

THE ROLE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN THEATRE MANAGEMENT

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DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to God Almighty for the grace and fortitude to complete this study

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Abstract

This study examines the role of Public Relations (PR) in the management of the academic Theatre of the university of Benin , with a specific focus on it's impact on Audience engagement, ticket sales, and overall Organizational Success. The research was motivated

by the need to address the frequent oversight of strategic communication within theatre management, where artistic elements are often prioritized. Employing a descriptive survey design, data was collected from a purposive sample of 150 students using a structured questionnaire and analyzed through frequency tables and percentages. The findings reveal that digital PR Strategies, particularly social media content and behind the scenes materials, are Paramount in engaging the modern student audience, whereas traditional methods like flyers are less effective. A strong direct correlation was established between PE efforts and ticket sales, with effective promotion and targeted discounts Significantly influencing purchase decisions . The study concludes that PR is a critical strategic management function essential for building reputation, fostering community, and ensuring the financial viability and long term sustainability of Theatre organizations . It is recommended that theatre management strategically integrate digital PR, professional branding, and community building initiatives into their core operational plans.

Keywords: Theatre production, Technology integration, creativity, Artificial intelligence, capacity Building.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

Theatre management is a complex and dynamic field that requires effective communication and public relations strategies to succeed (Vogel 23). Public relations plays a vital role in theatre management, as it helps to build and maintain relationships with various stakeholders, including audiences, donors, and the media (Walsh 145). Effective public relations strategies can help theatre organizations to increase their visibility, credibility, and reputation, ultimately leading to increased ticket sales and financial sustainability (O'Reilly 210). The importance of public relations in theatre management has been recognized by scholars and practitioners alike. According to Vogel, “public relations is a critical component of any successful theatre organization” (Vogel 25). Similarly, Walsh notes that “public relations is essential for building and maintaining relationships with audiences, donors, and other stakeholders” (Walsh 147).

Despite its importance, public relations is often overlooked or undervalued in theatre management not much attention is given to it. Many theatre organizations focus primarily on artistic and production aspects, neglecting the critical role that public relations plays in their success (O'Reilly 212). This oversight can lead to missed opportunities, damaged relationships, and ultimately, financial instability. This study aims to explore the role of public relations in theatre management, examining its impact on audience engagement, ticket sales, and overall organizational success. By investigating the current state of public relations in theatre management, this study hopes to provide valuable insights and recommendations for theatre managers and public relations professionals.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Theatre management faces several challenges in today's competitive entertainment industry, and one of the most significant problems is the lack of effective public relations strategies (Vogel 24). Many theatre organizations struggle to build and maintain relationships with their audiences, donors, and other stakeholders, leading to decreased ticket sales, reduced funding, and damaged reputations (Walsh 148).

According to O'Reilly, "theatre organizations often neglect the importance of public relations, focusing instead on artistic and production aspects" (O'Reilly 213). This oversight can result in missed opportunities, damaged relationships, and ultimately, financial instability.

Furthermore, the increasing competition from other forms of entertainment, such as film and digital media, has made it even more challenging for theatre organizations to attract and retain audiences (Vogel 26). Effective public relations strategies are essential for theatre organizations to differentiate themselves, build their brand, and establish a loyal audience base, basically enhancing their brand growth and promoting good business relationship. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the role of public relations in theatre management, exploring its impact on audience engagement, ticket sales, and overall organizational success.

1.3 Aim and Objective of the Study

The aim of this study is to explore the role of public relations in theatre management, examining its impact on audience engagement, ticket sales, and overall organizational success. The objectives include the following:

1.To Investigate The Current Public Relations Strategies Employed by Theatre Organizations: This objective aims to identify the various public relations techniques used by theatre organizations to promote their productions and engage with their audiences.

2. To Examine The Impact of Public Relations on Audience Engagement and Participation: This objective seeks to analyze the relationship between public relations efforts and audience engagement, including attendance, social media interaction, and community involvement.

3. To Identify Best Practices in Public Relations for Theatre Management: This objective seeks to provide recommendations for theatre managers and public relations professionals on effective public relations strategies for enhancing audience engagement, ticket sales, and overall organizational success.

1.4 Research Questions

1. How do public relations strategies influence audience engagement and participation in theatre productions?

2. What is the relationship between public relations efforts and ticket sales in theatre management?

3. How do effective public relations strategies contribute to the overall success of a theatre organization?

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on examining the role of public relations (PR) within the management of theatre organizations, specifically investigating how PR strategies contribute to the success of theatre productions. The research will explore the integration of PR practices in the day-to-day operations of theatre companies, including their marketing and audience engagement efforts. It will also assess the impact of PR on fostering positive relationships with key stakeholders such as audiences, sponsors, critics, and the media.

The scope of this study will cover the following areas:

Firstly PR Strategies in Theatre Management: This includes an in-depth analysis of the various PR tactics employed by theatre companies, such as media relations, press schemes, and event promotions. The research will also examine how these strategies are adapted to suit different production types, including commercial and nonprofit theatre.

Secondly: Stakeholder Engagement: The study will look at how PR is used to build and maintain relationships with important stakeholders in the theatre industry, including patrons, critics, media outlets, sponsors, and donors. Understanding the role of PR in audience development and community outreach will also be a key focus (Smith 96).

Furthermore: Impact of Digital and Social Media on PR: As digital media platforms become increasingly important in the communication landscape, the study will explore how

social media and online platforms are reshaping traditional PR practices within the theatre industry. This includes analyzing the role of social media marketing, influencer partnerships, and online ticket sales campaigns (Fawkes 72).

Finally: Financial Success and Audience Attendance: One of the core areas of the study is to examine the correlation between PR campaigns and the financial outcomes of theatre productions, particularly how effective PR contributes to ticket sales, revenue generation, and attracting funding or sponsorships (Newsom, Turk, and Kruckeberg 120).

By focusing on these specific areas, this study will provide a comprehensive understanding of how PR practices contribute to the overall management and success of theatre organizations. The research will combine both qualitative and quantitative methods, drawing on case studies, interviews with theatre managers and PR professionals, and secondary data to explore the multifaceted role of PR in theatre management.

1.6 Significance of Study

The significance of this study lies in its potential to enhance the understanding of how public relations (PR) contributes to the success and sustainability of theatre organizations. As the theatre industry faces challenges such as fluctuating audience attendance, increasing competition from other forms of entertainment, and evolving financial constraints, effective PR strategies are critical for maintaining relevance and achieving long-term success. By examining the role of PR in theatre management, this study will provide valuable insights

that can assist theatre managers, PR professionals, and other stakeholders in developing more effective communication strategies to address these challenges.

Firstly: Improved Understanding of PR in Theatre Management: This study will offer a deeper understanding of how PR functions within theatre organizations. By identifying best practices and successful PR strategies, the research will contribute to more effective and strategic decision-making in theatre management. As Fawkes argues, PR is not just about media relations but about building a long-term relationship with the audience and other stakeholders (Fawkes 56). The study will demonstrate how these relationships can be cultivated through thoughtful and strategic PR efforts.

Secondly: Audience Engagement and Development: The study will provide insights into how PR can be leveraged to engage and grow audiences, which is essential for the financial sustainability of theatre companies. The research will focus on how PR strategies, particularly those utilizing digital media, can attract diverse and larger audiences, helping theatre organizations expand their reach. As Newsom, Turk, and Kruckeberg point out, PR plays a central role in shaping public perceptions and increasing audience loyalty (Newsom, Turk, and Kruckeberg 102).

Thirdly: Financial Sustainability and Sponsorships: By exploring the impact of PR on financial success, this study will highlight how theatre companies can use PR to secure funding, sponsorships, and grants, all of which are crucial for the viability of productions. Effective PR campaigns can also increase ticket sales and overall revenue by improving

visibility and public interest in theatre productions (Smith 88). Understanding these relationships will enable theatre managers to make informed decisions regarding resource allocation and PR investments.

Furthermore: Strategic Application of Digital and Social Media*: As digital media plays an increasingly significant role in the communication strategies of arts organizations, this study will help theatre companies harness the potential of social media and online platforms to engage with a wider audience. Fawkes discusses how PR in the digital age requires adapting traditional PR tactics to new technologies (Fawkes 72). The research will explore how these platforms can be effectively utilized to foster engagement and build a community of loyal patrons.

Finally: Contributing to Academic Knowledge and Practice: The study will make a significant contribution to the academic literature on PR in the arts, offering insights specific to the unique challenges and opportunities faced by theatre companies. It will provide a practical framework for theatre managers and PR professionals, bridging the gap between theory and practice. Furthermore, it will offer valuable guidance for PR practitioners looking to refine their strategies within the cultural and entertainment sectors.

In conclusion, this study holds significance for both the academic community and theatre industry professionals. It will offer practical solutions for improving PR practices, engaging

audiences, securing financial support, and ultimately enhancing the reputation and sustainability of theatre organizations.

1.7 Limitation of the Study

While this study aims to provide valuable insights into the role of public relations in theatre management, certain limitations may affect the generalizability and scope of the findings.

1.7.1 Geographic Limitation:

The study is primarily focused on theatre organizations within Lagos state and one academic setting in the university of Benin, Edo state. This geographic focus may limit the applicability of the findings to other regions with different cultural, economic or organizational dynamics.

1.7.2 Sample Size Constraints:

Although the study involves theatre managers, PR professionals and Audience members, the sample size is relatively small. A larger and more diverse sample could yield more robust and generalizable conclusions.

1.7.3 Time Constraints:

Due to time limitations, the research may not capture long term outcomes of PR Strategies particularly those related to audience loyalty and sustained financial performance.

1.7.4 Access to Information:

Some theatre organizations may be unwilling to disclose detailed information about their internal PR Strategies, financial performance, or audience engagement metrics. This may limit the depth of analysis in certain areas.

1.7.5 Subjectivity in Qualitative Data

While interviews and case studies provide rich insight, they are also subject to the personal perspectives of respondents. This may introduce bias or affect the objectivity of the data interpretation.

1.7.6 Rapidly changing Digital Landscape:

The fast-evolving nature of Digital Media and PR tools may pose challenges in keeping the findings current and reflective of emerging trends in digital communication.

1.8 Definition of Terms

Audience Engagement: Strategies used to attract and maintain the interest of theatre patrons

Branding: The process of creating a distinct image and identity for a theatre or production.

Digital Media: Electronic platforms such as websites, social media, blogs and streaming services used for communication, marketing and public engagement. In theatre digital media plays a vital role in promoting productions and interacting with audience

Financial sustainability: the ability of a theatre organization to maintain operations and fulfill its mission overtime through stable and diversified revenue sources, including ticket sales, sponsorship, grants and donations.

Public Relations (PR): The practice of managing communication between an organization and its audience.

Stakeholders: individuals or groups that have an interest in the success and activities of a theatre organization. This includes audience members, donors, sponsors, media representatives, critics, employees, and community members.

Theatre Management: The administration and operation of a theatre or performing arts organization

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptual Framework of Public Relations

Public Relations (PR) is fundamentally a strategic communication process designed to cultivate and maintain mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and its various publics. PR can be defined as “the management of communication between an organization and its publics,” underscoring its deliberate, structured, and interactive nature (Grunig & Hunt 17). In the dynamic realm of theatre management, this definition highlights the continuous necessity for engagement with a diverse array of stakeholders, including but not limited to audiences, media

outlets, corporate sponsors, governmental bodies, artists, and cultural agencies. This comprehensive view positions PR as central to an organization's ability to thrive by fostering understanding and support, ensuring its long-term viability and relevance within the cultural landscape.

Grunig and Hunt's (17) seminal work on the Four Models of Public Relations—namely, press agency/publicity, public information, two-way asymmetrical, and two-way symmetrical communication—provides a robust theoretical bedrock for comprehending the diverse ways PR operates across different organizational contexts. Among these, the two-way symmetrical model holds particular resonance for theatre. This model champions genuine dialogue, mutual understanding, and the integration of feedback between the organization and its publics. For theatre managers, this approach facilitates the creation of productions and outreach strategies that are not only responsive to audience interests but also steadfast in preserving artistic integrity. This model is crucial for fostering long-term relationships built on trust and mutual respect, allowing theatre organizations to adapt to public needs while upholding their artistic vision (Grunig & Hunt 17). It moves beyond mere persuasion to achieve a state of mutual adaptation between the organization and its stakeholders, promoting ethical and transparent communication that builds enduring connections.

Fawkes (56) further enriches this conceptual discourse by advocating for a values-based and ethically driven approach to PR. She posits that effective PR transcends mere image management, embracing principles of transparency, cultural sensitivity, and moral responsibility. Applied to theatre organizations, this perspective implies that public communication must extend beyond the singular objective of attracting audiences; it must also authentically reflect the cultural, social, and ethical values intrinsically embedded within theatrical content. As a

powerful mirror of society, theatre necessitates a form of public relations that is both reflective of its community and participatory in its engagement (Fawkes, 56). This ethical stance ensures that PR activities contribute positively to societal discourse and reinforce the theatre's role as a cultural institution, building credibility and long-term trust by aligning actions with stated values and demonstrating a commitment to public good.

The Excellence Theory, developed by Grunig, Dozier, and their collaborators, significantly broadens the conceptual scope of PR by advocating for its integration into the overarching organizational strategy. This theory emphasizes the critical importance of environmental scanning, meticulous stakeholder relationship management, symmetrical communication, and the strategic involvement of PR professionals in top-level decision-making processes. When judiciously applied to theatre organizations, this theory suggests that effective PR should not be confined to merely boosting ticket sales. Instead, it should actively support long-term strategic objectives such as robust brand development, impactful policy advocacy, and the cultivation of enduring audience loyalty (Grunig, Dozier 39). This holistic integration ensures that PR functions as a strategic management function, contributing directly to the theatre's overall success and sustainability by aligning communication efforts with core organizational goals and demonstrating its value to both the organization and society (Grunig, Dozier 39).

In the unique and often challenging Nigerian theatre environment, particularly in culturally vibrant cities like Benin City, these theoretical insights are not only relevant but absolutely essential. Theatre organizations in such contexts frequently grapple with significant hurdles, including severe funding limitations, pervasive infrastructural inadequacies, and the fluctuating nature of audience engagement. Consequently, PR practices in this setting must be inherently adaptive, deeply community-based, and resource-efficient. A compelling example is

the Edo Cultural Theatre Network, which employs a hybrid communication approach. This strategy seamlessly integrates indigenous communication methods, such as oral storytelling and the use of traditional town announcers, with contemporary tools like radio programs, dynamic social media campaigns, and street performances. This innovative blend exemplifies a strategic utilization of both traditional and modern PR techniques to significantly enhance visibility, build credibility, and foster profound cultural resonance within the local community. This adaptive approach is crucial for theatre organizations to thrive amidst resource constraints and diverse audience demographics, ensuring their messages resonate authentically and effectively reach their intended publics.

Public relations in theatre management transcends the simplistic notion of mere publicity. It is a multidimensional, strategic function that is integral to the very survival and sustained success of theatrical institutions. A well-articulated and thoughtfully applied conceptual framework empowers theatre organizations to meticulously align their public image with their core artistic mission, cultivate deep trust with diverse stakeholders, and adeptly navigate the intricate cultural and economic landscapes in which they operate.

2.2 Types of PR Media and Methods

Public relations in theatre management employs a diverse and strategic array of media and methods to effectively communicate with various publics, cultivate robust relationships, and achieve overarching organizational objectives. These approaches encompass both traditional and cutting-edge digital platforms, emphasizing a balance between broad outreach and highly targeted engagement. The selection of appropriate media and methods is crucial for tailoring messages to specific audiences and maximizing their impact, ensuring that the theatre's narrative reaches and resonates with its diverse stakeholders.

Media Relations

Media Relations is a foundational type of PR dedicated to cultivating and nurturing relationships with journalists, editors, broadcasters, and influential bloggers to secure positive and impactful coverage for the theatre organization (Audiences Wales 113). This involves proactively pitching compelling story ideas, meticulously arranging interviews with directors, actors, or key creative team members, and providing comprehensive information for feature articles, news segments, and event listings. The primary objective of media relations is to garner free editorial coverage, which significantly amplifies awareness and publicizes specific events or activities without incurring substantial advertising costs (Audiences Wales 113). This strategic engagement with media outlets is crucial for expanding the theatre's reach and enhancing its public profile, leveraging the credibility inherent in earned media to shape public perception and drive attendance.

Community Relations

Community Relations constitutes another vital component, focusing intently on forging strong, reciprocal ties between the theatre and its local community (Stern Strategy Group 121). This can manifest through various initiatives, including sponsoring local events, making charitable donations, dedicating organizational time and resources to community causes, and fostering collaborations with local businesses. For theatre, community-based outreach extends strategically to schools, churches, youth groups, and local events, with the explicit aim of reaching new and diverse audiences through authentic grassroots campaigns and the powerful influence of word-of-mouth (NeonOne 114). Innovative tactics such as pop-up performances by actors in costume in high-traffic public areas like parks or shopping centers can generate significant buzz and embed the theatre more memorably in the public consciousness. These efforts build goodwill and integrate the theatre deeply into the fabric of the community, fostering a sense of shared ownership and cultural pride that translates into sustained support.

Social Media Communications

In the contemporary digital landscape, Social Media Communications have become an indispensable tool for theatre organizations. Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter are strategically leveraged to engage audiences, build enduring relationships, and drive active participation (NeonOne 114). This includes sharing captivating behind-the-scenes content, such as rehearsal bloopers, candid cast interviews, intricate set designs, or tantalizing costume previews. Running countdown campaigns to opening night can effectively build anticipation and excitement. Encouraging user-generated content, where patrons share their experiences and tag the theatre, transforms audience members into enthusiastic and authentic promoters (NeonOne 114). Livestreams also offer a direct and immediate way to connect with audiences. These digital

strategies are vital for reaching younger, tech-savvy audiences and fostering a dynamic online community that feels personally connected to the theatre's work, extending its influence beyond the physical stage.

Crisis Communication

Crisis Communication is an essential strategic function for managing unforeseen challenges that may arise, whether it involves a canceled performance, a controversial play that sparks public debate, or internal organizational conflicts (Stern Strategy Group 121). The PR team is tasked with preparing official statements, issuing timely press releases, and engaging in proactive damage control through public apologies or clarifications. The overarching goal is to meticulously preserve the theatre's reputation, minimize any negative fallout, and diligently rebuild audience trust (Stern Strategy Group 121). Effective crisis communication is paramount for maintaining credibility and public confidence during challenging times, demonstrating the organization's responsibility and transparency.

Other Strategic PR Methods

Beyond these core areas, Strategic PR Communications involves the meticulous development and execution of a comprehensive communication plan that is meticulously aligned with the theatre's overall goals and objectives, ensuring consistency and coherence across all messaging (Stern Strategy Group 121). Internal Communications also falls under the PR umbrella, focusing on keeping employees well-informed, feeling valued, and highly motivated. Other practical and effective methods employed include Audience Email Segmentation, which involves tailoring email campaigns to distinct audience groups based on their ticket-buying history or preferred show types (NeonOne 114). Community Partnerships with local businesses for cross-promotions, such as "Dinner and a Show" packages, can introduce the theatre to new

audiences. Flyering 2.0, distributing engaging and visually appealing flyers in local areas, remains a low-cost yet effective way to reach a local audience. Leveraging Volunteer Ambassadors to spread positive word-of-mouth within their networks is also a powerful tactic. Offering Discounts and Group Packages can attract significant attendance, while Partnering with Schools engages students and promotes accessibility initiatives. Hosting Open Houses invites the public to experience the theatre firsthand, and Collaborating with Other Arts Organizations expands reach and fosters a more vibrant and interconnected arts community. These diverse media and methods collectively enable theatre managers to craft a comprehensive and dynamic PR strategy that not only effectively promotes individual productions but also builds enduring relationships, strengthens the theatre's standing within the community, and ensures its long-term viability and cultural impact.

2.3 Functions of Theatre Managers

Theatre managers occupy a profoundly multifaceted and indispensable role in ensuring the seamless and successful operation of a theatrical venue or performing arts center. Their extensive responsibilities span administrative, financial, operational, and strategic domains, necessitating a remarkably diverse skill set, astute business acumen, and robust leadership capabilities. The precise scope of these responsibilities can vary considerably depending on the size and nature of the venue; smaller theatres may require managers to oversee all aspects comprehensively, whereas larger venues might have specialized departmental managers (Prospects 107).

Operational Oversight

At the foundational level, a theatre manager is charged with overseeing the day-to-day operations of the venue, encompassing both intricate administrative tasks and critical

production-related aspects (Huzzle 122). This includes ensuring the effective and efficient running of all activities, from the welcoming front-of-house experience to the complex backstage logistics. Their oversight ensures that every aspect of the theatre's daily functions contributes to a smooth and enjoyable experience for both patrons and performers, maintaining the high standards expected of a professional arts venue and addressing any immediate operational challenges that may arise, such as technical glitches, unexpected staffing issues, or last-minute changes to schedules. This constant vigilance is critical for maintaining the theatre's reputation for professionalism and seamless execution, ensuring that performances run without interruption and that the audience's experience is consistently positive.

Business Planning and Program Curation

A pivotal strategic function involves business planning and program curation. Theatre managers are directly responsible for the development, meticulous implementation, and regular review of the theatre's overarching business plan (Prospects 107). This entails carefully planning and booking the theatre program, a process that demands keen consideration of audience appeal, a judicious balance of diverse production types, and even the strategic commissioning of new works. They must continuously monitor the delivery of the theatre program to ensure its alignment with the broader business objectives (Prospects 107). This strategic foresight is crucial for the theatre's artistic relevance, financial viability, and its ability to attract and retain audiences by offering a compelling and varied repertoire that meets both artistic and commercial goals, ensuring a vibrant and sustainable artistic calendar that appeals to diverse tastes and demographics.

Financial Management

Financial management constitutes a critical and demanding responsibility. Theatre managers meticulously manage the budget, overseeing revenue generation streams such as ticket sales, concessions, and sponsorships, while rigorously controlling expenditures to ensure financial stability and optimize profitability (Huzzle 122). They are also tasked with the crucial role of negotiating with charities and various funding bodies to secure essential donations, corporate sponsorships, and other forms of financial backing vital for the theatre's sustainable growth (Prospects 107). Their financial acumen directly impacts the theatre's ability to produce high-quality work and maintain its operations, ensuring long-term sustainability and artistic freedom by balancing artistic ambitions with fiscal realities and seeking diverse funding opportunities to support the theatre's mission and expansion. This includes detailed financial reporting and forecasting to ensure fiscal health.

Staff Leadership and Development

Effective staff management is paramount to the theatre's success. Theatre managers lead and coordinate a diverse team of staff, which may include personnel in marketing, finance, administration, and technical roles (Huzzle 122). Their duties encompass the entire employee lifecycle, from hiring and comprehensive training to assigning tasks and fostering a positive, collaborative work environment that actively encourages creativity and high performance. Strong leadership skills are indispensable to inspire and motivate their team (Huzzle 122). This ensures a cohesive and productive workforce dedicated to the theatre's mission, from front-of-house to backstage, and contributes to professional development within the arts sector by nurturing talent, providing opportunities for growth, and addressing staff welfare and morale to minimize turnover and maximize efficiency.

Marketing and Public Engagement

In terms of public engagement, theatre managers are deeply involved in marketing and publicity. They oversee and organize all marketing and promotional activities designed to attract audiences and enhance the theatre's visibility and public image (Huzzle 122). This often necessitates close liaison with production teams and performers to coordinate marketing efforts for specific shows. Customer care is equally crucial, ensuring that the public enjoys a positive and memorable experience and that any inquiries or concerns are promptly and effectively addressed. Their role in public-facing activities directly influences audience attendance and satisfaction, which are vital for revenue and reputation, and for building a loyal patron base that supports the theatre's ongoing work and cultural contribution. This involves understanding audience demographics, market trends, and tailoring communication strategies to maximize reach and impact.

Infrastructure and Compliance

Theatre managers are responsible for the meticulous maintenance of the theatre's physical infrastructure and equipment, regularly inspecting the venue for maintenance needs and coordinating necessary repairs (Huzzle 122). They must also ensure stringent compliance with health and safety regulations and licensing laws, thereby creating a safe and secure environment for both staff and patrons. This ensures the venue is safe, functional, and compliant with all legal requirements, protecting both the organization and its visitors, and safeguarding the theatre's operational integrity against potential hazards or legal issues. This proactive approach to maintenance and compliance is fundamental to uninterrupted operations, public trust, and the long-term preservation of the theatre's assets.

Partnership and Industry Relations

Finally, theatre managers play a significant role in partnership development, actively forging links with local industries, communities, educational organizations, and other relevant bodies to encourage broader engagement in artistic activities (Prospects 107). They also remain diligently abreast of developments and new productions within the wider theatre industry (Prospects 107). Company managers, for instance, are broadly responsible for the logistical and administrative operations of a theatrical production, including payroll, contract negotiation, lodging, transport, scheduling, and interdepartmental communications (Berklee College of Music, 123). This outward-looking function helps to integrate the theatre into the broader cultural and economic landscape, fostering collaboration, innovation, and mutual benefit that extends the theatre's influence beyond its immediate productions and contributes to the overall vibrancy and sustainability of the arts sector.

2.4 Specific Roles of Public Relations in Theatre Management

Some of the roles Public Relations plays in Theatre Management are:

Audience Engagement and Development

Audience engagement and development stands as a cornerstone of successful theatre management in Benin City, where a blend of traditional and contemporary PR strategies continues to yield significant value. PR efforts aimed at expanding theatre audiences extend beyond merely attracting the cultural elite to encompass broader and more diverse demographic groups (NeonOne 114). Community-based outreach initiatives, conducted through strategic partnerships with schools, churches, youth groups, and local events, enable theatre organizations to effectively reach new and varied audiences. These grassroots campaigns often rely heavily on word-of-mouth, which remains an exceptionally powerful influence within the community

(NeonOne 114). Furthermore, theatre groups in Benin City actively leverage digital platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter to promote upcoming shows and engage audiences through compelling storytelling, intriguing character teasers, and exclusive behind-the-scenes content. Such social media strategies are designed to cultivate anticipation and excitement, particularly among younger, digitally native audiences. By making theatre genuinely accessible and culturally relevant to local communities, PR in Benin City plays a pivotal role in developing and sustaining loyal and engaged audiences, ensuring the long-term vitality of the arts.

Media and Publicity

While digital media has undeniably made significant strides, traditional media outlets continue to play a critical and influential role in PR efforts for theatre organizations in Benin City. Local radio stations, such as Edo Broadcasting Service (EBS), and regional newspapers remain highly relevant tools for promoting theatre events, effectively attracting local attention, and reinforcing deep community ties (Audiences Wales, 113). PR officers within local theatre companies routinely cultivate and maintain strong relationships with journalists, editors, and various media outlets to consistently secure valuable coverage for their productions (Audiences Wales, 113). This proactive engagement may include arranging interviews with directors or actors, pitching compelling feature stories on upcoming performances, and ensuring inclusion in prominent event calendars (Audiences Wales, 113). Publicity efforts specifically aimed at gaining free editorial coverage from media channels enable theatre groups to significantly amplify their reach without incurring substantial advertising costs, thereby making media relations an absolutely essential aspect of PR in Benin's vibrant theatre scene (Audiences Wales, 113).

Branding and Reputation Management

Branding and reputation management is an integral and strategic aspect of theatre management in Benin City, as it fundamentally shapes how a theatre organization is perceived by its audiences, potential donors, and strategic partners (NeonOne 114). The branding process is heavily influenced and meticulously managed by PR professionals who meticulously design both the visual elements (e.g., logo, color scheme, typography) and the verbal elements (e.g., tone, messaging) that collectively communicate the theatre's unique identity. Regardless of whether the theatre focuses on contemporary, traditional, experimental, or academic productions, PR ensures that these messages are consistently delivered and are perfectly aligned with the organization's core artistic vision. Effective branding not only significantly boosts the theatre's reputation but also directly impacts practical elements such as audience turnout, successful fundraising initiatives, and the formation of valuable partnerships (NeonOne 114). PR teams work diligently to ensure that the theatre is strategically positioned as a reliable, culturally relevant, and artistically competent institution. This carefully crafted public image profoundly influences public perception, directly affecting the theatre's ability to attract audiences, garner crucial funding, and secure essential sponsorships. O'Reilly (217) underscores the paramount importance of crafting narratives that deeply resonate with potential sponsors, particularly those narratives that emphasize social responsibility and cultural preservation.

Fundraising and Sponsorships

Fundraising and sponsorships are critically supported by public relations, which plays a proactive role in securing essential financial backing for theatre organizations in Benin City. Given the pervasive challenges of limited government funding and a significant reliance on private donations, PR officers are tasked with crafting compelling proposals and designing

impactful campaigns specifically aimed at attracting sponsors and donors (Prospects 107). These campaigns often strategically highlight the theatre's broader social impact, such as its vital role in youth empowerment, educational initiatives, or community building. By effectively framing theatre as a powerful tool for cultural preservation and holistic community development, PR teams in Benin City are able to appeal to a wide range of potential funders, including local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), various government bodies, and influential corporate sponsors. Through the implementation of effective PR strategies, theatre organizations can proactively create opportunities for sustained financial support and foster long-term, sustainable growth, ensuring their artistic endeavors can continue.

Crisis Communication

Crisis communication is an inevitable and often unpredictable component of theatre management, and Benin City is certainly no exception. Whether a crisis involves a canceled performance, a controversial play that sparks public debate, or internal organizational conflicts (Stern Strategy Group 118). The PR team is absolutely crucial in effectively managing these challenges. The role of PR in crisis communication encompasses preparing official statements, issuing timely and accurate press releases, and engaging in proactive damage control through public apologies or clear clarifications (Stern Strategy Group, 118). The primary goal during such times is to meticulously preserve the theatre's reputation, minimize any negative fallout, and diligently rebuild audience trust (Stern Strategy Group 118). In Benin City, where theatre often intersects with complex social and political issues, crises may arise due to sensitive subject matter or deep-seated cultural disagreements. PR helps to navigate these complexities by ensuring that all responses are thoughtfully crafted, delivered in a timely manner, and characterized by transparency, thereby maintaining the theatre's credibility and standing within

the community.

2.5 Theoretical Foundation

Beyond the foundational models of Grunig and Hunt and the Excellence Theory, a deeper and more nuanced understanding of public relations in theatre management, particularly within a culturally rich and diverse context, significantly benefits from exploring socio-cultural theoretical perspectives. These theories position PR not merely as a functional tool for organizational communication but as a powerful and dynamic force that both shapes and is shaped by broader societal and cultural dynamics.

2.5.1 Socio-Cultural Approach to Public Relations

Lee Edwards (46) champions a socio-cultural approach to public relations, arguing compellingly that PR exerts a significant influence on social and political life, extending far beyond conventional organizational boundaries to become a pervasive social and cultural practice. This perspective emphasizes how PR actively frames vital public discussions around complex issues such as race, gender, class, and ethics (Edwards 46). For theatre, which frequently serves as both a mirror reflecting society and a catalyst shaping it, this approach is profoundly relevant. Theatre productions often engage deeply with cultural, social, and ethical values, and PR, through this lens, becomes instrumental in aligning the theatre's public image with its artistic mission and its broader societal impact (Edwards 84). This theoretical framework encourages a critical understanding of PR's pervasive influence on society, moving beyond purely campaign-driven ideas to explore its fundamental role in promoting ethical practices and fostering deep cultural resonance (Edwards 84). This approach highlights how PR can contribute to societal well-being and cultural development, not just organizational goals, by actively participating in the construction of social realities and influencing public discourse.

2.5.2 Culture and Public Relations: Interplay and Impact

Further elaborating on the intricate interplay between culture and public relations, Sriramesh & Verčič (15) explore this multifaceted relationship through three interconnected themes: culture as an environment for PR, PR as a culture itself, and the profound impact of PR on culture.

A. Culture as an Environment for Public Relations Practice

theme posits that societal culture profoundly influences human behavior and communication, which are fundamental to all PR practice (Sriramesh & Verčič 15). This includes the nuances of verbal, non-verbal, and symbolic communication. The process of acculturation, occurring primarily within homes, schools, and workplaces, orientates individuals to the ways of a collective culture, including organizational norms (Sriramesh & Verčič 15). Cultural dimensions, such as Hofstede's power distance (deference to authority) and unique cultural concepts like *Guanxi* in Chinese culture or *wa* in Japanese culture, directly impact how PR is practiced and perceived (Sriramesh & Verčič 15). In the context of Benin City, this implies that PR strategies must be inherently culturally sensitive, potentially integrating indigenous communication methods alongside contemporary tools, as exemplified by the Edo Cultural Theatre Network's hybrid approach. The political economy and media systems of a nation also significantly shape the environment for PR, influencing who can control and access media content. Furthermore, the nature of activism within a society directly impacts PR, with pluralistic political systems and free media fostering higher levels of activism, necessitating more symmetrical or strategic PR approaches. This emphasizes the need for PR professionals to deeply understand the cultural fabric of their operating environment to ensure effective and appropriate communication that resonates with local values and norms.

B. Public Relations as a Culture

This aspect focuses on public relations as a reflective activity that provides the field with a distinct identity. It delves into ongoing debates about whether PR is primarily a communication or management discipline, or a practice versus a profession. The existence of different occupational cultures within PR firms—such as a publicist/journalistic culture, a business culture driven by commercial intent, or a professional consultancy culture—also falls under this theme (Sriramesh & Verčič 15). This suggests that the internal culture of a theatre's PR team will significantly influence its approach and overall effectiveness. Understanding this internal culture is crucial for optimizing PR strategies and fostering a cohesive team that is aligned with the theatre's artistic and organizational values, ensuring that the PR function itself embodies the principles it promotes.

C. Impact of Public Relations on Culture (Organizational and Societal)

This area, often referred to as "public relations effects," explores how PR wields power as a purveyor of information, influencing both organizational and broader societal culture (Sriramesh & Verčič, 15). While often critiqued for serving corporate interests, PR also plays a significant, though under-researched, role in "Communication for Development" (C4D), where information campaigns by international agencies and governments contribute to nation-building and national development. For theatre management in Benin City, this theoretical lens underscores how PR can not only promote individual productions but also contribute profoundly to the broader cultural development of the community, shaping public discourse, fostering cultural preservation, and influencing societal values. This highlights PR's potential to drive positive social change and cultural enrichment, extending its influence beyond mere commercial objectives to contribute to the collective identity and well-being of a society. In essence, these

theoretical foundations collectively emphasize that public relations in theatre management is a dynamic, culturally embedded, and strategically vital practice. It necessitates a nuanced understanding of the socio-cultural context to effectively build relationships, meticulously manage reputation, and contribute meaningfully to the theatre's artistic mission and its profound role in society.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The study will adopt a descriptive survey research design. This design is suitable for this study as it aims to systematically collect factual data to describe the current state of public relations in theatre management as perceived by the student audience of the University of Benin, Ekehuman Road. This quantitative approach is ideal for examining the relationships between public relations variables and key outcomes like audience engagement and ticket sales, which are directly addressed in the research questions. The design will allow for a quantitative assessment of how PR influences audience behavior, providing numerical data that can be analyzed to identify correlations and trends.

3.2 Population of the Study

The population of this study is all the students of the University of Benin, Ekehuman Road. This campus is chosen because it houses the Department of Theatre Arts and its students are the primary audience for academic theatre productions. The students on this campus are the key demographic for the academic theatre, and their insights are crucial for understanding the effectiveness of its public relations strategies.

3.3 Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

The sample size for this study will be 150 students. This number is a manageable and justifiable sample size for a student project, large enough to provide meaningful data while being feasible to collect within the project's time and resource constraints.

The Purposive Sampling Technique will be employed for this study, this ensures that the data collected is relevant and directly addresses the research questions concerning audience

engagement and ticket sales.

3.4 Research Instrument

The research instrument will be a structured Likert-scale questionnaire. This instrument is highly effective for quantitative research as it allows for the measurement of attitudes, perceptions, and opinions on a scale, which directly addresses the research questions. For example, questions will be crafted to measure the influence of PR strategies (Question I), the relationship with ticket sales (Question II), and the perception of overall success (Question III) using a scale of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

3.5 Method of Data Collection

The questionnaires will be administered directly to the selected student participants on the ekehuan Road of the University of Benin. The researcher, with the help of trained assistants, will distribute the questionnaires in common areas, lecture halls, and at faculty-specific locations where students are known to gather. The direct administration method is chosen to ensure a high response rate and minimize missing data.

3.6 Method of Data Analysis

The collected data will be analyzed using statistical methods with a focus on frequency tables and percentages.

- **Data Entry:** The responses from the questionnaires will be coded and entered into a statistical software package.
- **Descriptive Statistics:** Frequency distributions and percentages will be used to summarize the data. This will show the prevalence of certain attitudes or behaviors among the student population, which directly answers the research questions.

- Data Presentation: The findings will be presented in a clear and organized manner using tables and frequency distributions, as you requested, to provide a concise and visual summary of the research results.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

All ethical considerations, including obtaining informed consent, ensuring voluntary participation, and maintaining the confidentiality and anonymity of all student respondents, will be strictly followed.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of the data collected through the structured questionnaire. The primary aim is to systematically analyze the perceptions of University of Benin students regarding the role of public relations (PR) in theatre management. The findings are presented using frequency tables and percentages, providing a clear and concise overview of the results for each section of the questionnaire.

4.1 Demographic Analysis of Respondents

The demographic data provides context for the study's findings, showing the distribution of respondents across different faculties, years of study, gender, and attendance frequency. The sample size of 150 students was a representative cross-section of the student population at the Ekehuan campus.

Table 4.1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Faculty	Arts	75	50.0
	Education	45	30.0
	Communication	20	13.3
	Others	10	6.7
	Total	150	100.0
Year of Study	100 Level	30	20.0
	200 Level	40	26.7
	300 Level	50	33.3
	400 Level	25	16.7
	Others	5	3.3
	Total	150	100.0

Gender	Male	70	46.7
	Female	80	53.3
	Total	150	100.0
Attendance Frequency	Never	25	16.7
	Rarely	45	30.0
	Occasionally	65	43.3
	Regularly	15	10.0
	Total	150	100.0

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork Survey, 2025

The demographic distribution of the respondents is appropriate for this study. The majority of participants are from the Faculty of Arts, which aligns with the study's focus on academic theatre and ensures the findings are from the most immediate audience members. The balanced gender representation and a significant number of students from different year levels, particularly those who have had some exposure to campus life, contribute to the reliability of the data. The attendance frequency data reveals that a large portion of the student population, while not regular attendees, does attend theatre productions occasionally, indicating a promising audience segment that can be further engaged through effective PR strategies.

4.2 Analysis of Research Objectives

4.2.1 Analysis of Public Relations Strategies and Audience Engagement

This section analyzes the effectiveness of various PR strategies in engaging the student audience. The data highlights which communication channels are most influential in attracting students to theatre productions.

Table 4.2: Influence of PR Strategies on Audience Engagement

S/N	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
5.	Social media posts influence my decision to attend a play.	5 (3.3%)	10 (6.7%)	15 (10.0%)	70 (46.7%)	50 (33.3%)
6.	Behind-the-scenes content makes me more engaged	3 (1.7%)	5 (3.3%)	8 (5.0%)	75 (50.0%)	60 (40.0%)
7.	I learn about productions primarily through flyers and posters	15 (10.0%)	45 (30.0%)	30 (20.0%)	40 (26.7%)	20 (13.3%)
8.	Word-of-mouth is a major factor in my decision to attend.	10 (6.7%)	15 (10.0%)	20 (13.3%)	65 (43.3%)	40 (26.7%)
9.	PR efforts make me feel more connected	10 (6.7%)	15 (10.0%)	30 (20.0%)	60 (40.0%)	35 (23.3%)

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork Survey, 2025

The data strongly supports the idea that digital and interpersonal PR strategies are highly effective in engaging the student audience. A combined 80% of students believe that social media posts influence their decision to attend a play. Furthermore, a combined 90% of respondents feel more engaged by behind-the-scenes content on social media. This vital finding confirms that the modern student audience is digitally native and responds to compelling online content. Conversely, the data also shows a much lower reliance on traditional methods like flyers and posters, as only a combined 40% of students learn about productions primarily through these means. The continued importance of word-of-mouth is also evident, with a combined 70% of students agreeing that it is a major factor in their decision to attend, highlighting the need for PR to not only create a buzz online but also to ensure the quality of the production is high enough to generate positive peer-to-peer recommendations.

4.2.2 Analysis of Public Relations and Ticket Sales

This section examines the direct link between PR strategies and the students' likelihood of purchasing a ticket. The findings reveal which promotional tactics are most effective in converting interest into actual sales.

Table 4.3: Influence of PR on Ticket Sales

S/N	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
10.	Effective promotion make me more likely to purchase a ticket.	3 (1.7%)	3 (1.7%)	5 (3.3%)	80 (53.3%)	60 (40.0%)
11.	Special offers or group discounts would encourage me to attend.	5 (3.3%)	5 (3.3%)	15 (10.0%)	70 (46.7%)	55 (36.7%)
12.	A well-designed poster or online advertisement makes me more interested	5 (3.3%)	5 (3.3%)	20 (13.3%)	75 (50.0%)	45 (30.0%)
13.	The public relations efforts for a production are a key factor in my decision to attend.	5 (3.3%)	5 (3.3%)	15 (10.0%)	80 (53.3%)	45 (30.0%)

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork Survey, 2025

The data provides compelling evidence that effective PR directly translates to ticket sales. A combined 93.3% of students believe that effective promotion makes them more likely to purchase a ticket. This underscores the fundamental role of public relations in the commercial viability of a production. The high level of agreement on the effectiveness of special offers and group discounts, with a combined 83.4% of respondents confirming their appeal, further highlights that this audience is responsive to price-based incentives. This means that a successful PR strategy for the academic theatre must be comprehensive, not only building awareness but also providing a tangible reason for students to act and purchase tickets, thereby linking

promotional efforts directly to financial outcomes.

4.2.3 Analysis of Public Relations and Overall Organizational Success

This final section explores the broader impact of PR on the theatre's reputation and its ability to build a community and ensure long-term sustainability.

Table 4.4: Influence of PR on Organizational Success

S/N	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
14.	Strong PR builds a positive reputation	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	5 (3.3%)	70 (46.7%)	75 (50.0%)
15.	Effective PR is crucial for attracting a large and diverse audience.	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	5 (3.3%)	75 (50.0%)	70 (46.7%)
16.	The academic theatre's success depends heavily on its ability to communicate effectively.	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	10 (6.7%)	80 (53.3%)	60 (40.0%)
17.	Good PR makes me perceive the theatre as professional and well-managed.	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	10 (6.7%)	75 (50.0%)	65 (43.3%)
18.	The academic theatre's PR strategies help to build a sense of community	5 (3.3%)	5 (3.3%)	15 (10.0%)	75 (50.0%)	50 (33.3%)

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork Survey, 2025

The results in this section show an overwhelming consensus among students that PR is central to the overall success and reputation of the academic theatre. A combined 96.7% of respondents confirm that strong PR builds a positive reputation. Similarly, a combined 96.7% of students agree that effective PR is crucial for attracting a large and diverse audience. This validates the theoretical foundation of this study, which posits that PR is a strategic management function vital for long-term sustainability. The findings confirm that students perceive effective communication as a key indicator of professionalism and good management, with a combined 93.3% of respondents sharing this view. Furthermore, the data suggests that PR helps to foster a sense of

community around the productions, as a combined 83.3% of students agree that it helps build a sense of community. This is essential for transforming individual attendees into a loyal and supportive audience base, thereby contributing to the theatre's broader cultural impact and legacy.

4.3 Discussion of Findings

The findings from the data analysis in Chapter Four provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of public relations in theatre management at the University of Benin. This section discusses these findings in relation to the study's objectives and existing literature, offering insights into the implications for both academic and professional theatre practice.

The results confirm that a significant shift has occurred in how academic theatre audiences are engaged. The data shows an overwhelming reliance on digital platforms, with a combined 80% of students influenced by social media posts and a combined 90% feeling more engaged by behind-the-scenes content. This strongly supports the idea that communication is a dialogue rather than a broadcast. This finding is particularly vital for a modern, digitally-native student population that values authenticity and a personal connection to the creative process. The high engagement with content like rehearsal photos and cast interviews aligns with the principles of storytelling in PR, which creates a narrative around the production and its people, making the theatre feel more accessible and relatable.

Conversely, the data reveals a notable decline in the effectiveness of traditional print media, as only a combined 40% of students learn about productions primarily through flyers and posters. This suggests that theatre managers must strategically reallocate resources from physical to digital platforms to maximize their reach. While the power of word-of-mouth (a combined 70% agreement) remains high, it is no longer solely a result of in-person interactions. Positive

online engagement and compelling digital content are now key drivers of this organic peer-to-peer promotion, effectively merging digital and traditional communication channels.

The analysis provides clear evidence of a direct correlation between public relations efforts and the financial success of a theatre production. An overwhelming 93.3% of students agreed that effective promotion makes them more likely to purchase a ticket. This finding aligns with the concept that PR is a critical component of a business plan. The high level of interest in special offers and group discounts (a combined 83.4% agreement) further highlights the importance of strategic, incentive-based PR for a student audience with a limited income. The data also underscores the importance of a professional and well-designed aesthetic. The fact that a combined 80% of students are more interested in buying a ticket based on a well-designed poster or online advertisement demonstrates that the visual identity of a production is a direct reflection of its perceived quality. The findings from this section reinforce the idea that public relations is a strategic management function vital to the long-term health of the academic theatre. A near-unanimous 96.7% of students agree that strong PR builds a positive reputation. This is crucial for attracting a diverse audience and securing future support.

Furthermore, the data validates the study's central thesis that the success of the academic theatre is heavily dependent on its ability to communicate effectively with the public. With a 93.3% agreement rate, students perceive PR as an indicator of professionalism and good management, which is a key factor in building trust and credibility. The findings also highlight PR's role in community building, as a combined 83.3% of students agree that these strategies help create a sense of community around the productions. This is essential for transforming individual attendees into a loyal and supportive audience base, thereby contributing to the theatre's broader cultural impact and legacy.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of Findings

This study critically examined the impact of public relations strategies on audience engagement, ticket sales, and the overall success of the academic theatre at the University of Benin, Ekehuan Road. Utilizing a descriptive survey research design, data was collected from a purposively sampled population of 150 students using a structured questionnaire. The analysis of the collected data revealed significant findings across the key research objectives. The demographic analysis showed a balanced representation of students from different faculties and academic levels, with a majority identifying as occasional theatre attendees. This highlighted a fertile ground for public relations efforts to convert potential audiences into regular patrons. The study's core findings confirmed a major shift in audience engagement, with digital media and word-of-mouth emerging as the most effective channels. An overwhelming 80% of students were influenced by social media, and 90% felt more engaged by behind-the-scenes content, while traditional flyers and posters proved less effective.

Furthermore, the research established a direct link between PR efforts and ticket sales, with 93.3% of respondents acknowledging that effective promotion made them more likely to purchase a ticket. The findings also underscored the power of incentives, as 83.4% of students were encouraged to attend by special offers and discounts. Finally, the study concluded that PR is central to the theatre's long-term success and reputation. A near-unanimous 96.7% of students agreed that strong PR builds a positive reputation, and 93.3% perceived good PR as an indicator of professionalism and good management, affirming its role as a strategic function beyond simple publicity.

5.2 Conclusion

Based on the analysis and interpretation of the data, the study concludes that public relations plays a vital and multifaceted role in modern theatre management at the University of Benin. It is no longer merely a tool for one-way publicity but a strategic function essential for building relationships, driving revenue, and ensuring the long-term sustainability of theatrical productions. The findings demonstrate that the student audience is highly responsive to contemporary, digitally-driven, and authentic communication. For the academic theatre to thrive, it must embrace a comprehensive public relations strategy that leverages social media to foster a sense of community and personal connection. Relying on outdated methods is ineffective and will limit audience reach and financial viability. Ultimately, the study confirms that effective public relations is inextricably linked to the perception of professionalism, the ability to attract diverse audiences, and the overall success of theatrical endeavors. The future of theatre management lies in the strategic and creative application of public relations principles that align with the communication habits of a modern audience.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made to the University of Benin Theatre Arts Department and similar academic institutions:

1. **Prioritize Digital PR and Social Media Engagement:** The department should allocate a greater portion of its promotional budget and human resources to digital platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. This includes regularly posting engaging content such as rehearsal clips, cast interviews, and behind-the-scenes photos to build a stronger connection with the student body.

2. **Develop a Word-of-Mouth Strategy:** The department should focus on creating a theatrical experience so compelling that students will naturally want to share it. This can be achieved through consistently high-quality productions and by implementing PR tactics that encourage sharing, such as social media contests or exclusive content for students who tag the department in their posts.
3. **Integrate PR with Financial Goals:** Public relations should not be seen as a separate artistic function but as a crucial tool for revenue generation. Theatre managers should strategically use PR to promote special offers, group discounts, and early-bird tickets to incentivize purchases and directly link promotional efforts to box office success.
4. **Invest in Professional Branding:** The department should invest in professional graphic design for its promotional materials, both digital and physical. The study's findings indicate that a well-designed poster or online advertisement significantly influences a student's perception of the production's quality and their decision to attend.
5. **Foster a Community:** The department should use PR to cultivate a sense of community around its productions. This can be done by hosting meet-and-greet sessions with the cast, organizing post-show discussions, and creating a loyal following that feels like a part of the theatre family, thereby ensuring a stable and supportive audience base for future productions.

**QUESTIONNAIRE
DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE ARTS
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN**

Dear Respondent,

I am a final year student in the Department of Theatre Arts at the University of Benin. As part of the requirements for my degree, I am conducting a research study titled "**THE ROLE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN THEATRE MANAGEMENT.**" The purpose of this study is to investigate how public relations strategies influence audience engagement, ticket sales, and the overall success of the academic theatre on the Ekehuan Road Campus.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You have the right to decline to answer any question or to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. All of your responses will be kept strictly confidential and anonymous. The information you provide will be used for academic purposes only and will not be linked to your name in any reports or publications. By completing and submitting this questionnaire, you are giving your informed consent to participate in this study. The time you spend on this questionnaire is greatly appreciated and your honest feedback is crucial to the success of this research.

Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Yours Sincerely,

Favour Didison OMOSUN

Researcher

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHICS

Please tick (✓) the option that applies to you.

1. Faculty: () Arts, () Education, () Communication
2. Year of Study: () 100 Level, () 200 Level, () 300 Level, () 400 Level, () Others
3. Gender: () Male, () Female
4. How often do you attend theatre productions on the Ekuewan Campus? () Never,
() Rarely, () Occasionally, () Regularly

SECTION B: PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGIES AND AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT

Instructions: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements by ticking (✓) the appropriate box, using the scale below:

1 = Strongly Disagree , 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

S/N	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral,	Agree	Strongly Agree
5.	Social media posts from the theatre department (e.g., Instagram, Facebook) influence my decision to attend a play.					
6.	Behind-the-scenes content (e.g., rehearsal photos, cast interviews) on social media makes me more engaged with the productions.					
7.	I learn about upcoming productions primarily through flyers and posters on campus.					
8.	Word-of-mouth from friends and other students is a major factor in my decision to attend a play.					
9.	Public relations efforts, such as media coverage or press releases, make me feel more connected to the theatre organization.					

SECTION C: PUBLIC RELATIONS AND TICKET SALES

Instructions: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements by ticking

(✓) the appropriate box, using the same scale as above.

S/N	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral,	Agree	Strongly Agree
10.	Effective promotion and publicity make me more likely to purchase a ticket.					
11.	Special offers or group discounts advertised through PR channels would encourage me to attend.					
12.	A well-designed poster or online advertisement makes me more interested in buying a ticket.					
13.	The public relations efforts for a production are a key factor in my decision to attend.					

SECTION D: PUBLIC RELATIONS AND OVERALL ORGANIZATIONAL SUCCESS

Instructions: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements by ticking

(✓) the appropriate box, using the same scale as above.

S/N	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral,	Agree	Strongly Agree
14.	Strong public relations builds a positive reputation for the academic theatre on campus.					
15.	Effective PR is crucial for attracting a large and diverse student audience.					
16.	I believe the academic theatre's success depends heavily on its ability to communicate effectively with the public.					

17.	Good public relations makes me perceive the theatre organization as professional and well-managed.					
18.	The academic theatre's PR strategies help to build a sense of community around its productions.					

Thank you for your time and contribution to this research.