



NAMIBIA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

**Investigating Stakeholder Engagement in Public Relations Practices of two Namibian Universities (The
International University of Management and Namibia University of Science and Technology)**

By

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Thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the

Master of Journalism and Media Technology in the

Faculty of Human Sciences

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April 2021

DECLARATION

I, Ndamonako lita, **NUST Student Number 219145121** hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that to the best of my knowledge, it contains neither material previously published by another person nor material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree at any institution except where due acknowledgement has been made in the text.

I, lita Ndamonako, therefore grant the Namibia University of Science and Technology the right to reproduce this project in whole.

Name: Ndamonako lita, Miss. **Date:** April 2022

Signature:

A handwritten signature in red ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'C' followed by a series of loops and a horizontal line.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to establish the effectiveness of Public Relations Departments of IUM and NUST in stakeholder engagement. The main objective was to investigate the extent of stakeholder engagement by IUM and NUST's public relations departments. The study was qualitative, with a population of all universities in Namibia. Purposive sampling was used to select two Universities namely IUM and NUST. Represented by the Marketing and Communication Department at NUST and the Marketing, Communication and Stakeholders Engagement Department at IUM. Interview guides were used to collect data. The findings of the study indicated that PRO's roles are innumerable for each organisation but the most common areas are dealing with media, stakeholders and marketing the institution's brand through event planning and social media as well as maintaining the image and reputation of the two Universities. It was also indicated that Public Relations Departments are of benefit to stakeholders of the two Universities because they act as custodians of the universities' brand and ensure that the institution's images are well positioned in the public eye. They are also the ears and eyes on the ground. Based on these findings, the following recommendations were made:

Email and social media platforms are the most preferred forms of communication among the two Universities. The academic staff and the university management in general of the two universities need to take advantage of this, to make use of email and social media platforms to engage and preserve relationships with their stakeholders. The study also noted that to keep the effectiveness of the PRO of the two universities each communicated message should be carefully crafted for the various audiences to ensure maximum engagement. Information should also be made simple, summarizing the programs they offer to make it easier for the learners to understand.

In managing stakeholders of the two Namibian universities, PRO's of the two Namibian Universities should always fulfil their promises to their stakeholders as they are nothing without their stakeholders and always give correct information to meet stakeholder's needs.

KEY WORDS:

Public Relations Department, Stakeholder, and Higher Education Institution

CERTIFICATION

The undersigned certify that they have read and hereby recommend the acceptance by the Namibia University of Science and Technology a dissertation titled **Investigating Stakeholder Engagement in Public Relations Practices of two Namibian Universities** (The International University of Management and Namibia University of Science and Technology) submitted in (partial) fulfilment of the requirements for the Master's degree in Journalism and Media Technology (Faculty of Human Science) Department of Communication at the Namibia University of Science and Technology.

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Supervisor

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Date

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Date

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my mother who has imparted respect in me and supported me to reach this far. I would like to thank you for your unconditional support.

To my friends, supervisor, and classmates who were always there to share their words of advice and encouragement.

Lastly, to the man above my one and only God for giving me strength, focus, and guidance to complete this study.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Many theorists suggest that stakeholder management is a strategic function of public relations (Johnston & Sheehan 2014; Doorley & Garcia 2011; Harrison 2011). This implies that there is a key role to be played by public relations departments, public relations ensures that stakeholders are engaged, informed, and have a sense of importance to an institution (Gill, 2014). Benneworth and Jongbloed (2009) defined stakeholders as actors, institutions, agencies, clubs, groups, or individuals who may gain or lose from an institution's activities with an interest in the institution's performance. Stakeholders are not solely passive recipients of general benefits but they may demand a more active voice in the institution's running to improve the value of their share and their benefits. Universities' stakeholders include those potentially positioned to benefit from universities' social impacts (Freeman, 1984). Allen (1988) argues that universities have long agreements with their stakeholders both internally and externally as a way of handling their purposes.

Public relations departments play a central role in the strategic planning of higher education. According to the Public Relations Institute of South Africa: "Public relations is a deliberate, planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain understanding between an institution and its public including stakeholders". PRO's basic objective is simple, to communicate in order to achieve understanding through knowledge. PRO's exists to keep institutions alert to an ever-shifting environment of circumstance and public opinion. Especially in South Africa where the country has a lot of Institutions of Higher Learning, and hence all its institutions, are undergoing a phase of transition, this function is absolutely vital (Savio, 1992). This study investigated Stakeholder Engagement in Public Relations Practice at two Namibian Universities (The International University of Management and Namibia

University of Science and Technology). This chapter for this reason provides an overview of stakeholder engagement in public relations practices and provides a background to the research problem.

1.2 Background of the study

At the International University of Management (IUM) the role of a Public Relations Department is to develop and implement communication strategies for the institution and advise management on communication issues and strategies, organise special events such as open days, visits, exhibitions, and functions as well as conducting internal communication courses, workshops, and media training (The International University of Management, Marketing, Public Relations Guideline, 2015). While the role of the public relations department at the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) is to serve as a catalyst in communication and engagement and provide useful information to people about various aspects of the University, Stakeholders Management report (2017).

To simplify the measurement of engagement in Public Relations, three different types of stakeholder relationships are noted: the positively engaged faith-holders, the negatively engaged hateholders, and fakeholders are the unauthentic persona produced by astroturf and algorithms pointed out by (Luoma-aho, 2015).

Luoma-aho (2015) gives examples of all three and their significance (1) Priority in stakeholder relations should be placed on the faith-holders of high trust and long-term commitment, as they further influence all other stakeholders. In practice, this will mean slowly redirecting institutional finances and efforts from the previously prevailing, focusing on crisis management and dealing with Hate-holders interactions toward support and service desired by the faith-holders. (2) Hate-holders should not be ignored but seen as a potential future faith-holder group if their issues are addressed. More research is needed to understand how the process of reconciliation would occur in practice but understanding that hate may not be the final emotion these stakeholders feel toward the institution will encourage

professionals. (3) Public relations should monitor the stakeholder arenas to detect possible fake-holders and if detected invite the hidden influencer to dialogue. This remains an ideal as there are always hate-holders and fake-holders that cannot be reasoned with.

All stakeholders may move from positive to negative engagement or from negative to positive engagement unexpectedly. Therefore it is the task of public relations professionals to support the faith-holders, engage the hate-holders and reveal the fake-holders provided that they give them clear information. Understanding all three groups is needed as they all contribute to institutional legitimacy.

1.3 Problem statement

According to Bundy et al (2017) a stakeholder is an individual or party that holds an interest in a business or its dealings, and can for this reason either be affected by the business or can affect the business. Hence, stakeholders are very important for the institution, its operations, and its sustainability given that stakeholders can impact or be impacted by the operations of a business. Stakeholders are specifically important to institutions of higher learning because the progress and growth of the institution are directly proportional to the engagement of stakeholders. At IUM it is noted with concern, that there is poor participation of stakeholders in different academic activities at the Institution. It is observed that some stakeholders do not participate and engage in matters affecting the development of IUM, nor partake in activities such as decision making, contribution to the implementation of new courses, funding towards the University, and participation in meetings to solve problems affecting the development of the University. In this regard, this made the researcher want to explore the extent of stakeholder engagement by public relations departments, particularly in the context of higher education institutions. In this view, this study investigates this issue, using a case study of IUM and Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST).

1.4 Research question

The main aim of the study was to investigate the extent of stakeholder engagement by IUM and NUST's public relations departments. The study aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the role of the Public Relations Department at IUM and NUST?
2. To what extent do IUM and NUST engage their stakeholders?
3. What are the key issues in managing the stakeholders of the two Namibian Universities?
4. How effective are the Public Relations Departments of IUM and NUST in stakeholder management?

1.5 Significance of the study

This study provided evidence of the effectiveness of the public relations departments and their engagement efforts at NUST and IUM towards their stakeholders. Hence, the findings of this study are significantly important to various stakeholders who stand to benefit from this study. It is of significance to employees because they stand to understand the importance of public relations, it is of significance to students as they stand to benefit from the new body of knowledge. It is of significance to the two universities because they will gain from the new body of knowledge that will inform their decision-making process regarding public relations. The study also contributed new knowledge in the fields of strategic communications, particularly in the context of higher education institutions.

1.6 Definition of key terms

Public Relations Department: A public relations department is a department in an institution responsible for public relations activities. His/her duty is to supply information about an institution in a way that makes people have a good opinion of it. A PRO is highly required for an institution to build rapport with customers, investors, voters, the general public and also institution employees. (USLegal, 2021)

Stakeholder: Benneworth and Jongbloed (2009) defined stakeholders as actors, institutions, agencies, clubs, groups or individuals who may gain or lose from an institution's activities with an interest in the institution's performance. In the context of the study, the stakeholders of the universities include employees, government (and its agencies), suppliers, unions, students and the community.

Higher Education Institution: Include not only universities and colleges but also various professional schools that provide preparation in such fields as law, theology, medicine, business, music, and art. Higher education also includes teacher-training schools, junior colleges, and institutes of technology.

1.7 Thesis outline

This thesis consists of five chapters.

Chapter one presented the introduction to the study, the background, the statement of the problem, research objectives, significance, delimitation, definitions of terms and the outline of the study.

Chapter two outlined the existing literature relating to stakeholder engagement in public relations practices. Also, the theoretical framework underpinning the study was discussed.

Chapter three presented the research methodology which consisted of aspects such as the design, the population, sample, sampling, data collection and data analysis, validity and reliability issues as well as the ethical consideration

Chapter four: outlined the findings derived from the interviews, it also presented the analysis and interpretation of the presented data.

Chapter five: provided a conclusion to the thesis and offered recommendations in line with the research questions and objectives it aimed to answer.

1.8 Chapter summary

This chapter highlighted the introduction, the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the research objectives, and the significance of the study. It also defined key terms. The next chapter focuses on a review of previous related research studies and theories.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAME WORK

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter highlighted the introduction, the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the research objectives, and the significance of the study. This chapter discusses the literature on how public relations departments manage their stakeholders when it comes to stakeholder engagement. It is important to understand the role of public relations departments and stakeholders of a university, the key issues in managing the stakeholders of a University, to what extent public relations departments of Universities engage their stakeholders and how effective these public relations departments are in stakeholder management. The literature review also explores the three different types of theories underpinning the study, which are the Stakeholders Theory, the Normative Stakeholders Theory and the Instrumental Stakeholders Theory. By definition, a literature review is a comprehensive summary of previous research on a topic. The literature review surveys scholarly articles, books, and other sources relevant to a particular area of research.

As stakeholder engagement is primarily concerned with the relationship between organisations and their stakeholders with a focus on dialogue, consultation and participation, stakeholder engagement is central to public relations (Amaeshi & Crane, 2006)

2.2 Role of Public Relations

Hayes (2021) believes that public relations are the set of techniques and strategies related to managing how information about an individual or company is disseminated to the public, and especially the media. Its primary goals are to disseminate important company news or events, maintain a brand image, and put a positive spin on negative events to minimize their fallout. Public relations may occur in the form of a company press release, news conference, interviews with journalists, social media posting, or other venues. According to Kelleher (2018) public relations is the practice of managing and disseminating

information from an individual or an institution to the public to affect their public perception, it is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between institutions and their public.

Grunig and Grunig (2008) in their Excellence Theory, the value of public relations lies in institution-public relations. A good relationship with its strategic public is helpful for an institution to develop and achieve goals desired by both the institution and its public, reduce costs of negative publicity, and increase revenue by providing products and services needed by stakeholders. To maximize the value of public relations, public relations must identify strategic publics and build long-term relationships with them through symmetrical communication programs. The excellence theory also shows that an institution's reputation is largely a byproduct of these institutional behaviours and institution-public relationships, reemphasizing the important strategic role that public relations have in institutional governance.

Honey (2017) believes that at its core, public relations is about influencing, engaging and building a relationship with key stakeholders across numerous platforms to shape and frame the public perception of an institution. Public relations also encompasses the following: Anticipating, analyzing and interpreting public opinion, attitudes and issues that might have an impact, for good or ill, on the operations and plans of the institution.

Honey (2017) goes on to state that public relations are concerned with counselling management at all levels in the institution concerning policy decisions, courses of action and communications including crisis communications taking into account their public ramifications and the institution's social or citizenship responsibilities. Protecting the reputation of an institution. Researching, conducting and evaluating, continuously, programs of action and communications to achieve the informed public understanding necessary to the success of an institution's aims. These may include marketing; financial; fundraising; employee, community or government relations; and other programs. Some of the roles

within public relations include; corporate communications, crisis communications, executive communications, internal communications, investor relations communications, marketing communications, integrated marketing/integrated marketing communications, media relations, content creation, events, social media, multimedia, reputation management, speechwriting and brand journalism

2.3 Stakeholders in Public Relations and How they are engaged

Stakeholder engagement is in most institutions the responsibility of the public relations department. Luoma-aho (2015) observed that Stakeholder engagement has always been central to public relations but has received more attention recently due to the introduction of real-time media and new hybrid forms of marketing, advertising and public relations. “Stakeholder engagement will be free of manipulation, interference, coercion, and intimidation, and conducted based on timely, relevant, understandable and accessible information, in a culturally appropriate format. It involves interactions between identified groups of people and provides stakeholders with an opportunity to raise their concerns and opinions (e.g. by way of meetings, surveys, interviews and/or focus groups), and ensures that this information is taken into consideration when making project decisions” (Dundee, 2014, pp.3-5). Given the list above, stakeholders require a strong relationship between institutions and society through advanced communication technology and the sharing of knowledge to a more advanced level as highlighted by Gill (2014). This according to Gill (2014) means that an institution is now accountable to a range of stakeholders beyond those who invest in it.

Itanyi and Ukpere (2014, p. 29) indicated that a “Good stakeholder relationship management which is one of the tools of modern public relations, fosters a sense of joint ownership, prevents undue bureaucracy or industrial disputes, makes resources available, keeps information/knowledge and feedback flowing, and enhances cooperation to achieve the desired outcome of socio-economic

development". In its sense, the institution must ensure proper communication channels that distribute information in an attractive manner and at the right time. This may for example include the use of social media such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, and Instagram, which are more convenient to the majority of stakeholders in modern days.

As the institution becomes accountable to the society at large which hosts its stakeholders with different needs and expectations it is significant to consider the following recommendations by Itanyi and Ukpere (2014, p.29): "(1) Public relations managers/practitioners should acquire stakeholder relations management skills to keep abreast with the modern trends; (2) The management of institutions must realize that for their institutions to be competitive in the global economy, they have to engage in collaborative relationships with both internal and external system in their networks; (3) continuous dialogue, communication and feedback should be encouraged within and outside institutions to reduce process/project downtime and improve quality delivery; and (4) Stakeholders/public should always contribute to policy formulation and implementation". These factors are more important in helping an institution like IUM and NUST to ensure satisfaction for their stakeholders through their public relations. Although some stakeholders are very powerful people, a stakeholder manager probably knows more about the project than them. This gap can often lead to some stakeholder expectations not being met within the confines of a project. In cases like this, it is expedient to explain early enough in an honest and transparent manner. Some Common Pitfalls are that they indicated are always finding fault with deliverables; not providing feedback on interim deliverables and milestones; delaying the approval process; not providing any direction; Steal your team members; undermining your authority with politics; making a case against the project in public, and starting a competing project.

They further said some stakeholders will certainly resist change. Therefore the best way to influence them to support your project is to educate them about the benefits of the project. A stakeholder manager should probe deep to discover possible sources of influence. They further said one key strategy is to develop rapport by making people feel important, anticipating their expectations, and keeping them informed. Every person involved in a project is important to its success. A great way to gain commitment is to help them see the importance of what they are doing. It is important to keep people informed. No one likes surprises. Tell them what they need to know when they need it. Remind team members about issues that are coming up and notify them if any plans change. It is also necessary to know what stakeholders expect. The more one understands stakeholders' needs, the better-equipped one will become to meet their expectations. It is also essential to inform stakeholders about what requirements will be met, what requirements will not be met, and the reasons why. As stakeholder engagement is primarily concerned with the relationship between institutions and their stakeholders with a focus on dialogue, consultation and participation, stakeholder engagement is central to public relations (Amaeshi & Crane, 2006)

2.4 Stakeholder Engagement

According to Sedmak (2021) Stakeholder engagement is the organised identification, planning, analysis and implementation of activities designed to influence stakeholders. A stakeholder engagement strategy identifies the needs of key groups. Jeffery (2009) goes on to state that stakeholder engagement is the process by which an institution involves people who may be affected by the decisions it makes or can influence the implementation of its decisions. They may support or oppose the decisions, be influential in the institution or within the community in which it operates, hold relevant official positions or be affected in the long term.

International Finance Corporation (2007) states that stakeholder engagement is a process that institutions can follow to listen to, collaborate with, or inform their existing stakeholders. This process entails identifying, mapping and prioritizing stakeholders to determine the best tactics for effective communication while making the best use of available resources. Stakeholder engagement helps institutions proactively consider the needs and desires of anyone who has a stake in their institution, which can foster connections, trust, confidence, and buy-in for your institution's key initiatives. When done well, stakeholder engagement can mitigate potential risks and conflicts with stakeholder groups, including uncertainty, dissatisfaction, misalignment, disengagement, and resistance to change. When it comes to strategic planning, stakeholder engagement is critical. Your stakeholders must understand why you exist, where you want to go, and how you're going to get there. Furthermore, it's essential that your *key* stakeholders are aligned with and bought into the strategic direction of your institution so they can become advocates that can help you achieve your mission and vision. Additionally, your stakeholders will have a wealth of relevant knowledge and experience that your senior leaders may want to take into consideration to help your institution be more impactful, sustainable and viable over the long term.

2.5 Digitalization and stakeholder management

Lock (2019) highlighted that the digital age is a game-changer for the communication between institutions and stakeholders. Relationships are pivotal to public relations departments. However, their conceptualizations, measures, and normative assumptions have neither been analyzed systematically and across disciplines, nor have they been studied in light of the changing digital communication landscape. Therefore there are broadly two fields that have a central interest in studying relationships between institutions and constituents: marketing and public relations (PR). The rise of digital communication technology has heavily impacted public relations departments and marketers' everyday

practices, making the Internet the key initial contact point for communicating with stakeholders. Communication in a digital environment possesses specific characteristics different from offline interactions. In the “digital age,” she said communication is a “fundamental condition of individual existence and social and constitutive of relationships. Therefore communicating online is always mediated and the choice of channels depends on the relationship between the parties and relationships influence the channel choice.

Various authors have cited that to reconsider concepts and operationalization of relationships in institution-stakeholder research from a meta-perspective, the following research question is asked. How are online communicative relationships between institutions and stakeholders investigated? The goals are threefold; to explicate communicative relationships between institutions and stakeholders in a digital communication context on a conceptual level; to identify measurements of these relationships on an operational level and to outline the normative assumptions on relationships for public relations researchers. Therefore these insights allow us to identify gaps in current public relations departments' research on relationships and to derive suggestions for the future.

In 2019, the landscape of digital communication, international agreements and investor expectations makes stakeholder engagement more important than ever: Digital and social media amplify the voices of the public, including civil society institutions; international agreements such as the UN Guiding Principles and Sustainable Development Goals, have been established and globally accepted; and investors are significantly more focused on company approaches to environmental, social, and governance (ESG) issues, which in turn necessitate consideration of all stakeholders, not just shareholders. (Taylor et al., (2019).

2.6 Communicative relationships

On the basis of communicative relationships; Lock (2019) stated that relationships and communication appear to be strongly interrelated or even inseparable to some scholars. Here, relationships are not necessarily based on exchanges of goods and services, but on communication. Thus, rather than regarding information flows as an accompanying process of transactions, communication is the central tenet of relationships. This is illustrated in the term communicative relationship. Since relationships and communication are intricately interlinked, relationships are most distinctively described as defining communication in the same vein regarding relationships as inherently communicational. Communication is used to reduce uncertainty between the parties in a relationship and relationships exist through shared narratives of reciprocal expectation. Lock further asserts that these narratives are influenced by the history of the relationship which determines the quality of communication.

Applied public relations cases in stakeholder management offer readers the opportunity to observe and analyze how contemporarily businesses and institutions interact with key groups and influences, Mckee and Larry (2009). The two writers further indicated that institutional theorists tell us that different types of expertise become important in management when people with that expertise can solve problems that are crucial to that institution at a particular time. They also said that public relations professionals are becoming empowered today because of their ability to solve problems of relationships, trust and responsibility that threaten the survival of many institutions and result in poor performance by most others. Mckee and Larry (2009) further reported that the public relations departments' function provides a voice for the public when management makes critical, strategic decisions. Too often, decisions are made regarding the public who have no say in decisions.

No formal institution 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, donors, consumers, regulators, the media and so on. Some institutions may prefer to think of themselves as islands, however, or floating battleships equipped with all the resources necessary for their sustenance. In reality, such a view is too shortsighted for success, Mckee and Larry (2009).

Kim and Garavan (2012) mention that the involvement of stakeholders is considered an important dimension of quality system implementation in a Higher Education environment. The implementation process from the perspective of stakeholder involvement demonstrated a strong insular character. It was a process very much driven by the Division rather than an institution-wide initiative. There is no evidence that Alumni were involved and effective use was made of surveys feedback mechanisms; however, this was all driven by the Quality Team. Therefore there was less evidence of successful engagement with other functions and the outside world.

Mundy (2015) stated that communicating diversity and conveying a commitment to multiculturalism helps build trust with key stakeholders, indicating an institution's openness to dialogue and change and reinforces its investment in evolving local communities. He further said embedding diversity values in communication practices reflect the principles of relationship management which calls on public relations practice to pursue mutually beneficial relationships build on trust, openness, involvement, investment and commitment. Therefore he said embedding an institution's diversity values in communication practices reflects an investment in building long-term, quality relationships.

Mundy (2015) also further said that public relations departments are charged with first creating and then maintaining and improving stakeholder relationships. In addition to that, he said institutions must understand a stakeholder's relationship to that institution and ask why different stakeholders have varying degrees of influence or perceived legitimacy and ensure all stakeholder voices are being heard.

Grad (2015) also mentioned that stakeholder engagement is key to strengthening a university's reputation and managing risk. Further stating that higher education institutions operate in a complex

universe of stakeholders. On one hand, they must meet the needs of their most immediate constituents such as students, faculty and staff. On the other hand, to maintain consistent enrollment, they must connect with prospective students, parents and high school counsellors. The same author also states that as entities that largely depend on external funding, they have to be aligned with their boards, private funding institutions, state legislators and industry partners.

These groups Grad (2015) further indicated that interests often differ and universities must work hard to cultivate productive and fruitful relationships with each group. For example, cost-cutting measures can cause anxiety among faculty and staff, while tuition increases are likely to drive away cost-sensitive prospective students.

In her writing, Grad (2015) emphasized two important points on stakeholders' engagement:

Assumptions – Sweet Briar's former administrations assumed that their decision to close the institution would be understood by their stakeholders. While they most likely expected a strong reaction from faculty, staff and students, they probably underestimated the attitudes of alumni. Institutions need to invest the time to understand the interests and attitudes of all their stakeholders so they can determine the most effective ways to engage with them. Through effective stakeholder engagement, institutions can better achieve their business goals and protect their reputation.

Exclusions – Some institutions view engaging with non-supportive stakeholders as a risk. In Sweet Briar's case, the alumni community felt excluded from the decision to close the college, prompting them to mobilize. While engaging with groups who may have different positions can be intimidating, learning about their concerns and reservations can help institutions build a broader base of support for their strategies.

Steininger (n.d) in her paper shared that building a positive reputation with your stakeholders requires engagement on some level within every institutional function and with every business decision.

As a strong advocate for stakeholder engagement, she encourages her clients to understand by listening and having ongoing open dialogue, to discuss the expectations of those impacted by their decisions and actions. The author believes that it is critical for companies and institutions to engage in conversation with their stakeholders, which includes everyone in the value chain, often with consumers as the final link to first understand what stakeholders expect and then to share how they are meeting those expectations through their business operations, social impact and financial stability.

Temmerman (2018) mentioned that it can be formidable, revealing as well as an exciting and certainly necessary part of any university's regular planning and improvement agenda to engage in open discussions with its key stakeholders. Students, alumni, staff, community groups, industry and professions as well as governments are all stakeholders in higher education. In small developing countries or rural and regional communities where there is just one university, all these stakeholders stand to gain (or lose) a lot, based on how well their university contributes to and positively transforms the human, social and economic condition of the country or community.

In addition, Temmerman (2018) said that in some way or another all these stakeholder groups are or will be affected by what the university does and produces. Further, as is the case in developing countries, many will be able to support the university to achieve its government mandate of meeting the human resource needs of the country. And so it augurs well for the university to listen to and potentially incorporate what they have to say. Stakeholder engagement usually involves communicating with stakeholders about an institution's achievements to date and its plans for the future as well as asking

their views about both, especially the latter. Stakeholder feedback can then be appropriately factored into the change management process.

2.7 Public relations process at IUM

At the International University of Management (IUM) the role of a public relations department is to develop and implement communication strategies for an organisation and advise management on communication issues and strategies, organise special events such as open days, visits, exhibitions and functions as well as conducting internal communication courses, workshops and media training. The International University of Management, Marketing, Public Relations Guideline (2015). Public Relations Departments at IUM use mass emails to communicate to their stakeholders as well as social networking websites and blogs. Therefore some of the many roles of Public Relations at IUM include Customer Liaison, mediator, marketer and event management. They also plan, develop and implement campaigns and strategies. They are also released to media institutions in the hopes that they will publish them. They also communicate with colleagues, clients and media standards. Through information distribution, the Public Department at IUM develops content for the public that can arouse emotions. They are also the eyes and ears on the ground, gathering all information and passing them on to the stakeholders to make decisions and they are also responsible for managing the reputation of a university, monitoring the public and media's opinions.

2.8 Public relations process at NUST

The role of the public relations department at Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) is to serve as a catalyst in communication, and engagement and provide useful information to people about various aspects of the university (Namibia University of Science and Technology stakeholders' management report, 2017). Another role of a Public Relations Department at NUST is media engagement, social media management, external communication and drafting newsletters and

speeches. They also engage their stakeholders to a large extent as this is a core function for the University to realize its vision and mission. In this way, it helps to ensure that the institution's image is well-positioned in the public eye. The goal of any University is to ensure that it provides quality education, specialized programs and degrees for its key stakeholders which are students. With many universities now focusing on constructive alignment as a means to improve teaching for quality learning universities, public relations should also focus their attention on drawing out what makes a University a great equalizer in society. Public Relations Departments should have a Stakeholder Relations Management plan to build and maintain relations with stakeholders. This allows for a two-way flow of information (coming in and out) and resources between a university and its stakeholders – media, students etc.

2.9 Challenges affecting public relations and stakeholder engagement

According to Kaur, Sumit and Lodhia (2019) the effectiveness of stakeholder engagement can be weakened by certain difficulties and challenges faced by an organisation. These include limited resources, lack of commitment from internal stakeholders, political factors, heterogeneous concerns, inadequate representation and an unwillingness to engage.

Additionally, Coates (2019) goes on to state that there are generally so many stakeholders and it is typically very difficult to accommodate and answer to all of them equally as a result some may be neglected. These stakeholders have competing priorities as everyone comes to the table with a unique set of objectives, expecting that most of them will be met. And, unfortunately, what's important to one group may not even be on the radar of another. Coates (2019) continues by stating that resources are constrained as times are tough and belts can't get any tighter. Public institutions are under intense pressure to satisfy stakeholders' needs despite limited funds, people, and equipment. Lastly, there are disparate data and opinions as sometimes we simply aren't doing a great job of enabling stakeholders to

provide input efficiently. Open public forums can be chaotic. Focus groups may not be sufficiently representative. And, without data standardization, it's difficult to fairly compare the merits of different ideas.

Pilkington (2015) believes there are various challenges in stakeholder engagement, these include; stakeholders having multiple priorities, being constrained by time, and opportunities being limited. Stakeholders are more likely to make time if they perceive the project as relevant to them and there is a clear purpose to the engagement. Also, stakeholders change all the time. Hence there is a need to ensure that time is devoted to keeping track of who stakeholders are. This is because the interest of individuals and positions are subject to change and an individual who was a stakeholder yesterday may not be a stakeholder tomorrow. Additionally, it seems a lot of effort when there is little impact. A question that remains eminent is; when should a stakeholder be engaged? Only when there is a major impact or at every juncture.

2.10 Theoretical framework

Below are the theories that underpin my study (stakeholders' theory, normative theory and instrumental theory)

2.10.1 Stakeholders Theory

The Stakeholders Theory was coined by Edward freeman in 1984 (Freeman, 1984), the theory suggests that shareholders are merely one of many stakeholders in a company. This theory also holds that anyone invested and involved in, or affected by, the company, employees, environmentalists, the institution plants, vendors, governmental agencies, and more can be seen as stakeholders. Freeman argues that without the support of stakeholders the institution would cease to exist. The views of Freeman are however in contrast with the views of economist Milton Friedman who in 1970 argued that in a capitalist economy, the most important stakeholder in an institution is the shareholder.

Friedman implies that the shareholder invests in the institution and the institutions should for this reason be concerned about the shareholder's return on investment, continued growth and the bottom line profits. This theory is important to this study because it states that if stakeholders are treated well, they tend to reciprocate with positive attitudes and behaviours towards the institution, such as sharing valuable information. As such, this study aims to investigate how the two universities' stakeholders are being engaged and what channels of communication do PROs use to communicate to their stakeholders.

2.10.2 Normative Theory

The second theory is the Normative Theory which was first used by Phillips (2003) who defines normative stakeholders as those stakeholders to whom the institution has a moral obligation, as an obligation of stakeholder fairness, over and above that due to other social actors simply by virtue of their being human. UKEssays (2018) described how public relations practitioners can be effective and ethical by offering a normative theory in the two-way symmetrical model.

Bokhaleid (2016) believes that two-way symmetrical public relations are set up based on real and two-way communication. It is concerned with mutual interaction rather than one-sided. The two-way symmetrical theory focuses on mutual understanding and respect to achieve the intended objectives of generating positive media hype. This theory requires a willingness to make changes and engage in negotiations. Institutions must take part in public relations to make major adjustments to meet the requirements of the public. According to The Arthur W Page Center (2020) the two-way symmetrical model of public relations is deemed to be the most ethical and sophisticated public relations practice. It emphasizes dialogue that creates and keeps mutually beneficial relationships between the institution and its key stakeholders. This model attempts to reduce the potential imbalance of power that is found in the asymmetrical model of public relations and embraces a wider social responsibility outlook. As a

result, the business is not seen as the key beneficiary of public relations activity. Rather, stakeholders and society are both key considerations.

Lee and Boynton (2017) believe that categorical imperatives of equality, justice, and fairness guide many of the ethical decisions within the two-way symmetrical model, there are certain universal laws that all reasonable people must meet. These principles help guide professionals in the development and sustenance of mutually beneficial relationships. From this standpoint, the institution is often subservient to societal needs as public relations professionals seek the greatest good. Habermas (2007) believes that dialogue is a central component of the two-way symmetrical model. This model supports continuous two-way communication between an institution and its stakeholders. Ethical literacy, however, must guide the dialogue to ensure ethical communication. Ethical discourse cannot be dominated by one party but must represent a give-and-take form of communication. Ethical discourse occurs when individuals treat one another with openness and respect. There are four criteria necessary for ethical discourse: the communication must be comprehensive; it must be true; it must be appropriate for the audience; it must be sincere. Pearson (2021) in Arthur W Page Center (2020) offered four additional conditions necessary for ethical public relations symmetrical discourse: there must be the opportunity for beginning and ending communicative interaction, there must be the opportunity for suggesting topics and initiating topic changes, there must be the ability to provide a response and to have that response treated as such and there must be the ability to select channels of communication. Using these guides, professionals can ensure ethical, two-way communication. Unlike the asymmetrical model, the symmetrical model includes a larger societal focus. Communication is designed to include a myriad of voices to ascertain the most ethical action.

2.10.3 Instrumental Stakeholders Theory

The instrumental stakeholder theory was developed by Ali and Abdelfettah (2016), this theory highlights that the stakeholders are factors enabling the company to achieve its objectives and enable leaders to meet their fiduciary obligations towards shareholders. The Instrumental stakeholder theory takes into account the performance implications for institutions with greatly ethical relations with stakeholders, characterized by great levels of information sharing, cooperation, and trust.

While several studies suggest performance-related benefits, an apparent question remains: If the instrumental stakeholder theory is of so much value, why is it not the widest used stakeholder theory? It is also believed that the literature on the existing instrumental stakeholder theory has three shortfalls that reduce its ability to explain the difference in performance. (1) Limited theory exists around how instrumental stakeholder theory-based stakeholder management could render a sustainable competitive advantage. (2) Current literature has greatly omitted the potential shortfalls (e.g. costs) that come with using this type of stakeholder relationship. (3) There is a limited theory on the context in which the expected benefits of the instrumental theory-based stakeholder relationship are more probable to exceed the cost. This theory is relevant to my study because if both students, employees of the universities and the government are well informed then there will be a higher chance of them being interested in participating in different academic activities of the two universities and in this way problems affecting the development of the universities will be solved easily, in turn enhancing the performance of the institution.

2.11 Chapter summary

A literature review chapter aims to outline existing knowledge on a topic of interest. It provides the researcher and the audience with a general overview of the existing knowledge on the topic of interest. A literature review that is well outlined can make sure that proper research questions have been asked

and a proper theoretical framework and/or research methodology has been selected. Simply put a review of literature enables the researcher to situate the current study within the body of the relevant literature and to provide a context for the audience. This chapter for this reason outlined existing literature regarding stakeholder engagement in public relations practices and provided the theoretical framework that underpins the study. The next chapter outlines the research methodology that was employed to conduct this study.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

The previous chapter reviewed the literature on the existing body of knowledge on the topic of interest. This chapter discusses the methodology used in this study and seeks to address the purpose of the study. Research design, sampling methods, population, and data collection procedures are presented in this section.

3.1 Research Design

Saunders (2009) asserts that a research design is a blueprint that outlines how a proposed study will be conducted. Simply put, it is the plan that will guide the researcher in collecting and analysing the required data relating to the topic of interest. There are three primary research designs (qualitative, quantitative and mixed design). This study adopted a qualitative research design. Data for this study was for this reason collected through an interview guide with open-ended questions, methodological triangulation was however achieved through document analysis, interviewing, and observation.

3.2 Research philosophy

The term research philosophy refers to a system of views and assumptions about the development of knowledge. Although this sounds rather profound, it is precisely what researchers are doing when embarking on research: developing knowledge in a particular field. The knowledge development researchers are embarking upon may not be as dramatic as a new philosophy of human motivation, but even by answering a specific problem in a particular institution researchers are, nonetheless, developing new knowledge, Saunders (2009). This study adopted a realistic research philosophy that is based on the principles of the positivist and interpretivist research philosophies. The realistic research philosophy is based on ideas that are required for the perception of the subjective nature of human beings.

3.3 Research Approach

This study used a qualitative approach; this is a type of social science research that seeks to interpret meaning from non-numerical data that help understand social life through the study of targeted populations or places (Crossman, 2020). The qualitative approach was relevant for the study because it helped the researcher gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions and motivations and it also provided the researcher with insights into the problem associated with stakeholder engagement. A case study of IUM and NUST was therefore used.

3.4 Population and Sampling

A population can be said to be a comprehensive group of individuals, institutions, objects and so forth who have common characteristics that are of interest to a researcher, According to a report from Unisa Polit and Hungler (1999:37) a population is an aggregate or totality of all the objects, subjects or members that conform to a set of specifications. The population for the study was all the universities in Namibia. Sampling is a technique by which a sample is drawn from the population (Bless and Higson-Smith, 2000). The purposively selected sample was (IUM) and (NUST) represented by the Marketing, Communication and Stakeholders Engagement Department and the Marketing, Communication Department respectively. From the Department of Marketing, Communication and Stakeholders Engagement at IUM four participants were selected to participate in the study. From NUST only two participants were selected. The reason why only a few participated is that both these two departments consist of only a few people. Non-probability sampling refers to a sampling technique in which the researcher selects samples based on the subjective judgment of the researcher rather than random selection. Non-probability sampling is a sampling method in which not all members of the population have an equal chance of participating in the study, unlike probability sampling (Bless & Higson-Smith, 2000). It is worth noting that the participants included the Director of Marketing, Communication and Stakeholders Engagement Department, Marketing Department, Stakeholders Engagement Department

and Digital Department at IUM. While at NUST the participants who took part were the Acting Director of the Communication; Marketing Department and the Communication Department. It is worth noting that the Directors and Deputy Directors formed part of the study because public relations departments work under the said Departments and the Directors possess important information important regarding public relations and stakeholder engagement as they head the said Departments.

3.5 Data collection

The main data collection tools included the open-ended interview guides. Participants were asked predetermined questions from the interview guides. The participants included the Director of Marketing, Communication and Stakeholders Engagement Department, Marketing Department, Stakeholders Engagement Department and Digital Department at IUM. While at NUST the two participants who took part were the Acting Director of the Communication; Marketing Department and the Communication Department. Only those participants could participate because the two Departments consist of only a few people and that is where the researcher wanted her answers from. Even though the researcher wanted to interview participants using a face-to-face approach, she was unable to due to the COVID-19 restrictions during the time of the study. Interviews were conducted telephonically with the Directors of the two departments at the two Namibian Universities, and both public relations departments plus the Marketing departments from the two Namibian Universities. The interview guides contained information about the views and experiences of individuals responsible for stakeholders' engagement.

3.6 Data analysis

The thematic content analysis was used to analyse the collected data. Kothari (2011) believes that the thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis method that involves reading through a data set for example a transcript from an interview, and identifying patterns in meaning across the data by

identifying themes and codes in the data. Hence, The data were analyzed and presented using a summary from the participants. The results obtained were analyzed in categories according to how participants responded to each question in the interview. The interview guide was used to collect data, and that included open-ended questions were created by the researcher. Data triangulation was achieved by using document analysis, hence, the researcher analysed the personal documents of the two institutions, this included online data posted by the institution.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Saunders (2009) believes that the concept of ethical consideration in research relates to moral conduct and prevention of harm during and after a study has been conducted. To be precise, it is concerned about not creating conditions that are harmful to the subjects of a study. Hence, the following research considerations were applied to this study.

Avoidance of harm: The researcher has an important task to ensure avoidance of harm during and after the study. Hence, the researcher undertook to ensure that no emotional or physical harm emanated from the study during and after the study.

Confidentiality; the identities of the subjects were known to the researcher, however, the researcher took various measures to ensure that these identities were kept confidential and that no mention was made of a subject's name in the study (e. g. numbers were used instead of names).

Informed consent: human participation in a study should be voluntary and must be done with full information about what the study is about, what it would mean to partake and that they provide consent before entering the study. The researcher for this reason ensured that the subjects were well informed of the objectives of the study and related information. Consent was sought from the participants before the interview commenced by verbally asking the subject.

Voluntary Participation: Participation in the study was voluntarily, hence, participants were not coerced into participation but were rather invited to participate and were allowed to turn down the invitation and withdraw from the study at any time during the study.

3.8 Validity and Reliability

Validity is the degree to which the measuring instrument actually measures and describes the concept it was designed to measure (David & Sutton 2000: 28). To ensure the validity of the instruments, the researcher used external validity, which is the extent to which the research findings can be generalized to a larger population. In addition, the researcher explained the interview guide to the participants to ensure that there were no misinterpretations of questions.

Reliability is concerned with questions of the stability and consistency of measurement instruments. It is concerned whether the same measurement instrument may yield consistent results at the end of data collection. To ensure the reliability of the interview guide, it was administered under the same conditions.

The interview guide was created to gather information related to the research topic and the sample was selected based on what the researcher considered useful to the study. Oppenheim (2008, p, 67) believes that achieving a 'sameness' of questions between participants is a manifest impossibility. Instead, it is important to ensure the questions are the same for all participants (Oppenheim, 2008, p, 67). The researcher worked closely with the supervisor by handing in every chapter of the research to make sure that the research is valid and reliable.

3.9 Limitation of the study

This study experienced various limitations, e.g. some participants decided to withdraw from participating. Also, some information that was given by the participants was not of use nor value to the

study. However, the researcher made sure that the validity of the study was not affected because not the information gathered was subsequently sufficient.

3.10 Chapter summary

This chapter presented the research methodology of the study. The research design, research approach, sampling, together with the instruments used. The methods of data collection and analysis and ethical issues were outlined. Also, this chapter highlighted the population used in the study. This chapter highlighted and provided the research design and methodology employed in the study. The research design covered the research method, which was qualitative, the approach, the population, the sample, data collection, and data analysis. Further, the chapter also presented ethical issues that were taken into consideration during the study as well as the limitation of the study. The next chapter presents and analyzes the collected data.

CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided an outline of the research methodology employed. This chapter presents the findings of the study conducted at the International University of Management and the Namibia University of Science and Technology about stakeholder engagement in public relations practices of two Namibian Universities. The objectives of the study were to determine the role of the Public Relations Departments at IUM and NUST, to determine the extent to which IUM and NUST engage their stakeholders, to determine the key issues in managing the stakeholders of the two Namibian Universities and to determine how effective the Public Relations Departments of IUM and NUST are in stakeholder management.

4.2 Demographic Information

A total number of 7 participants participated in the study by answering interview guides. Female participants made up the majority of the participants – 5 in total or 70 percent, compared to 2 male participants that took part in the study, which is 30 percent. The main requirement was that participants were Directors of Departments, public relations departments, digital marketing departments and marketing departments at the two Institutions of Higher Education given that these are the individuals that have information regarding stakeholder engagement. The study further revealed that all participants who took part in the study, are working full time in the Department of Marketing, Communication and Stakeholders Engagement at IUM as well as in the Department of Marketing, Communication at NUST.

4.3 Stakeholder Engagement in Public Relations Practices

Theme 1: The role of the PRO in the two institutions.

The findings of the study indicated that at NUST media engagement, social media management, external communication, drafting newsletters and speeches, marketing the institution's brand through event planning and social media are some of the roles of PRO while at IUM a PRO plan, develop and implement campaigns and strategies, create and distribute a press release to media institutions, they also maintain the image and reputation of the university as well as develop communication strategies and prepping media release, keynote speeches and building positive reputation image for the university.

The findings are evident from the following responses;

'PRO's roles are various for each institution. But the most common areas are dealing with media, stakeholders and marketing the institution's brand through event planning and social media. (NUST 1)

PRO's are responsible for media engagement, social media management, external communication, drafting newsletters as well as drafting speeches. (IUM 1)

PRO's maintains the image and reputation of the University. (IUM 2)

PRO's deal with developing communication strategies, preparing media releases, keynote speeches and building a positive image for the university. (NUST 2)

A PRO is responsible for planning, developing, and implementing campaigns. (IUM3)

These findings agree with the findings of Honey (2017) who states that public relations are concerned with researching, conducting and evaluating, continuously, programs of action and communications to

achieve the informed public understanding necessary for the success of an institution's aims. These may include marketing; financial; fundraising; employee, community or government relations; and other programs. Some of the roles within public relations include; corporate communications, crisis communications, executive communications, internal communications, investor relations communications, marketing communications, integrated marketing/integrated marketing communications, media relations, content creation, events, social media, multimedia, reputation management, speechwriting and brand journalism. The findings also appear to agree with the findings of Kelleher (2018) who states that public relations is the practice of managing and disseminating information from an individual or an institution to the public to affect their public perception, it is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between institutions and their public. The researcher agrees with the participants' responses and what the scholars have stated above stating that public relations departments of the two universities should always keep their social media platforms updated and market their Institutional brand more often to continue maintaining the image and reputation of the two universities.

Theme 2: The extent to which NUST and IUM engage their stakeholders.

The findings of the study indicated that at NUST they engage to a large extent as this is a core function for the university to realize its vision and mission while at IUM they engage their stakeholders with every decision to be made and regularly through emails and meetings. This is evident from the following responses;

Public relations departments should have a stakeholder relations management plan to build and maintain relations with stakeholders. This allows for a two-way flow of information (coming in and out) and resources between a university and its stakeholders – media, students etc. (NUST 1)

Public relations departments engage their stakeholders to a large extent as this is a core function for the university to realize its vision and mission. (NUST 2)

PRO's engage their stakeholders regularly through emails and meetings. (IUM 1)

PRO's engage their stakeholders with every decision to be made. (IUM 2)

These findings seem to agree with the findings of Hayes (2021) who states that public relations are the set of techniques and strategies related to managing how information about an individual or company is disseminated to the public, and especially the media. Its primary goals are to disseminate important company news or events, maintain a brand image, and put a positive spin on negative events to minimize their fallout. The researcher personally agrees with how both institutions engage with their stakeholders but both institutions should be engaging their stakeholders regularly, in this way it will always keep their stakeholders updated and being reminded to engage more on issues affecting the two Universities, therefore, it is very important to engage their stakeholders regularly.

Theme 3: Key issues in managing the stakeholders of the two Namibian Universities.

The findings of the study indicated that at NUST budgetary constraints are sometimes a setback while at IUM is by providing their promises to their stakeholders from day one as they are nothing without their stakeholders and communication methods might as well be understood wrong to meet stakeholders' needs. This is evident from the following responses;

Stakeholders' responsibilities differ in institutions due to the working cultures and environments of that institution. (NUST 1)

Budgetary constraints are sometimes a setback and a key issue in managing stakeholders. (NUST 2)

The key issues in managing stakeholders are: you might get your communication methods wrong or PRO's might misunderstand their stakeholders. (IUM 1)

Organisations should keep in mind that they are nothing without their stakeholders, they must provide their promise from day one. (IUM 2)

The findings appear to agree with the findings of Kaur, Sumit and Lodhia (2019) who state that the effectiveness of stakeholder engagement can be weakened by certain difficulties and challenges faced by an organisation. These include limited resources, lack of commitment from internal stakeholders, political factors, heterogeneous concerns, inadequate representation and an unwillingness to engage. They also seem to agree with the findings of Coates (2019) who states that there are generally so many stakeholders and it is typically very difficult to accommodate and answer to all of them equally as a result some may be neglected. These stakeholders have competing priorities as everyone comes to the table with a unique set of objectives, expecting that most of them will be met. And, unfortunately, what's important to one group may not even be on the radar of another. The researcher feels like budgetary issues and misunderstood information are some of the most important issues in managing the stakeholders of the two Universities, perhaps if Public Relations Departments start giving more clear information to their stakeholders, on time and the correct platforms might improve the situation.

Theme 4: The effectiveness of PRO's at IUM and NUST in stakeholder management.

The findings of the study indicated that at NUST each communication message is carefully crafted for the various audiences in order to ensure maximum engagement and would be measured by the workload (goals and execution of those goals). While at IUM Information is made simple to understand by summarizing the programs we offer to make it easier for the learners to understand. This is evident from the following responses;

PRO's needs to adopt a method that will work for the target audience and for the type of content they have to deliver. (IUM 1)

I believe the effectiveness of information leads to stakeholder engagement through participation. (IUM 2)

Information is made simple to understand by summarizing the programs we offer to make it easier for the learners to understand. (IUM 3)

Each communication in the message is carefully drafted for the various audiences in order to ensure maximum engagement. (NUST 1)

Target messaging is designed to foster dialogues and actions under the four pillars mentioned above (teaching and learning, governance, community engagement and research). (NUST 2)

Glad (2015) indicated that to maintain consistent enrollment, they must connect with prospective students, parents and high school counsellors. She also said that as entities that largely depend on external funding, they have to be aligned with their boards, private funding institutions, state legislators and industry partners.

Yes in this objective the researcher agrees with how the information is crafted and makes it simple and clear for the benefit of the stakeholders to understand them more clearly. Effectiveness of information leads to stakeholder engagement through participation

Theme 5: Nature of information disseminated to stakeholders

PRO's were asked about the kind of information they disseminate to their stakeholders. The findings indicate that the two Universities disseminate information regarding announcements, events, programs on offer, teaching and learning, governance, community engagement and research. This is evident from the following responses:

We disseminate through publishing programs or policy briefs such as mass emails. (IUM 1)

We advertise and Market IUM Programs to potential clients. (IUM 2)

There are multiples in which the marketing department gives information to stakeholders by digital and print marketing strategies. (IUM 3)

The Namibia University of Science and Technology disseminate information on teaching and learning, governance, community engagement and research. (NUST 1)

Marketing items, newsletters, posters, new programmes, applications, covid – 19 announcements, events etc. (NUST 2)

These findings seem to agree with the findings of Hayes (2021) who believes that public relations are a set of techniques and strategies related to managing how information about an individual or company is disseminated to the public, and especially the media. Its primary goals are to disseminate important company news or events, maintain a brand image, and put a positive spin on negative events to minimize their fallout. Public relations may occur in the form of a company press release, news conference, interviews with journalists, social media posting, or other venues. The researcher agree with the participants' responses as the kind of way PRO's use to disseminate the information to their stakeholders is very important as in this way stakeholders need to be informed to make good decisions about when and how they can fully participate.

Theme 6: Channels of communication used to communicate with stakeholders.

The findings indicate that the two Universities make use of various channels of communication to communicate with stakeholders. These include; social media tools (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Youtube and LinkedIn), Short Messages Services (SMS), blogs, emails, newspapers, radio, TV and bulk SMSes. This is evident in the following responses;

The Department of Marketing and Communication uses social media tools (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Youtube and LinkedIn), Short Messages Services (SMS), blogs, emails and announcements for external and internal communication and local media (print, online and broadcast). (NUST 1)

PRO's uses email, social media, newspapers, radio, TV and Bulk SMS to communicate to their stakeholders. (NUST 2)

PRO's use face to face via attending expos, fairs and school visits. Social Media is the most used form of communication as everyone has a smartphone and is on social media. (IUM 1)

There is a wide range from print to digital. (IUM 1)

PRO's uses social networking websites, emails and blogs to communicate to their stakeholders. (IUM 3)

We communicate to our stakeholders using email, social media, newspapers, radio, TV and bulk SMSes. (NUST 1)

We communicate to our stakeholders using social media tools such as (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Youtube and LinkedIn), Short Messages Services (SMS), blogs, emails and announcements for external and internal communication and local media such as (print, online and broadcast). (NUST 2)

We communicate to our stakeholders using social networking websites, emails and blogs. (IUM 1)

We communicate to our stakeholders using face-face via attending expos, fairs and school visits. (IUM 2)

These findings seem to agree with the findings of Luoma-aho (2015) who states that Stakeholder engagement has always been central to public relations but has received more attention recently due to the introduction of real-time media and new hybrid forms of marketing, advertising and public relations. It also appears to agree with the findings of Itanyi and Ukpere (2014, p. 29) who states that institution ensures proper communication channels that distribute information in an attractive manner and at the

right time. This may for example include the use of social media such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, and Instagram, which are more convenient to the majority of stakeholders in modern days.

The researcher also agrees with the participant's responses stating that the only way stakeholders can be properly reached is by communicating with them using social media platforms as well as face to face therefore the researcher is in more agreement.

Theme 7: Level of interest shown by stakeholders in participating when needed on board.

The findings indicate that stakeholders do show interest in participating when they are required to do so. This is evident in the following responses:

This depends on the level and area of interest. (NUST 1)

Yes, they do, this is however dependent on what is being communicated. Some messages attract more interest than others. (NUST 1)

Yes, they do show interest in participating, through stakeholders analysis one can see participation. (IUM2)

Yes, they do show interest in participating, this is however dependent on what is being communicated. Some messages attract more interest than others. (NUST 1)

Stakeholders' participation depends on the level and area of interest. (NUST 2)

Yes, stakeholders show interest through stakeholder analysis one can see participation. (IUM 1)

Yes, stakeholders show interest in participation. (IUM 3)

These findings seem to agree with the findings of Pilkington (2015) who states that there are various challenges in stakeholder engagement, these include; stakeholders having multiple priorities, being

constrained by time, and opportunities being limited. However, stakeholders are more likely to make time if they perceive the project as relevant to them and there is a clear purpose to the engagement.

The researcher stated that stakeholders show interest in participating according to their interests. And yes when they are recognized and better equipped they will definitely meet what is expected of them.

Theme 8: How the public relations department is of benefit to the stakeholders of the University.

The findings indicate that the public relations departments are of significance to the University. This is evident in the following responses:

Public relations departments or the department in which they serve are essential for any institution as they act as custodians of the brand. (NUST 1)

This role helps to ensure that the institution's image is well-positioned in the public eye. (NUST 2)

Are responsible for managing the reputation of a university. Monitoring the public and media's opinion of your clients or employer. (IUM 1)

Through information distribution, the public relations department develops content for the public that can arouse emotion. (IUM 2)

We are the ears and eyes on the ground, gather all the information and pass them on to the stakeholder to make decisions. (IUM 3)

A participant from NUST responded stating that they are of benefit because their role helps to ensure that the Institutions image is well-positioned in the public eye and it also helps diffuse threats if any. (NUST 1)

Another participant from NUST responded stating that public relations departments or the departments in which they serve are essential for any institution as they act as custodians of the brand. (NUST 2)

A participant from IUM indicated that they are of benefit because through information distribution, the PRO develops content for the public that can arouse emotion. (IUM 1)

Another participant from IUM responded by saying they are of benefit because they are the eyes and ears on the ground, gather all information and pass them on to the stakeholder to make decisions. (IUM 2)

Another participant from IUM also responded by indicating that they are of benefit because they are responsible for managing the reputation of a University. (IUM 3)

These findings seem to agree with the findings of Dundee (2014) who states that PRO's are of benefit because they involve in interactions to identify groups of people and provide stakeholders with an opportunity to raise their concerns and opinions (e.g. by way of meetings, surveys, interviews and/or focus groups), and ensures that this information is taken into consideration when making project decisions". The researcher is also in agreement with the participant's responses, stating that PRO's are of benefit because their role helps to ensure that the Institutions image is well managed and also the eyes and ears of the Institution and makes sure that the Institution's stakeholders are well informed.

Document Analysis

Document analysis is a form of data analysis that is used to achieve data triangulation. The researcher for this reason made use of document analysis, specifically personal data analysis to compare the data with the findings. The results of the document analysis indicate that public relations are responsible for the internal and external communication with stakeholders, the findings further indicate that the two institutions make use of various strategies to engage stakeholders, these strategies include the use of digital communication, social media, and the hosting of events.

The role of public relations at the two universities

According to NUST (2022) the role of public relations at the institution is that of being the custodian of all external and internal communications. Public relations ensures that all the schools and departments within NUST receive enough exposure externally to ensure that all stakeholders are aware of the activities and courses on offer at NUST. In the same light public relations also play a central role internally by making sure that internal stakeholders are aware and updated on the latest events and news regarding the institution. The roles and functions of public relations appear to be similar as IUM (2022) states that the role of public relations at IUM is to create brand awareness of the institution as Global Hub for Information Technology and Management Sciences internationally and locally. Equally so, public relations also maintains the internal and external communication and dissemination of information to internal and external stakeholders by keeping them abreast with the latest news and activities relating to the institution. The revelations from the document analysis appear to corroborate the findings of the study as the findings indicate that public relations are responsible for the internal and external communication with stakeholders.

Marketing strategies employed by the two universities

According to NUST (2022) The Namibia University of Science and Technology has made considerable investments and has spent a good amount of time and energy enhancing its position as a leading institution of higher learning. This investment has developed a marketing strategy that has brought about an improved image for the institution. As part of its marketing strategy, the institution annually holds career fairs to not only market the university but to give prospective students the chance to benefit from face to face interaction with NUST staff. Prospective students are given the required information about NUST, giving them the chance to make information-based career decisions. In collaboration with all the NUST Departments, Faculties, Centres and other Units, public relations facilitates institutional events, and thus maintains a sound relationship with members of the media and other stakeholders. Public relations also employs digital communications platforms as means to engage with stakeholders. In talking about the marketing strategies employed by IUM, IUM (2022) states that public relations are in charge of ensuring that communication is maintained with stakeholders and that information reaches them. Public relations for this reason make use of strategies such as the use of publications such as the newsletter (IUM Voice) and IUM Bulletin. Public relations also updates the institutions' websites and Facebook as means of imparting information to the stakeholders and students. These revelations seem to agree with the findings of the study that indicate that the two institutions make use of various strategies to engage stakeholders, these strategies include the use of digital communication, social media, and the hosting of events.

4.4 Chapter summary

This chapter presented and discussed the findings from the participants, this presentation emanated from responses to questions drafted by the researcher. The findings answered the relevant questions asked in the questionnaire with the interpretations given clearly by the researcher with themes coded

based on common answers. Under each of the themes developed, there were specific questions asked and based on the responses of the participants the researcher organised similar responses under similar themes.

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented and analysed the collected data. This study investigated Stakeholder's Engagement in Public Relations Practices of two Namibian Universities (NUST and IUM). Chapter 1 introduced the study by highlighting the background of the study, the problem statement, the research questions as well as the significance of the study. Chapter 2 reviewed the relevant literature and also the thesis underpinning the study. Chapter 3 explained the methodology used in the study. Chapter 4 presented the findings of the study conducted and this section presents the summary, recommendations and conclusion of the findings of the study that was conducted at the International University of Management and Namibia University of Science and Technology about how public relations at the two Institutions engage and communicate with their stakeholders.

The findings of the study also indicated that at NUST each communication message is carefully crafted for the various audiences in order to ensure maximum engagement and would be measured by the workload (goals and execution of those goals). While at IUM Information is made simple to understand by summarizing the programs we offer to make it easier for the learners to understand.

The following issues are described in the chapter: summary of findings, based on the objectives of the study, recommendations based on the findings of the study, limitations of the study and finally the conclusion.

5.2 Summary of findings

The first objective of the study sought to establish the role of PRO in the two institutions. In this way, the findings of the study indicated that at NUST media engagement, social media management, external communication, drafting newsletters and speeches, marketing the institution brand through event planning and social media are some of the roles of PRO while at IUM a PRO plan, develop and

implement campaigns and strategies, create and distribute press releases to media institutions, they also maintain the image and reputation of the university as well as develop communication strategies and prepping media release, keynote speeches and building positive reputation image for the university.

The second objective of the study sought to establish the extent to which NUST and IUM engage their stakeholders, the findings of the study indicated that at NUST they engage to a large extent as this is a core function for the university to realize its vision and mission while at IUM they engage their stakeholders with every decision to be made and regularly through emails and meetings.

The third objective of the study sought to establish the key issues in managing the stakeholders of the two Namibian Universities, the findings of the study indicated that at NUST budgetary constraints are sometimes a setback while at IUM is by providing their promises to their stakeholders from day one as they are nothing without their stakeholders and communication methods might as well be understood wrong to meet stakeholders needs.

The fourth objective of the study sought to find out the effectiveness of PRO of IUM and NUST in stakeholders' management, the findings of the study indicated that at NUST each communication message is carefully crafted for the various audiences in order to ensure maximum engagement and would be measured by the workload (goals and execution of those goals). While at IUM Information is made simple to understand by summarizing the programs we offer to make it easier for the learners to understand.

The findings revealed that the most channel of communication public relations departments of the two Universities use to communicate to their stakeholders are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Youtube and LinkedIn), Short Messages Services (SMS), blogs, emails and announcements for external and internal communication and local media (print, online and broadcast), email, social media, newspapers, radio, TV and bulk SMSes, face to face via attending expos, fairs and school visits.

The findings of the study also indicated that some of the effectiveness of PRO of NUST and IUM in stakeholders' management is, at NUST each communication message is carefully crafted for the various audiences in order to ensure maximum engagement and would be measured by the workload (goals and execution of those goals). While at IUM Information is made simple to understand by summarizing the programs we offer to make it easier for the learners to understand.

The findings also established the key issues in managing the stakeholders of the two Namibian Universities, the findings of the study indicated that at NUST budgetary constraints are sometimes a setback while at IUM is by providing their promises to their stakeholders from day one as they are nothing without their stakeholders and communication methods might as well be understood wrong to meet stakeholders needs.

The study also indicates that stakeholders at both Institutions do participate and engage in matters concerning the two Universities but it depends on the level and area of interest.

5.3 Recommendations

The study noted that email and social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Youtube and LinkedIn are the most preferred form of communication among the two Universities by public relations departments. The academic staff and the university management in general of the two universities need to take advantage of this, to make use of email and social media platforms to engage and preserve a relationship with their stakeholders.

The study also noted that to keep the effectiveness of the PRO of the two Namibian Universities each communication message should be carefully crafted for the various audiences in order to ensure maximum engagement. Information should also be made simple to be understood, summarizing the programs they offer to make it easier for the learners to understand.

In managing stakeholders of the two Namibian universities, PRO's of the two Namibian Universities should always provide their promises to their stakeholders from day one as they are nothing without their stakeholders and always give correct information to meet stakeholders' needs.

5.4 Limitation of the study

This study experienced certain boundaries and limitations, such as some participants decided to withdraw from participating. The researcher was also not granted to see certain documents from the two Institutions and also some information that was given by the participants was not of use or contributed value to the study. Being said above the researcher made sure that the validity of the study is not affected because not too much information was missed out.

5.5 Conclusions

Although the study was conducted among the public relations departments, directors and marketing departments of only the International University of Management and the Namibia University of Science and Technology, the findings can be generalized to other tertiary institutions in Namibia.

The study found that the two universities' public relations are captivated by Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Youtube and LinkedIn), short Messages Services (SMS), blogs, emails and announcements for external and internal communication and local media (print, online and broadcast), email, social media, newspapers, radio, TV and bulk SMSes, face to face via attending expos, fairs and school visits to communicate to their stakeholders.

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FACULTY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (F-REC)

DECISION: ETHICS APPROVAL

Ref: S033/2020
Student no.: 219145121

Issue Date: 06 August 2020

RESEARCH TOPIC

Title: Investigating Stakeholder Engagement in Public Relations Practices of two Namibian Universities

Researcher: Ndamonako Anna lita
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E-mail: hmapudzi@nust.na

Dear Ms lita,

The Faculty of Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee (F-REC) of the Namibia University of Science and Technology reviewed your application for the above-mentioned research. The research as set out in the application has been approved.

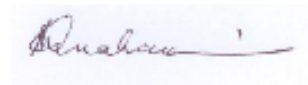
We would like to point out that you, as principal investigator, are obliged to:

- maintain the ethical integrity of your research,
- adhere to the Research policy and ethical guidelines of NUST, and
- remain within the scope of your research proposal and supporting evidence as submitted to the F-REC.

Should any aspect of your research change from the information as presented to the F-REC, which could have an effect on the possibility of harm to any research subject, you are under the obligation to report it immediately to your supervisor or F-REC as applicable in writing. Should there be any uncertainty in this regard, you have to consult with the F-REC.

We wish you success with your research, and trust that it will make a positive contribution to the quest for knowledge at NUST.

Sincerely,



Prof Rewai Makamani
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7. APPENDICES

APPENDIX 7.1

August 2020

Dear Respondent

Re: Investigating Stakeholder Engagement in Public Relations Practices of two Namibian Universities the International University of Management and Namibia University of Science and Technology

I am a second-year student at the Namibia University of Science and Technology studying toward a Master's Degree in Journalism and Media Technology. The general purpose of this study is to investigate Stakeholder Engagement in Public Relations Practices of two Namibian Universities which is the International University of Management and Namibia University of Science and Technology

I am interested in obtaining your opinions and inviting you to take part in the study. Please take a moment of your time to fill in the attached questionnaire. The information provided will be kept confidential and will be used for academic purposes only.

Yours faithfully

Ndamonako Anna Iita

Researcher

APPENDIX 7.2

INTERVIEW GUIDE

SECTION A: Demographic information. (Please circle the appropriate answer)

1. What is your gender?
 - ☐ Male
 - ☐ Female
2. What is your age?
 - ☐ 16-25
 - ☐ 26-35
 - ☐ 36-45
 - ☐ 46-55
 - ☐ 56+
3. Are you a part-time or full-time employee?
 - ☐ Full-time
 - ☐ Part-time

SECTION B: Information relating to stakeholder engagement in public relations

4. What kind of information do you disseminate to your stakeholders?
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5. How effective is the information to ensure that stakeholders are fully participating?.....
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6. What channels of communication do you use to communicate to your stakeholders?.....

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7. What more can be done by public relations departments to ensure fully participation of stakeholders of Universities?.....
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8. Do stakeholders show interest of participation when needed on board?.....
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9. How often do you communicate to your stakeholders?.....
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10. Are stakeholders important to your University?.....
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11. How is the public relations department of benefit to the stakeholders of the University?.....
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12. What is the role of the Public Relation Department at IUM and NUST?.....
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13. To what extent do IUM and NUST engage their stakeholders?.....
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.....
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14. What are the key issues in managing the stakeholders of the two Namibian Universities?.....
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.....
.....
15. How effective are the Public Relation Department of IUM and NUST in stakeholder management?.....
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.....
.....

Thank You for participating



Digital Receipt

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