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Global Public Relations and Multinational Corporations: The Influence of Culture on Public's Reactions to H&M, Dove, and Nivea's Media Campaigns in the United States and Nigeria

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Global Public Relations and Multinational Corporations: The Influence of Culture on Public

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by

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ABSTRACT

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This study examined the significant impact of culture on global public relations practices using a

case study analysis of Dove, H&M, and Nivea's media campaigns between 2017 and 2019. The

analysis was carried out through a structural comparison between the public's reaction from the

United States and Nigeria. Cultural variations between the two countries were examined, and

how the variations impact GPR practices were explored. Social judgment theory, apologia, and

image restoration theory were used as the theoretical frameworks alongside Hofstede's cultural

dimensions. This study demonstrates that understanding cultural dimensions as it applies to

diverse countries operating in the global market can reveal how organizations can design and

implement effective public relations practices across borders regardless of the existing cultural

differences which pose as a challenge.

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my family and everyone that contributed towards the success of this study.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Public relations is faced with challenges such as cultural differences, misrepresentation of the target audience/public in media campaigns, and one size fits all strategies. This study explores how culture plays a significant role in global public relations, brand reputation, and the position of multinational companies in the global marketplace using Nivea, H&M, and Dove as a case study. The issue of culture as a significant concept in effective public relations practices has been a focus of researchers. Global public relations (GPR) necessitate the understanding of intercultural aspects of public relations and the need to integrate its international aspect (Taylor, 2000).

The purpose of this study is to examine and evaluate through selected case studies how cultural and racial identifiers such as skin color, and hair contributed to the crises of selected multinational brands. Issues such as misrepresentations, racial, and cultural insensitivity, the strategies implemented to handle crises, effective strategies that could have been implemented, and the impact those strategies had on their brand reputation will be explored. Also, structural comparisons between the United States and Nigeria will be carried out to explore how cultural differences impact publics' reaction to crises and how the differences can be used as a tool to developed tailored messages that resonate with the target audience.

A case study analysis of the public's reaction through social media platform - Twitter, was carried out on three different multinational brands using social judgment theory, image restoration theory, and apologia as the theoretical framework. Hofstede's cultural dimensions were used to explore how different cultural dimensions are compared to fully understand culture as a construct in GPR. Beverly Naya's 'Skin' documentary was also used to explore the issue of colorism in Nigeria and how it impacts brands' acceptance.

The outcry that arises from crisis and how social media is fast becoming the platform to solicit the public's reaction will be explored alongside the study of culture; This is to better understand how global public relations practice can affect brand reputation and at the same time impact multinational corporations' (MNCs) market share in the global marketplace.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

This study builds on existing literature from several fields, such as business management, marketing, public relations, cultural studies, psychology, and media management. First, the literature on the overview of public relations will be discussed. Next, there will be a review of literature on culture, public relations in Nigeria, brand reputation, global public relations, and global marketplace. Finally, the literature on the overview of the theoretical frameworks, and its relationship with the selected case studies will be explored. The purpose is to explore how cultural differences across national borders impacts crisis communication as well as investigate how the identified cultural factors play a significant role in brand reputation and its positioning in order to provide recommendations that effectively meet the ever-changing industry demands.

Global Public Relations (GPR)

One of the major interaction elements is communication. Effective communication is the basis upon which relationships are built, managed, improved upon, and maintained (Stokes & Freitag, 2009). Public relations has its origin in the United States in the early 20th century with publicity as its start-off practice (Sriramesh & Verčič, 2012) however, its modern definition now cuts across engagement and relationship building (PRSA, n.d.). Public relations is a form of strategic communication targeted towards earning public understanding and acceptance, and the process of creating a good relationship between an organization and the public, especially with reputation management, and communication of information (Curtin & Gaither, 2007). Public relations "is a leadership and management function that helps achieve organizational objectives, define philosophy, and facilitate organizational change" (Lattimore, Baskin, Heiman, & Toth, 2004, p. 5). They further stated that communication with all relevant internal and external

publics helps develop relationships, and in order to create a level of consistency between the expectations of the society and the goals of the organization, there must be effective and consistent communication between the organization, its constituencies, and its publics.

According to the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), public relations is "a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics" (PRSA, n.d.). The need to establish global presence by multinational companies and brands has necessitated the integration of global public relations to cut across cultural borders (Wakefield, 2008). Global public relations is essentially controlled by multinational corporations, large PR agencies, and power nations. In order for MNCs to establish regional presence, resources are pooled through local/native talents that serve as the cultural intermediaries between the organizations and the targeted publics (Curtin & Gaither, 2007). The impact that the activities of an organization has on its other subsidiaries in other parts of the world illustrates how globalization works in a global marketplace (Taylor, 2000).

An MNC is "an international network that creates, accesses, integrates, and applies knowledge in multiple locations" (Almeida, Song, & Grant, 2002, p. 148). MNCs face macro-environmental conditions in the diverse countries they operate (Bae & Noh, 2001). Although, there happen to be differences in business activities, and knowledge due to cultural differences that exist, the integration of those business activities that stands as organizational culture and brand identity needs to be considered (Ghoshal & Nohria, 1989) on a worldwide basis (Schulz, 2003). The integration of the knowledge and activities gives MNCs the ability to yield greater value of being multinational (Kogut, 1989).

Global public relations as a strategic management implies that organizations set goals and missions, and ensure that they are relevant to the concerned environment (Verčic, 1993). In the

bid to expand with the rapidly changing marketplace, successful organizations, most especially multinational corporations, need to operate in a global marketplace. Cultural constructs are essential for public relations, and on a larger scale, culture itself is core to global public relations and ultimately, brand image cultivation and acceptance. Global public relations advocates for the dominance of culture and difference (Taylor, 2000). That is, it views public relations from a cross-cultural context (Culbertson & Chen, 1996). Cultural differences are one of the key factors that affect human communication processes, and due to this, meanings are created, deduced and associated with based on the differences (Freitag & Stokes, 2009).

Public Relations in Nigeria

Public relations (PR) in Nigeria is categorized into a political propaganda and public information process (Otubanjo & Amujo, 2013). Globalization has necessitated the need to get rid of isolation from global events. This is evident in how multinational corporations have extended the practice of public relations to several other countries and continents (Akpabio, 2009). In Nigeria, there is a misconception about the practice of public relations. This is patent in how it is perceived to revolve around window dressing, press agentry, sales promotion, and untruthfulness (Asemah, 2011). The notion is that public relations practice in Nigeria is charlatan in nature. Based on the study carried out by Rotimi Olatunji (2014) on the differing perception of public relations in Nigeria among practitioners and the general public, public relations professionals are perceived by the public to be more loyal to their clients and employers and less likely to consider the public interest (Olatunji, 2014).

RQ1: How do cultural differences contribute to the effectiveness of public relations practices in developing countries such as Nigeria?

One of the identified limitations in Nigerian public relations is that the country's standpoint on PR is yet to take its place as its current perspective of what the practice is about is dominated by that of another (Akpabio 2009). In developing countries, public relations practitioners are "less inclined to seek information from their publics because they do not intend to shape organizational activities to the need of the environment" (Sriramesh K., 1992, p. 204). This further illustrates that environmental scanning and the two-way symmetrical approach is not the strategic route that Nigerian public relations practitioners integrate into the practice (Akpabio, 2009). Similarly, the practice of public relations may not be excellently integrated in a developing country such as Africa (Freitag & Ashli, 2009).

The counter notion to the identified limitations is that public opinion and the elicited behaviors of the public drives African public relations (Idemili, 1990). Ogundipe (1990) used the Nigerian banking industry as an analogy. He stated that the Nigerian banking industry implements one of the PR strategies that involves collecting and analyzing data regarding the changing behavior and attitudes of its key publics- the consumers. He further identified research, planning and programming, action and communication, and evaluation as the four basic public relations steps. It is however significant to note that Akpabio's depiction of Nigerian PR is more recent compared to that of Ogundipe. Owens-Ibie (2005) explained that public relations is a strategic communication tool that helps provide solutions to conflicts that arise within and outside industries in Nigeria.

However, it is important to note that public relations in Nigeria is still developing in the area of PR being a strategic practice that goes beyond understanding the public's attitudes or change in behavior to ensuring that the data collected, and responses recorded are evaluated to effect better organizational decisions and ultimately to have the concerns of the publics taken

care of such that it aligns with the goals and mission of the organization (Koper, Babaleye, & Johansoozi, 2009).

Cultural Constructs and Public Relations

Swann (2014) stated that the publics are stakeholders who are actively involved in an organization and what it has to offer. That is, they are the driving force for the decisions made and also the determinant of an organization's reputation. Global public relations advocates for the dominance of culture and difference (Curtin & Gaither, 2007). This implies that it views public relations from a cross-cultural context (Culbertson & Chen, 1996). Cultural differences are one of the key factors that affect human communication processes and due to this, meanings are created, deduced, and associated with based on the differences (Freitag & Stokes, 2009). According to Hofstede (2001), culture "is the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another." This suggests that culture is a representation of differences (Weinbaum & Edwards, 2001). Culture is the foundation upon which a society's value system is built, and it is one of the important factors/elements when it comes to business ethical decision-making (Kim & Kim, 2010). Similarly, it is a concept that accounts for the differences which exist within a society (Minkov & Hofstede, 2013).

Meanings are drawn based on shared cultural experiences. As meanings and interpretations lie within culture, culture is one of the major defining factors of deducing meanings. Target audiences create meanings to the content they consumer, thereby illustrating that interpretations of messages lie within the consumers (Kim & Kim, 2010). Robbins (1997) characterizes globalization as a process through which an organization make use of local talents in the role of message production to ensure that significant attention is paid to cultural

differences. Meaning is generated and given shape through representation (Curtin & Gaither, 2007). According to Hall (1997b), "we give meanings by how we represent them" (p.3). Curtin and Gaither (2007) explains that people place importance on signs, and symbols. A typical example of this is seen in a recent H & M media campaign that suffered a backlash due to assumed misrepresentation of African-American hair, which is a symbol of identity. Targeted publics create their own meaning during the period of content consumption based on situational factors such as culture (Curtin & Gaither, 2007).

Cultural indices such as high-context and low-context culture give room for cultural norms and value descriptions. Social norms have the capacity to control and exert influence on market economies. This further explains that communication or information flow is tied to the level ascribed to a cultural context, either high or low. Curtin and Gaither (2007) explain that the United States has low-context cultures that give room for free flow of information, clear and detailed communication while developing countries have high context cultures. The interplay between culture and global public relations is at the forefront of organizational communications (Sriramesh & White, 1992). They further explained that for organizations to communicate to and with their publics in a global marketplace, public relations practitioners "...will have to sensitize themselves to the cultural heterogeneity of their audiences" (p.611). Similarly, organizations that are not sensitive to their socio-cultural environments in which they operate will lose the trust, loyalty, and relationships they have with their key stakeholders (Kim & Sriramesh, 2009).

One of the factors attributed to business failures is lack of cultural and racial sensitivity and the heightened prominence for the bottom line rather than the interest of the public as it aligns with their values and identity (Morosini, 2002). Another factor that contributes to its failures is the isolation that a problem or public perception of a global brand outside of its parent

company country is essentially not the problem of the parent company. It is significant to note that cross-national conflict shifting is an impossible concept to disregard most especially for multinational corporations. Infiltrating the global market comes with challenges as it also comes with its benefits. By expanding into the global market, the brand or corporation is putting its image out in the open for more public perception and notions (Morosini, 2002).

Overview of Hofstede's Dimensions of National Culture and its applications to GPR

The cultural differences that exist between countries impact the effectiveness and efficiency of public relations practices in global business environment. Hofstede defines culture as "the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another" (Hofstede G., 1980, p. 21). The different approach of Hofstede towards levels of culture entails values, heroes, rituals, and symbols (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010).

RQ2: How do cultural differences across national borders impact GPR and brand reputation?

Similarly, culture is reproduced in societal values hence, cultural variations must be duly integrated in global businesses (Vasile & Nicolescu, 2016). Hofstede's cultural dimensions shed more light on the cultural differences that exist between the two selected countries- United States, and Nigeria, and how these dimensions contribute to shaping and informing the cultural variations and ultimately how the variations contribute to public relations practices and crisis communication. It further illustrates how the differences in national cultures shapes the perceptions, beliefs, and values of individuals (Hofstede, 1986). Cultural difference is a significant variable that affects public relations practices (Rhee, 2002). Hofstede cultural dimensions is used as a holistic approach to studying and analyzing the ways in which cultural

differences can contribute to effective public relations practices on a global level. He identified

four dimensions that cuts across cultures (Ijewere & Edith, 2012). Hofstede's dimensions of

national culture consist of six dimensions: (a) Power Distance Index (b) Individualism vs

Collectivism (c) Masculinity vs Femininity (d) Uncertainty Avoidance (e) Long Term

Orientation vs Short Term Normative Orientation, and (f) Indulgence vs Restraint. However, for

the purpose of this study, power distance index, masculinity vs femininity and long-term

orientation would be used for analysis. This is because the three dimensions is considered more

relevant to the case study.

Power distance illustrates the inequality that exists in power exertion over another. That

is, it is the level to which individuals considered less powerful assume and acknowledge that

there exists inequality in power distribution. This dimension further demonstrates how

individuals in a nation with a high-power distance index assume a hierarchical system where all

individuals understand and acknowledge their position with no need for justification. The case is

not the same for nations with low power index; here, there must be a justification for the unequal

distribution of power. Masculinity versus femininity illustrates how a society can be competitive

and strive for greater achievements, or choose good life standards through modesty.

In relation to business activities or organizational activities, a society or nation

considered to have a high score in MAS designs and executes goals in the most competitive way

while a society with a low MAS score is less competitive in nature. Long-term orientation, on the

other hand, explains the pragmatic nature of some societies and how some others are more

culturally inclined towards their existing traditions. A high score for LTO depicts a society that is

opened to analyze issues and to implement changes with consideration for long term effects of

decisions made. A society with low score LTO is more concerned with fast and quick results

while strictly holding on to their traditional way of getting things done (Hofstede, n.d.). In figure 1 below, the cultural dimensions between the United States and Nigeria was compared.

Hofstede Cultural Dimensions
United States vs Nigeria
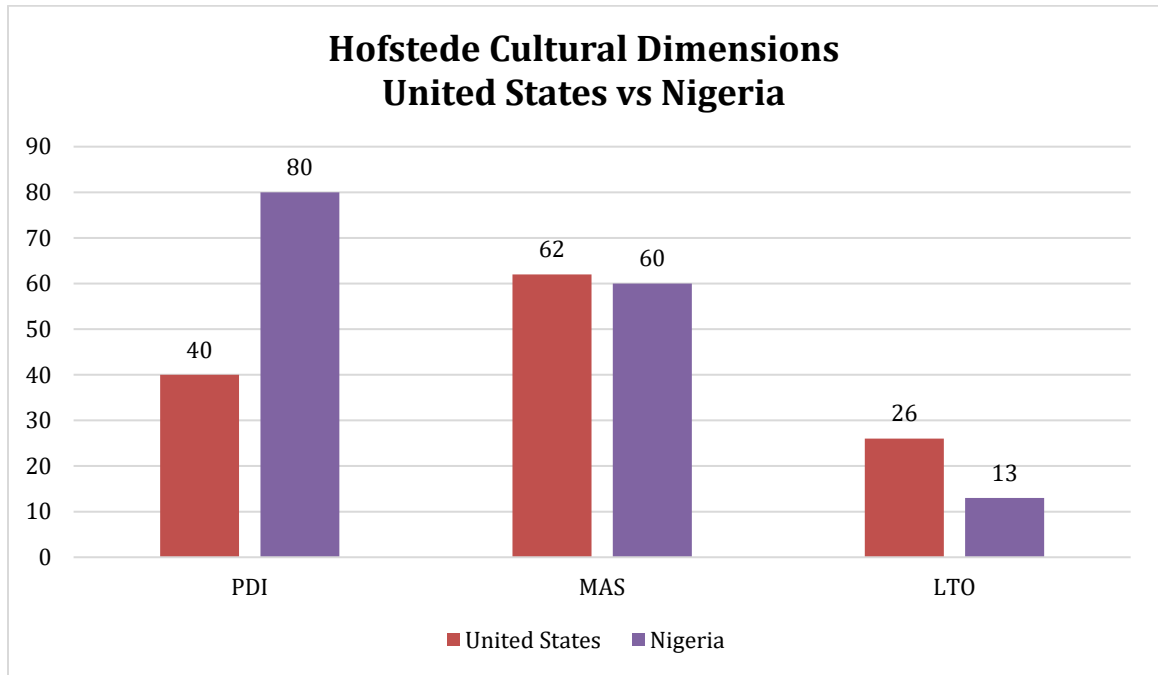
Figure 1. Hofstede Cultural Dimensions: United States versus Nigeria

Brand Reputation, Global Marketplace, Cultural Complexities

Corporate reputation is an object of communication (Carroll, 2013), and cultural approach to global branding integrates the necessity to acknowledge diverse ways of handling brands across different contexts (Cayla & Arnould, 2008). Brands, when defined as cultural forms goes deeper to evaluate the historical, geographical, and social context therefore rendering the assumption that global brands are all evolving in similar ways flawed (Wang 2008; Wengrow, 2008). Branding of products and services differs across cultural contexts distinctively (Cayla & Arnould, 2008). Corporate reputation is an object of communication (Carroll, 2013).

The AC^{4}ID reputation framework as illustrated by (Carrol, Greyser, & Schreiber, 2011) posits that corporate reputations ranges from the actual reputation type (i.e., what we really are), communicated reputation (i.e., what we say we are), conceived reputation, construed reputation (what we think others see), covenanted reputation (what the brand stands for), ideal reputation (what we ought to be), to the desired reputation. Further to this, the framework is rooted in the premise that the awareness of the various types of reputations enables organizations to draw insights in order to effectively categorize messages into noise or feedback, make clarifications and reduce the noise that the organization and its stakeholders experience, and effectively respond to feedback in order to give room "for learning, growth, and development" (p. 6).

Positioning complexities arise when there is a need to integrate consistency across markets in the minds of stakeholders (Khojastehpour, Ferdous, & Polonsky, 2015), while at the same time incorporate the culture of its consumers. Global brand managers face the challenge of "change" and "interpretation" due to its emergence into a new market and new cultural contexts (Kay, 2006). The corporate brand is termed the reality of any corporation as perceived in the mind of its stakeholders (Nandan, 2005). Similarly, literature on branding suggests that corporations considered to be strong brands are defined by the positive association with its stakeholders, representative activities, the difference in customer's perception, and its overall success story (Kay, 2006). The connections with consumers vary in cultural contexts and that cultural meanings should be encouraged when larger corporations operate in different local contexts (Kates & Goh, 2003).

The complexities that are common with MNCs revolve around cultural diversity, government regulations, geographical distance, and language (Hsu, Chen, & Cheng, 2013). However, for the sake of this study, the focus would be on the cultural diversity that seems to be

a prevalent factor for effective and successful brand management (Gupta & Govindarajan, 1991).

The volatility of multiple foreign market environments, which comes with different and diverse

cultural orientations, has contributed to the uncertainties faced by MNCs concerning how their

corporate brands are managed (Moeller, Harvey, & Griffith, 2013). Drawing on previous

literature on MNCs corporate brands, Khojastehpour at al. (2015) suggests a structure that

highlights six complexities faced by organizations in managing and maintaining their corporate

reputation. According to the suggested structure, the complexities include culture, organizational

structure, strategic role, knowledge, positioning, and extended responsibilities. While still

drawing on these complexities, MNCs seem to have a high continuum. This is evident in how

different international strategies are developed to meet the cultural demands of all subsidiaries

effectively (Tsai, Yu, & Lee, 2006). Similarly, the differences in national cultural orientations

contributes to the organizational culture complexity hence the need to ensure that local context is

paid attention to (Veronica, Russell, Ruth, & Mike, 2009).

Cultural Identity and Beauty Standards

Eurocentric beauty standard is one of the challenges faced by blacks in the United States

(Robinson-Moore, 2008), which also extends to some African countries with relations to the

global marketplace for MNCs. Privileges and positive connotations seem to be more associated

with light skin color, and its prevalent preference has persisted in the United States (Coard &

Breland, 2001). Similarly, black's racial identity is depicted by reliance on white culture for

validation (Carter et al., 2017).

RQ2: How are people of color portrayed in media campaigns?

Culture-specific models of racial consciousness identify skin color as one of the major

identities of blacks (Cross, 1995). Eurocentric beauty standards are prevalent in the United Sates

as well as other countries in the world. The standards through media portrayals has placed higher value on skin features which is mostly associated with "whiteness" and straight hair when it comes to hair texture (Reece, 2016). The value placed and associated with "whiteness' has led to higher levels of perceived attractiveness that is associated with the color while the privileges of darker skin color drop at the expense of lighter skin color (Frieze, Olson, & Russel, 1991).

Differences in skin color marks cultural and social significance among diverse ethnic groups in the racial context (Li, Min, & Belk, 2008). Beverly Naya's 'Skin Documentary' illustrates how Nigerians place a higher preference on the lighter skin. This buttresses that prevalent preference as identified among blacks in the United States, often referred to racism, is also identified in Nigeria in the form of colorism. This documentary is a depiction of how PR fails in the United States may not necessarily be considered PR failure in Nigeria. This will be further discussed in the analysis of the case study and how it relates to global public relations and the structural comparison between the selected nations in chapter four.

Race/Cultural Identity

One of the major approaches to operationalize culture is through beliefs and value systems. The inquiry into cross-cultural research has been refined over the years whereby two or more cultures are being compared and contrasted (Tansuhaj & Sojka, 1995). The sense of cultural awareness has become multidimensional, and cultural identity as a concept is considered to be contextual and continually evolving. Similarly, the process of facing challenges, achieving a balance within the society points to how culture changes due to the influence of economic, political, and social factors (Fong & Chuang, 2004). Furthermore, cultural identities are reinforced through intercultural interactions. Fong and Chaung (2004) further explained that

ethnicity and identities both constitute socially constructed reality and that "race is culture" (p.6), however, an individual's culture is more than his or her race.

Cultural identity is a "social construction" (p.6). That is, it is a shared system of behaviors, and sense of belongings. Through interactions, identity is constructed and re-constructed (Collier & Thomas, 1988). Variable features such as hair texture, and skin color are racial identifiers which are used as physical assessment for racial recognition or association (O'Sullivan, Hartley, Saunders, Montgomery, & Fiske, 1994). The popularity of lightening products for skin in the marketplace made it a universal concept (Isa & Kramer, 2003). This is further seen in the global marketplace where brands such as Beiersdorf and Unilever are considered the most prominent players in the skin whitening industry, and also have the largest market shares in India and Nigeria (Vijaya, 2019). The fashion industry and media are reinforcing the ideal self-image for consumers through media and ad campaigns (Belk & Pollay, 1985).

Crisis Communication in the Global Marketplace

Crisis communication is a communication strategy in public relations which may pose as a challenge in global market operations if not effectively managed (Taylor, 2000). Similarly, crisis becomes aggravated when they happen in an international context or environment (Coombs, 2014). Coombs further explains that crisis occur as a result of a poor organization - public communication approach. Crisis is an unforeseen event that puts the positive perception and expectancies of stakeholders at risk, and by so doing, the performance of the organization and expected positive outcomes is impacted negatively (Coombs, 2015).

The central point of crisis communication lies in how communication strategies are created and implemented to manage messages and its meaning during a crisis situation (Coombs,

2009)**.** It is a communication process that explores ways in which response strategies are developed such that the messages passed across exert influence on the public's perception of the organization (Coombs & Holladay, 2014). Instructing information that aides the public in the process of dealing with the crisis, regulating and modifying information which helps the public cope psychologically with the crisis, and image repair process which helps in image restoration are the three strategic central point for crisis response (Sturges, 1994). Coombs and Holladay (2014) explain that there are multiple communicators in a crisis, and they influence the pattern a crisis takes. They further described the communicators as "those who may communicate with, for, and against" (p.43) the organization. Effective crisis response strategies are achieved when the public responds favorably to the account of the incident (Coombs, 2007).

Role of Social Media in Crisis Communication

Findings on the impact of social media on public relations and crisis communication explain that social media affects organizations' credibility, bottom line, "encourages dialogue among its stakeholders" and how it is perceived by its stakeholders (DiStaso, McCorkindale, & Wright, 2011). As a tool of engagement and content exchange between the public and organizations (Wright & Hinson, 2009), researchers have identified social media to play a significant role in the "social construction" and "social deconstruction of crisis" (Schultz, Utz, & Göritz, 2011, p. 20). It has been described as the platform that gives room for participation, openness, and community networking with emphasis on it being more credible than traditional media during a time of crisis (Procopio & Procopio, 2007).

As a content exchange platform, users are considered to actively play the role of content production and consumption (O'Reilly, 2017). For global corporations that operate within the global environment, crises have become more rampant due to the accelerated rate at which

information is shared (Gruber, Smerek, Thomas-Hunt, & James, 2015), and how social media globally connects the public (Ki & Nekmat, 2014). As a strategic means of communication, communication professionals have attributed great importance to social media as a strategic means of communication most notably in the area of organizational representation and in crisis situations (Eriksson & Olsson, 2016). Responding to crises in a strategic way and passing across information in a timely manner due to the fast pace feature of social media is one of the major ways to effectively and successfully manage crises (Pattersom, Wilkins, & Painter, 2019).

Social Judgment Theory

Through behavior cultivation, attitude is deduced. It is only from behavior that we infer that an individual has an attitude (Sherif & Sherif, 1965). Social judement theory (SJT) rests on the idea that the effect of a persuasive message with regards to a certain issue is determined by the way the receiver assesses the position of the message (Sherif, Sherif, & Nebergall, 1965), and that two or more individuals can perceive a single message differently (Sherif & Hovland, 1961). The theory presents a comprehensive framework of how the targeted audience responds to persuasive messages.

SJT illustrates that a receiver evaluates a message individually and then make judgments that are often defined by social norms, values, and beliefs of that individual (Smith, Atkin, Martell, Allen, & Hembroff, 2006). Furthermore, the cultural variations, traditions, and customs inform acceptable behavior, and attitudes as well as the non-acceptable ones (Sherif et al., 1965). It revolves around the assessment and evaluation of an individual's judgment in relation to the communicated messages. This allows the individual to measure the concept, ideas, or information that correlates with his or her standpoint; how it does matter or how it does not

really matter to him and then make a judgment out of it. In other words, there must be at least two alternatives in the set of positions (Sherif et al., 1965).

SJT categorizes how messages are received into (a) latitude of acceptance, (b) latitude of rejection, and (c) latitude of non-commitment. Latitude of acceptance is defined as "the position on an issue (or towards an object) that is most acceptable, plus other acceptable positions" (Sherif et al., 1965, p. 130). The latitude of acceptance deals with the concepts or ideas that align with an individual's standpoint (Griffin, 2012). In relation to public relations and its intersection with cultural variances and integration of cultural differences, social judgment buttresses the aspect of message interpretation and how it can bring about positive or negative reactions during crises.

Latitude of rejection refers to the scope from which concepts, issues, or messages deem unacceptable; however, the message is presented individuals choose to not agree with them. That is, "a refusal of latitude of non-commitment implies that there are positions which the individual neither accepts nor rejects (towards which he prefers to remain non-committal in his overt reaction)" (Sherif et al., 1965, p.24). Latitude of non-commitment is the category that places an individual's standpoint to be neither acceptable or objectionable (Sherif et al., 1965). It is the neutral sentiment that an individual showcase in relation to any message. SJT explicates that attitude is being drawn out based on the latitude that the receiver is on

Image Restoration Theory

Image is a concept that is fundamental to public relations; the notion that it is an impression shared by the target audience extends towards organizations, non-profit groups, for-profit groups, and government institutions (Benoit, 1997). Building on the pre-existing theory-apologia, image restoration focuses on the message choices. Its strategies are of two

assumptions, with the first being that communication is an activity that is goal-oriented and the second assumption stating that maintaining a favorable image is the focal point of effective communication (Blaney, Benoit, & Brazil, 2001).

Benoit (1997), explains that image revolves around an individual, group of individuals, and corporations are perceived by the target audience. The perception is often informed by the message, actions, and behavior of the corporations alongside its constituencies. It is significant to note that there exists the possibility of having more than one or two audiences with diverse and different interests, hence, the need to identify all relevant audiences and their interests and have it addressed with effective messages (Benoit, 1995). Image restoration theory (IRT) entails the use of communication strategies to rectify the negative impacts of a crisis (Benoit & Brinson, 1994; Brinson & Benoit, 1996). It serves as a framework that speculates how communications strategies can promote the success or failure of crisis management (Coombs & Schmidt, 2000).

The theory looks into the efforts that needs to be put together to rebuild a damaged reputation through its laid down restorative strategies (Benoit, 1995). The strategies identified by Benoit (1995) revolve around: (i) denial, (ii) evasion of responsibility, (iii) reducing the offensiveness of the act, (iv) corrective action, and (v) mortification. According to Benoit, denial implies that organization concerned did nothing wrong; hence, they are not involved in a crisis. Evasion of responsibility illustrates that the organizations has minimal responsibility for the crisis. Reducing the offensiveness of the act gets the target audience to perceive the organization or crisis with minimal damages.

Corrective action strives to repair existing damage that the crisis caused or prevent the crisis from recurring. Mortification strategies tend to make organizations take up the responsibility for the crisis, thereby issuing out an apology. In addition, Coombs (1998),

describes crisis-response strategies into a concept; defensive-accommodative continuum. The concept of defensive-accommodative continuum illustrates how defensive responses seek to protect the organization's end, while the accommodative responses seek to address the concerns of those affected by the crisis. However, the route recommended by researchers is to ensure that the response strategies are more accommodative and less defensive (Coombs & Schmidt, 2000). This will be further discussed in the discussion chapter when analyzing the cases.

Apologia

Understanding that one of the major priorities in any crises is the safety of the stakeholder (Coombs, Frandson, Holladay, & Johnasen, 2010), there exists the need for a defense response to ensure that the earlier stakeholder safety is guaranteed. Apologia, a class of rhetoric is defined as a self-defense speech (Ware & Linkugel, 1973). Ware and Linkugel (1973) further identify factors such as denial, that is, "challenging the facts of the accusation" (Coombs et al., 2010, p.42) bolstering, which entails avoiding the accusation by associating the organization or oneself with "something attractive" before a deciding audience (Coombs et al., 2010, p. 42); differentiation, that is, before a deciding audience, an activity or aspect is separated from a much more larger context; and transcendence which integrates an activity into a context that was not previously illustrated before a deciding audience. The reliance on denial to yield persuasiveness is effective and acceptable when it causes no dissonance on the part of what the target audience beliefs. In addition to bolstering's definition above, is that the speaker uses a reinforcing strategy to lay more emphasis on something that will yield favorable sentiment from the part of the deciding audience.

In relation to public relations, this can be used as a theoretical framework of defense when crisis cases that seem to be clearly misinterpreted are carried out. This is seen in the

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response of H&M to the call out they got from consumers of color about its 2019 campaign, which will be further discussed in chapter four. Currently, the theory is being used as a theoretical framework for crisis communication (Avery, Lariscy, Kim, & Hocke, 2010).

Dove

Dove is a global brand that falls in the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) category, and it was developed under its parent company-Unilever in 1957 with its flagship products as the beauty bar soaps. There has been an expansion in 80 countries and in its products line ranging from bar and body care, skin-care lotions, deodorants, to hair products. Being the most prominent of Unilever's consumer brands with its products' tagline revolving around "moisture, pureness, purity, natural," amongst others, its ad content advocates for confidence (dove.com). With its commitment and compelling social mission to change the stereotypical beauty narrative through its "Real Beauty" campaign, it employs the use of cause marketing to advocate against unrealistic beauty standards that are perceived to affect self-esteem and confidence of women negatively. One of the major advantages that Dove has as a brand is its strategic shift in ad campaigns and content. That is, it creates beauty narrative that does not prey on women's beauty anxieties (Young, 2017). Dove has been able to showcase its strengths through the use of a well-structured integrated marketing strategy that makes use of target market engagement, strong and effective media presence that creates the platform for sharing, commitment to building positive self- esteem and inspiring women to their full potential and strong brand image.

Overview of Dove's 2017 Media Campaign Crisis

Dove's 2017 media that had a black woman remove her brown shirt to reveal a white woman in a light shirt sparked many controversies. The brand's campaign initiative to visually

illustrate its integration of inclusion and diversity in its media campaign went wrong due to the use of wrong messaging cues, which a large section of its target market found to be insensitive and demeaning. As stated earlier, cultural cues when they do not correlate with what a segment of the target market truly identify with, there would be misinterpretation (Oakenfull & Greenlee, 2005). The removal of shirt and revealing of another model in lighter skin can be said to illustrate that the brand embraces all cultures and cares for all skin tones. However, the intended meaning was not the meaning that the audience perceived it to be.

The campaign was perceived to be racist and other related campaigns from the same brand that seem to portray racist messages re-surfaced. The description from the majority of the public leaned towards "a dirty black person cleansed into whiteness" (nytimes.com). In response to the public's reaction, the spokesperson for Dove explained that GIF "was intended to convey Dove Body Wash is for every woman and be a celebration of diversity, but we got it wrong and, as a result, offended many people" (nytimes.com).

The campaign evoked emotions out of the target audience, and one of the crucial things to note is that it may point out to be misunderstood if not properly constructed and delivered. The message in the above campaign if constructed and delivered with attention to sensitive issues that surrounds the segment of the target market portrayed, there is a likely chance that misconceptions and mis-interpretation would not have occurred.

Hennes & Mauritz (H&M)

The H&M group is known as one of the leading fashion retailers worldwide with its headquarter in Sweden, present 69 markets with online shopping access available in over 43 countries (Ridder, 2018), and subsidiaries across other countries such as Asia, Africa, Middle East, North and South America, Oceania, and Europe (H&M). Its first store was opened in

Västarås in Sweden in 1947. H&M's mission is to democratize fashion while ensuring its business practices accommodate the culture and values of countries of operations. The brand mostly uses Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, and YouTube as its social media platforms (H&M, n.d.) According to Statista, the company made a total sale of 28 billion dollars in 2017 with 3.3 billion dollars of the sales being attributed to the United States (Ridder, 2018).

H&M 2018 Crisis Overview

In 2018, H&M's "Coolest Monkey in the Jungle" campaign hit social media, and the response of the concerned public led to a reputation crisis. The media campaign was illustrated with a little boy in a green sweatshirt with an inscription that reads "Coolest Monkey in the Jungle." The brand was accused of cultural appropriation and racial insensitivity (West, 2018).

H&M 2019 Crisis Overview

The "After School" media campaign depicted kids' looks after school in their natural state. The controversy focused on a black kid whose natural hair was perceived to be naturally left "unkempt." The concerned public took it to Twitter and Instagram to complain about the misrepresentation of African natural hair, which happens to be a movement that stands for resistance and the need to embrace the natural texture of hair.

NIVEA

Nivea is one of the personal care products of the global brand-Beiersdorf, which has its parent company in Germany with local markets in Africa, Europe, the Middle East, and Asia & The Pacific (Nivea.com, n.d.). The product was launched in 1911 with its significant development of

the first oil and water-based cream (Beiersdorf, n.d.). As of 2019, the global brand value is estimated at 6.85 billion U.S dollars (Shahbandeh, 2019).

NIVEA 2017 'White is Purity' Crisis: An Overview

The 'white is purity' deodorant media campaign with the tagline- 'keep it clean, keep it bright. Don't let anything ruin it' was identified as racist and misleading. Some of the responses to the media campaign concluded that the concept of racism was used as a marketing strategy (BBC, 2017).

This chapter reviewed existing literature from related fields to explore various ways in which culture has been identified to impact GPR practices and brand reputation. The theoretical framework upon which this study will be further analyzed was also explored to give a more grounded understanding of the outlined concepts.

Chapter 3. Method

Case Study

Case study is defined as "a qualitative research (Yin, 1994) that explores current phenomenon within real-world context" (Yin, 2018). It is an empirical method that helps to understand the real-world case(s) and presumes that the understanding may contextualize conditions relevant to your chosen case (Yin & Davies, 2007). For the purpose of this study, Schramm's definition (1971) would be used. The focus of a case study is that it tries to proffer a more in-depth understanding of a decision or set of decisions. That is, it provides more understanding with regards to why a decision was taken, the manner at which they are implemented, the results or implications of such decision (Schramm, 1971; Yin, 2018). It provides examples of inappropriate and appropriate decisions, as well as behaviors in order to influence future change or bring about improved decisions. A case study approach was used to examine and analyze the target audience's perspectives and perceptions.

This paper focused on case studies to explore factors that led to the media campaign crises based on publics' feedbacks in three multinational brands between the year 2017 to 2019, respectively. The central notions explored in the study are the role culture plays in PR practices, why organizations sometimes miss the mark, depictions of targeted publics in a social media campaign, and how the publics' perception of an organization affects its brand reputation.

Sample Selection

Brands were selected based on their global recognition in the global marketplace, their integration of racial identifiers, and how Hofstede's cultural dimensions come to play in national character.

Sample

For this study, samples were selected from two beauty brands, and a clothing brand that had similar racial identifiers and reactions from its target audience between 2018-2019. Publics' reaction that pointed out the misrepresentation of the skin color of blacks and hair texture were selected for analysis.

Table 1.

Brands and Media Campaigns

Brand Name	Media Campaign	Social Media Channel	Year
Nivea	White is Purity	Twitter	2017
	Natural Fairness	Twitter	2017
Dove	3 mins vid gif	Twitter	2018
H&M	After-school kids	Twitter	2019

Media Campaigns Samples and Summary

NIVEA- White is Purity

The media campaign illustrated the back of a woman's head, which had long wavy hair with the slogan 'WHITE IS PURITY' (appendix A). The campaign was considered a racist rhetoric promotion. However, a white supremacist group embraced the ad (Wang, 2017).

NIVEA- Natural Fairness

The campaign made use of the tagline 'For Visibly Fairer Skin' in its 'Natural Fairness' (appendix B) campaign. The campaign was described as racist and colorist (Nwankwo, 2017) by Africans, most notably by those in Nigeria and Ghana.

H&M- After School Kids Campaign.

The campaign portrayed kids' in after school looks (appendix C). The public focused on the black kid model with a type 4C natural hair, which was considered "unkempt" and intentionally made to look worse by the brand when compared to the hair of the other kid models. The public considered the representation of black hair as insensitive and discriminatory (Conteh, 2019).

Unit of Analysis and Variables

The units of analysis for this study are the characters/models in the four controversial media campaigns. Racial identifiers such as hair texture, skin color, Hofstede's power distance index, masculinity and femininity, and long-term orientation are the variables for the analysis of

this study. In this study, masculinity versus femininity will be referred to as MAS, power distance index as PDI, and Long-term orientation as LTO.

Racial Identifiers

Hair.

The dominance of the cultural ideals of non-black beauty products manufacturers has influenced the perception and portrayal of beauty standards (Lindsey, 2011). The hair of Africans is still being racialized with it being associated, with unattractiveness hence influencing the acceptance of straight hair and lighter skin as the accepted beauty standard and avenue to access social and economic status (Dash, 2006). Hair will be assessed and discussed on the attributes of 'dirt,' 'uncivilized,', 'unkempt,' 'unattractiveness,' and 'untidy'. As opposed to these associations, African hair has been described as a symbol of 'power relations' and resistance' (Johnson & Bankhead, 2014). It is, however, noteworthy to point out how these stereotypical associations are made in advertisements and how this influences the reaction of the target audience, and the general public.

Skin.

Shades of Blacks' skin color is described using both negative and positive terms; however, negative attributes and association are more prevalent. The skin description, as indicated in the media campaigns and as perceived by the public were defined and associated with 'inferiority,' 'dirt,' and 'impurity.' In Beverly Naya's award-winning skin documentary, the darker skin tone is associated with a lower preference, "not acceptable". The documentary defined skin and associated it with more positive terms in order to push for more embrace of any

shade of dark skin through the testimonials of respondents that had gone through negative experiences associated with having black skin. The producer used terms such as 'beautiful,' 'powerful,' 'strong' to illustrate the beauty that lies beneath a black skin. The respondents were segmented into two sections; those that perceive their skin color after a long time of struggle of acceptance of their color as beautiful and the other respondents who associated darker skin tone with 'not being enough', 'it is more attractive to men', 'some career sectors prefer lighter skin tone to darker skin tone. The black construct of darker skin tone is identified with low self-image and identity (Naya, 2019). In addition to this, the sale and purchase of lightening skin products has been considered as a marketing strategy to penetrate the market that demands for lighter skin shade.

Cultural Variables

PDI.

For this study, the power exertion that exists in a man-woman relationship, and organizations-target market relationship was studied as it applies to the two selected countries (United States & Nigeria). The PDI index of each country contributes to how the audience from the countries react to crises is explored.

MAS.

This was defined by traits and a system that drives a society or organization towards achieving its goals. As earlier discussed in chapter 2, it is how a society is culturally perceived, either as being highly competitive or less competitive.

LTO.

This is illustrated in how the two countries respond differently to new methods or practices and how traditions and existing cultures are preserved, integrated, and replaced. This shows how culture impacts public reaction differently due to the differences that exist. This chapter reviewed the research method procedure and also identified the unit of analysis for this study. It is significant to note that only three of Hofstede's dimensions of culture- PDI, MAS, and LTO will be used for this study. These three dimensions are used for analysis as it is considered more relevant to this study, especially in the area of how the public responded to the crises in both countries.

Chapter 4. Findings

This chapter will discuss the variables, provide answers to the research questions, and the data collected. This study examines the impact of culture in global public relations using the United States and Nigeria as a case study. This segment will include the results gathered from collected data on the media campaigns of selected MNCs and answers to each research question. A case study analysis was carried to examine how the portrayal of racial and cultural identifiers such as skin color and hair by MNCs are interpreted and how those representations and interpretations impact brand reputation as depicted in media campaigns. Racial identifiers and Hofstede's PDI, MAS, LTO formed the unit of analysis/variables. Random samples of media campaigns that align with the selected variables were selected for the purpose of analysis.

Research questions are addressed below:

RQ1: How do cultural differences contribute to the effectiveness of public relations practices in developing countries such as Nigeria?

Public relations practice in Nigeria, while drawing from the selected data, is more inclined towards the interest of the organization. This is seen in the manner in which Unilever responded to the campaign that circulated around Nigeria and other developing countries such as Ghana, Cameroon, and Senegal. It is important to note that public relations practices in developing countries are less inclined towards the public when it comes to shaping organizational activities. Nivea's response and public opinion as illustrated below further describes how an MNC tends to handle PR crisis differently with either focusing on public concern and how it may impact their reputation, or their bottom line. Examples of this is seen in Nivea's response below to the public's reaction towards its 'Visibly Fairer Skin' media campaign in Nigeria and other African countries:

"We have recently noted concerns on social media by some consumers regarding our

NIVEA Natural Fairness Body Lotion communication in Ghana. We would like to

emphasize that this campaign is in no way meant to demean or glorify any person's needs

or preferences in skin care….. the product is meant to "protect the skin from long-term

sun damage and premature skin-ageing" and also address "uneven skin tone" — and that

it is "every consumer's right to choose products according to their personal

preferences." (Nwankwo, 2017, para. 12).

In comparison to its response for its White is Purity campaign that was for the middle east

audience, below is Nivea's response:

"That image was inappropriate and not reflective of our values as a company. We deeply

apologize for that and have removed the post" (Saelinger, 2017, para.7).

One of the responses of a Twitter user reinforces the concern for the bottom line rather than

public concern:

"Sadly, this is a worldwide pathology, created by colonialism, exploited by marketers."

(@JoyAnnReid, 2017)

The response of Nivea, when compared to the response of other crises that ensued in

developed countries such as United States, further identifies the broader gap that exists in how a

crisis is analyzed and handled differently in developed countries and developing countries. The

implementation of standardized PR practices in Nigeria is still emerging, as seen in the crisis

communication processes variance when in comparison with developed countries like the United

States.

Hofstede's cultural dimensions are evident in the Skin documentary which identifies the gap that

exists in gender equality and the power exercised by one over the other due to the prevalent

patriarchal system operated in Nigeria. As a construct rooted in the Nigerian culture, women's decision to bleach for a fairer skin according to the documentary is to look more attractive for their husbands and to ensure the reason for infidelity is not because of being seen as unattractive. One of the respondents in the documentary was asked if she would like to stop bleaching and have her previous skin color (black) back. She responded:

> "I will not like to be black again because I live with my husband and if he should marry someone else, he would say it is because my skin color has changed and he may find it unattractive" (Translated to English from Yoruba-a native language in Nigeria).
>
> Skin Documentary (Naya, 2019, 38:45-38:55)

This can be also be related to MAS in which the dominant values in society are considered masculine. That is, some of the personal decisions made by women are indirectly influenced by what men think and expect. The skin documentary depicted this through the respondents' answers and how the validation of men heightens their skin confidence. PDI was illustrated not only through the gap that exists between the organizations and the publics in Nigeria (as seen in Nivea's response for example), but also among its members of the society. This further identifies the patriarchal power and how highly rated it is in Nigeria compared to the United States. Based on data collected, the high-power distance index illustrates how the Nigerian society has accepted the wide gap between individuals of the society and with no demand to justify the reason for inequality of power.

RQ2: How are people of color portrayed in media campaigns?

One of the racial identifiers - skin color - was the focus of this research question. Beverly Naya's Skin documentary identified and analyzed the issue of colorism in Nigeria and how the media portrays black skin. In the documentary, black skin is associated with 'unattractiveness',

'low self-esteem', 'little or no attention,' 'not good enough'. Dove's Before & After media campaign had public reactions that pointed towards associating the black skin to 'dirty', 'unclean', The same pattern was followed in its 3 second GIF video clip, which featured a black woman turning white.

> "So @dove it's okay to say us black excellent people can be painted as dirty and to be
>
> "white: is clean? Not today sir (peace out emoji)
>
> #Dove #racist (@bbwbbwxo, 2017).

Another Twitter user wrote:

> "Associating cleanliness + beauty with whiteness and dirtiness with blackness is
>
> dangerous and only perpetuates white supremacist ideologies" (@blkgirlculture, 2017).
>
> In the skin documentary, specific segments of the population are cultivated into believing

the misrepresentation of the black skin color and stereotypical portrayals are the social reality hence their behavior is influenced towards changing their skin color to fit into what is perceived "beautiful"- lighter or fairer skin color:

> "Sometimes you might want males' attention, maybe when you were dark in complexion,
>
> you were not getting that attention from male, from guys,. So you may want to get all that
>
> attention from men so I need to brighten up my skin…I, Bobrisky, I have impatience so I
>
> rushed to where I am today because I can't wait to grow out of poverty .…If I can change
>
> one thing, it would be that I change back to my previous complexion. You know why?
>
> Because the stress I use in rubbing my creams is terrible."
>
> Skin Documentary (Beverly, 2019, 29:33-29: 43 & 30:34-31:01)
>
> RQ3: How do cultural differences across national borders impact GPR and brand
>
> reputation?

Vasile and Nicolescu (2016) posits that societal values are reproduced in culture therefore global businesses integrates the differences in their business activities. Media campaign data collected on Dove, Nivea, and H&M illustrate how the public can choose to disassociate itself from a brand due to crisis or misrepresentation of a group of the society. This is evident in the responses below:

H&M.

"Woke up this morning shocked and embarrassed by this photo. i'm deeply offended and will not be working with @hm anymore..." (@theweeknd, 2018)

Another Twitter user tweeted:

"BOYCOTT @hm! Whose with me? @hmusa What universe do you live in that makes it okay to flaunt your racist ways in such an epic portion. I demand you remove this ad!"

This child is precious and should be treated as such #boycottH&M #racists #coolestmonkeyinthejungle #notonmywatch (@AFoucard, 2018)

Dove.

"The racist dove ad is a continuation of a long history of racist soap advertising" (@kawrage, 2017)

Nivea.

"Just saw the NIVEAUSA white is purity ad-*tosses all Nivea products in trash* #youjustlostone and your whole marketing team needs to be fire" (@anjoylus19).

As some segment of the public may choose to disassociate itself from a brand, some are drawn to it due to how it meets their needs and values. Nivea's parent company is in Germany and Germans equates "white" to "purity":

"White is color of Purity! Truely [sic] German brand (laughing emoji) #Nivea. Interesting choice of words! (@nandighosha, 2017).

However, the campaign was targeted the middle east audience outside of Germany where "white" may not necessarily be associated with "purity" but rather seen as a racist tagline.

The United States had more of an uproar for insensitive and racist content, while the response from the documentary depicts that Nigeria would rather have those products and not categorize cultural insensitivity as a concept that can or should lead to a crisis in media campaigns. Guidelines and ethical procedures can be designed and implemented with emphasis on a target audience's interest across all borders.

The overview above addressed the research questions raised based on data collected. How cultural differences impact PR practices, how media campaigns with no cultural and racial sensitivity affects brand reputation, and the portrayal of people of color in media campaigns were explored. In summary, culture as a construct affect public relations practices due to differences that exist among countries.

Chapter 5. Discussion

Discussion of Findings

Cultural variance is a challenge for GPR (Taylor, 2000); hence the need to integrate effective communication between organizations and their targeted publics such that it aligns with their cultural values. This chapter will discuss the findings of study, the application of the theoretical frameworks and its implications, the variance that exists in MNC's activities, and how culture impacts global practice and brand reputation. Some responses from the public will be referenced as well. Crisis communication steps that were taken and steps that could have yielded better results will also be discussed. The limitations of this study and recommendations for future research will be highlighted.

Cultural Variance between the United States and Nigeria

Nigeria has a high-power distance index, which can be considered to indicate that in terms of organization-public relationship, power is more centralized and resides more with the organization than with the public. This is a form of asymmetric communication process which gives no proper implementation of standard public relations practice which in essence could be symmetrical in its communication process with a focus on the public concern and interests and a two-way communication process. Hofstede's insights further illustrate the hierarchical system in which autocratic traits may be exercised by the more powerful (Hofstede, n.d.). Referencing this study research question one, and the answer given with the company's response, it is evident that the way PR practices are perceived and practiced in developing countries like Nigeria is impacted by its cultural dimensions. For instance, Nivea's response to its 'Visibly Fairer Skin' media campaign illustrates how the target market or public's interests is not significantly

considered. Focus was placed on the personal preference of the customers forgetting that the

same customers they were referring to seemed to have a problem with the campaign.

"…the product is meant to "protect the skin from long-term

sun damage and premature skin-ageing" and also address "uneven skin tone" — and that

it is "every consumer's right to choose products according to their personal

preferences." (Nwankwo, 2017).

The question now would be, are MNCs using the different cultural dimensions as a

marketing strategy to improve sales and not bring about improved brand perception everywhere

they operate, or are they using the differences as a means to tailor messages such that it resonates

with every customer? United States has a lower PDI with a system where an organization-public

and heads-subordinates relationship is characterized by association and receptiveness. A typical

example of this is seen in Nivea, Dove, and H&M responses to the crisis that ensued. MAS plays

a significant cultural role; however, the United States has a higher index by two points. The

influence of PDI and that of MAS can be said to have common influence on organization-public

relationships and among members of the society. Loyalty is considered an important cultural trait

among Nigerians. A hint can be taken from Nivea's emphasis on "product preference" in their

response, which could be taken as the product is made for their loyal customers, and those that

understand what they stand for will purchase their products regardless.

The portrayal of identified racial identifiers has been a topic of debate. It is important to

note that where the selected MNCs went wrong was to portray the black color and African

natural hair in ways that blacks do not want them to be portrayed. As a social construct, racial

values have been dominated by the dominant groups, hence, the portrayals of those values are

represented as understood by the dominant group. This is seen in the samples collected for this

study; skin color and hair were associated with 'dirt,' 'ugly,' and 'untidy'. Should beauty be measured or portrayed in ways that it only reflects Eurocentric paradigms? This was the bone of contention of arguments brought forward by the public and participants of the skin documentary. The shift is now towards embracing an individual's unique differences as beauty without placing any above the other. The paradigm shift in behavior is to be noted by organizations as negative portrayals of these identifiers are fast becoming unacceptable even in countries like Nigeria, as shown in the documentary.

MNC's Response to Crisis

All selected media campaigns suffered a backlash; however, not all media campaigns were considered a crisis by the corporations. This is evident in their responses to the publics' reaction. All selected media campaigns fell on the latitude of rejection of the concerned public as they did not project the values of the targeted publics as expected. Most of the reactions leaned towards boycotting the brands. Drawing from Benoit's image restoration theory and Apologia, organizations should have a goal-oriented effective communication process. Negative impacts of crisis can be overturned through the application of related theories.

Image Repair Strategies

The MNCs implemented some of Benoit's restorative strategies, although the success of those strategies could not be measured:

Mortification.

Dove, and H&M took the responsibility for the crisis and issued an apology:

"An image we recently posted on Facebook missed the mark in representing women of color thoughtfully. We deeply regret the offense it caused." (@Dove, 2017)

"That image was inappropriate and not reflective of our values as a company. We deeply apologize for that and have removed the post." (Saelinger, 2017, para.6)

Reducing Offensiveness of Act and Corrective Action.

Nivea and Dove identified the areas in which they went wrong, and reinforced their organization's beliefs and measures to reevaluate their activities/processes:

"Diversity and inclusivity are crucial values of NIVEA. We take pride in creating products that promote beauty in all forms, Discrimination of any kind is simply not acceptable to us as a company, as employees, or as individuals" (Saelinger, 2017, para. 7).

"Dove is committed to representing beauty of diversity. In an image we posted this week, we missed the mark in thoughtfully representing women of color and we deeply regret the offense it has caused. The feedback that has been shared is important to us and we'll use it guide us in the future." (@Dove, 2017)**.**

Bolstering.

The brand took up one of the strategies identified under Apologia. The campaign had a divided reaction whereby a segment of the public appreciated how the undone hair of the black kid model represented their childhood days and how it is a typical description of type 4C hair texture. Another segment saw the campaigns as an intentional act to downplay the beauty of

natural hair in its real texture. H&M took this as an opportunity to present what was considered a crisis and associated the incident with something attractive before the deciding audience in its response to Essence after the media campaign was released:

"We are aware of the comments regarding one of our models for H&M kids. We truly believe that all kids should be allowed to be kids. The school aged kids who model for us come to the photo studio in the afternoon after school and we aim for a natural look which reflects that" (Fasanella, 2019, para.7).

The above strategy was used to yield favorable sentiment from the audience - "we aim for a natural look." It is significant to note that when messages are miscommunicated or misinterpreted, defense can be used if and when it is considered to appeal to the target audience.

What They Did Wrong

Although some saw the campaigns as a negative portrayal of one of the racial identifiers, H&M was able to reasonably manage the situation by controlling of the narrative of the 'perceived' crisis. However, it was not the same for Natural Fairness campaign.

Limitations

The amount of data collected for this study is relatively small and captured only three MNCs. It was challenging getting enough public reaction for the Nivea's media campaign in Nigeria in order to carry out a structural comparison. This may be attributed to the growing nature of PR practices in Nigeria and its low IDV score. In order to tackle these challenges, Beverly Naya's skin documentary was used as supporting analysis material to gain more understanding about people's perception of the selected racial identifiers. Samples gathered from

Twitter were solely used for this study; perhaps, samples from Facebook or Instagram could have yielded different results.

Future Research

Drawing from this study and the analysis, it is evident that PR research in Nigeria is still undergoing a developing stage in terms of research and its standard practice. Hence, this study had to rely on available and existing studies. Future research could explore the role of PR in crisis management using developing countries as case studies with emphasis on the role that diverse African cultures and sub-cultures play on the implementation of PR practices. This will create a strong basis to carry out structural comparisons between other countries, thereby giving more understanding into the challenge that cultural differences pose and offering more effective solutions.

Recommendation and Conclusion

Cultural differences are part of the key variables affecting the success of public relations practices (Rhee, 2002). Multiple dimensions of cultural competence can be used as a conceptual framework to understand further how cultural differences prevalent in PR can be effectively managed. This can be done by ensuring that the perspective and components of specific cultural and racial groups are incorporated into communication strategies that are culture-specific. With the industry growing demands, it is important to that tailor messages that resonate with the target market, appeals to them emotionally, and also design crisis communication strategies that are truthful, authentic and aim to respect target audience,

Understanding that problems such as cultural and racial prejudice in media campaigns has a long-term effect on brand reputation, it is important to design and implement strategies that

depicts the values and cultures of the target market in a positive light. MNCs can also demonstrate a proper and genuine understanding of these cultural differences, values, racial identifiers before portraying them in media campaigns. In situations where local talents are the PR professionals for MNCs, cultural competence, and vast knowledge of global public relations practices should be considered necessary when looking out for professional skills in PR professionals. This is to ensure that culture-specific PR decisions made outside MNCs' parent company align with the standards of practice and code of conduct.

One of the major problems this study identified in Nivea's response in Nigeria was the brand's emphasis on customer preference and not the actual concern of the public. The brand's response paid no attention to the vital message of not promoting skin bleaching and glorification of fairer skin. PR is expected is to be a two-way communication channel whereby organizations communicate with the target market and their target market communications with them-a beneficial relationship. Nivea's response seemed to deviate from this crucial aspect of PR-relationship building.

Overall, this study examined how culture as an independent variable impacts MNCs and PR practices. Based on the data collected, culture is an independent variable that impacts the implementation of GPR practices across nations. The samples collected to carry out a structural comparison demonstrated cultural influences on GPR and how PR practices implemented by MNCs, most especially in subsidiary countries can impact its brand reputation and perception.

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Appendix A: Nivea's White is Purity Media Campaign

Appendix B: Nivea's Natural Fairness Media Campaign

Appendix C: H&M's After School Media Campaign
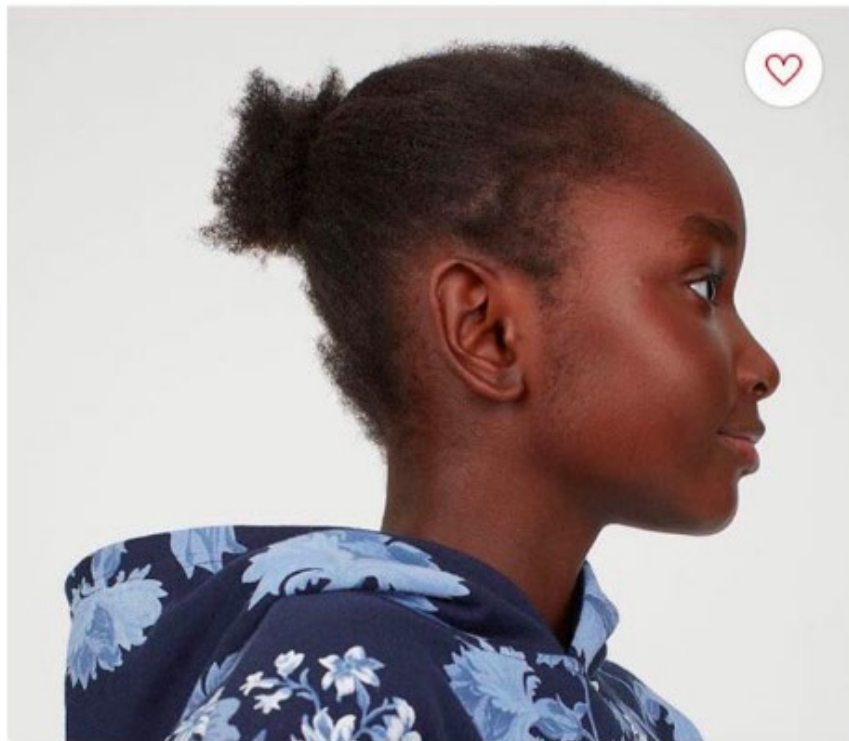
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