior public relations practitioner provides a good indication of how the function is regarded within organisations. Seitel (2004) maintains that when

managing an organisation's public relations system, practitioners must demonstrate comfort with the various elements of the organisation itself; must be the interpreter of the organisation, its philosophy, policy and programmes, all of which emanate from top management. Public Relations therefore must report to those who run the organisation. However, in many sports clubs, this reporting relationship has not always been the case. Many times, Public Relations has been subordinated to advertising, marketing and other disciplines. Seitel (2004) points out that in many organisations, Public Relations has suffered the impact of downsizing and decentralisation. This has led to the shrinkage of large operations to the formation of smaller departments. This has, further, led to the question of what is the best way to organise for Public Relations in an organisation. It can be argued that the strongest Public Relations department is one led by a communications executive who reports directly to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) (Seitel 2004). Skinner, Mersham and Von Essen (2004) note that public relations is regarded as, and should of necessity be, a management function. This refers to Public Relations practice at an advanced level by experienced practitioners. According to Gracia (2011), Public Relations is best in sports clubs when it reports directly to the Chief Executive of the sports club. Garcia's (2011) study discovered that under the Presidency of Florentino Pérez of the Real Madrid FC, a Public Relations approach have been integrated into every strategic decision including the recruitment of players, the use of event planning, Internet, social media, promotional tours, and publications and the display of Real Madrid's own audiovisual media. The adoption of this model has proven successful despite poor sports results.

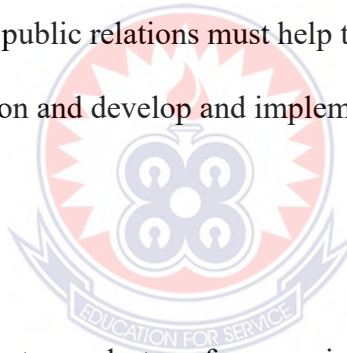
Seitel (2004) further maintains that the role of Public Relations in strategic management within organisations must be viewed from four perspectives namely; *the environment, strategy, organisation and people*.

2.4.1 The environment

The conventional perception of public relations is that it is concerned primarily with communicating with the organisation's external publics and involves a more or less one-way flow of information from the organisation to the outside world (Seitel, 2007). Lubbe and Puth (2004) argue that as a management function, public relations has a major role to play in acquiring information of relevance from outside and analysing and interpreting it.

2.4.2 Strategy

Without public relations' input of information about trends and developments within the environment, no meaningful strategies can be constructed (Thomlison, 2000). Grunig (2006) states that public relations must help to define the target audiences to be reached by the organisation and develop and implement communication plans to reach those audiences.



2.4.3 Organisation:

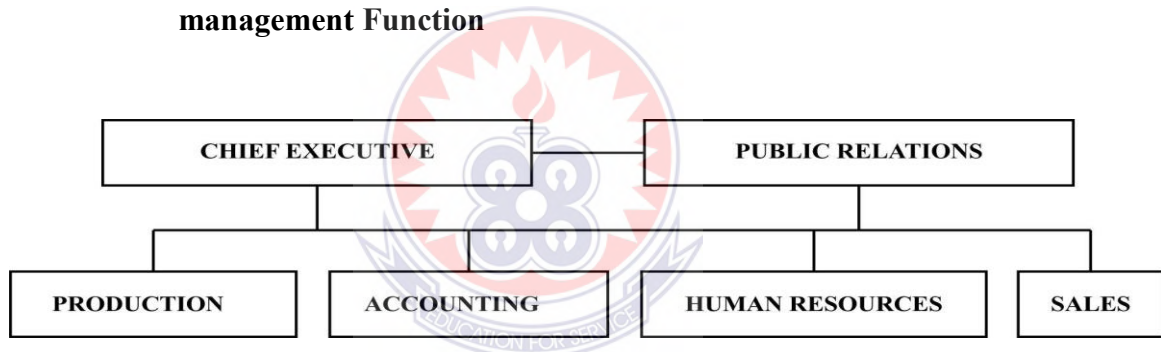
Public relations interprets and transfers environmental information into the organisation. It focuses on communicating corporate messages to its external audiences (Lamb & McKee, 2005). According to Theaker (2004), "Public relations' external communication functions can be relevant only in an environment where management recognises the public relations' role in environmental analysis and strategic planning". Public relations is a vital tool for strategic management in building and maintaining the reputation of an organisation.

2.4.4 People

Employees are one of the critical success areas in which management effectiveness may be evaluated. Lubbe and Puth (2004) maintain that one of public relations' roles is to

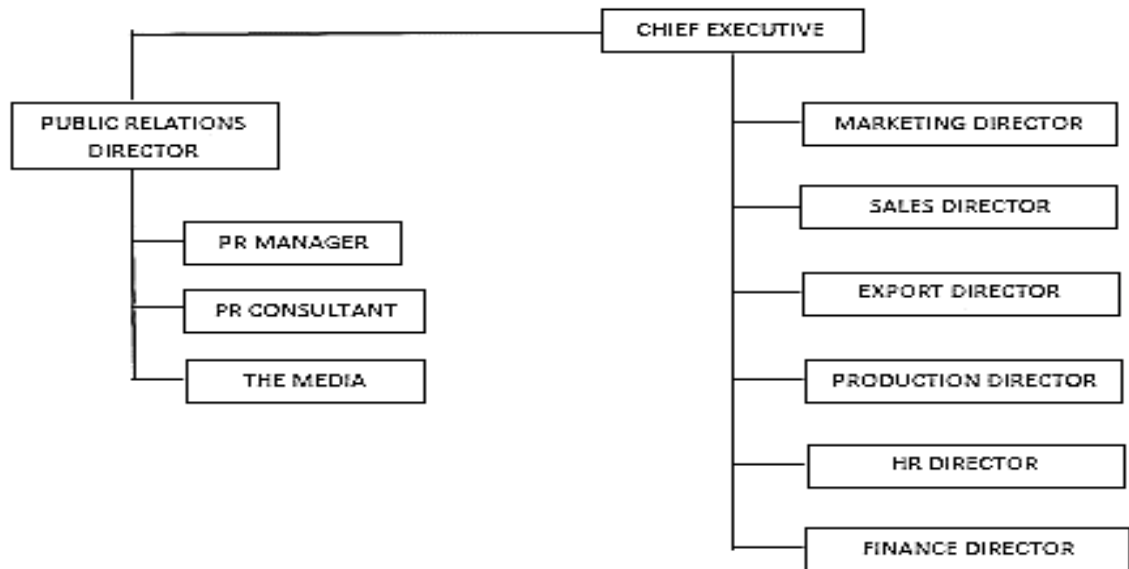
communicate with employees as one of the target audiences that an organisation attempts to reach as part of its overall public relations strategy. The four perspectives of public relation as espoused by Seitel (2004) reinforce Garcia's (2011) findings in regard to the strategic management of sports clubs. His study showed that when management of sports clubs positions Public Relations as a Management role, and allows Public Relations to function independently and effectively, taking into considering all the four perspective espoused by Seitel (2004), its effectiveness is enormous and beneficial to the sports clubs as proven by Real Madrid FC. Below are diagrams from PR scholars indicating the ideal position of PR in organisations.

Figure 1.1: Is an Ideal organogram of an organisation indicating PR as a management Function



Source: Skinner et al. (2001:P.6)

Figure 1.2: The organogram of a corporate management organisation indicating public relations as a director status

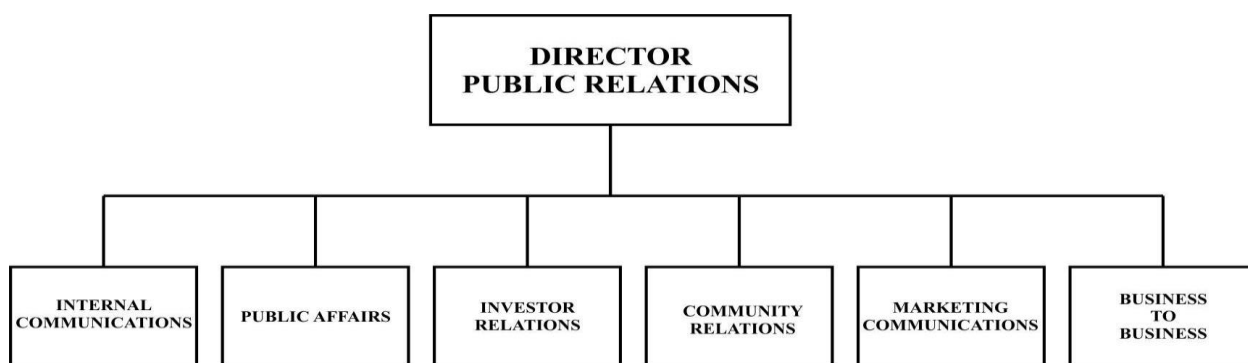


Source: Skinner et al (2004)

In order for an organisation to function effectively, Skinner et al. (2004) maintain that public relations managers need to be positioned at management level so that they are responsible to top management and serve all departments of the organisation. Ideally, the Public Relations manager should have a board of director status, as this happens in the world's successful companies as depicted in the above organograms. Both figures 1.1 and 1.2 indicate that Public Relations is a management function. Public relations helps organisations by assisting them to reach decisions and fulfil functions more effectively and helps the organisation to contribute to mutual understanding between the organisation and its environment. Seitel (2004) argues that public relations, should be the corporate conscience. An organisation's Public Relations professionals should enjoy enough autonomy to deal openly and honestly with management. As for the names of the department in which Public Relations is housed, organisations use a wide variety of names for the function. Ironically, the trend today seems to be away from the use of the traditional term 'public relations' and towards 'corporate communication'.

Van Riel (1995), cited in Tench and Yeomans (2006), states that public relations, in essence is, 'corporate communication'. Van Riel (1995) further divides corporate communication into three areas as follows: Management Communication, Marketing communication and Organisational communication. Management communication is communication by management aimed at developing a shared vision, establishing and maintaining trust in the leadership, managing change and empowering and motivating employees. Marketing communication however, is aimed at supporting the sale of goods and/or services. This will include advertising, sales promotion, direct mail, personal selling and market-oriented public relations or publicity. All these are public relations tasks and Organisational communication is a host of communication activities usually at a corporate level, all of which will be necessarily located in the Public Relations department. Göksel and Serarslan (2015) in their study, "*Public Relations in sports clubs: New media as a strategic corporate communication instrument*" postulates that sports clubs that do not have a corporate formation do not consider PR activities as a function of management even though football clubs have a capacity to attract mass interest. Sports clubs who run Public Relations activities have now noticed the necessity to reach fans using various Public Relations strategies as PR is now part of the process at all sporting levels, whether handling major sponsorship and media rights deals, events, to promoting team unity. They further noted that Public Relations also helps the athletes psychological feelings after media criticism or public ridicule in addition to helping them respond in a positive manner, or increasing participation in the game.

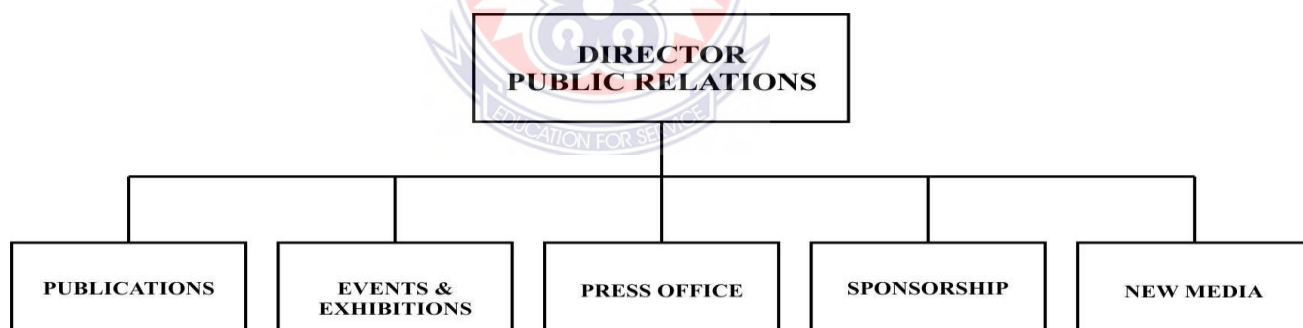
Figure 1.3: Public relations department structured by functions



Source: Tench and Yeomans (2006)

Figure 1.3: above shows a typical functional structure. Tench and Yeomans (2006) mention that in such a structure, an individual or group will look after all the activities falling within their specialty, whether these are media relations, sponsorship, events or individual relationships.

Figure 1.4: Public relations department structured by tasks



Source: Tench and Yeomans (2006)

Figure 1.4: Above is an example of a Public Relations department's structured on task lines. An obvious danger of both approaches (Figure 1.3 and Figure 1.4) is that the specialist individuals or teams become functional or task-oriented and lose the overall picture of organisational priorities. The job of the manager is to ensure this does not happen. Cutlip et al. (2000) maintain that many in-house departments use a mixture of functional and task teams. Owing to the fact that both the functional and task oriented

are part of the support function of an organisation, public relations' departments and professionals will operate with all other departments offering support and advice as required. This is part of the boundary-spanning role described earlier by Cutlip et al (2005) and fits in very well with the Relationship management theory approach.

Wilcox and Cameron (2006) postulate that the role of public relations in organisations often depends on the type of organisation, the perceptions of top management, and even the capabilities of the public relations executives. While some organisations may view public relations as a separate entity, as opposed to functions such as marketing, others see these two functions as falling under a common umbrella. It is, therefore, evident that the boundaries between public relations and other functions such as marketing are very blurred. As a result, in some organisations, one will not find a Public Relations or a marketing department but rather a communications department that is responsible for both public relations and marketing functions. However, problems are often encountered with organisations not understanding the difference between public relations as a discipline on its own, and public relations as a marketing tool. To solve these problems, organisations need to acknowledge and start from the premise that public relations is the function that manages the communication between an organisation and its publics in order to build and enhance healthy relationships to the benefit of all parties involved. The Chapter has clearly demonstrated, with support from scholars such as Cutlip et al (2005); Tench and Yeomans (2006); Seital et al (2004) among others that public relations is an important, if not an integral, part of an organisation. However, public relations should be located within the bracket of top management, where it could take up a more strategic role within an organisation and be involved in strategic decision making. Given the number of roles that public relations can play within an organisation, public relations as a subsystem within an organisation

should be a department that functions to contribute to the greater well-being of the organisation as a whole. Strategic planning for public relations is an essential part of management. Planning is critical not only to know where a particular campaign is headed but also to win the support of top management. Seitel (2004) affirms that in the 21st century, the practice of public relations is firmly accepted as part of the management process of any well-run organisation. Public Relations' objectives and goals, strategies and tactics must flow directly from the organisation's overall goals. Management must depend on the able assistance of proper public relations practice to help re-establish trust in society's major institutions.

2.5 Public relations as a Top management Function

According to Grunig (2007) it is important that organisations maintain Public Relations as a strategic management function and continually reposition itself to be able to adjust to new and improving communications technology and social expectations in the organisation. Grunig (2007) proposed that organisations should strengthen the role of public relations in the overall strategic management process of the organisation. Dozier and Broom (2006) suggest that for Public Relations to be effective in its role in an organisation, the public relations manager should participate in management decision making since one of the normative functions of public relations is the boundary spanning role between an organisation and its publics'. It is important that public relations is considered as management function so as to be more effective in dealing with identified publics. Where Public Relations is considered a management function, the Public Relations manager would be privy to decisions the board makes and would be in the right position to advise management on the best way to communicate its decision to the publics', and also at the same time, make the public relations manager influential enough to ensure that the public's interest are included in board decisions at

all times. Another reason for the inclusion of public relations in the top management role could be articulated along the lines of how an organisation presents itself, the publics it chooses to target, the relationship to prioritise and the reputation it wants to achieve. These are strategic matters within the purview of management. It is important to note that no organisation lives in isolation, and therefore, the organisation needs its publics to survive.

Garcia (2011) in his study noted that it is key for Public Relations in clubs to perform boundary spanning roles to enable the clubs keep a constant communication channel with their external publics. This he recommended, will assist the management of the club to spot any problem and deal with it before it gets out of hand. He further noted that without the fans (external public) there will be no club.

2.7 Public Relations and sports

According to Favorito (2014), explosion of media outlets in societies has led to an ever-growing interest in professional sports teams and athletes. These identified interests (professional sports teams and athletes) create a relationship between the sports teams, league organisations, the brand, athletes and all publics including the fans. Relationships in general create social integration and collective consciousness that lead to national integration (Taylor, 2000). From a relationship management view, Public Relations can be considered a social and identity cohesion function. Hopwood, Kitchin and Skinner (2012), writing from a sports perspective, indicate that Public Relations (PR) has always been part of sports organisations and may take the form of handling major sponsorship and media rights deal, events, promoting stars, promoting team unity and helping the athletes psychological feeling after media criticism or public ridicule in addition to helping them respond in a positive manner, or increasing participation in

the game (Hopwood, Kitchin & Skinner 2012). In order to build relationship, and also maintain a positive reputation among the various publics, there is the need for sports clubs to professionally manage their reputation. Reputation management is a public relations practice used to enhance or maintain an organisation or brand image (Harris 1988; Nakra 2000). A positive reputation is golden, worth nurturing, and once tarnished, becomes incredibly difficult to recover (Nkara 2000). Creating and maintaining an image is increasingly more important for athletes. Besides the media attention that requires a positive image, the opportunities in sponsorship money also requires positive image, in the sense that athletes represent brands, so their actions affects the brand they represent. This phenomenon is important for reinforcing the importance of reputation management for the organisation and individual (Sports Media Challenge, 1992). Football clubs are perfect examples of organisations that fall under this Public Relations requirement as the media spotlight is always on the team and the individual players, in particular, to manage their reputations.

According to Grunig & Grunig (1991), an organisation that wants a good reputation must build it based on mutual relationship; in essence, organisations need to start listening to its publics. In this regard, Ledingham (2001) and Young (1995) are of the view that everyone in the organisation needs to be involved in reputation and relationship building. When it comes to managing relationships in a football club, everyone connected to the club needs to be involved in the club's reputation management process because any misconduct, (be it by a player, coach, staff member and sometimes fans as well) has the potential of ruining the image of the club and making it less attractive to sponsors.

Issues management is one of the most effective Public Relations steps to manage an

organisation's reputation. Cutlip, Centre and Broom (2000, p. 17) explain issues management as "the proactive process of anticipating, identifying, evaluating and responding to public policy issues that affect organisation relationship with publics". Miller (1999) further postulates that issues management involves the searching of trends or issues that might affect the organisation in the future, whereby steps are needed to adjust the organisation to place it in a better situation. Issues properly managed has the potential of averting crisis in a long run.

2.8 Sports Marketing

According to Moore and Teel (1994) and Gary and McEvoy (2005), sports marketing is the application of marketing concepts to sports products and services and also the marketing of non - sport related products through some association with sport. Fullerton and Merz (2008) further postulate that the concept of sports marketing is ambiguous in its meaning for both practitioners and academics. Discussion about its application in the popular press and in many textbooks include categories ranging from tickets to spectator sports, to sports-related wagers, to illegal gambling establishments (Shannon, 1999). Fullerton and Merz (2008) note that there are some varying views about what the discipline of sports marketing encompasses. Some scholars are of the view that the primary task of sports marketing is selling tickets and putting fans in the seats at the stadium (Sports marketing surveys, 2002). In recent years, when big corporate organisations use sports as tool or a platform to sell their products which are mainly non-sports products, the concept of limiting sports marketing to tickets sales becomes detrimental to the development of sports organisations, particularly football. Narrowing down sports marketing to only tickets sales, is to deny sports organisation the opportunity of making more money through using products to market non - sports products.

Shannon (1999) identified that the concept of sports marketing consists of various categories which range from selling of match tickets to betting on sports-related matters in legal gambling institutions. He also indicates that sports marketing is concerned with the marketing of sports. Goldman and Johns (2009) also state that the marketing of sports concerns marketing of sports events, equipment, and facilities. They add that marketing with sports means promoting non-sporting products or services. According to Mullien et al. (2007:17) “a sports products can be described as any bundle or combination of qualities, processes and capabilities (goods services and ideas) that a buyer expects will deliver”. Mullien et al (2007) further highlighted the importance of fans in sports marketing by stressing that spectators who buy tickets to go and cheer their teams at a sports event are part of the production of the sports product. The fans add the thrill and excitement around the event venue which contributes to the atmosphere in the stadium and aids in producing the event. Sports organisations, particularly football clubs have moved from merely being a recreational weekend activity to a big business. Sports organisations should therefore, make use of the marketing efforts to attract non-sporting products.

Sports marketing has become so important for the survival of sports organisations. It has also become immensely beneficial to business entities. Jeffer and Ross (1999) report that a 1974 study about the commercialisation of sports came to a conclusion that sports would not survive without financial support of business and industries. Many companies are now realising that sports sponsorship is also a valuable way to reach new markets (Shank, 1999). According to Farrelly, Quester and Burton (2009), sports sponsorship is increasingly used by companies as an image and brand positioning platform. Through sports sponsorship, companies can reach large audiences and sometimes communicate with audiences that would have been difficult to reach if

normal advertising were used (Brassiguton & Pettit, 2002). Sports sponsorship offers a high awareness, all-embracing television and press coverage. It also has the ability to attract a broad cross-section of the community and it can reach all and sundry. Public Relations is part of the Marketing mix, so in essence PR managers provide an advisory role or function to football clubs when it comes to sports marketing. In Ghana, it is not strange to find the marketing and Public Relations department either in a single department or working very closely hand in hand to ensure the success of the club.

2.9 Sponsorship in sports

According to Tench and Yeomans (2006), sponsorship in public relations is an exchange relationship whereby an organisation helps to fund an event financially or in kind, or support an initiative in return for a variety of reasons such as publicity. Sponsorship is essentially a business deal which is intended to be the advantage of both the sponsor and sponsored (Skinner, Essen & Mersam, 2007). Sponsorship expenditure, particularly for sports events and the arts, has grown in recent years compared with other promotional media such as sales promotion (IEG, 2009). Over the last decade, sponsorship has evolved from merely philanthropic activity to an effective communicational tool. Sports sponsorship, in particular, has become an important source of income for professional sporting organisations and an effective marketing tool for companies aiming at commercial objectives. Sponsorship with football clubs means greater responsibility has been placed on the clubs to manage their reputations well. According to Nufer and Buler (2010) most successful sports sponsorships are based on a good relationship between sports entity and its sponsor. As football clubs become beneficiaries of sponsorship, sponsoring companies will expect more from the clubs and athletes in terms of relationship management especially with their identified publics. It therefore, becomes important for football clubs to practice effective public

relations to ensure that they establish and maintain good image to attract and maintain sponsorship. In Ghana, where Premier League clubs are enjoined by regulation to have public relations units/outfits not much is known about individual club sponsorship but the National Association -- Ghana Football Association (GFA) oversees all sponsorship in regard to the senior national team, the Black Stars.

2.10 History and Development of Football in Ghana

Football was introduced into Ghana, formerly known as the Gold Coast, towards the close of the 19th century by merchants from Europe. These merchants had then invaded the coastal areas and built forts and castles to enhance their trading activities either in merchandise or human cargo (GFA, 2011). In their leisure time, the sailors would play football among themselves and with the indigenous people. The popularity of the game spread quickly along the coast, culminating in the formation of the first football club, Excelsior, in 1903 by Mr. Briton, a Jamaican-born British citizen (GFA, 2011).

As the popularity of the game grew, other amateur clubs were formed along the coast, including: Accra Hearts of Oak, Accra Standfast, Cape Coast Venomous Vipers, Ebusua Dwarfs, Sekondi Hasaacas and Sekondi Eleven Wise. It was not until 1922 that Gordon Guggisberg, then governor of the Gold Coast, formed the Accra Football League Committee to regulate football in Accra. The first league kicked off in that same year with Accra Hearts of Oak Sporting Club emerging as winners, taking the coveted Guggisberg shield (Otoo, 2014).

There are sixteen (16) football clubs that participate in the Ghana Premier League per season and the three least performing football clubs at the end of the season, are relegated to the division one (GFA, 2011). The top three clubs of the division one league are promoted to contest in the Premiership for the next season to replace the three

relegated teams from the Premiership (GFA, 2011). According to Al Smith (2012), since the inception of the Premier League, Accra Hearts of Oak and Kumasi Asante Kotoko, have won many laurels and the hearts of many football lovers in the country.

The Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) is the international governing body of association football whilst the Confederation of African Football (CAF) is the administrative and controlling body for the African associations. In Ghana, there is the Ghana Football Association (GFA) which is in charge of all football - related activities, programmes and events. There is a Premier League Board (PLB) responsible for organising the Premier League and a Division One League Board (DOL) that runs the Division One Football League. The clubs have their own union referred to as the Ghana League Clubs Association (GHALCA). Football in Ghana also consists of a Second Division, a Third Division, a Juvenile League and a Women's League.

2.11 Brief history of the selected Ghanaian football clubs for the study

2.11.1 Accra Hearts of Oak sporting club commonly referred to as Hearts of Oak or just "Hearts" is the oldest club in Ghana today and amongst the oldest clubs in the whole of the African continent (GFA 2011). Hearts, who are affectionately nicknamed *Phobia*, have been among Ghana's pre-eminent clubs since their founding and have been very successful since the formation of the Ghanaian football league in 1956, having won the league title 19 times (Otoo 2014)

2.11.2 Kumasi Asante Kotoko, popularly known as the porcupine warriors, or simply "kotoko" was formed a few years after Accra Hearts of Oak by Kwasi Kuma from Nyankyerase near Kwadaso, a suburb of Kumasi Ghana in 1924 (Asante Kotoko SC, 2015). Kumasi Asante Kotoko popularly known as the porcupine warriors were originally known as Kumasi Rainbows. The club's name went through a series of

changes up until 1934 when the founders of the club sought permission from the then Asantehene, Nana Sir Osei Agyeman Prempeh II to rename it Kumasi Asante Kotoko. The club was thus officially inaugurated in 1935 making the Asantehene the life patron of the club, and that tradition has been in effect since 1935 till date with Otumfuo Osei Tutu, the current Asantehene as the current life patron (www.asantekotokosc.com, 2015).

2.11.3 West African football Academy (WAFA) formally known as Feyenoord Football Academy, established by the Dutch football club, was officially commissioned on October 23, 1999. The main objective of the academy in Ghana was to be an extension of Feyenoord's youth development in Rotterdam. (wafa.com) Another essential objective was to set up a structure to groom young talented African football players on technical and educational levels; whilst in familiar surroundings and with WAFA's know-how. WAFA are currently playing in the Ghana Premier League. Feyenoord's chairman Jorien van den Herik was given permission for the opening of Feyenoord's own football academy in the Ghanaian settlement of Fetteh, just outside the capital Accra. (wafa.com) In addition to helping their football potential the students are provided with formal education which is funded by Feyenoord. Feyenoord was rebranded in August 2014 to West African Football Academy ([wafa](http://wafa.com), 2016)

2.11.4 Liberty Professionals FC was founded in 1996 by Accra-based businessmen Felix Ansong and Alhaji Sly Tetteh. The club was one of the earliest in Ghana to adopt a professional approach to the management of a football club. The club started their first season in the Division One League but were promoted to the Ghana Premier League within their second season. Since then the club has consistently maintained respectable league match performances (www.Libertyprofessionalsfc.com, 2016)

2.11.5 Aduana Stars FC is a professional football clubs based in Dormaa Ahenkro, Brong – Ahafo Ghana. The club is competing in the Premier League and has been doing so for the past 3 seasons. The club is owned by the Chief of Dormaa Ahenkro. He is the financier of the club and it is the only club from the region to be playing in the Ghana Premier League.

2.12 Theoretical framework

This section of the study deals with theories that underpinned the study. Eisenhart (1991:18) describes theoretical framework as a “structure that guides a researcher by relying on a formal theory by using an established, coherent explanation of certain phenomena and relation.” Theoretical frameworks generate values and beliefs which are not unique to a researcher but shared in a common paradigm with other scholars. This study found the Relationship Management Theory and the Excellence Theory were relevant and appropriate for the study.

2.12.1 Relationship Management Model

There have been many studies on the essence of organisational Public Relations. According to Ledingham and Bruning (2000) the notion that relationships ought to be at the core of Public Relations scholarship and practice appears first to have been advocated by Ferguson (1984). Ledingham and Bruning (2000) note that the perspective then advanced through the rapid adoption of relational definitions of Public Relations in leading texts, such as that of Cutlip, centre and Boom (1987). After the relational perspective emerged as an area of explanation for Public Relations scholars, Broom and Dozier (1990) suggested a coorientational approach to measure organisation -- Public Relationships, rather than communication efficiencies as a function of Public Relations evaluation (Ledingham and Bruning 1998). Ledingham (2011) posits that the

primary function of Public Relations is to manage an organisation's Public Relationship. He argues that the management of an organisation's Public Relationship can be achieved through both symbolic behaviour (communication) and actual behaviour in an ongoing exchange between organisations and publics, organisations and organisations, and publics and other publics. Ledingham (2011) offers the following recommendations for the efficient management of an organisations public relationship:

- Identify relevant relationships dimensions and construct Public Relations programmes around these dimensions.
- Relationship dimensions must be operationalised to target identified publics (fans, players, managers)
- It is critical to build relationships.
- It is important to make interpersonal communications the centrepiece of relationship building.
- All efforts should be made to use both symbolic and actual behaviour. Effective relationship management initiatives have demonstrated the value of not just talking, but also of doing.

The relationship management model establishes that the management of organisational Public Relations balances the interests of organisations and their publics (Ledingham, 2011). The theory confirms that managing an organisation's relations will ultimately lead to a mutually beneficial relationship between the parties involved. In this perspective, Public Relations is seen as the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationship between an organisation and the publics on whom its success or failures depends (Cutlip, Centre & Boom, 1994).

2.12.2 Relationship Cultivation Strategies

Grunig (2011) provides the following examples of symmetrical relationship cultivating strategies:

Access - Members of publics or community or activist leaders provide access to public relations workers. Public relations representatives or senior managers on the other hand provide representatives of public's similar access to organisational decision-making processes.

Disclosure or openness - Both organisations and members of publics are open and frank with each other, willing to disclose their thoughts, concerns, and problems as well as their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with each other.

Assurances of legitimacy - Each party in the relationship attempts to assure the other that it and its concerns are legitimate and each is willing to demonstrate that it is committed to maintaining the relationship.

Networking - Organisations build networks or coalitions with the same groups that their publics do, such as environmentalists, unions, or community groups.

Sharing of tasks - Organisations and publics share in solving joint or separate problems. Examples of such tasks are managing community issues, providing employment, conducting high-quality research, and maintaining funding; these are in the interest of the organisation, the public, or both.

Integrative conflict resolution strategies - Integrative approaches are symmetrical because all parties in a relationship benefit by searching out common or complementary interests and solving problems together through open discussion and joint decision-making. Integrative strategies are more effective than distributive strategies.

According to Cutlip, Center and Broom (2005), the main focus of the study of public relations should not just be on the organisation or the public or the communication process but rather, the focus should be on relationship between an organisation and its publics; this is because central to modern PR is relationship management. Public relations in sports clubs could benefit by adopting some concepts in relationship management such as shared interest, mutuality, and relationship building to support sports club's mission and achieve goals.

2.12.3 Relevance of the Relationship Management Theory to the Study

The Relationship Management Theory lays emphasis on the need for Public Relations to be at the core of management function, in that the management of an organisation's --Public Relationship can be achieved through both symbolic behaviour (communication) and actual behaviour in an ongoing exchange between organisations and publics, organisations and organisations, and publics and other publics. According to Ledingham (2011), the relationship management model establishes that the management of organisational Public Relations balances the interests of organisations and their public. According Garcia (2011), due to the globalisation in the media landscape, sports clubs have transformed into increasingly complex organisations that need to build and maintain relationships not only with their fans, but also with other audiences including shareholders, government and sponsors. In order to build relationship and also maintain a positive reputation among the various publics, there is the need for sports clubs to professionally manage their reputation. Reputation management is therefore a Public Relations practice used to enhance or maintain an organisation or brand Image (Haris 1998; Nkara 2000). The Relationship management Theory will enable Public Relations officers of the football clubs in Ghana to effectively manage the relationship of the clubs and their various publics. The theory further

expects practitioners in the organisation's to evaluate and interpret opinions, attitudes and aspirations of their publics through dialogue .This is what the Relationship Management theory espouses.

2.13.1 Excellence Theory

The Excellence theory was developed by Grunig (1992) as a standardised model for Public Relations practitioners to follow. Grunig (1992) argued that for an organisation to be most effective in meeting objectives, Public Relations should be included in the strategic management of the organisation.

The ten (10) general principles offered by the theory that ensures effective public relations are as follows:

1. Involvement of Public Relations in strategic management - The involvement of Public Relations in strategic management functions allows for more inclusive decision making and gives organisations well informed about how their policy might affect their public/stakeholders from the perspective of the public.
2. Empowerment of Public Relations in the dominant coalition - The publics' function must be empowered enough to be able to report directly to management in order to counsel on matters involving publics, policy and ethics.
3. Integrated Public Relations functions - Public Relations functions must not be limited to a specific function of the organisation but rather must have access to authority at all levels and functions of the organisation and most importantly, not subsumed under other functions in the organisation.
4. Public Relations as a management function, separate from other functions - It is eminent that Public Relations is made a separate management function in the organisation in order to prevent other departments from encroaching into the

Public Relations role. This helps the Public Relations department work effectively.

5. Two - way symmetric communication model of communication - A two way symmetric communication is a dialogue-based communication which has shown to be more effective than other models in resolving conflict and also to build and maintain relationship with publics.
6. Public Relations department headed by a manager rather than a technician - Due to the sensitive and peculiar nature of public relations, it is advisable for a public relations professional to handle or head a public relations unit or department rather than someone who is simply adept to the technical skills of writing. Professional public relations managers have been trained in research, conflict resolution, budget creation and how to manage staff in the department
7. Department with the knowledge needed to practice the managerial role in symmetrical public relations. An excellent public relations department has the knowledge necessary to manage public relations symmetrically in that it can conduct sophisticated research to understand publics, and it can also engage in negotiation and collaborative problem solving.
8. Symmetrical system of internal communication -- Dialogue-based systems of internal communication are important for building teamwork. Issue research also allows issues managers to identify problems early so that they can be resolved before they escalate.
9. Diversity embodied in all roles -- It is important for public relations departments to have diverse professionals in all roles of the function so that decisions and communications will be inclusive of varying viewpoints. Inclusivity breeds excellence because it lessens the feelings of alienation created by excluding or

not soliciting the ideas and opinions of some publics. (Vercic, Grunig & Grunig, 1996)

10. Ethics and integrity -- Finally, the researchers added ethics and integrity as important considerations remarking that ethics is important enough to be a standalone principle of excellence (Vercic, Grunig & Grunig, 1996).

The excellence theory mainly directs and helps organisations to be more effective in the implementation of their goals and objectives with Public--Relationship part of the strategic decision making. The theory further indicates how Public Relations should be ideally conducted to achieve best results. The excellence theory identifies the various variables that should go into designing an excellent public relations department to contribute towards the overall effectiveness of the organisation.

2.13.2 Relevance of the Excellence Theory to the current study

The principles of the Excellence Theory is very important to an organisation in achieving its strategic goal and objectives. The theory lays emphasis on how Public Relations makes organisations more effective and how it is organised and managed. The theory also looks at how it contributes to organisational effectiveness, the conditions in organisations and their environments, and how the monetary value of Public Relations can be determined. According to Grunig (1992) The Excellence Theory establishes that the value of Public Relations lies in organisation -- Public Relations. Good relationship with its strategic publics is helpful for an organisation to develop and achieve goals desired by both the organisation and its publics, reduce costs of negative publicity, and increase revenue by providing products and services needed by stakeholders. Football clubs have taken the shape and form of corporate organisation due to globalisation (Garcia 2011) so in essence, Public Relations practitioners in

football clubs are expected to understand and appreciate the principles of the excellence theory espoused by Grunig (1992). For football clubs to effectively function as a corporate organisation, there is the need for Public Relations in the football clubs to assume forefront of management status. The researcher used the excellence theory to interrogate the practices of the Public Relations in the Football clubs as theory expects practitioners in the organisations to have a “hands on approach” to the management of the organisation, and also, evaluate and interpret opinions, attitudes and aspirations of their publics through dialogue.



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the research method employed for the conduct of this study. This includes the research approach, study design, instrumentation, data collection and analysis techniques.

3.2 Research Approach

To better understand the nature and functions of Public Relations among the selected professional football clubs in Ghana, a qualitative research approach was employed for the study. Hancock (2002) postulates that qualitative research is concerned with opinions, experiences and feelings of individuals producing subjective data. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) avers that qualitative researchers seek to preserve and analyse the situated form, content and experience of social action rather than subject it to mathematical or other interpretation. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) maintains that, qualitative approaches concentrate on issues of how humans articulate and interpret their social and personal interest. Creswell (2014) also posits that qualitative research is an approach to exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The qualitative approach to research seeks to identify and explore in-depth the reasons and attitudes, among others that people assign to a phenomenon.

Creswell (2014) postulates that qualitative research involves a process that takes into cognisance the questions, issues and procedures which are collected from the participants. This is usually associated with the participants' social or natural phenomenon and naturalistic setting. The data collected is analysed inductively and

categorised into suitable themes to aid the researcher interpret the data. Following the definition of Lindlof and Taylor (2002) on qualitative research, this study analysed the experiences of the Public Relations Officers (PRO's) from the selected professional football clubs. The study is interpretive in nature. The researcher interpreted the data collected in line with specific theoretical frameworks and concepts (Relationship Management theory; Excellence Theory) which underpinned Lindlof and Taylor's (2002) definition of qualitative research approach.

3.3 Research Design

Multiple case was used to gather information. According to Creswell (2014), research design can be described as a strategy, plan and a structure of conducting a research project. He states that the selection of a research design is mostly dependent on the nature of the research problem or the issue being addressed, the researcher's personal experiences, and the audience for the study. For this reason, Yin (2003) maintains that case studies become relevant when the study focuses on the "hows" and "whys", of a phenomenon and also in situations when researchers cannot manipulate the behavior of subjects involved. Case studies also become appropriate when researchers want to learn more about the contextual conditions that are especially relevant to the phenomenon under study, and when the boundaries between the subjects of study and the context are not clear.

Case study research is increasingly becoming common in sport-related studies; however, most of such works tend to be single cases (Tapp, 2004; Tapp & Clowes, 2002). However, for this study, a multiple case study was employed mainly because of its ability to get different views and opinions in order to offer a more varied and richer empirical evidence. Multiple case study research can lead to a genuine academic

contribution (Eisenhardt, 1989). The study intends to generate an in- depth understanding on the chosen topic.

In line with Creswell (2014) definition of research design, this study focused on the specific understanding placed on Public Relation in relation to its position and structure in the selected football clubs. The research design further analysed how the functions of Public Relations affects the day to day activities of the football clubs. This research design was selected because it afforded the researcher the opportunity to engage in in- depth interview with respondents (Lindloff & Taylor, 2002).

3.4 Population of the study

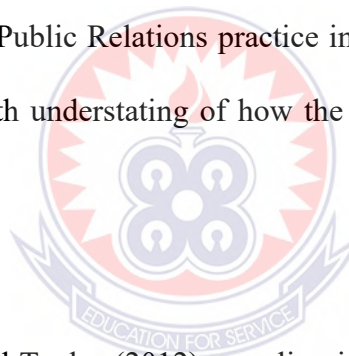
Wimmer and Dominick (2006), notes that population refers to a group or class of objects or units. Kusi (2012) also avers that a population is the entire group of homogenous entities from which the targeted population is drawn. This means that a population is the total number of all individuals, events or organisations that have certain characteristics and are of interest to the researcher. The population for the study constitute the Public Relations Officers, the football players and management of the selected football clubs, this is because, the selected population could provide balanced data to the researcher to aid him eliminate any possible biases

3.5 Sampling method

For the purpose of this study, a purposive sampling method was employed to select respondents. According to Creswell (2012) purposive sampling is the selection of sites or participants that will help the researcher understand the problem and the research question. Creswell (2012) points out that when using the purposive sampling, decisions need to be made about who or what is sampled, what form the sampling should take, and how many people or sites need to be sampled. Bernard (2002) also adds that

purposive sampling is a non-random technique where the researcher decides what needs to be known and sets out to find people who can and are willing to provide the information by virtue of knowledge or experience.

Based on Bernard's (2002) definition of what a purposive sampling is, the researcher selected respondents on the basis of their participation in the Ghana Premier League and their willingness to participate in the research. The study, therefore, initially purposively selected five public relations officers (PROs) of the selected professional football clubs in the Ghanaian Premier League for an in-depth interview. The selection of the Public Relations officers of the five football clubs in the Ghana Premier League was based on the researcher's conviction that the Public Relations officers possess some wealth of knowledge in Public Relations practice in their respective clubs. This gave the researcher an in-depth understating of how the Public Relations functions in the football clubs.



3.6 Sample size

According to Lindlof and Taylor (2012) sampling involves the selection of a number of study units from a defined study population. Lindlof and Taylor (2012) indicate that whilst there are no closely defined rules for sample size in qualitative research, qualitative study usually relies on small numbers with the aim to identify information-rich cases or informants. Information-rich cases are those which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research, so the term purposeful sampling is used when such people are selected. The study's main focus was to investigate the position, structure and function of Public Relations in the Professional Ghanaian football clubs. In order to achieve that the researcher had to interview football officials from the sampled teams. The researchers choice of respondents for the study

was based on the respondents experience and understanding of clubs operations in the Ghana Premier League. For the purpose of this study, two officials from the sampled teams were interviewed, that is, the identified PRO or communications director and one management member of the team. The researcher found it prudent to interview a management member of the clubs in addition to the identified PROs. The study sampled five teams.

3.7 Data Collection instrument

According to Lindlof and Taylor (2002) when conducting a qualitative research, it is important for the researcher to take into consideration the most effective data collection instruments that will enable the researcher gather accurate information. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) explain that in selecting persons for interviews, researchers normally select persons whose experiences are central to the research problem in some way such that owing to their experience or knowledge, can help answer critical questions and satisfy the objectives. Data collection instruments used for this study are interviews and document analysis.

3.8 Interviews

According to Creswell (2014), with regard to interviews conducted in qualitative research, the researcher conducts telephone interviews, face-to-face interviews with participants or engage in focus group discussion (FGD). The telephone and face to face interviews involve unstructured and generally open-ended questions that are few in number and intended to elicit views and opinions from the participants. Brinkmann and Kvale (2008) explain that the process of conducting Interviews is a conversational practice where knowledge is produced through the interaction between an interviewer and an interviewee or a group of interviewees. Asking questions and listening to others

tell what they know, feel and believe are the archetypal actions of the interview. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) aver that when conducting qualitative research, the scope of topics that can be covered is limitless. Interviews are particularly well suited to understanding the social actor's experience and perspective. Qualitative interviews are a storytelling zone par excellence in which people are given complete license to craft their selves in language. Hancock, Ockleford and Windridge (2009) maintains that the open ended nature of the questions posed will define the topic under investigation and will also provide opportunities for both interviewer and interviewee to discuss some topics in more detail. If the interviewee has difficulty answering a question or provides only a brief response, the interviewer can use cues or prompts to encourage the interviewee to answer the question further. The interviews will then be transcribed and the responses from the respondents will be analysed alongside the issues adduced from the interviews and put into themes based on the most recurring issues.

This data instrument was used for this study to enable the researcher obtain detailed description and perspectives of public relations regarding the true position, function and the structure in the sampled football clubs. This could not have been obtained easily by other methods of enquiry.

3.6 Techniques for Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was chosen for this study. Frankel and Wallen (2003) posits data analysis essentially has to do with analysing and synthesising the information the researcher obtains from various sources into a logical description of what was observed or otherwise discovered. Creswell (2009) also maintains that the researcher must make "sense" out of what was gathered from the data into coherent units of information, also known as themes or codes. To guide the manner in which thematic analysis was to be

carried out, the researcher adopted a four step flow from Creswell (2009) with additional ideas from Rossman and Rallis (1998). The researcher used the following steps in conducting the thematic analysis:

- i. In the first step the data from the interviews was transcribed. The pertinent parts of the recorded interviews were transcribed from an audio to text format.
- ii. This was followed in the second step by the researcher reading through the data transcribed. This was to afford the researcher the opportunity to make an overall meaning and an impression of the data transcribed.
- iii. In step three codes or themes were generated. At this stage, ‘the materials were organised into chunks or segments of text before bringing meaning to information’ (Rossman & Rallis in Creswell 2009:186). The text data from the data collected were categorised into segments called themes, based on some reasoning from the research questions.
- iv. The final step was ‘interpreting the meaning of the themes’. According to Creswell (2009:189), “qualitative research is interpretative research”. At this stage, therefore, the meanings of the data were interpreted and the findings were compared with information assembled from the literature or theories (Creswell, 2009:189).

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.0 Introduction

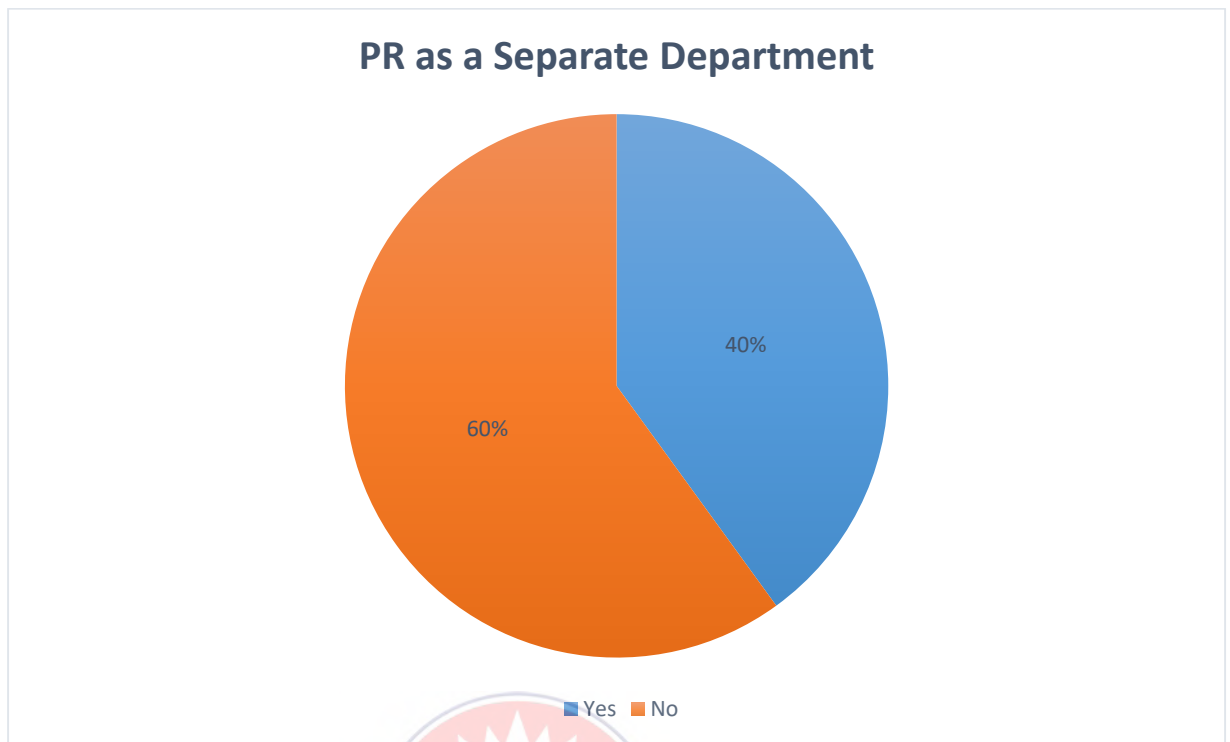
This chapter presents the results of the field work conducted amongst Public Relations practitioners within the five selected football clubs for the study. Data was collected from the five sampled football clubs for the study as well as documents obtained from the football clubs. The findings of the study was then discussed from the perspective of the literature review as well as the relationship management model and Excellence theory to assess the role of Public Relations the selected football clubs understudy. In general, the analysis was done under the three main research questions:

1. How is Public Relations structured in Football clubs in the Ghana Premier League (GPL)?
2. What constitute Public Relations practices in the Football clubs of the GPL?
3. What is the nature of communications employed by Public Relations practitioners of the selected football clubs in the GPL?

4.1 Analysis and Discussions of the Findings on how Public Relations is structured and positioned in Football clubs in the Ghana Premier League (GPL)

4.1.1 The Public Relations Department within the Football clubs

In response to whether the Public Relations department was a separate department, 40% of the respondents responded in the affirmative whilst 60% of the respondents (depicted in figure 4.A) indicated they did not have separate public relations departments, but, the PR functions had been integrated into other interdependent departments such as administration and or marketing. This confirms Davies's (2004) argument that the home for public relations is still not clear in most organisations.

Figure 4.A

The Findings from the data collected from the study indicate that there are various factors that influence the location of the public relations' department within the football clubs. Responses showed that depending on the nature and size of the football clubs, public relations cannot function independently of other departments such as Marketing, Human Resources and Administration. For example, clubs like Kumasi Asante Kotoko and Accra hearts of Oak, had an independent Public Relations Departments as against clubs like Aduana Stars and Liberty professionals that have merged the Public Relations Department into other departments like Human Resource, Marketing or Administration.

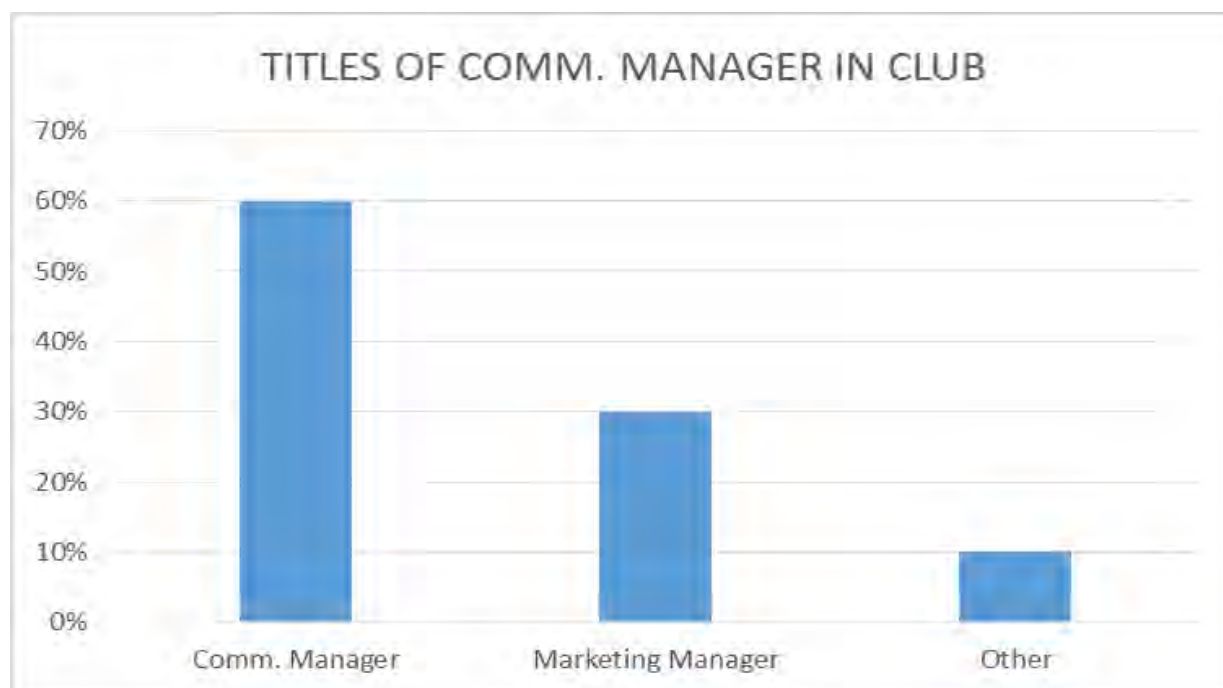
The Respondent from Accra Hearts of Oak SC revealed that for his club, Public Relations is the 'glue' that holds all communication together. He noted:

The club previously did not have a separate public relations department, however, through research, the club came to a decision to have a separate communication department manned by Public Relations professionals. Now it serves as a very important tool for the club that holds all the communication together.

According to the respondent, Public Relations is central in developing strategies and policies and further ensuring the successful implementation of such strategies and policies.

4.1.2 Interdependence of Public Relations Department in Football clubs

The findings of data collected reflect various portfolios occupied by public relations professionals. Within the selected football clubs for the study, respondents indicate that public relations professionals are called by different titles. Figure 4.B indicates that 60% of the respondents disclosed that within their given department, the head of department is called the communications manager and there are public relations officers and assistants that work under this manager within the department. 30% of respondents also indicated that the department was headed by the Marketing Manager and the Marketing Manager had various subordinates such as news editors, social media and website editors and, public relations coordinators. Other clubs (10%) revealed that the public relations department was not really developed as such so it was usually logged under the Administration Manager's duties.

Figure 4.B

The data showed that Public Relations' functions in some of the football clubs understudy had been merged with other departments in the club. For example, Accra Hearts of Oak SC and Kumasi Asante Kotoko SC had a well-structured public relations department as well as other departments with clear cut roles and duties. Their PR department's roles and functions were properly spelt out and they did not overlap into other roles such as Human Resource, Administration or Marketing, however, respondents from Aduana Stars, WAFA and Liberty Professionals disclosed that there were at times, an overlap of job titles, description and functions of PR in their clubs. The respondent from Liberty Professional FC disclosed that "due to the integration of public relations with other departments, public relations practitioners could often share two or more functions (public relations, human resource and marketing)". For this club, the Marketing outfit provided substantial input into public relations related duties such as, coordinating events, media selection, press releases for newspapers and magazines. Corroborating this type of interaction between public relations and other departments,

Grunig, Grunig and Dozier (2002) maintain that public relations functions also support other organisational functions, such as human resource management (relationships with employees and unions), lobbying (governmental communication), and financial management (investor relations and other financial relationships with stakeholders such as analysts and shareholders). This interchangeable and overlapping functions between Public Relations, Marketing and Administration departments has led to the integration and incorporation of public relations into other departments in the football clubs. According to Van Riel (1995), most organisations draw all communication-related activities under one department in order to strategically plan and manage communications to make the most of the strategic role of communication in the organisation. The study further discovered that the middle and lower level clubs require approval from directors or owners of the clubs before any strategic planning is implemented. Respondents claim that usually, their ideas are shot down by the Directors and hardly see “the light of day”.

Respondent from Liberty Professional adds

As a public relations manager, it is expected that you draw your own strategic communication plan but most often than not, when we submit it (strategic plan) to the “Bosses” they usually scale it down drastically or scrap it off completely.

The study further gathered that some of the Public Relations Departments of football clubs were organised along similar lines as in, the owners/directors of the club usually influencing public relations plans. This study takes the view that even though clubs like Accra Hearts of Oak and Kumasi Asante Kotoko which are regarded as Top clubs in the Premier take Public Relations seriously, however, the other clubs like Aduana Stars FC and Liberty Professionals do not entirely understand the strategic function of Public

Relations. For this reason, no deliberate attempt or effort is made by these football clubs to appoint very technical and competent professionals to man the PR departments. This particular finding is contrary to the principles of Grunig's (1992) Excellence Theory which advocates PR professionals should head PR units and also, the department must be independent from other departments.

4.1.5 The Structure of Public Relations Department in Football clubs

Figure 4.C Organisational chart of Accra Hearts of Oak Sporting Club



Figure 4.C is the organogram of Accra Hearts of Oak sporting clubs. The Board of Directors are made up of six members and the ultimate decision making body of the club. They appoint the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the club. The Chief Executive Officer in consultation with the Board of Directors appoint the Managers; these managers are the Communication Director/Public Relation Coordinator, Administration and Finance officer and the Team Manager (Coach). The managers in

turn appoint the people they work with in consultation with the CEO. The organogram positions the Communication Director on management level. The Communication Directorate is an independent Department in the club. The Communication Director appoints the editor of the *Hearts News* which is the official newspaper of Accra Hearts of Oak. There is also a dedicated team that handles the clubs website, photography and all social media accounts (Twitter, Instagram and YouTube)

Respondent from Accra Hearts of Oak SC said;

We place a lot of premium on communication hence our effort to ensure that the right people (trained) are appointed into the department. The communication department is an important operation of the club because it is the first point of call for both the external and internal publics

This reinforces the 1st and 4th principles of the Excellence theory which encourages Public Relations to be part of the strategic management function of the organisation and also be required to be separated from other functions/department of the organisation.

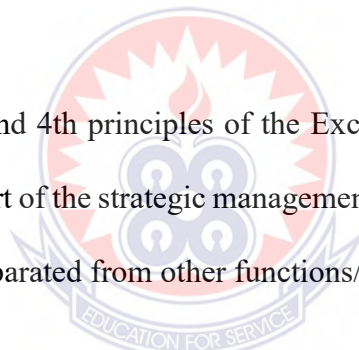


Figure 4.D Organisational chart of Aduana Stars sporting club

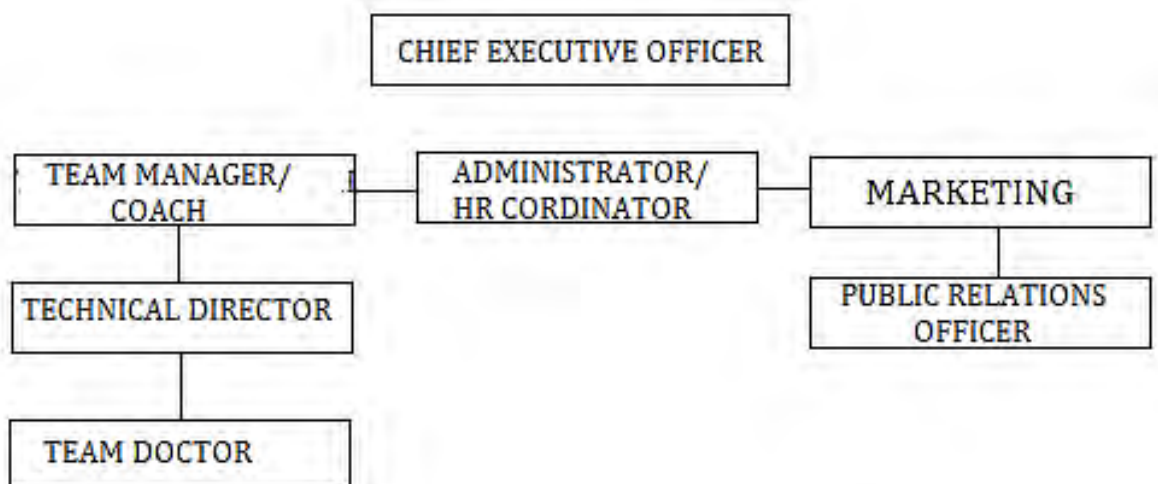


Figure 4.D is the organisational chart for Aduana Stars Sporting Club. According to the clubs organisational chart, the club is managed by the Chief Executive Officer who makes all the appointments.

Respondent from Aduana Stars note;

The CEO is the owner of the club. He finances and call all the shots. You either do as he says or find your way out. As a PRO, I am usually limited in my functions. I report to the marketing manager

The CEO appoints all the managers of the club including the Administrator/ Human Resource Manager, Marketing manager and Team Manager (coach). As shown by the organisational chart (Figure 4.D), the position of the Public Relations in this club is subsumed under another department namely the Marketing Department. This is contrary to the 4th principle of the excellence theory which stipulates that Public Relations as a management function must be separated from all other functions. It is important that public relations is made a separate management function in the organisation in order to prevent other departments from encroaching the public relations role. This helps the public relations department work effectively.

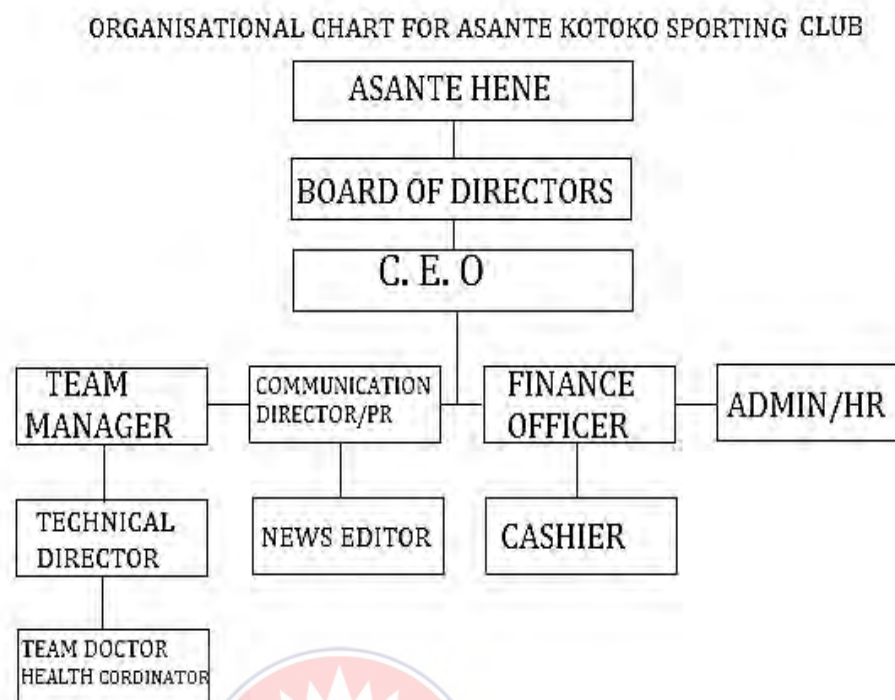
Figure 4.E Kumasi Asante Kotoko Sporting Club

Figure 4.E is the organisational chart of Kumasi Asante Kotoko Sporting Club. Due to the history and formation of the Club, the club is regarded as property of the Asante people so, in essence, the Asantehene, is the life patron of the club. Skinner, Mershan and Von Essen (2004) maintain that in order for an organisation to function effectively, public relations managers need to be positioned at management level so that they become responsible to top management and serve all departments of the organisation. As shown in the organogram, Public Relations is positioned at management level and is independent of other departments. The PR department in this club reports to the Chief executive officer of the club accordingly.

Respondent from Kumasi Asante Kotoko observes:

The Public Relations department is a very important component of the club. The Asantehene himself consults with the Public Relations officer when issues arise that might threaten the club in anyway. When it comes to the appointment of the PR manager, a lot of thought is put into the process and the most competent and experienced persons are appointed to head the department, The Communication Director/PR manager is head the of the News team and the social media team as well

Asante Kotoko’s organisational structure and position of the Communication Directorate/PR Department is similar to that of Accra Hearts of Oak. It can be observed that both clubs place a high premium on communication. According to Garcia’ (2011) study, sports clubs that place premium on communication in their clubs are guaranteed financial success even if the club might not be performing on the pitch.

Figure 4.F Liberty Professionals Sporting Club

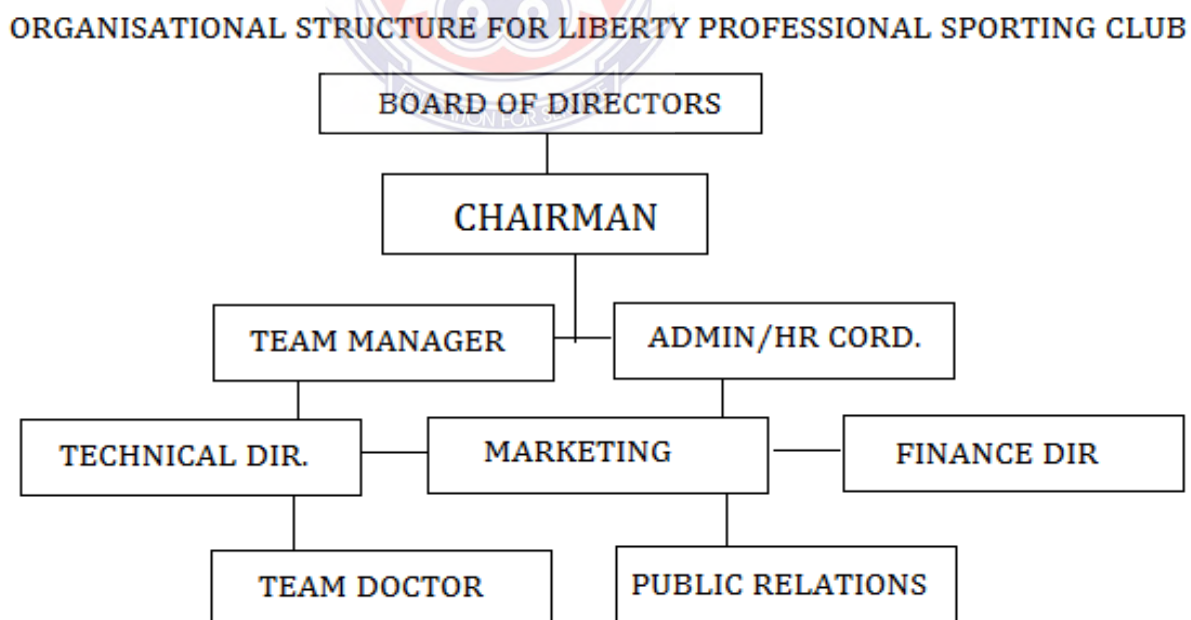


Figure 4.F is the organisational chart of Liberty Professional Sporting Club. According to the organisational chart, the Public Relations department is not at management level. It has been placed under the marketing department, so in essence, the PR officer reports to the Marketing Department/Manager. This is in contrast with most of the principles of the excellence theory, especially the 4th principles, which maintains that PR should not be subsumed under other functions in the organisation.

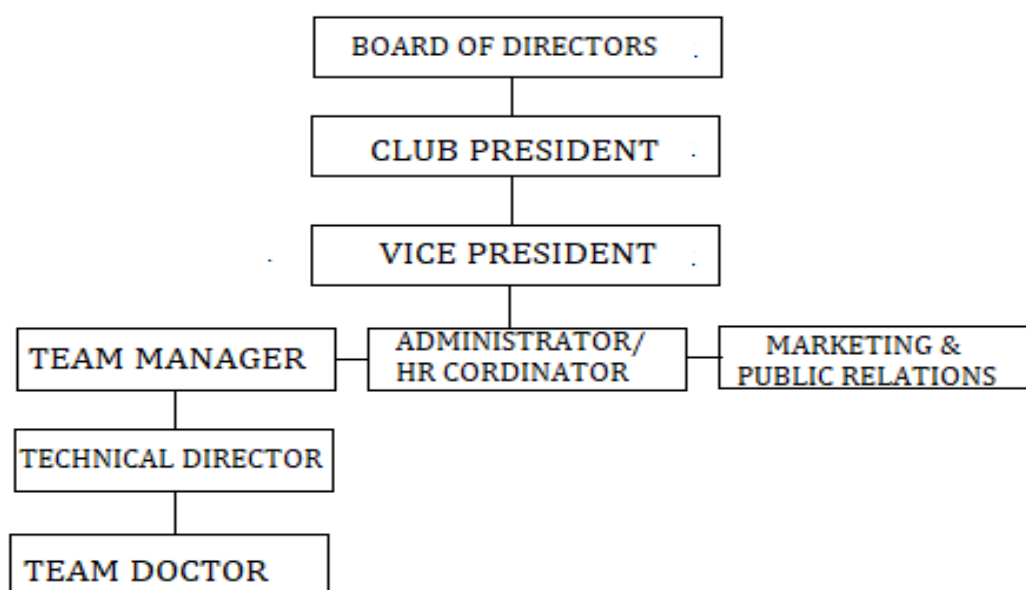
The Respondent from Liberty Professionals note:

Even though I report to the marketing manager, we work hand in hand to ensure that the clubs communication is on point. We also have a few external people who help us with the social media and website management.

Stroh (2007) is of the view that marketing is one of the Public Relations fields cross - discipline: hence there are many points of intersection between the two disciplines both in theory and practice Even though it might seem like the PR department is subsumed under another department, Stroh (2007) maintains that PR cross-interdisciplinary fields could help bring to the fore functions of PR in the club.

4.1.5.5 West African Football Academy (WAFA) organisational Chart

Figure 4.G

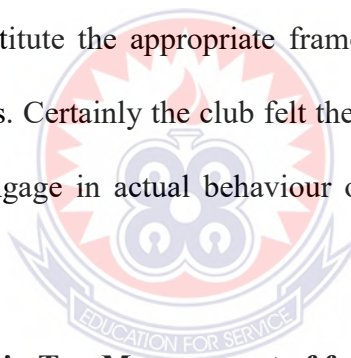


WAFA, is a Ghanaian football club academy founded by Feyenoord, an international football club based in Rotterdam. WAFA's organisational structure merges the marketing and public relations department into a single department headed by one professional. This is acceptable and does not necessarily render the PR useless nor relegate it to the background because PR is considered as a corporate communication function involving both Marketing and Public Relations. According to Van Riel (1995) as cited in Tench and Yeomans (2006), Public Relations, is, a "corporate communication". Van Riel (1995) further divides corporate communication into three areas as follows: Management Communication, Marketing communication and Organisational communication. So even though the Public Relations and marketing department are one, the officer in-charge takes the PR principles into account before making communication plans.

According to the respondent from WAFA, "The club puts premium on Public relations. The department is led by a competent person who is second degree holder with Public

Relations option and who himself is supported by highly qualified professionals”.

This response is consistent with the claim by Skinner (2002) that public relations has expanded significantly during the 20th century as a wide range of organisations are adopting professional public relations as a means of achieving economic objectives. The move to include public relations in sports club communications can be situated within the framework of the Relationship Management Theory. Ledingham (2011) argues that the core function of public relations is to manage organisation -- public relationships. This argument is further sustained by Ledingham's view (2003) that within the relational perspective of public relations, communication functions as a strategic tool in the building and maintenance of organisation -- public relationships. This is believed to constitute the appropriate framework for the practice of public relations in football clubs. Certainly the club felt the need not just to communicate to their publics but also engage in actual behaviour on enduring exchange with their publics.



4.1.6 Public Relations in Top Management of football clubs

The study found that 50% of the football clubs understudy placed public relations or the communication function as prior concern of management of the clubs. The study noted that clubs placed communication function of the club at management level were incidentally the Top clubs. Management of these clubs realised that football clubs were entities that swung between the concepts of football PR, therefore was only natural that it is given a seat in top management. The Public Relations Managers/Communication Directors of Accra Hearts of Oak Sports Club and Kumasi Asante Kotoko were part of the decision making body of the clubs. Respondent from WFA also indicated that the Public Relations Department is part of the decision making process (management) of

the club. It was also revealed that the Communications Directorates/PR Department of the football clubs were further divided into areas of specialties manned by competent officers for efficiency, such as the clubs newspapers, social media accounts and websites.

Respondent from Accra Hearts of Oak said:

The Communications Directorates comprises of all workers of Hearts news including the editor - in-chief of the official newspaper, Social media account managers and myself (communication director). The Directorate is part of the day to day management and running of the club. At our current level, you know the club can't do without communications.

The 2nd principle of the Excellence Theory by Grunig (1992) is clearly demonstrated in the above finding. According to the principle, the Communications Manager must be empowered to be in the dominant coalition and to report directly to management in order to advise on matters involving publics, value and ethical decisions (Grunig, 1992). According to the principle, the Communication Manager or in the case of this particular study, the Public Relations Manager in the dominant coalition is expected to symbolise the conscience of the club and also represent the interest of the publics of the club when vital decisions concerning them were made and furthermore, assist the club to support its mission and achieve its goals. The study is of the view that the football clubs appreciate and understand the importance of proper communication (PR) to the development and growth of their clubs.

4.1.7 Basic Public Relations Management Tools

In order for public relations to be of importance to football clubs, the clubs must appreciate or possess some understanding of the basic management tools that will help

the Department bring its own contribution towards the achievement of the overall goals of the organisation (Nakara. P, 2000). Modern understanding of public relations positions PR as management function implying that PR should be planned, managed by objectives, evaluated, and connected in some ways to organisational objectives. The study discovered that the Public Relations Departments in football clubs were equipped with the following; environmental scanning, segmentation of publics, issues and crisis management, crisis communication and evaluation of communications programmes, basic management knowledge and tools to be of value to the organisation. These tools as used in the clubs, are highlighted below:

4.1.7.1 Environmental Scanning

Environmental scanning is the first step of strategic Public relations. Environmental scanning is designed to identify the potential issues, publics, opportunities and risks in order to inform and advise management on the appropriate steps to take to achieve mutually satisfying relationships and goals (Grunig, 2011).

Respondent from Kumasi Asante Kotoko Indicates;

Football is a competitive sports which in itself is an indication that there is the need to be on top of issues. How can we possibly make progress when we are not on top of issues, opportunities and risks that confront the (football) club. Our scanning process usually begins right within the club by monitoring the decisions management is considering. We monitor group discussions, social media, personal contacts and traditional media. We try to gather valuable data and try to make some sense out of it so that we are better positioned to counsel management.

The response bears some similarity with the scanning processes proposed by Grunig (2011). This finding is in consonance with the 5th principle of the Excellence Theory which states that the Public Relations unit must always be headed by a professional

Public Relations Manager rather than simply someone who is adept in technical skills. This is because the Public Relations Manager has the skills to monitor the environment and conduct research to gather valuable information that will help management to balance the clubs interests with that of their publics in order to remain relevant in society.

4.1.7.2 Segmentation of Publics

Respondents indicated that segmentation of publics was a common and very useful tool that characterised their communication activities. They indicated that every issue generated its own publics and so without appreciation of the concepts of publics, communication strategies were bound to fail. They indicated that segmenting publics enabled them (Communication/PR department) do proper targeting of their communication strategies to attain optimum results.

Respondent from Wafa remarked:

It is very important that we categorise our publics according to their needs and their potentials either to facilitate or inhibit our communication strategies. Otherwise we won't attain the right results with the strategies intended. It's not all about communication. We put our ears to the grounds a lot.

The revelation made in this section of the study is consistent with the argument by Cutlip, Center and Broom (2000) that the important role of the Public Relations Practitioner in segmentation of publics is to listen to what is happening outside the organisation so that they feed the organisation with valuable information that shape not just the presentation of information to the publics, but also its actual content. The finding can also be situated within the Relationship Management Theory where Ledingham (2011) recommends that for efficient management of organisation, public -

- relationships dimensions must be operationalised to target both the internal and external public. It is important for Public Relations messaging to fit differences in geographical and socio-economic conditions with regards to perceptions, values, and mindset (Ledingham, 2011).

4.1.7.3 Issues Management, Crises, and Crises Communication

The study showed that issues management, crises and crises communication were integrated within the Communications Department of the football clubs in Ghana. The Communications Departments showed that they were proactive in trying to avert crises. The Communication Department did so by constantly scanning and monitoring the environment to spot potential problems. The Communications Department could then adjust to balance the self-interest of the football club with that of their publics. The clubs believed that an issue responded to in time were crisis averted.

According to respondent from Hearts:

We don't await for crisis because they are costly. That's why we monitor the environment constantly at the same time, responding to issues that pop up every now and then. Our strategy is to be in touch with the fans to know the issues and to identify with the issues. But when crises occur we rely on the relationship and trust we have built with the people over the years.

The finding suggest that public relations efforts of football clubs are not limited to communication strategies, but include monitoring clubs internal and external environments, including scanning for issues that might affect the clubs. The study further showed that the crisis communication efforts of football clubs is in line with the relationship principle advanced by Grunig (2011). This principle maintains that organisations can withstand both issues and crisis better if they have established good

long-term relationship with their publics who are at risk from decisions and behaviours of the organisation. The approach adopted by the communications outfits of football clubs is also in consonance with the Relationship Management Theory of Public Relations. Ledingham (2011) recommends strongly that for the efficient management of organisation -- public relationship, it is critical for football clubs to build relationships. He contends that relationship management almost never thrives on television or media campaigns, and that there is evidence to show in literature that relationship building initiatives with publics have saved cost to organisations (Ledingham. 2011).

4.1.7.4 Evaluation of Communication Programmes

The study found that evaluation of communication programmes was one of the key to the communication function of football clubs. The respondents disclosed that evaluation was extremely important because it informed other communication strategies that were implemented. The Communication/PR department systematically assessed and evaluated communication programmes and relationships with the publics.

Respondent from Kotoko note;

As the Head of the communication Department of the club, I undertake all the basic PR functions such as planning, developing strategies, executing and evaluating strategy. My work starts from evaluation. It is the starting point for other strategies to be initiated and executed. This evaluation helps me to know the measure, the rate or success of implemented programmes.

This finding is in consonance with the 5th principle of the Excellence Theory espoused by Grunig (1992). This principle recommends the Public Relations unit to be headed by a professional manager who is endowed with the necessary skills and knowledge to

be able to subject public relations programmes to systematic assessment and to measure their impact on communications' (Grunig, 1992).

This submission means that, the communication function of the club considers all publics in their environment and uses a variety of tools and tactics to communicate and enhance relationships with these publics. The communication function of the club uses research and monitoring methods to keep abreast with the perceptions of the internal and external publics of the club. A variety of communication channels are utilised by the clubs' communication/Public relations to enhance their reputation. It also provides strategic counsel to the clubs' leadership to help the management make better decisions. The findings showed that each club had its peculiar understanding of communication functions. For example, clubs like Accra Hearts of Oak, WAFA and Kumasi Asante Kotoko understand and fully use PR to enhance the club's functions by equipping their communication department with tools such as Research, Evaluation, Monitoring among others to enable them discharge their responsibility effectively whilst ensuring that all key publics are given due consideration when critical decisions are made. In this regard, the Public Relations Manager acts as the voice for many who were not in the room when choices were made. At the same time, the evaluation of communication programme helps the clubs to achieve its goals by engaging in the most appropriate behaviours and build mutually beneficial relationships

RQ2. What constitutes Public relations Practice in Football clubs in the Ghana Premier League?

4.2 Analysis and Discussion of what constitutes Public Relations Practice in Football Clubs in the Ghana Premier League

4.2.1 Public Relations practice in Football Clubs

The study sought to find out how PR roles and functions in the clubs portrayed management's understanding of public relations. The findings indicated that management of all the five clubs acknowledged the importance of public relations to the management of their respective football clubs'. The findings showed that there were different types of public relations practice in the clubs, confirming the assertion of Cutlip, Centre and Broom (2000) that there are different types of public relations such as investor relations, which deals with an organisation and its investors; internal and external relations, which deals with an organisation and its employees and other publics respectively. Even though it was established that different types of public relations practice existed in football clubs, the five clubs did not perform the same PR types, roles and functions. The findings established differences and similarities in PR roles and functions in the clubs. These differences and similarities, as the findings showed, were as a result of management's portrayal of PR as well as the size of the club. The study discovered that the Public Relations Departments were involved in the technical functions such as website content management, handling, news releases, and Media placements, Production of magazines, newsletter, reports, manuals and Newspapers. Others were social media messaging, Publicity, Promotion, Training, Events management, counselling, managing club identity. Some of the management function they performed were planning, research, strategy and evaluation. According to Grunig's (1992) Public Relations should be recognised as an important management function in

an organisation.

According to Cutlip, Center and Broom (2006) the role of public relation in strategic decision making is usually determined by proximity and access to management. The findings indicated other PR roles such as the expert prescriber, the problem solving facilitators and even the technician roles, were performed in the clubs but not all these roles were performed by the PROs. Management of some of the clubs took up some of these roles and their functions, pushing the PROs to the peripheries. However, irrespective of their size and support base, the findings showed that all the five clubs took internal communications seriously, even though internal relations functions were not performed by their PROs.

4.2.2 Integrity in Communication

The football clubs in the study admitted that they were competing to appeal to as many people as possible, so in essence, there was need to respect people when communicating with them. Based on this, each football club had established some sort of codes of conduct to guide communications activities. The clubs also monitored their internal publics to ensure that their staff conform to these codes. They admitted that on a number of occasions, they had some of their people going against the established rules/codes.

One of the respondent commented:

Communication is the lifeline of any organisation so we are extremely mindful of how we communicate to both the internal, and especially, the external publics. We continue to train our staff members on how best to communicate with our publics. We have a media monitoring unit to ensure some level of conformity but due to the nature of the media some people who are tasked to speak on our behalf make comments they are not supposed to make and sometimes get away with. When we find people like those who go against our communication policy, we prevent them from speaking on the clubs behalf.

This finding is in consonance with the 10th principle of the Excellence Theory which states that an excellent public relations department should be regulated by ethics and integrity. Vercic, Grunig and Grunig (1996) maintain that ethics is important to be a "stand alone" principle of excellence.

RQ3. What is the nature of communications employed by Public Relations practitioners of the selected football clubs in the GPL?

4.3 Analysis and Discussions on the Nature of Communications in Football Clubs in Ghana

4.3.1 Channels of communication in Football Clubs

The clubs have various channels of communication through which they communicate with their publics (staff, players, supporters, sponsors, media, and the Ghana Football Association). The channels of communication used are: the mass media (radio, newspaper and television), social media such as Facebook, YouTube and twitter, meetings, mails, emails and telephone calls, txt messages and interpersonal discussion. Each of these channels were used depending on the issue and the target audience. For its internal communication, the clubs used emails, telephone calls and meetings to communicate with staff and players, while it used mails, emails and telephone to communicate with the Ghana Football Association, the regulatory body of football in Ghana. To communicate with the supporters, the club used the mass media because their supporters were spread throughout the nation. The clubs sent press releases to various media houses when it wanted to communicate with its supporters and other stakeholders through the mass media. The study found that Kotoko and Hearts of Oak owned mass media channels for communicating with the club's supporters. The official newspaper of Asante Kotoko, for example is the *Kotoko Express*, while that of Hearts

of Oak is the *Hearts News*. The other three clubs; Adauna Stars, Liberty Professionals and WFA inclusive of Accra Hearts of Oak and Kumasi Asante Kotoko all have official website of the clubs as well as social media accounts. Some of the social media accounts frequently used by these clubs are Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and twitter. They use the social media accounts to send information about the club to the media and the fans and it also helps the clubs interact with their publics as well.

In general the study found that football clubs communicate with the aim to inform, persuade, and mobilise support for their clubs. Football clubs continue to rely on the traditional channels of communication in spite of the introduction of new communication channels. The new methods of communication employed by the football clubs which allowed them to have direct feedback from their publics is in consonance with the relationship management model. The relationship management model aims to listen, learn and help football clubs to accommodate publics' interest and manage relationships to achieve the overall goals of Football clubs. Additionally, the 6th principle of the Excellence Theory employs public relations department to use the two-way asymmetrical model of public relations. This is because a dialogue-based approach has shown to be more effective than any other in solving conflicts, preventing problems, and to building and maintaining relationships with publics.

4.3.2 Dialogue-based approach to communication

The study gathered that the football clubs had adopted a dialogic approach to communications. The clubs preferred face-to-face/one-on-one contact with their publics. They cite reasons including the fact their publics would be able to understand them better, the possibility of they themselves appreciating better the needs and problems of the publics and the relatively more cheaper and a more effective way to

mobilise support for the clubs.

A respondent from Aduana Stars said, “We try as much as possible to make our club approachable and very interactive because we are in business to appeal to our fans. We give our fans the chance to share their problems and frustrations with us so that we can find a way of meeting them at least half way”. Respondent from WAFA also added, “Our approach (communication) it is a two-way affair. We have regional offices/secretariat that handles communication at that level”.

This signifies a system of communication among the clubs that relies on a more dialogue approach to communications. This approach also finds expression in the Relationship Management Theory. Highlighting on the relationship management theory, for example Ledingham (2011) recommends that it is important to make interpersonal communications the centrepiece of the club. According to one of the respondents, due to the limited funds available to them (clubs) they hardly dish out huge some of monies to do advertisements, hence their interactive approach to communication in the club. The 6th principle of the Excellence Theory argues that it is important for an excellent public relations department to use the two-way asymmetrical model of public relations because a dialogue-based approach has been shown to be more effective than any other in resolving conflicts, preventing problems, and to building and maintaining relationships with publics. The study also found that the supporters mostly received hints and news about their club mostly from their local FM stations but official news came through the official media channels of the club either the clubs newspaper, social media or the website. The club occasionally communicated to the supporters through the supporter unions, especially on major club policies. Also, apart from arranged meetings, official communication was through the mass media,

especially through the clubs newspaper. Again, the study found that the supporters sent information to management of the club through its representative by writing formally to them and through face to face meeting as well. But for the mass supporters, anybody could communicate to the club through email or through any of the club's official media channel.

4.3.3 Organisation — Public Relationships

Ledingham and Brunning (2001) cited in Ledingham (2003) state that public relations is, in fact about relationships and that to build and sustain organisation — public relationships, organisations must not only communicate but exhibit behavioural communication based on real action. To be able to execute this mandate, Public Relations Managers must master the relationship linkages within their environment by identifying and aligning goals and interests upon which their sustenance hinge on. The study found that the major publics of football clubs were akin to the typology identified by Ice (1991) as Enabling linkages, Functional linkages, normative linkages and Diffused linkages.

A respondent made the following comment:

The major stakeholders are our supporters and the Ghana Football Association who can make or unmake us; the other football clubs the media and anyone who show interest in our activities. It is important that we maintain a cordial relationship with all these major categories.

The ability to spot some of these nuances is evident to the quality of personnel in the communications Directorates of football clubs in the study. It further demonstrates the ability of these football clubs to manage relationship with these varied publics. It is important for Public Relations Practitioners to be aware of these major categories in order to be able to analyse and then map out appropriate strategies to meet the needs of

the various publics and to attain the goals of the football clubs. This finding is in consonance with the Relationship Management Theory. Ledingham (2011) recommends that organisations must identify relevant relationships dimensions and construct public relations programmes around these relationship dimensions. Secondly, relationship dimensions must be operationalised to target publics. Public relations campaigns should be able to fit differences with regards to publics, perceptions, values, and mindset.

4.3.4 Relationship Cultivation Strategies

Football clubs, like all organisations depend on their publics to support their mission and achieve their goals. Football clubs thrive when they command great numbers. Football clubs therefore put in place deliberate strategies to cultivate and maintain long lasting relationships with their publics for the purpose of supporting their missions and achieving their goals.

The study found that football clubs used the following sampled strategies:

I. Access

A respondent remarks, "Our offices are open to members of our clubs, the general publics as well as the media. They come in every now and then."

II. Networking

A remark from a respondent, "We've noted that fan clubs have created their own social media platforms to promote the clubs and we've linked up with them (the fans)".

III. Being Truthful

A respondent captures it this way, "First of all you need to be truthful to the fans. You tell them exactly what is happening. No need to spin or lie to them because eventually, they will find out the truth and it won't look good for the club".

IV. Visible leadership

This is a response from one of the respondents, "Our supporters like to see leaders who are proactive and listen to their concerns/suggestions. Some of these fans have been supporting the clubs their whole lives so they feel part of the club. You wouldn't want to make them feel unappreciated"

V. Responsiveness

This is a statement from a respondent, "We try as much as possible to be quick in responding to the needs, issues and requests of our fans. We're on social media 24 hours in 7 days responding to the concerns of our fans."

VI. Dialogue

A respondent said, "We always make it a point to meet with the fans at their fan club meetings once in a while. It gives them the opportunity to dialogue with us."

VII. Making the Football clubs attractive"

A respondent noted, "We've made the club attractive to both the young and old. Our adverts are very catchy and we ensure that everyone has a voice in our club"

Most of the strategies identified in this study are in line with those identified in Grunig (2011). The findings are in tandem with the Relationship Management Theory. Ledingham (2011) states that all efforts should be made to use both symbolic and actual behaviour to cultivate relationships. He argues that effective relationship management initiatives have demonstrated the value of not just talking, but also of doing. It is quite clear that relationship cultivation strategies outlined above are of both symbolic and actual communication behaviours. The strategies as used by the football clubs appear appealing and are intended attract people to align with the clubs.

4.3.4 Football clubs Public Relations activities and their effect on sponsorship

The study sought to find out how the club's PR activities affect their relationships with sponsors. The findings indicated that clubs which had sponsors performed similar PR activities in their quests to maintain good and positive image. It also emerged that in spite of the absence or unavailability of some clubs securing sponsorship, the management of these clubs nonetheless took their reputations and image seriously by constantly addressing issues with the media and the community. Creating and maintaining an image is increasingly becoming as important for players. Besides the media attention that requires a positive image, sponsors are only willing to work with organisations or individuals with positive image, so in essence, organisations are reinforcing the importance of reputation management for their organisations.

Football clubs are perfect examples of organisations that require reputation management as the media spotlight is always on the team and the individual players, in particular, to manage their reputations (Sports Media Challenge, 1992). Hearts of Oak and Asante Kotoko, for example managed their relationships with their sponsors through two-way communication channels such as telephone calls, emailing and face-to-face meetings. Apart from the football clubs, some of the players have sponsorship from some companies as well. This is in tandem with the assertion that an organisation that wants a good reputation must build it on mutual relationship; therefore, the organisation needs to start listening to its publics (Grunig & Grunig, 1991; Young, 1995). In a football club, everyone, especially the footballer must be involved in managing reputation hence the effort by the clubs to get their players involved in the clubs' reputation management.

In essence therefore, creating and maintaining a positive image is a good way for clubs

to repay the investment of sponsors in the clubs. This is because sponsors use sponsorship as a public relations vehicle for achieving profit-oriented business objectives including increased market penetration, brand awareness, media exposure, and subsequent contribution to revenue (Arthur, 1999; Javalgi, Traylor, Gross, & Lampman, 1994; Stotlar, 1999; Walliser, 2003). Sponsors would not be able to achieve all these in a football club without a good image. Even though the findings indicated that both Kotoko and Hearts had good relationships with their sponsors through their public relations efforts, it also emerged that Kotoko was more successful in wooing new sponsors than Hearts. Kotoko had more sponsors than any other Ghanaian club and they kept winning new sponsors. Kotoko's PR tactics appeared to have had more impact on their supporters than Hearts of Oak. This is supported by the fact that Kotoko had recorded more successes at the time of the study. Hearts of Oak on the other hand hadn't won any trophy since the 2008/2009 season. In spite of Hearts of Oaks' PR efforts the Hearts fans were apathetic, especially towards attending matches, while Kotoko regularly registered massive supporter turn outs during their matches (Al Smith, 2011). Hearts on the other hand could employ the PR strategy of Real Madrid, who successfully kept their supporters happy and increased their fan base despite winning only one title in five years. Garcia (2011) consciously argued that Real Madrid's off-field strategy to grow its brand through strategic use of public relations by feeding the media good stories starring its lead players in stories that fostered suspense, excitement, and emotion, is the reason for success when their on-pitch performance had reached rock bottom.

4.3.5 Social Media and the Web

According to the findings of this study social media and the web were being used to great effect by the football clubs in the study. The clubs had integrated digital communication tools into their communication activities to make communication more personal and interactive with the aim of building and maintaining a mutually satisfying relationships with their publics. The study found that all the football clubs had official websites. The commonest social media tools in use were: WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube. Among these platforms the most popularly used ones were WhatsApp and Facebook. WhatsApp was used to greater effect particularly within the internal structures of the football clubs while the use of Facebook was targeted more at the wider publics. The clubs explained that these platforms were used for three reasons; first they were cheap, secondly it allowed them to get more personal and listen to the concerns of their fans and at the same time, gave the clubs the opportunity to present their message; and thirdly, it helped them build and maintain enduring relationships with their publics to support the clubs mission and achieve the clubs goals.

A respondent from Kumasi Asante Kotoko had this to say about social media:

Due to our consistent social media presence, our club name is always out there. We make Facebook post of any new development to inform our teeming fans. We make sure that we deliver the news first before the news agencies. This gives some credibility to our club. Formerly, we had to wait till we go to press before we can put out a story and usually by that time, the story was already dead news. Social media has really helped us a lot. Sometime last year, Joy Sports adjudged us the club with the most social media presence. Most recently, when we hired a new coach to take over from our former one, we put it on Facebook, made videos and put them up on our YouTube and Facebook pages. So, it tells you that we're taking advantage of social media. Even fan clubs have their own accounts through which they communicate to our

publics. Our publics are allowed to interact with us. We're on social media 24 hours in 7 days. They send their concerns and we respond to them every now and then.”

The development that the football clubs are resorting to social media to engage their publics had a strong link to the Relationship Management Theory. Ledingham (2011) posits that interpersonal communication should be made the centrepiece of an organisation. It is more effective than mediated communication. The finding further lends credence to the 6th principle of the Excellence Theory advanced by Grunig (1992). The principle states that it is important for an excellent public relations department to use the two-way asymmetrical model of public relations because a dialogue-based approach has been shown to be more effective than any other in resolving conflicts, preventing problems, and to building and maintaining relationships with publics. Unfortunately, a check on the websites of the five clubs showed that none of the clubs had integrated or allowed interaction on their website. However, three football clubs linked their social media platforms to their websites. The adoption of digital media also supports the Relationship Management Theory which argues that interpersonal communications should be made the centrepiece of organisation, (Ledingham, 2011). This is undoubtedly the greatest move to interpersonal and social interaction.

4.4 Chapter Summary

The chapter presented findings of the data gathered from the study. The presentation was done in an orderly manner on various themes such the structure and position of PR, roles and functions of PR of the clubs, channels of communications of the clubs, as well as the club's relationship with their sponsors.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter summarises the findings, conclusions, and limitations of the study and offer recommendations based on the interpretation of the results. It further makes suggestions for future studies.

5.1 Summary of the findings

The purpose of the study was to investigate the position, structure and functions of public relations among the five selected football clubs in Ghana. This aim was accomplished through the following objectives:

1. To investigate the position and structure of Public Relations (PR) practice in five Football Clubs in the Ghana Premier League (GPL).
2. To investigate the functions of PR in five Football clubs in the Ghana Premier League. (GPL)
3. To investigate and describe the nature of communications employed by public relations practitioners of the GPL Ghana

The study assessed the position, structure and functions of public relations among Ghanaian football clubs by studying five Premier League clubs namely; Kumasi Asante Kotoko SC, Accra Hearts of Oak SC, Liberty Professionals, West African Football Academy (WAFA) and Aduana Stars FC using the theoretical approaches of the Excellence theory and the Relationship Management theory. The literature review revealed that whilst some football clubs may view public relations and other functions such as marketing or human relations as separate operations, others see these functions

as falling under a common umbrella. The study further sought to assess the clubs' understanding of Public Relations and the nature of public relations practiced by the clubs. The study found that management of the clubs viewed PR as important in the day to day administration of the clubs; again Public Relations was used as a tool for maintaining relationship with their publics. Whilst some clubs had a well-structured public relations departments in their clubs and used all the available functions of PR, others relied only on media relations and investor relations. The study found that the PROs mainly played the communication facilitator role and the technician role. The study also discovered that the clubs used channels such as telephone calls, memos, meetings and emails for their internal communication and the mass media (radio, television and newspaper) and social media as channels for external communications. These channels had a positive impact on the clubs' relationships with their publics, although there were instances where breakdown in communication affected relationships with supporters and the media in particular. The study found that meetings was the most used channel of communication in the clubs' due to the instant feedback it provided. The clubs' own media channels such as *Kotoko Express* and *Hearts News* came out as frequent and reliable channels of communication between the clubs and supporters because of the clubs wide reach.

The study found that the clubs managed issues and their image mostly through the mass media in order to either attract sponsors or establish and maintain good relationship with their sponsors. However, it was also established that non-performance and lack of success on the pitch were hindrances to attracting sponsorship.

5.2 Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were reached: Public Relations Practice varied with the size of the club. For instance, clubs like Kumasi Asante Kotoko and Accra Hearts of Oak, which are considered as Top level clubs in the League recognised Public Relations as a management function and therefore PR was found to be an integral part of the communication function of their clubs. This was however unlike Liberty professional and Aduana Stars that logged the PR function with another department. In the attempt to make their communication function stronger, Hearts and Kotoko had professional communicators performing different functions. Some of the Public Relations Departments in the clubs operated with basic communication management tools and were also empowered to be part of the dominant coalition to influence decisions at the management level. This conclusion validates the Excellence Theory which among others emphasises that make for an excellent public relations department. The study found that even though the clubs viewed PR as an important management function their understanding of PR was limited because they did not handle it like a management function; PR officers of the clubs thus did not perform all the required roles expected of PR managers.

Furthermore, the study concludes that the nature of communication used by Public Relations Practitioners of the football clubs understudy was mostly dialogue-based. This approach therefore reinforces the Relationship Management Theory which advocates the use of interpersonal communications by Public Relations Practitioners. In addition, the study discovered that Public Relations Practitioners put in a number of strategies to manage relationships and reputation. The strategies for managing relationships were access, networking, listening, and responsiveness, dialoguing, and

identifying with the people. On the other hand the strategies for managing reputation included the history of the clubs, symbols and defining attributes.

5.3 Limitations of the Study

A major limitation to the study was that only five out of the sixteen Ghana Premier League clubs were studied due to time constraints. Another limitation was that the study could not interview other internal employees of the clubs studied, especially the players, to know their views on the effectiveness of internal communications channels in the clubs. The study could not also interview sponsors of the clubs to find out about their relationships with their clubs. In addition, the study considers the internal documents made available to the researcher as quite scanty. All these notwithstanding the study was worthwhile as rich data was gathered through the interviews. It is possible that interviewees might not have divulged all the information the researcher was looking for, but all the same, what they made available was considered valuable.

5.4 Recommendations

The study recommends further expansion of this study to include interviewing internal staff, particularly players to know their views on the effectiveness of internal communication channels. Also, future studies should consider interviewing club supporters as well as sponsors of the club. The study discovered an appreciable level of Public Relations practices in Premier League clubs in Ghana. However, to improve on the Public Relations practice in Ghanaian football clubs, it is recommended that clubs make as a matter of club policy, possibly at the board level, to establish Public Relations departments. These PR departments should be set up in line with the principles of PR such as making it an integral part of management and empowered to perform the various PR roles and functions. It is recommended that the clubs which do not have a

properly established PR department should consult with PR firms to help them set up their PR departments. This will help them bring together all the other roles and functions of PR in the clubs under one department.

Social media has become a powerful, effective and inexpensive channel of communication for organisations. Organisations like football clubs with dedicated and passionate supporters must take full advantage and expand their reach and support base through communication with social media channels. Finally, the study recommends that Ghanaian clubs should adapt to technological advancement in communication by taking social media more seriously.

In view of all the findings, the study concludes that public relations practice in the selected clubs in Ghana is quite encouraging but a lot needs to be done in terms of the organisation and adjustment to public relations in the clubs to be able to adjust to modern trends in sports communication.

5.5 Summary of Chapter

The chapter discussed the findings of the study in detail and in thematic areas according to the objectives of the study. The chapter also stated limitations to the study and also made recommendations for future research into areas which the study was unable to look at due to time constraints.

REFERENCES

- Al-Smith, G. (2011). *Empty Stadia in Africa: A Cultural Phenomenon?* Business of Sport in Africa, 37-39.
- Arthur, D. (1999). *The decision-making process of corporate sport sponsorship in Australia*. Unpublished PhD thesis, Southern Cross University, Lismore, Australia.
- Asante Kotoko FC (2015). History of Asante Kotoko FC. Retrieved December 2015, from Asante Kotoko FC:
<http://www.ashgoldfc.com/Historyoftheporcupineworriors>
- Bernays, E. (1928). *“The new propagandists” in propaganda*. New York: H. Liverlight.
- Bowen, S. A. (2000). *A theory of ethical issues management: Contributions of Kantian deontology to public relations' ethics and decision making*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Maryland, College Park.
- FIFA. (2011). *the History of Football*. Retrieved September 25, 2015, From FIFA: <http://www.fifa.com/classicfootball/history/game/historygame2.html>
- Boyce, C. & Neale, P. (2006). Conducting In-depth Interviews: A guide for designing and conducting in-depth interviews for evaluation input. *Pathfinder International Tool Series, Monitoring and Evaluation*, 2, 1-12.
- Brassington and Pettitt (2002). Principles of Marketing. *Journal of financial times*. Princeton Hall
- Bridgewater, S. & Stray, S. (2002). *Brand Values and Typology of Premiership Football Fans*. Warwick business school working paper. Retrieved from <http://amj.aom.org/content/50/1/25.short?rss=1&ssource=mfc>
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research Design*, (4th ed). Sage Publication.
- Cutlip, M., Center, A. H., & Broom, G. M. (1994). *Effective public relations*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Cutlip, S. M. Center, A. H., & Broom, G. M. (2000). *Effective Public Relations*, (8th ed). New Jersey, Prentice-Hall
- Cutlip, S., Center, A., & Broom, G. (2005). *Effective public relations* (9th Ed). New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Darby, P. (2002). *Africa, Football and FIFA*. London: Frank Cass.
- Davis, A. (2004). *Mastering Public Relations*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Davis, Grunig, J. E. (2006). Furnishing the edifice: ongoing research on public relations as a strategic management function. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 18(2), 151-176. A. (2004). *Mastering Public Relations*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Deloitte. (2011). *The Untouchables: Football Money League*. *Sports Business Group*, 2-30. Retrieved From: http://www.deloitte.com/assets/DcomUnitedKingdom/Local%20Asset Documents/Industries/Sports%20Business%20Group/UK_SBG_DFML11.pdf
- Dubin, R. (1969). *Theory building: A practical guide to the construction and testing of theoretical model*. New York: Free Press Prentice Hall. Edition Sage Publications.
- Eisenhart, K. M. & Graebner, M. E. (2007). *Theory building from cases: Opportunities in Public Relations*. New York Free Press. Prentice Hall.
- Farrelly, Q. & Burton (2006). *Changes in Sponsorship relationship: Competition and capabilities of successful sponsorship relationship*. University of Adelaide; RMT University
- FIFA. (2011). *the History of Football*. Retrieved September 25, 2011, From FIFA: <http://www.fifa.com/classicfootball/history/game/historygame2.html>
- Fullerton, S. & Merz R. G. (2008), "The four domains of sports marketing: A conceptual framework." *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 17(2), 90.
- García. C. (2011) Real Madrid Football Club: Applying a Relationship-Management Model to a Sport Organization in Spain. *International Journal of Sport Communication*.
- Ghana Football Association. (2016). Retrieved September 25, 2016, from <http://www.ghanafa.org/index/league/3>
- Goddard, W. & Melville, S. (2004). *Research Methodology: An Introduction*. Lansdowne: Juta and Company Ltd.
- Göksel, A. G. & Serarslan, M. Z (2015). Public relations in sports clubs: New media as a strategic corporate communication instrument. *International Journal of Physical Education, Sports and Health*.
- Gray, D. & McEvoy (2005). Sports marketing strategies and tactics. In Parkhouse, B(Ed), *The management of sport: Its foundations and application*, McGraw-Hill Inc, New York.
- Grunig, J. & Hunt, T. (1984). *Managing public relations* (6th ed.). Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

- Grunig, J. E. & Grunig, L. A. (1991). Conceptual differences in public relations and marketing: the case of health-care organizations; Public relations and marketing. *Public Relations Review*, 17.
- Grunig, J. E. & Hunt, T. (1984). *Managing public relations*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston.
- Grunig, J. E. (1992). Communication, public relations, and effective organizations: An overview of the book. In J.E. Grunig (Ed.), *Excellence in public relations and communication management* (pp. 1-31). New York: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Grunig, J. E., Grunig, L. A., & Dozier, D. M. (2002). *Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management*, ed. J.E. Grunig (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1992), pp. 117-58.
- Grunig, L. A. & Grunig, J. E. (1995). *Manager's guide to excellence in public relations and communication management*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Grunig, L. A., Grunig, J. E., & Dozier, D. M. (2002). *Excellent public relations and effective organizations: The study of communication management in three countries*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc.
- Grunig, L. A., Grunig, J. E., & Toth, E. L. (2007). *The future of excellence in public relations and communication management: challenges for the next generation*. New York: Routledge.
- H. Russell Bernard (2002). *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches Fourth Edition Handbook of public relations* (pp. 527–534). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Hancock, B., Ockleford, E., & Windridge, K. (2009). *An introduction to qualitative Research*; NHIR RDS for Yorkshire & Humber.
- Hancock, Ockleford, & Windridge (2009). *An introduction to Qualitative Research*. The NIHR Research Design Service for Yorkshire & the Huber.
- Heath, R. L. (2006). Onward into more fog: thoughts on public relations research directions. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 18(2), 93-114.
- Hopwood, Kitchin, & Skinner (2012). *Sports public relations and communications*. Leeds Metropolitan University, University of Ulster, Griffith University.
- IEG (2009). IEG Sponsorship Report. *American Journal of Marketing*, 28

- Javalgi, R., Traylor, M., Gross, A., & Lampman, E. (1994). Awareness of sponsorship and corporate image: An empirical investigation. *Journal of Advertising*, 23(4), 47-58.
- Jeffer. P. & Ross. C. (1999). Commercialization of sports in the 21st century. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc.
- Joe Favorito (2014). *Sports publicity; a practical approach, Second edition*. Columbia University Press.
- Johnson, R. B. & Christensen, L. B. (2008). *Educational Research: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed approaches*. (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Johnston, J. & Zawawi, C. (2004). *Public Relations: Theory and Practices*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
- Kathleen, M. & Eisenhardt (1989). *Building Theories from Case Study Research*. Newtown Press; Emmong Press.
- Kusi, H. (2002). *Doing qualitative Research: A guide for researchers*, (ed). Newtown; Emmong Press.
- L'etang, Y. & Pieczka, M. (2006). *Public Relations: Critical Debates and Contemporary Practice*. London: Routledge.
- Lamb, L. & McKee, K. (2005). *Applied Public Relations: Cases in stakeholder management*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc.
- Ledingham, J. A. & Bruning, S. (2000). *Public Relations as relationship management: A rational Approach to the study and practice of public relation*. Routledge Communication series.
- Ledingham, J. A. & Bruning, S. D. (1998). Relationship management in public relations: Dimensionsof an organization–public relationship. *Public Relations Review*, 24(1), 55–65.
- Ledingham, J. A. (2001a). Government and citizenry: Extending the relational perspective of public relations, *Public Relations Review*, 27, 285–295
- Ledingham, J. A., & Bruning, S. D. (1999). Managing media relations: Extending the relational perspective of public relations. In J. Biberman & A. Alkhafaji (Eds.), *Business research yearbook* (Vol. 5, pp. 644–648). Saline, MI: McNaughton & Gunn, Inc.

- Ledingham, J. A., Bruning, S. D., Thomlison, T. D., & Lesko, C. (1997). The applicability of the interpersonal relationship dimensions to an organizational context: Toward a theory of relational loyalty; a qualitative approach. *Academy of Managerial Communication Journal*, 1(1), 23–43
- Ledingham, J.A. (2003). “Explicating Relationship Management as a General Theory of Public Relations.” *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 15(2), 181- 198.
- Lindlof T. R. & Taylor B. C (2002). *Qualitative Communication Research Methods, Second Management Review, Vol. 14*: Academy of Management media relations In J. Biberman & A. Alkhafaji (Eds.), Business research yearbook (Vol. 5, pp. 752–756). Sa- line, MI: McNaughton & Gunn, Inc.
- McKee, A. (2005). *The Public Sphere: An introduction*. Cambridge University Press, 2005 –Language Arts & Disciplines.
- Merriam, S. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco.
- Moore, E. & Teel, S. (1994), “Marketing tools for sports management.” In P. Graham (Ed), Sport business: Operational and theoretical aspects. Dubuque, IA: Brown and Benchmark.
- Nakra, P. (2000). Corporate reputation management: CRM with a strategic twist? *Public Relations Quarterly*.
- Nufer, & Buhler. (2010). Relevant factors for successful relationships between professional sporting organisation and their sponsors. *Journal of Physical Education and sports management*, 2.
- Nufer, G., & Bhler, A. W. (2010). How effective is the sponsorship of global sports events? A comparison of the FIFA World Cups in 2006 and 1998. *International Journal of Sports Marketing & Sponsorship*, 11(4), 303-319.
- Ohene, N. K. (2014). *Using website design and social media to market Ghanaian football clubs*. Unpublished master’s dissertation, University of Ghana, Legon.
- Otoo. E (2014). *Importance of Sports to nation building*. Unpublished master’s dissertation. University of Ghana, Legon
- Redman, L. V. & Mory, A. V. H. (2009). *The Romance of Research*. Baltimore: The Williams & Wilkins Co.
- Sebbale, R. K. (2011). Football Marketing in Ghana. (A. Moughrabi, Interviewer) South Africa. Vamplew, W. (1982). The Economics of a Sports Industry. *The Economic History*, 35(4), 549.

- Seitel, F. P. (2001). *The practice of Public Relations*. 8th edition. Upper Saddle, NJ: Prentice Hall Inc
- Seitel, F. P. (2004). *The practice of Public Relations*. Upper Saddle, NJ: Prentice Hall Inc.
- Seitel, F. P. (2007). *The practice of public relations*. (10th ed.). NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- Shank, M. D. (1999). *Sports marketing: A strategic perspective*. Prentice Hall press
- Shannon, J. R. (1999). "Sports marketing: an examination of academic marketing publication", *Journal of Services Marketing*, 13(6), 517-535, <https://doi.org/10.1108/08876049910298775>.
- Skinner, C., Mersham, G., & Von Essen, L. (2004). *The handbook of Public Relations*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press Southern Africa.
- Sports Marketing Surveys (2002, October 7). *Insights Newsletter*, 1-3
- Stake R. E. (2010). *Qualitative Research*. A Division of Guilford Publications.
- Steyn, B. & Puth, G. (2000). *Corporate Communication Strategy*. Sandown: Heinemann.
- Stoldt, Dittmore & Branvold (2012). *Sports Public Relations - 2nd Edition: Managing Stakeholder Communication*. Retrieved from www.humankinetics.com
- Taylor, M. (2000). Toward a public relations approach to nation building. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 12(2), 178–210.
- Tench, R. & Yeomans, L. (2006). *Exploring Public Relations*. London: Pearson Education Limited.
- Theaker, A. (2004). *The Public Relations Handbook*. London: Routledge.
- Thomlison, T. D. (2000). *Public relations as relationship management*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc.
- Wilcox, D. & Cameron, G. (2006). *Public Relations: Strategies and tactics*. (8th ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Wilcox, D. & Cameron, G. (2009). *Public Relations: Strategies and tactics*. (9th ed.). Boston: Pearson Education Inc.

Wilcox, D., Cameron, G., Ault, P., & Agee, W. (2004). *Public Relations Strategies and Tactics*. Boston: Pearson Education Inc.

Xifra, J. (2008) *Soccer, civil religion, and Public Relation: Devotional Promotional of Gereno, Communication and Barcelona Football club*. Faculty of Tourism and communication, University Spain.



APPENDIX I

INTERVIEW GUIDE — POSITION, STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS AMONG SELECTED PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL CLUBS IN GHANA

This study is an academic enterprise that seeks to document aspects of how football clubs in Ghana position, structure and carry out Public Relations functions. Kindly assist me conduct the interview to obtain information for the study. Please ensure that confidentiality is of topmost priority to this study and that information obtained from this interview is solely for the purpose of academic work.

1. What is the core business of your organisation (area of specialisation)?
2. What is the vision and mission statement of your organisation?
2. Can you describe or illustrate the position of PR on the organogram of your organization?
3. To whom do you report?
4. Do you have a public relations' department in your organisation? If not, please specify which department undertakes public relations' functions.
5. How big is this department and what are its functions?
6. Does the public relations' department in your club function independently?
7. What does the public relations' concept mean for your club?
8. What does public relations' practitioners mean to you?
9. Provide a hierarchy structure stating where the public relations' department is situated within the club
10. How does your clubs maintain open and frank communication amongst the various departments?

11. Is the Head of Communications part of top management?
12. How much influence does the communications department have to ensuring the inclusion of the publics' interest in management decisions?
13. How do you go about the following and what do you look out for in each instance?
14. Environmental scanning –
15. Identification of publics/ stakeholders
16. Scenario building
17. Evaluation of communication programmes
18. What are the channels of communication available to your club and who are your target audience?
19. What kind of interaction do you commonly seek with your publics?
20. How have you sought to leverage on the web and social media to create more personal relationships with your key publics?
21. What digital communication tools have you integrated into your communication activities?
22. How active are these platforms?
23. In the face of fragmented media, how does your outfit effectively co-ordinate communication activities to ensure the overall achievement of communication and club goals?
24. Do you set out to spin certain information and if yes when does it become necessary?
25. What is the role of ethics and integrity within your communication activities?

THANK YOU