

The Influence of Marketing Public Relations in the Redemption of a Product's Battered Image: A Study of Indomie Noodles Crisis

Oluwasola, Omolola, O., Tiwalola Madoc & Ibitoye, Pius O.

Communication and Media Studies,

Afe Babalola University,

Ado-Ekiti,

Nigeria

omolola.oluwasonla15@gmail.com, lollyani@yahoo.com

oluwasolao@abuad.edu.ng

Abstract

Crisis is a phenomenon that has affected many products, individuals and even corporate establishments. Some products survive the crisis while others are pushed off the market place. It becomes necessary therefore to nosedive into how companies can effectively manage product crisis to retain share of the market. This study therefore examines the significance of Marketing Public Relations in the redemption of a product's battered image; a study of the killer Indomie Noodles scare. The survey method was used. 160 copies of questionnaires were distributed to two study population namely; Secondary School students and Mothers. Also, a semi structured interview guide was used to elicit information from industry correspondents in the print and broadcast media and also for the media executive of the public relations company that handled De-United Foods Limited's crisis. Data obtained were analyzed using several analytical techniques to examine relationship among variables under investigation. Findings from the research work revealed that sales dropped significantly during the Killer indomie scare. It was discovered that the inability of De-united Foods Industries Limited to act promptly by coming up with appropriate clarifications allowed the crisis to thrive. Based on findings obtained from the study, the researcher therefore recommends that companies should act promptly and be 100% open to the media and the general public during crisis period.

Keywords: Product; Rumour; Crisis; Marketing Public Relations. Marketing mix

Introduction

Background to the Study

The contemporary marketing world is characterized by various challenges especially fierce competition. Sometimes, this competition leads to advertising clutter, damaging rumor, product crisis, product's loss of reputation and so on. As a result, organization's product marketers have geared up to the reality that advertising though important, is not the overriding element of the promotional mix. Hence, the need arose to employ integrated marketing communication (which combines advertising with sales promotions, public relations, sponsorships, direct marketing, personal selling and so on).

Specifically, companies using integrated marketing communication like McDonald use more of public relations strategies and messages in order to overcome clutter emanating from competition and also to act as socially responsible organizations especially during product crisis.

Today's marketers see public relations as a vital promotional tool that can be used to enhance a company's overall marketing performance. This is because it is more credible and

acceptable by consumers because they believe that public relations oriented messages are coming from selfless unbiased personnel.

Harris (1991:4) quoting Herbert Baum, president of the North American Division of Campbell Soup Company, reinforces the significance of public relations in a company's marketing strategies when he said.

Campbell soup is a firm believer in building brands, long term brand equity, brand-building type of advertising and marketing are absolutely necessary for sustaining the effectiveness of our brands. At the same time, sales promotion getting the immediate sale, the short-term buck is necessary to stay in the game. The hidden weapon is PR. PR is probably more effective in changing consumers' attitudes about products today than advertising. It is easier for consumers to believe a message if it's coming from an independent third party than if you is shouting it in an ad.

This view suggests that public relations help boost the effects of a company's promotional efforts on its consumers.

Despite the benefits derived from public relations, there is still need for the marketing world and even public relations practitioners to note the clear demarcation between corporate and marketing public relations.

Traditionally, public relations are concerned with people's perception of issues, individuals or a corporate entity. However, the recognition given the new marketing mix (integrated marketing communication) by companies has brought about a distinction between corporate and marketing public relations (an emerging sub-discipline of public relations).

Corporate public relations as Bergh and Katz (1999) explain focuses on the non-customer goals of a company such as corporate image or issue-oriented communication while marketing public relations activities and messages are designed to support the company's selling function. Depending on a company's marketing objectives, marketing public relations tend to be more involved with integrated marketing communication efforts as it works closely with sales promotion and advertising.

Kotler, in Harris (1991 V) describing marketing public ins says: "it is a healthy offspring of its two parents: marketing and public relations. Marketing public relations represents an opportunity for companies to regain a share of voice in a message-satiated society".

Keegan, Moriarty and Duncan (1992) describe marketing public relations as a type of public relations that focuses on creating positive impressions of a product or brand.

Marketing public relations' core competence cover a lot of marketing objectives which include product introduction, promotion/ brand awareness, crisis management, building consumer trust and confidence, reinforcing weak markets, targeting, defending products at risk, cultivating new markets and repositioning and so on.

De-United Foods Industries Limited's Crisis Synopsis

De-United Foods Industries Limited (manufacturer of Indomies Noodles) was registered in Nigeria in 1990 with factories located in Ota, Ogun State and Port-Harcourt. The factories have installed capacity of 500,000 and 46,000 packs per day respectively. So far, seven Indomie flavours have been duly registered by the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC).

Way back, as the only company producing noodles in Nigeria, De-United Foods Industries had enjoyed patronage and loyalty from consumers until when pandemonium broke on the 9th of May, 2004. It was reported and rumoured that Mr. Yemi Motiriwon, a 25-year-old man died while many more victims were in the hospital after consuming meals of Indomie Noodles. Consequently, the company lost its hold on its consumers; school children,

undergraduate, parents, young and old.

This development made NAFDAC to temporarily shut the company's factories. The agency conducted laboratory tests on samples of Indomie Noodles collected from different sources and locations (retailers, wholesalers and even some from the Indomie company factory during processing).

Afterwards, the media reported that NAFDAC tests did reveal a level of risk in the brand but specifically blamed some batches of the product. Also, the agency could not link the death of Mr. Yemi Motiriwon to the rumour that he died after consuming meals of Indomie noodles stressing that the risk in the product cannot lead to death. Moreover, medical reports said the deceased died from an enlarged heart condition. NAFDAC ordered the Indomie company to recall the affected batches from the market. The agency therefore declared the product safe for consumption.

In line with the foregoing, this research work attempted to see in practical terms what this emerging sub-discipline of public relations can offer manufacturers particularly with regards to product's reputation management.

Statement of the Problem

In Nigeria, corporate organizations particularly manufacturing companies are susceptible to product crisis. Past examples are Always sanitary towels, manufactured by Procter and Gamble, and Close up toothpaste, manufactured by Unilever Nigeria Plc. These crises often occur in some cases as a result of mix-ups in the product's production line, drop in product quality, adulteration of the product and at times rumour. At such moments, companies often find it difficult to effectively manage the problem due to their inability to tactfully reach the minds and hearts of target consumers. The consequence in some cases of courses is the erosion of such a product from the market place.

Fuelling the problem is the realities that mass advertising and even target advertising has lost some of their cost-effectiveness as consumer have now developed communication-avoidance attitudes.

Kotler in Harris (1991: V) observes that "in this age, in an over communicated society, consumers develop communication avoidance routines. They don't notice print ads; they "tune out" commercial messages. They busy themselves watching videos, working at the computer, going to movies and sports events ..."

Therefore, there is need for managerial marketing executives to develop plans that will break through consumers' resistance, indifference and clutter. The need to rediscover the power of news,

feature articles, events, town storming, community programmes and good media relations in delivering imaginative messages with credibility and impact. This can be done through public relations effort, specifically, the emerging marketing public relations.

To this end, this research work sought to know through exploration how marketing public relations can help redeem a product **battered** image using Indomie Noodles, a product of De-United Foods Industries Limited as a study.

Research Questions

This study provided answers to the following research questions:-

- i. What effects did the killer Indomie crisis have on consumers' perception and purchase of the product during the crisis?
- ii. To what extent can marketing public relations effort rebuild consumers' trust, confidence in and purchase of product that has suffered image loss?
- iii. Of what effect is marketing public relations oriented messages on consumers in comparison to advertising?

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of the study is to examine the influence of Marketing Public Relations in the Redemption of a Product's Battered Image; A study of Indomie Noodles Crisis. In addition, the following are other specific objectives of the study.

- i. To examine whether marketing public relations strategies can help to restore consumers' trust and confidence in a product that already have a tarnished image.
- ii. To establish the extent of the positive effect that the marketing public relations strategies and messages employed by the Indomie company have on To know what effects the killer Indomie crisis have on consumers' perception and purchase of the product during the crisis.
- iii. Consumers against claims made by the management of De-United Foods Industries Limited.
- iv. To critically examine consumers perception of marketing public relations oriented messages compared to advertising. It also looked into the possibilities of using marketing public relations to combat consumer's resistance to advertisements.

Conceptual Clarification

Marketing Public Relations: A Definition

Marketing public relations as defined by Keegan, Moriarty and Duncan (1992) is a sophisticated and planned publicity effort that focuses on creating positive images for a product or brand. They explain further that unlike advertising, marketing public relations consists of brand messages that appear in the media for free. Another definition given by Bergh and Katz (1999) explains that marketing public relations activities are designed to support a company's selling function.

In his own view, De Mooij (1994:370) says marketing public relations concerns the marketing of a company's product, service brand. He explains further that marketing public relations is an activity which when organized can make an important contribution the following:-

- *The introduction of new products or brands*
- *The upgrading or juvenating of existing brands*
- *The strengthening of the brand image.*
- *The effectiveness of international image campaigns particularly when integrated with promotion and direct marketing communication.*

In addition, marketing public relations uses tools like press release, media briefing and conference, facility visit, product endorsement, feature articles, spotlight and supplement, sponsorship, town storming and so on.

In an attempt to appraise these definitions, the researcher believes that the authorities cited emphasize how marketing public relations helps build a favourable product image and not solely the image of company as the traditional corporate public relations stresses. Before now, publicity for a product is usually in form of publicity for the company. Now, with the advent of marketing public relations, the brand or service can be publicized separately and distinctly through positive brand messages published in the media and other marketing public relations tools.

Well known internationally, the concept of marketing public relations arose in the 1980's due to the need to distinguish between corporate public relations and the specialized application of public relations techniques that support marketing.

Moreover, Keegan et al (1992) reiterate that it was some significant considerations that gave marketing public relations its current levels of importance. For example, marketing public relations to the trio is seen as cost effective in the face of increasing media and advertising Costs, because it breaks through clutter and above all, increases message credibility.

Of all the highlighted contributions of marketing public relations effort to a company's corporate objectives, it is its contribution in the strengthening of a brand's image that is of utmost importance to this study.

Approaches to Marketing Public Relations Practice

As a matter of fact, every organisation and its product have a reputation, either good or bad. Center and Jackson (1995:13) confirm this when they posit that "the managerial challenge is whether something is consciously done to face the fact of reputation". A good or bad reputation depends on the practical approach that a company's public relations department adopts in tackling and dealing with issues. Some companies are proactive while some are reactive.

Proactive Marketing Public Relations: This is dictated by a company's marketing objectives. Shimp (2000:608) says "it is offensively rather than defensively oriented and opportunity seeking rather than problem solving"

To Center and Jacksoni 1995J, practitioners using this approach are often analysers/prospectors. They explain that such practitioners always stargaze into possible future occurrences and therefore earmark effective plans and programmes to handle such forecasts and subsequently evaluate results.

Shimp adds that the major role of proactive public relations is the area of product introductions or product revisions. He explains further that proactive marketing public relations is integrated with other integrated marketing tools to give a product additional exposure, newsworthiness and credibility

Reactive Marketing Public Relations: This describes the conduct of public relations in response to outside influences.

According to Shimp (2000), this approach is undertaken as a result of external pressures and challenges brought by competitive actions, shifts in consumer's attitudes, changes in government policies and other external influences. In essence, reactive marketing public relations deal typically with changes that haven negative consequences on an organisation. As such reactive marketing public relations attempts to repair a company's reputation prevent market erosion and regain lost sales.

Furthermore, Shimp(2000) explains that unanticipated marketplace development can place an organisation in a vulnerable position that demands reactive marketing public relations especially product defects and failures.

While it is desirable for practitioners to be proactive, it also need be pointed out that there may be unexpected situations that require reactive responses. However, it is only those who have prepared ahead that will be able to make their reactive situations a success story. In other words, there is need for strategic and adequate planning against unforeseen but envisaged situations that could crop up in the future.

Now, what is the significance of marketing public relations in the marketing mix.

The Role of Marketing Public Relations in the Marketing Mix

Authorities agree that marketing public relations is a promotional option that rounds off the marketing mix by adding value to it. It boosts the impact of advertising campaign, sales promotion, direct marketing and personal selling thereby facilitating exchange of transactions

for mutual benefits.

For instance, Bergh and Katz (1999) say marketing public relations can make a contribution to the promotional plan by making a company's message more credible. They agree with other scholars that consumers believe that the intent of advertising, direct marketing, sales promotion and sales people is to sell something to them. However, marketing public relations in the form of carefully managed publicity can help create synergy for an integrated marketing plan.

Harris (1991:46) affirming Bergh and Katz's (1999) proposition said that "marketing public relations presents an opportunity to gain positive product exposure".

Adegoke (2000:23) in his own view says public relations' role in the marketing mix is geared towards influencing a company's publics' opinions to ensure a favourable disposition towards it. He stresses that public relations ensures the "acceptance of an organisation's products or services, its price, promotional efforts for the satisfaction of its public needs".

In a nut shell, marketing public relations efforts are significant in the marketing mix in the areas of research, product development, branding and packaging, brand image building, trade and product support, product launching and distribution, positive product or brand publicity through good media relations. It goes further to monitor media activities, legislature and other forces that could have effect on the company's activities and publics.

Marketing and Public Relations' Alliance

The increasing interest in the convergence of public relations and marketing has resulted in more public forums devoted to the subject especially at the international market. Inspite of the rising acceptance of public relations by marketing executives, considerable confusion however surrounds the nature of relationship.

The alliance between public relations and marketing will be examined using the working relationship model propagated by Kotler and Mindak (1978) cited in Harris (1991) and Katherin Yip (1990) cited in Ajala (2001).

Harris (1990) citing Kotler and Mindak (1978) gives a five part model of the possible interdependence between marketing and Public relations as management functions.

These are:-

- i. Separate but equal functions
- ii. Equal but overlapping functions
- iii. Marketing as the dominant function
- iv. Public relations as the dominant function
- v. Marketing and public relations as the same function

Separate But Equal Functions: This model supports the traditional view that marketing and public relations are different in their perspectives but however work in the same direction. This function is what Ajala (2001) calls interrelatedness of marketing and public relations.

According to Kotler and Mindak cited in Harris (1991), marketing exists to serve and satisfy customers' needs at a profit while public relations exists to produce good will in the company's various public so that such publics do not interfere in the company's profit making ability.

Explaining the first phase of the model, Ajala (2001:28) citing Katherin Yip (1990) sees the separate functions as independent. According to her, mutually exclusive functions exist where company's marketing and public relations functions are purposely demarcated in such a way that both functions are autonomous.

Equal but Overlapping Functions: This model is of the view that marketing and public

relations have important overlapping functions and also share some common concepts. The most obvious overlapping function is product publicity which may be carried out by either of the two disciplines/departments.

Marketing as the Dominant Function: This school of thought postulates that corporate public relations should be enshrined under the control of corporate marketing. The existence of public relations in the company according to this model is to make it easier for firms to market their goods and services.

Public Relations as the Dominant Function: This model still carries on the power struggle and tussle as to whose role is more dominant. It states that public relations should control marketing. It hangs its argument on the fact that the future of an organisation depends critically on how it is viewed by key publics which include stakeholders, unions, financial institutions, employees, community leaders, regulatory authorities, policy makers as well as customers.

Marketing and Public Relations as the Same Function: This model advocates that the two departments' functions have converging concepts and methodologies. They both acknowledge "the primacy of a management process consisting of analysis, planning, implementation and control" Harris (1991:42).

The marketing and public relations relationship models can be graphically represented thus:

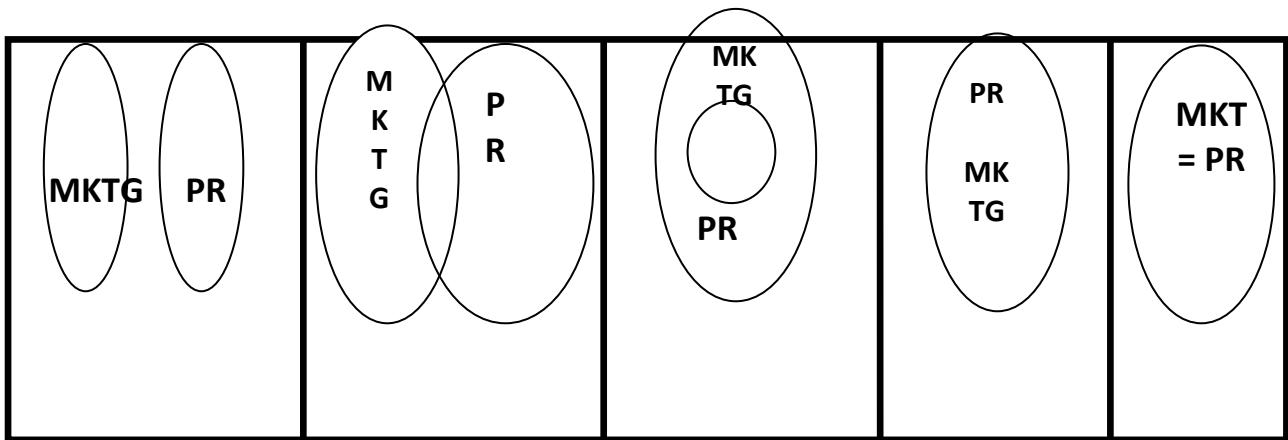


Figure 1: Marketing and Public Relations relationship model.

Source: Kotler and Mindak's sketch in Journal of Marketing, October 1978:14 as cited in Ajala2OO1:27]

Though, one may not be able to specifically pinpoint a model as the most suitable one for all organisations, the fifth model appears to be most beneficial to organisations.

Whatever may be the arrangement, as a management function, public relations and marketing should remain complementary to each other. This synthesis would lead to marketing decisions that recognise the necessity of satisfying both consumer and non-consumer publics who influence the company's ability to market its product effectively. This will ultimately allow the company to achieve set objectives.

Distinction between Corporate and Marketing Public Relations

The practice of public relations in Nigeria and even internationally is viewed as one that is concerned with how people feel about issues, individuals or corporate bodies. However, the rise in the significance given integrated marketing communications has brought about a distinction between the age long corporate public relations and marketing public relations.

To start with, corporate public relations are a corporate management function while marketing public relations on the other hand is a marketing management function. Under this scheme, Harris (1991) posits that the mission of corporate public relations is to support corporate objectives while that of marketing public relations is to support marketing objectives. In essence, corporate public relations focus on the non-customer goals of a company such as corporate image or issue-oriented communication while marketing public relations activities are designed to support the selling function.

Put differently, corporate public relations deals with an organisation's corporate goals like good investor relations, government relations, community relations, public affairs, advocacy advertising among others. Marketing public relations in its own capacity helps in maintaining markets for mature products, winning consumers' confidence for products, ensuring positive product publicity, trade support and so on.

Inspite of this distinction, Harris (1991) still points out a close working relationship between them. This is not only because of the similarities of skills and experience but also due to the need to integrate marketing objectives with corporate objectives especially during crisis. The synergy is particularly important because corporate response to crisis situation unavoidably affects consumers' perception and behaviour. Subsequently, the company's response affects its fate in the market place even after the crisis.

Product's Crisis

Crisis indeed is a fact of life from which no organisation is immune. Guth and Marsh (2000) citing Barton describe crisis as a major event that has potential negative results. They add that the event and its aftermath may significantly damage an organisation and its employees, products, services, financial condition, reputation and so on.

Crisis as it is, may either be brutal or otherwise. Whatever category it is, a crisis can be an act of nature (natural), an intentional or planned event by external forces or an unintentional accident. When a product experiences crisis, it is often rare for it to be a natural occurrence. It could either be as a result of a mix up in the product's production line or an intentional event such as sabotage, adulteration of the product and so on.

Apart from causes highlighted above, Ajala (2001:175) citing Dunne (1990) points out certain things or acts that could trigger off a crisis; these include; financial difficulty, deregulation changes, managerial incompetence, product failure, industrial relations and market changes.

Empirical Review

A study conducted by Tom Duncan (1985) cited in Harris (1991) for Golin/Harris communication sought to know "How manufacturers and service companies perceive and use marketing public relations". It was discovered that marketing public relations was perceived as being effective in a variety of areas that are traditionally the responsibility of advertising. Three out of every four companies in the sample used marketing public relations and those who did used it to build credibility, save money, complement advertising and sustain established brands.

These research findings reinforce the recognition given marketing public relations at the international market in relation to its significance in a company's promotional effort as opposed to what obtains in the Nigerian marketing world.

Methodology

This study adopted the survey research design method. 160 copies of questionnaire and semi-structured interview guide were used to elicit information from respondents.

The study populations were of three categories. First, Junior Secondary School (JSS) one and two students in private schools. Second, mothers in Lagos state. The third population included media personnel in Lagos — state and this by extension included a media executive of the public relations agency that handled the De-United Food Industries Limited's crisis.

Junior Secondary School one and two students were chosen because it has been discovered that most of De- United's advertising messages are directed at children. The students are categorized as children because their age range is between 10 and 12 years. Moreover, children also have an indirect purchase power (though not in terms of monetary capacity). This is manifested in their influence on their parent's eventual decision to purchase Indomie Noodles. The children's indirect purchase power helped the researcher to study their reactions during the crisis, the role they played and the effect that the marketing public relations tools employed by De-United Foods Industries Limited had on them.

Mothers were chosen because they, unlike the children are the buyers. Frequency counts and percentages were utilized to analyze data. To ease analysis, tables and figures of Mothers are labeled A while those of Children are labeled B.

Data Analysis and Discussion of Findings

Research Question One: What effects did the killer Indomie crisis have on consumers' perception and purchase of the product during the crisis.

This research question was asked to ascertain the reactions of consumers to the crisis and to also discover the effects the crisis have on the purchase of the product. This is important because the other research questions are tied to this.

Table 1: Consumers Reactions to the Crisis

Mothers (A)				Children (B)			
Option	Frequency	Percentage	Cum. Percent	Option	Frequency	Percentage	Cum. Percent
I was shocked	32	40.0	40.0	I stopped eating indomine	28	35.0	35.0
I was indifferent	23	28.8	68.8	I told mummy not to buy indomine again	25	31.3	66.3
I was afraid	14	17.5	86.3	I did not believe it	18	22.5	88.8
I did not believe it	11	13.8	100.0	I continued to eat indomine	9	11.3	100.0
Total	80	100.0		Total	80	100.0	

Source, field survey

Table 1 reflects consumer's reactions to the killer Indomie Noodles crisis and it indicates variations in respondents' reactions. From the table 1A, 32 respondents, representing 40% of the respondents claimed that they were shocked while 23 or 28.8% of the respondents said

they were indifferent. In addition, 14 or 17.5% of the respondents claimed that they were afraid while another 11 respondents which translated into 13.8% maintained that they did not believe the rumour.

For children, table 1(B) indicates that 28 or 35° of the total respondents completely stopped eating Indomie during the crisis while another 25 respondents, representing 31.3% of the respondents said they told their mothers not to buy Indomie Noodles again. These two reactions show that a large number of children were also shocked and afraid like the mothers. Surprisingly, 18 or 22.5% of the total respondents claimed that they did not believe the rumour. Also, about nine or 11 .3% said they continued to eat Indomie. The last two range of responses show that some children were not moved by the rumour.

Table 2: Extent of the Effect of the Rumour on Consumers' Perception and Consumption of Indomie Noodles

Mothers (A)				Children (B)			
Option	Frequency	Percentage	Cum. Percent.	Option	Frequency	Percentage	Cum. Percent
Great extent	48	60.0	60.0	Very much	49	61.3	61.3
Some extent	23	28.8	88.8	Not too much	8	22.5	83.3
Little extent	8	10.0	98.8	Not at all	13	16.3	100.0
No extent	1	1.3	100.0				
Total	80	100.0		Total	80	100	

Source, field survey

Table 2 represents respondents' responses on the extent to which the rumour affected their perception and purchase of Indomie. Information presented in table 2(A) shows that 48 respondents (mothers), which translated into 60% of the respondents admitted that the news greatly affected their perception and consumption of the product while another 23 or 28.8% of the respondents claimed that their perception and consumption was affected by the news to some extent. Also, eight or 10% of the total number sampled said they were affected to little extent while one or 1.3% of the respondents said the effect was to no extent.

For children, table 2[BJ reflect that 49 respondents representing 61.3% of the total respondents claimed that the news really affected the way they used to eat Indomie then because they stopped consuming Indomie. In addition, 18 respondents, which translated into 22.5% of the respondents, said the effect was not too much. Also, 13 other respondents, indicating 16.3% of the total number sampled said their consumption of Indomie Noodles then was not affected at all.

From the above, it could be said that a good number of children maintained their interest in the product than mothers. This is shown in the 13 or 16.3% of total respondents (children) that said the news did not affect their consumption at all compared to the 1.3% of mothers who said the effect was to no extent. This shows about 15% difference.

In a nutshell, available data showed that people's perception and loyalty was affected during the crisis. Even mothers that claimed they were indifferent still had their purchase decision altered during the crisis.

Research Question Two: To what extent can marketing public relations efforts rebuild consumers trust, confidence in and purchase of a product that has suffered image loss?

This research question was raised to ascertain the possibilities of using marketing public relations to regain confidence and trust for a tarnished product.

To ease understanding of the analysis, responses on marketing public relations efforts are categorised and summed up as marketing public relations tools. These are: Recall of the affected batches from the market, the appearance of the Indomie company's managing director on New dawn with Funmi Iyanda, stories and feature articles in newspapers and magazines, testimonies of people shown on television eating Indomie Noodles (product endorsement) and Indomie company's officials' visit to schools (town storming). The marketing public relations tools were broken in the questionnaire to ease respondents' answers.

Table 3: Medium From Which Respondents Hear De-United Limited's Side of the Story

Mothers (A)			Children (B)				
Option	Frequency	Percentage	Cum. Percent.	Option	Frequency	Percentage	Cum. Percent
Advertisements	18	22.5	22.5	Advertisements	12	17.5	17.5
Newspaper and magazine reports and articles	24	30.0	52.5	Town storming	22	27.6	45.0
New dawn with Funmi Iyanda	32	40.0	92.5	Newspaper reports and articles	18	22.5	67.5
Radio	6	7.5	100.0	Television	17	21.3	88.8
				Radio	9	11.3	100.0
Total	80	100.0		Total	80	100	

Source, field survey

According to the data provided in table 3(A) respondents got exposed to the company's message through a number of avenues. Out of the 80 mothers sampled, 32 or 40% of them said they heard the company's side of the story from new dawn with Funmi Iyanda while 24 respondents, representing about 30% of the respondents claimed they learnt about it through newspaper and magazines reports and articles. Moreover 18 or 22% of the respondents said they heard about the company's side of the story through advertising while the remaining six respondents which represented about 7.5% maintained that they heard the company's message over the radio.

For children, facts gathered presented in table 3 (B) show that 17 or 21.3% of the respondents got to hear the company's message through television while another 18 or 22.5% of the respondents were informed through newspaper reports and articles. Also, 22 respondents which translated into 27.5% of the total respondents got to know about the company's side of the story when the Indomie Company's officials visited their schools. These are all summed up as marketing public relations tools. In all, 57 or 71.3% of the total number of children sampled and 56 or 70% of mothers sampled were informed by the

marketing public relations tools highlighted above. More so, 14 or 17.5% of the respondents claimed that they heard the Indomie Company's message through advertisement while nine respondents which represented 11.3% of the sample said they were informed by the radio. From facts gathered, it was discovered that De — united Foods United made use of both the electronic and print media and even interpersonal interactions.

Table 4: Report(S) and Action [Sithat Convinced Consumers Most.

Option	Frequency	Percentage	Cum. Percent.	Option	Frequency	Percentage	Cum. Percent
Report by Nafdac	36	45.0	45.0	Advertisements	14	17.5	17.5
Marketing public relations tools	35	43.8	88.8	Marketing public relations tools	57	71.5	88.8
Advertisement	9	11.3	100.0		9	11.3	100.0

Source, field survey

A question was raised to ascertain the most convincing report(s) and action(s) taken on the Indomie crisis. Respondent's responses were quite revealing. Data obtained and presented in table 4(A) indicates that 36 respondents, which translated into 45% of the total respondents were most convinced by NAFDAC'S report while 35 or 43.8% of the sample claimed they believed marketing public relations tools most. Also, nine or 11.3% of the respondents maintained that they found advertisement most convincing.

The manifestation above especially the claims by 36 or 45% of the mothers that they found NAFDAC'S report most convincing was however faulted by the facts gathered during the interview the researcher conducted for industry correspondents and the media executive of the public relations firm that handled the Indomie crisis. One of the industry analysts (Mr Ade Ogidan) and the media executive of the public relations agency [names withheld] opine that NAFDAC's report was just a face saving exercise.

They argued that if truly Indomie was poisonous then, thousands of children would have died and that the figure will not just be "one" as rumoured. They finally disclosed that similar laboratory tests were conducted abroad on same "affected batches" and the results revealed that there was nothing wrong with Indomie.

On same question, in table 4(B), 14 or 17.5% of the children claimed that they found advertisement most believable while an aggregate of 57 respondents, representing 71.3% of the total number sampled found marketing public relations tools most convincing. In addition, nine or 11.3% of the respondents found messages on radio most believable.

Table 5: The Effect of Marketing Public Relations Tools in Rebuilding Trust in Indomie Compared with Advertising.

Mothers (A)

Option	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Yes	68	85.0	85.0
No	12	15.0	100.0
Total	80	100.0	

Source: field survey.

When asked whether the other tools (marketing public relations) actually make respondents to have trust in Indomie again than advertisements 68 or 85% of the total respondents opine that marketing public relations tools and NAFDAC report made them to have trust in Indomie again while 12 or 15% of the respondents believed that they still have trust in the product even with only advertisement. The manifestation above affirms the ability of marketing relations to rebuild trust in a tarnished product.

Research Question Three: Of what effect is marketing public relations oriented messages on consumers in comparison to advertising?

Table 6: Consumers' Believe In Advertising If It Was The Only Tool Used.

Option	Frequency	Percentage	Cum. Percent.	Option	Frequency	Percentage	Cum. Percent
Yes	12	15.0	15.0	Yes	29	36.3	36.3
No	68	85.0	100.0	No	31	63.8	100
Total	80	100.0		Total	80	100	

Source, field survey

Table 6(A) above reinforced the credibility of marketing public Relations as against advertising. For instance, 68 mothers, representing 85% of the total sample maintained that they would not have believed the company's claims if it used only advertisement while 12 or 15% of the respondents still have confidence in advertisement as they claimed they would believe the company.

In addition, in table 6(B) it was gathered from the children that 51 of them, which translated to 63.8% of total respondents said they would not have believed the claims of the company if it used only advertisement. Also, 29 or 36.3% of the respondents said they will believe the company. The percentage of children that said they will still believe the company if it used only advertisement is higher than that of mothers by 2 1.3%. This shows that advertisement is still being favoured by a good number of children, that is, it still has some hold on them.

it can be inferred that respondents were greatly exposed to marketing public relations tools employed by the company. This, to a great extent created credibility for the company's messages. This is another pointer to the fact that companies need to integrate their crisis management and promotional tools.

In sum, it can be inferred from respondents' responses to the questionnaire (especially

mothers) that the turning point for the restoration of loyalty was when the managing director of the company. Mr. Rogers Reu appeared on new dawn with Funmi lyanda and ate Indomie Noodles prepared from the “said affected batches”, (product endorsement). These tools and some others are purely marketing public relations efforts. This effort gave a boost to the image of the product and the company as a whole.

When the researcher asked the industry correspondents about their perception of the scare, both Mr. Adewale Champion, a business correspondent of Minaj media group, Lagos and Mr. Ade Ogidan, business editor of The Guardian newspapers believed that the crisis was initiated by a rival company. They argued that if truly, Indomie was killing, then hundreds of thousands of children would have died and not just “one person” as rumoured.

Furthermore, below are other questions that the researcher asked the media executive of the public relations agency. The information gathered gave an insight into the crisis. It was gathered from the media executive that the company used a mix of promotional tools like sales promotion, point of purchase display, marketing public relations, sponsorships, town storming, advertisement and so on. The media executive further disclosed that the agency only worked on the marketing public relations aspect.

According to the media executive, the company used marketing public relations tools like media briefing, feature articles in newspapers and magazines, spotlights, products endorsement, sponsorship, town storming and so on.

He added further that all these have their peculiarities and they were all used to achieve the desired impact.

Moreover, the interviewee further reinforced the credibility enjoyed by marketing public relations compared to advertising. He maintained that the tools employed had significant impacts on consumers, part of which is reflected in the high sales volume that is recorded now. He stressed that this is a demonstration of people’s trust for the product.

On the whole, data gathered in the course of this research work proved that there is reasonable confidence in the product now. The product only battles with fierce competition with over saturation of different types of noodles in the market.

Conclusion and Recommendation

In Nigeria, even at the international market, mass advertising is fast losing its hold on consumers. The Chief Executive Officer of H.J. Heinz Company, Dr. O'Reilly cited in Harris (1991) observes that advertising is “suffering from the law of diminishing returns”. While making this observation, the CEO urged marketing executives to think and find new unconventional ways to support their marketing strategies.

Drawn from facts gathered, the study recommends that:

- i. Crisis period is a time to act promptly. Organisations should act as socially responsible corporate establishment and be 100% open to the media and the general public.
- ii. Companies should integrate their marketing efforts to achieve unprecedented success.
- iii. Since research is cumulative, it is suggested that future researchers may attempt to study the significance of marketing public relations in rejuvenating weak brands.

References

- Adebayo, O.O. (1998) *Public Relations in Government and Non Commercial Organisations*. Ikeja: IBM.
- Adegoke, L.A. (2001) *Introduction to Public Relations: Principles, Media and Methods*. Ibadan: Sulek-Tenik Publishing Company.
- Agoro, Y. (1997) *Principle and Practice of Public Relations*. Ibadan: Supreme Press.
- Ajala, V.O. (2001) *Public Relations in Search of Professional Excellence*. 2nd Edition, Ibadan: Maybest Publications.
- Bergh, B.G. V. and Katz, H. (1999) *Advertising Principles- Choice, Challenge, Change*. Chicago: NTC Publishing Group.
- Center, A.H. and Jackson, P. (1995) *Public Relations Practices: Managerial Case Studies and Problems*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc.
- De Mooij, M. (1994) *Advertising Worldwide: Concepts, Theories and Practice of International, Multinational and Global Advertising*. Hertfordshire: Prentice Hall Inc.
- Guth, D.W. and Marsh, C. (2000) *Public Relations: A Value Driven Approach*. Needham Heights: Allyn and Bacon.
- Haig, M. (2003) *Brand Failures*. Britain: Kogan Page Limited.
- Harris, T.L. (1991) *The Marketers' Guide to Public Relations: How Today's Top Companies are Using the New Public Relations to Gain Competitive Edge*. Canada: John Wiley and Sons Inc.
- Health, R. (1998) *Crisis Management for Managers and Executives*. Britain: Financial Times Pitman Publishing.
- Keegan, W., Moriarty, S. and Duncan, T. (1992) *Marketing: Annotated Instructor's Edition*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc.
- Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2000) 3rd Edition. Barcelona: Cayfosa Quebecor.
- Shimp, T.A. (2000) *Advertising Promotion: Supplemental Aspects of Integrated Marketing Communications*. 5th Edition, Orlando: Harcourt College Publishers.
- Smith, P.R. (1993) *Marketing Communications: An Integrated Approach*. London: Kogan Page Limited.