RESEARCH TOPIC: ESTABLISHING PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING OF THE ROLE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN PROMOTING CUSTOMER RELATIONS: A CASE STUDY OF LUSAKA CITY COUNCIL

In partial fulfillment of the award of a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Mass Communication

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ABSTRACT

Public Relations is distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance and cooperation between an organization and its publics. It involves management of problems or issues; helps management to keep informed on and responsive to public opinion; defines and emphasizes the responsibility of management to serve the public interest; helps management keep abreast of and effectively utilize change, serving as an early warning system to help anticipate trends; and uses research and sound and ethical communication as its principal tools.

The basic function of the government Public Relations department/agencies is to provide information, education/instruction to the citizens. The effort should also motivate the people directly or indirectly, to discharge these functions in a meaningful and purposeful manner, it is necessary that the Public Relations Department/wing should be clear about the broad objectives which guide their work.

The purpose of the study was to establish public understanding of the role of public relations in promoting customer relations. To that effect specific, this study investigated the knowledge of customers towards public relations, its role in promoting customer relations, the attitude of customers regarding the role of Public Relations and the perception of customers toward the role of Public Relations in promoting Customer Relations, the case of Lusaka City Council.

The researcher concludes based on the findings that the local authority is more reactive in its public relations that it sustains its PR campaigns. The researcher also concludes that the role of PR in promoting customer relations at the Lusaka City Council cannot be underrated or over emphasized. The public recognize the need for the local authority to maintain an open door policy in terms of keeping a continuous flow of communication and receiving feedback and avoid information/communication gaps which gaps misconceptions and negative perceptions.

Key terms; Public Relations; Customer Relationship; Role.
DECLARATION

I, Rachael Namukolo do hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my work and investigations. This work has not been submitted for the award of a degree at this, or any other University.

Signed: ---------------------------------------------------------------

Date: ---------------------------------------------------------------
DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this research to Victoria Viela, a woman I have long since admired for her strength and grace.
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I thank my Almighty God for giving me life in abundance because through His mercy, thesis has become a success. I also extend my heartfelt gratitude to my family for the support they have rendered to me financially ever since I embarked on this four year academic journey at CAVENDISH UNIVERSITY. I am also deeply honored and humbled to express my utmost and sincere gratitude to my supervisor and course lecturer for his tireless effort by correcting me whenever I went wrong. Finally, I also wish to thank and value the contributions of LUSAKA residents for rendering their time besides their busy schedules by successfully participating in this research through filling in the questionnaires and also being interviewed. I also extend my deepest appreciation to my all course mates for the time they spared for me by helping me whenever my supervisor was not available.
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ACRONYMS

CR .............................................Customer Relationship

PR .............................................Public Relations

APR .............................................Association of Public Relations

SWOT .............................................Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats

SPSS .............................................Statistical Package for Social Sciences
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This chapter delves into what Public Relations and Customer Relations is, tracing its origins and also states the problem statement.

1.0 Background

While there might be various reasons as to why humans exist and how they came to be from religion to religion and perhaps from the absence of religion, there exists no doubt as to why organizations exist and that is to solve a problem and satisfy customers. All businesses and companies are set up because there exists a problem or deficit and a market base that needs that problem solved. For your business to continue surviving it needs to be continuously solving a problem, hence remain relevant. In short the customer is the beginning and the end of an organisation. The Lusaka City Council exists to provide quality civic responsibilities to the community of Lusaka which range from waste management to cemeteries and health inspectorate. The council is always in contact with the general public through the services that it renders.

Public relations creates a link between the council and its publics, it is used as a tool to promote customer relations between itself and the public. It is defined by the Association of Public Relations as a planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organization and its publics. It uses tools such as Media relations, Advertorials, Social media, Newsletters, Brochures and catalogues, Business events, speaking engagements, Sponsorships or partnerships that help build understanding between an organization and its public, building satisfactory company-customer relationships.

In 1987 Association of Public Relations (APR) provides a definition of public relations, which is still used. In this definition, PR is defined as planned and continuous efforts to establish and maintain goodwill and understanding between an organization and its target audience (Ibid).
Words "planning" and "continuous" show that goodwill and understanding itself is not obtained easily. There has to be deliberate efforts and programs made to create an understanding of the organization by the public, understanding which then breeds good will between the two parties. This has to be continuous because trends are always changing, once you leave a communication gap, speculations arise.

The APR also defines public relations as a method that organizations use to maintain the credibility of products, services or staff with the aim of obtaining recognition and support.

Public relations is a vital artery and bridge linking people and the organization. Public relations are the art and social science that link intra-and extra organizations (Kotler, 1996).

On the other hand, customer relations have been an essential part of business since time immemorial. Sheth and Parvatiyar (2000) observe that developing customer relationships has its origins in the preindustrial era where artisans often developed customized products for each customer. Such direct interaction led to a bonding between the producer and the consumer. At this early stage, there was recognition that the firm not only had control of producing a service but also an appreciation of customer evaluation of the supplier. With the industrial era came middlemen and mass production which eliminated the direct relationship between producers and their consumers.

This transferred the marketing function from the producer to the middleman. Several factors have contributed to the rapid development and evolution of customer relations in recent years. These include the advent of sophisticated computer and telecommunication technologies that allow producers to directly interact with end customers. The 2000s customer relations focused more on cause-related marketing and social responsibility as firms moved towards more aggressive customer engagement for profit. Current customer relations management continues to improve on the gains made in previous decades while seeking new and innovative ways to not only attract but also retain customers (Ibid).

Hyper-competition in the current era brought about by globalization has forced marketers to be more concerned with customer retention and loyalty. According to Sheth & Parvatiyar (2000) fueled by new technology and the growing availability of advanced product features, consumers are less willing to make compromises in product and service quality. Rosenberg and Czepiel (2017) observe that retaining customers offers a more sustainable competitive advantage than acquiring new ones. Marketers and businesses are realizing that it costs less to retain customers than to compete for new ones. Many organizations are therefore investing in customer relations
strategies in a bid to retain their customer base. However, it is worth noting that whereas private companies have embraced customer relations as they understand the crucial role satisfied customers play in increasing sales, the same cannot be said for public sector organizations. Many public sector organizations lack a detailed understanding of the meaning of customer relations and require knowledge about “how” to improve public services.
1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Public Relations is generally meant to influence public opinion or attitudes in a positive direction as it ensures goodwill, mutual understanding and acceptance. The main purpose of public relations is to establish and maintain a two-way communication in order to continuously ensure understanding or resolve conflicts between individuals, organizations and publics but it is somewhat ironic that an industry that works to manage reputations and build positive images for huge and small corporations suffers from its own public perception problems.

Some consider public relations as a smoke screen, a company’s cover up for wrong doings that only works in crisis, a euphemism for lying, spinning or generating propaganda. A 2011 Gallup poll measuring the most ethical professionals put advertising and public relations at the bottom (Newton, 2011). According to Callison (2004), media consumers doubt public relations spokespersons and rank them behind almost all other information sources.

It can be said that perhaps public relations is struggling with its professional image probably aided by the lack of acknowledge and understanding about No.1 what public relations really is and No.2 its role in customer relations. The public or an organizations’ customers care about one thing only and that is service satisfaction-their satisfaction which can only be achieved through customer relations between the customer and the organisation which relationship of course is established and maintained by public relations.

There is a clear link between PR and CR and what this paper seeks to do is investigate how knowledgeable the public is about the role that the public relations unit at Lusaka City Council plays in enhancing customer relations between the Council and its customers in order to breed service satisfaction in order to help the public gain an appreciation of the public relations unit itself and make them more receptive to their PR campaigns that promote customer relations hence improving customer-company relations, create understanding and mutual respect.

The researcher believes this will help gain the public understanding for both the general public and institutions especially the public in being more appreciative of PR.
It is a distinctive management function which helps to establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance and cooperation between an organization and its publics; involves the management of problems or issues; helps management keep informed on and responsive to public opinion; defines and emphasizes the responsibility of management to serve the public interest; helps management keep abreast of and effectively utilize change, serving as an early warning system to help anticipate trends; and uses research and sound ethical communication techniques as its principal tool (Swallow, 2010).

On the other hand, Customer Relationship is a marketing approach providing satisfaction of customer needs at every point of interaction between the customer and the cooperation. Customer is not just about installing software or automating customer touch points. It is about the reinvention of enterprises around the customer and becoming customer-centric.
1.3 Research Purpose

This research was aimed at establishing how knowledgeable the public is about the role of public relations in promoting customer relations in order for it to be appreciated as a critical tool in achieving service satisfaction and achieve an attitude change.

1.4 Rationale of the Study

The study will help identify gaps in improving customer understanding of public relations, if the public understand the role of PR in CR and therefore add to the pool of knowledge regarding the public’s understanding of the role of PR in promoting CR. This in turn will help the public become more receptive of information being sent out by organizations and help PR practitioners device other workable means of understanding and relationships that breed service satisfaction between the two parties, change public’s perception, help organisations understand their audience better and overall improve customer relations.

Besides, the findings of this research will also provide a clear representation regarding the knowledge of customers and the role PR plays in promoting CR. For this reason, the information obtained in this research, will be used to come up with good policies and programs regarding the role that PR plays in promoting CR particularly in Zambia. Henceforth, the research will also bring to attention the attitude of customers in promoting CR which will coerce stakeholders in taking precautionary measures so as to strengthen customer relations.
1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1.5.1 General Objective:
➢ To establish public understanding of the role of public relations in promoting customer relations: A case Study of Lusaka City Council.

1.5.2 Specific Objectives:
➢ To ascertain the knowledge of customers regarding the role of Public Relations in promoting Public Relations at the Lusaka City Council.
➢ To ascertain public perception towards publics relations
➢ To establish the attitude of customers towards the role of Public Relations in promoting Customer Relationship at Lusaka City Council.
➢ To find out the perception of customers towards the role of Public Relations in promoting Customer Relationship at Lusaka City Council.

1.6 Research Questions
1. What is the knowledge of customers regarding the role of PR in promoting CR at Lusaka City Council?
2. What do you think is the attitude of customers towards the role of PR in promoting CR in Lusaka City Council?
3. What do you think is the perception of customers towards the role of PR in promoting CR in Lusaka City Council?
4. What is your perception on Public Relationships?
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

No knowledge is new under the sun, various research, study and discourse has been done by other researchers. What the researcher intends to highlight what those literatures may have prescribed and generated as concerns in this field of study.

This chapter shall also seek to provide general literature on public relations and its link to customer relations, further more it shall provide a theoretical framework upon which this study shall be pegged. This chapter provides a review of literature on the role of PR in enhancing customer relations. It has two major sections; an analysis of literature relevant to the study and a theoretical framework segment. The former includes a review of literature on customer relations.

2.1 Overview of Literature

Public Relation is a management function that involves monitoring and evaluating public attitudes and maintaining mutual relations and understanding between an organization and its public. The public relations are important department in any company, which has relation with the customer service. Its first objective is to improve channels of communication and to establish new ways of setting up a two-way flow of information and understanding (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2009).

The purpose of public relations is to build and maintain an organizations’ positive image, inform target audiences about positive associations with a product, service brand organization, maintain good relationships with influencers – the people who strongly influence their target audience, generate goodwill among customers, the media, and other target audiences by raising the organizations profile.
2.2 Theoretical Framework

This researcher used the Two-way Symmetrical model in which, public relations communicators make every attempt for each side to understand the others point of view. The goal here is to achieve mutual understanding albeit in a deeper and more profound way that puts the two parties in a win-win situation. It is a useful model for conflict resolution within an organisation and especially between an organisation and its publics. The public relations communicator here is a middleman between the organisation and its publics striving always at achieving mutual understanding rather than an adversarial relationship.

The two-way symmetric model borders upon generating mutual understanding which is acute to the feat of the organisation. Adegoke (2000) adds that the essence of the two-way communication in public relations is to enable a corporate body to develop positive and effective relationship through mutual understanding between the organisation and its public, in short customer relationship.

Brunig acknowledged the two-way symmetrical model as a way of carrying out public relations through bargaining, negotiating, and strategies of conflict resolution to bring about symbiotic changes in the ideas, attitudes, and behaviours of both the organisation and its publics. The model which is characterised as most ethical and effective in practice provides a normative theory for accomplishing outstanding communication management.
2.3 Literature Review Underpinning the Study

Measuring customer satisfaction is a key performance indicator within business and is often part of the balanced scorecard. The main aim of measuring customer satisfaction is to make a prompt decision for the continuous improvement of business transactions. Attracting a new customer as a source to build on existing relationship, customer satisfaction is essential to be measured. Similarly, to retain the current customer base, measuring customer satisfaction is equally important. Actionable information on how to make customers more satisfied is, therefore, a crucial outcome. Unless the organization focuses on their improvement efforts in the right area the organization cannot maintain the competition level of business in a market. To recognize the needs of the customer is to satisfy the customer and to meet the need of the customer, a measurement of customer satisfaction is what matters the organization (Evans, 2004).

Measuring a customer satisfaction may be different in the different organizations since there are different approaches to measure customer satisfaction. As one of the measurements of the performance of the quality management system, the organization shall monitor information relating to customer perception as to whether the organization has met the customer requirements. The methods for obtaining and using this information shall be determined. Every organization seeks customer satisfaction where these sorts of parameters help an organization to measure the customer’s satisfaction and demands so that organizations can provide them with appropriate services as per their requirements. The possible dimension to measure customer satisfaction could be quality, price, trust relationship, complaints, problems and many others. The key point of measuring customer satisfaction is to conclude how to improve it and how to keep building a good relationship with customers and potential customers (Egan, 2000). Customer satisfaction is extremely important because it is the way of getting feedback from the customers in a way that they can use it to manage and improve their business. Customer satisfaction is the best indicator of how the business looks like in the future. Customer satisfaction helps in doing SWOT analysis that could help them to develop their business in an advance and in a systematic way. Besides this, it will also help in making the right decision to use the appropriate resources while manufacturing the products. Similarly, it maintains the relationship with the existing customers and also creates the possibility to acquire others (Foss & Stone, 2001).
When products are bought customers expect perfection instead of quantities. There are varieties of products that are similar in the market and sometimes it is difficult to distinguish which one is qualitative and durable. This is the great opportunity for the business organization doing marketing of their products and services to understand what exactly customers are seeking for. Customer satisfaction is a key indicator of the marketplace that evaluates the success of the organization. People have varieties of tastes and choices and therefore, satisfaction also differs from one person to another. It also may vary the expectation of the consumer depending on the option they may have, such as the national and international market (Kotler & Keller 2006.)

A technique for assessing the customer satisfaction should also have to go through the international market procedure to meet the requirement internationally. In the process, granting the satisfaction to the customer in both physical and technological aspects has changed drastically. However, there is still no method of measuring customer satisfaction. But the feedback from the customer can be taken as a crucial tool for measuring customer satisfaction. On the other hand, it’s cheaper to retain customers than acquire new ones. To make a customer’s cost lot of money. Marketing team spends lots of money and time in convincing their excellence. Customer satisfaction is a primary aim of every company. Customer satisfaction ensures the customer wants to return to purchase the service. Satisfied customers are more likely to recommend their friends and families which will help to grow the business. A totally dissatisfied customer decreases revenue, whereas satisfied customer has a positive effect on profitability (Godson, 2009). Customer expectations are the belief about service delivery that serves as standard or reference points against which performance is judged. Customer expectation is difficult to know in service delivery, wrong actions and failure which could cause of losing a customer, waste of investment, time and eventually business. Customer expects some level of service quality from a service provider during the transaction; therefore customer’s opinion about the quality standards and also what kind of standard customer expects are essential to know (Kotler & Armstrong, 2001).
Knowing what the customer expects is one of the most critical factors in delivering good and service quality. Customer expectations are the standards of performance against which service experiences are compared. The difference between what a customer expects and perceives in the service delivery forms the customer gap. This leads to customer dissatisfaction with the product or service. To close this gap, the gap model of service quality suggests that four gaps called provider gaps from one to four needs to be closed. It is important for companies to close the gap between customer expectations and perceptions in order to satisfy their customers and build long-term relationships with them (Kumar, 2011).

Grasp is the psychological expectations of customer. On the basis of effective management of customer expectation, firstly it cannot ignore basic collection and analysis of customer information which includes information collection and statistical information based on properties of clients, the level and instability consumption, personal preferences, service and satisfaction feedback information regarding the analysis of customer expectations and needs provide a basis to measure the level of information support. Analyze customer needs, assess customer expectations: Customer need analysis is an important basis and means of measuring customer expectation (Morey, 2012).

According to Japanese management expert Kano model, customer demand is divided into three categories such as basic demand, expected demand and surprise demand. Zeithaml (2003) portrait customer perceptions as the subjective assessments of actual service experiences. This refers to how customers perceive services, how they assess the quality of received services, whether they are satisfied, and whether they have received good value. Accordingly, customer perceptions of service are also defined as customer perceptions of quality, satisfaction and value. The customer perceptions are the way that people see something based on their experience. Everyone’s perception will be, at least, slightly different. Perception is also described as the end result of a number of observations by the customer (Kumar & Petersen, 2012).
2.3 Research Variables Arising from Literature.

Customer relationship management focused on businesses marketing their products and services through relationships and interactions with customer market, often taking advantage of IT-based interactivity. Peelen (2005) reveal that customer relationship management is a protective marketing strategy that focuses on managing the customer experience by understanding their needs and purchase behavior. It is an efficient way to strength the relationship between a company and its customer, transforming links into friends and partners. This is done by building learning relationships, for example through super-market identification cards and loyalty programs (Peppers & Rogers, 2011).

Customer relationship management implements a customer focus that enables an organization to retain loyal customers and a greater share of the customer’s wallet through cross selling and up selling. The organization must master multichannel marketing and managing touch points to implement it effectively. The structural design of customer relationship management consists of an integrated front office, business intelligence system (data ware houses, data marts and data mining), and business rules that transmit business intelligence to front-office personnel, physical links to back office systems such as inventory control, accounts receivable, and performance metrics (Chu & Fung, 2006).

There numerous components of customer relationship management which among others include customer loyalty. Rogers & Peppers (2004), describes that customer loyalty can be approached into two directions attitudinal (emotional) and behavioral (functional). The attitudinal definition of loyalty suggest that loyalty is a state of mind whereas behavioral loyalty means that someone is willing to pay a premium for brand x over brand y even without favor to the attitudes that underlie that conduct. Behavior customer loyalty is not the cause, but the results of preference (Ibid).
A company focusing on different tactics to increase customer loyalty in fact increase the amount of repurchase behavior strategy that can easily include, raising consumer`s general choices for the brand or customer level of satisfaction with it. Behavioral customer loyalty is simply more useful and practical be-cause when customer is loyal then customer is a repeat purchaser, plain and simple. Customer loyalty should have as direct connection as possible to a company`s financial and operational profits results. The lifetime value will capture all the various behavior and activities of the customer that have relationship with the enterprise`s profit from loyalty customers (Brink & Bendt, 2004).

Another component is customer relationship which means that a customer is someone with whom we exchange value. With better service provided to the customer in return strong relationship bond will create between the company and customers. For example, Customer who orders books via internet from an online bookstore may afterwards contact the supplier by telephone to obtain additional information. Due the recorded of the data in the computer system the operator can see that the purchase has been completed, as well as having access to the additional information on the delivery, product and payment (Kumar, 2011).

In this way the customer does not have to provide their entire contact history. The dialogue may proceed without the obstacles because the delivery channels have been connected with one another. Customer relationship management is a process that addresses all aspects of identifying customers chance to create customer knowledge, building customer bonds and shaping their perceptions of the organization and its products. Customer relationship is the one provided at the turn of the century, has adapted the concept of real time marketing for various purposes. Customer relationship targets towards the building of an infrastructure, which may be used to develop long-term customer supplier relationship. As a result of infrastructure, the walls between company and customer torn down. Whereas it was once impossible to enter the other`s domain at one`s own convince, nowadays it is a great easier deal (Swallow, 2010).
On the other hand customer are able to look into the records to determine whether a specific product is in stock, track the status of delivery and analyzed other buyer opinions on the product. The buyer may be involved as lead user in the development of new products and share confidential information. Customer can obtain access to areas of the company which were previously hidden and which could only be entered or accessed under supervision and by appointment.

As viewed from the other side it becomes much easier for suppliers to gather information from customers and contact them. The customer and supplier activities are integrated. The privacy of the both may easily be violated and both will have to consider carefully what is and what is not desirable in this part. In real time, it will be possible to provide to one another wishes quickly (Rosenberg & Czepiel, 2017). Customers have different needs and demands about how they wanted to be treated. Therefore, very seldom organizations satisfy the needs of every potential customer in a similar manner. In service contexts, it is often difficult to satisfy targeted groups of customers because customers frequently meet and interact with each other and influence fellow customer’s perception of the service. Therefore, to manage a good customer relationship organization should deal with the customers in different ways (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2009).

It is important to have a customer segment to keep in relation to a different targeted group of the customers. It is also important to keep in mind that customers in a relationship with a service provider often want to be recognized and treated individually, even though they are part of a larger segment. In addition, the modern technology available to the firms also supports the individualistic treatment of customers. Direct customer contacts in most of the services give a good starting point for the individual treatment of the customers (Peppers & Rogers, 2011).

On the other hand, it is important to know the need of the customers. To maintain a relationship first of all, the service purchased by customers has to fit the customers. Designing for relationships requires a customer centered approach. Maintaining customer relationship just do not happen accidentally, they are constructed through the service and product provided. Relationships build over to create a loyal customer and loyal customer multiplies the transactions. The relationship infrastructure consists of the building blocks for a business. The components of substructure build on top of each other to create a growing infrastructure.
A relationship requires the right blend of the texture and touch. There are some instances where service industry cannot provide sufficient levels to build the relationship (Kotler & Keller, 2006). Today, the customer requires flexibility, availability, creativity and price advantages from the service provider. Therefore, new attributes are required for an organization to succeed in a dynamic world where customers wish, customer preferences, customer behavior and loyalties are equally focused. Today, in order to maintain a relationship with a customer: “Customers are always right” trend has been highly given importance. According to Kumar and Petersen (2012), the companies who have implemented the idea of customer relationship management are the most successful ones regardless of their business field. Therefore, managing customer relationships and relationships with other parties require a service oriented culture.

Going forward, trust, commitment, and attraction play an important role in relationship markets. As in relationships between people or organizations, especially in business relationships, whether they are big industrial cooperation or supply chain organizations, it is commonly agreed on that related partners in business need to have a high degree of commitment to achieve and maintain success in their relationships. Mutual commitment plays an important role in a relationship, due to its significant benefit for companies and widely considered as the most advanced phase of partner’s interdependence (Zeithaml, 2003).

Trust is a belief in the reliability. In other word, it is one party expectation that other party will behave in a certain predictable way in a given situation. If the other party doesn’t behave in an expected way, then the trusting party (customer) will face the more negative situation. The trust concept can be divided into four categories. First is generalized trust; this trust is derived from social norms. The second is system trust is depending on the laws, contract and industry regulation. The third is personality-based trust and this is based on a human tendency to rely upon another person to behave in an expectable way according to expectations because of personality trends. The last one is a process- based trust follows from contacts and experience that have been taken place over a time an ongoing relationship between two parties (Ibid).

Commitment is one party in a relationship feels motivated to do business with another party. It is also defined as a long-term desire to maintain a valued relationship. A customer is committed to a supplier similarly expected loyalty from the supplier or service provider.
The manufacturer may feel committed to repair and maintenance provider who has consistently proved that it can offer skillful and timely service of its production machines. Here if a supplier has taken extra trouble to do so, then beside the excess demand for its service at some point the sense of commitment has become even deeper. Commitment always relates to trust and trust is to be considered the most critical and key factor for developing commitment among the partners. Trust and commitment being “two highly interrelated notions for success “of any partnership that stimulate a relational bond between the parties. Further, it leads to improvements in efficiency, productiveness and effectiveness, when existing simultaneously (Chu & Fang 2006.)

Attraction is a third key concept in relationship marketing. It means there should be something which makes supplier or service provider interesting to give the customer. Attraction can be based on the financial, technological or social factor. A globally operating accounting expert may find large firm affiliations in various countries an attractive potential customer, which offers large financial opportunities. Manufacturer of the latest technology for a manufacturing process is an attractive partner for a manufacturing firm. Similarly, social contact highly appreciated may become a base for good relationship that can lead to a business relationship. If attraction between two parties exists there is a basis for a relationship to develop. If there is a lack of attraction the parties will probably not start doing business with each other (Duncan, 2002).

Law of attraction is one of the important principles to utilize in business to success. Law of attraction can be understood by understanding that like attracts like. This means a person realizes it or not he/she will be responsible for bringing both negative and positive influences into lives. The important part to understand the law of attraction is to understand that spending days in regrets about the past or fears of the future, it shows more negativity appearing, and instead of looking for better things in every experience gives chance to appear positive energy (Foss & Stone, 2001).
If the existence of trust in a business partner and commit to that partner may be more important to the customer who sees more value in the relationship itself. Such type of customer relationship oriented and may appreciate the existence of trust and commitment rather than being satisfied with every single exchange transaction. Long term relationship always doesn't work to maintain a long-term business relationship. The customer may want to experience new alternative for a change. Overloading relationship with the service provider may create certain blindness to a customer (Rensberg & Cant, 2003).

A fundamental tenet of customer relationship management is that organization wins by attracting and keeping the most valuable customers. The most important assets of the firm are long term customers. Firms should know the long-term value of their individual customers. The lifetime value of the customer should be measured which will help the organization to realize the importance of keeping the existing customers. To understand the worth of the customer it is important to think broadly about the ways in which customers add value to the firms. Recognizing the value of a customer will lead to better decisions about how to expand the business activities (Kotler & Keller, 2006).

Most businesses understand the costs of acquiring a customer, but they are unaware of the costs of losing a customer. There are several reasons behind the customers stop doing business with the firm, such as uncertainties of moving away, not understanding the value of the customer’s death and so on. Poor service, poor goods, and the quality which does not meet the customer requirements are often the results of the giving the value of the customers away. Here value does not refer to the price it refers to the perceived benefits stood to be gained in the context of price. Based on the appropriate understanding of the customer situation and needs firm should create the essential values (Godson, 2009).
Customer value and value of the customers in business have a different interpretation and that should not be confused. Customer value refers to what the customer gets in a product or service whereas the value of a customer in business is the stand which keeps the company in running a business. The primary aim of the business organization is to make a clear attempt in creating customer value in order to attract and retain customer to deliver quality as well as the superior value of the business to the customers. Implementing an effective marketing strategy concept by offering qualified goods and services of the company will meet and exceeds the expectations of customer needs better than other competitors. For the long-term survival of the company and for the success customer value can be taken as an important prerequisite in this competitive market, understanding the way of the customer’s judgment and value a service or a product has been crucial. Although the research of the customer value in many areas stands still it has already generated a lot of fruitful insights into the value creation process from customer and company perspectives (Evans, 2004).

In this competitive environment, a business organization cannot survive longer with a transactional attitude towards customers. It has been very important to focus on marketing lenses which are considered as a major aspect for satisfying and maintain customers. In this context, it has been clear that customer satisfaction is entitled as an important theoretical and practical issue for the marketers and the researchers. Satisfaction is the feeling of the individuals after comparing product and service performances with their expectations. If the business organization meets the expectations of the customers, then there is the possibility of a long-term relationship (Kotler 1996.)

To identify, establish, maintain, enhance and terminate the relationship with customers and other stakeholder customer relationship marketing plays a crucial role. Moreover, it is the best contemporary marketing strategies for the companies to satisfy their customers’ needs and wants. Along with this, it has evolved from the direct response marketing; it focuses more on customer retention and satisfaction of their needs. Instead of focusing on delivering and selling the products, many companies are targeting in developing and marketing long-term relationships with customers and this is defined as relationship marketing (Morey, 2012).
Enhancement and focus on the customer, building relationships with the customers have become necessary for the companies in the past few years because business success depends on clients. Therefore, companies are trying to keep the existing customers through which it will easier to gain the steady income. Once the customers are attracted towards the firm, they are more likely to stay in the relationship when they are constantly supplied with quality products and services and good value over time. Under relationship marketing, loyalty, long-term relationship and customer retention are three factors that determine the profitability of the business. It is true that if the customers are satisfied they are willing to pay more for the products and services and maintain a long-term relationship. Therefore, the business organization should make an effort to understand the core factor of the business to increase the customers (Ibid).

In a nutshell, from the above literature, it is arguably important to note every company aim is to maintain the long-term relationship with the customers and the business organization through encouraging. In order to acquire the potential customers, needs and demands should be acknowledged also customer satisfaction has a great impact on the entire business operations. Therefore, it is very important to the organization to understand what exactly the customers need and how to gain loyalty for the successful business. To that end, the customer plays a crucial role in the market chain process. To make it clearer, satisfied customers are the ones who create the possibility of the new customers. If the existing customers are satisfied with the product and service, then there are the chances of recommendation to the new ones. This will lead to the increasing number of customers and could maintain the level of the relationship with the customers.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the procedures and techniques that were used in arriving at the findings that were generated. In other words, the reliability and validity of the findings were largely dependent on this chapter. This research employed both qualitative and quantitative analysis to gather an in-depth understanding of the role of the PR in promoting CR. These two methods were used because the research used both explanations and figures respectively. This research also made use of both primary and secondary data due to the fact that, first-hand information was collected through well-structured self-administered questionnaires and already researched data respectively through archives and library research in order to gather relevant secondary data in an effort to support the research which drew lessons that were learnt from the past on the similar topic that is, the role of the PR in promoting CR.

3.2 Research Approach

The research approach was both qualitative and quantitative. In-depth information from respondents were they provided narratives through oral interviews. In other words, this approach necessitated the researcher beginning with a completely open mind without any preconceived ideas of what would be found as it aimed generating new theory based on the data. In addition, once the data analysis had been completed, the researcher examined existing theories in order to position their theory within the discipline.
3.3 Research Strategy

The research approach used by the researcher used was surveys case study of townships in Lusaka City was used in order to generate the findings regarding the role of the PR in promoting CR. This was because it heavily relied on these townships which the researcher deemed important in marketing thereby promoting customer relationship.

3.4 Sampling Frame

In this research, the targeted population was quite random, the researcher targeted people around the city of Lusaka randomly selected by the researcher. This research focused on both sexes, male and female. The research was highly analytical in order to establish how knowledgeable Lusaka residents who form a market for various organizations’ and companies were concerning the role of PR in promoting CR which bordered back to the subject under scrutiny.

3.5 Sample size and Sampling strategy

The sample size comprised 80 Lusaka Residents. Thus, this figure was deemed to be large enough and was hoped to provide accurate findings as it would be a representation of the infinite mainstream of the people of Lusaka City especially in the marketing arena. The sample only comprised the residents of Lusaka who were carefully selected to make the findings representative of the entire population from which the sample was drawn. Simple random sampling design was used to come up with a sample as each Lusaka Resident was given an equal and an independent chance of being picked or selected.
3.6 Operationalization of Research Variables.

In this research, Public Relation referred to the management of the spread of information between an individual or an organization and the public. In other words, it included an organization or individual gaining exposure to their audiences using topics of public interest and news items that did not require payment. On the other hand, Customer Relationship was an approach used by a company’s interaction with current and potential. In addition, it used data analysis about customers’ history with a company to improve business relationships with customers, specifically focusing on customer retention and ultimately driving sales growth.

3.7 Data Collection Techniques

The primary data used was self-administered questionnaires which included close ended questions as well as open ended questions. Interviews were also conducted to get an in-depth understanding were clearance was needed.

These questionnaires included close-ended questions as well as open ended questions. The sole purpose of closed ended questions was to ensure uniformity while closed ended questions were conclusive in nature as they were designed to create data that would be easily quantifiable. The information gained by the closed ended questions allowed researchers to categorize respondents into groups based on how knowledgeable they were about Public Relations.

On the other hand, the open ended questions provided the researchers with an insight on the opinions of the participants on the subject matter. To that effect, both primary and secondary were collected for the purpose of this study to yield accurate findings. However, the study was more qualitative than quantitative. Secondary sources or data such as the library, internet documents, and media publications were also used so as to form a concrete perspective and starting point of the study.
3.8 Data Analysis Methods

The data collected from questionnaires was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) which involved coming up with graphs, frequency tables, pie charts and many others making it possible for the description, discussion, interpretation, summarization, categorization and explanation of data in order to come up with the concrete generalizations and conclusions that were entirely based on the study population.

CHAPTER FOUR: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND DATA INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the presentation of findings based on the specific objectives respectively. As stated in the methodology, the study used both qualitative and quantitative methods.

4.2 PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.3 BACKGROUND INFORMATION OF RESPONDENTS

The background information of 80 respondents from various areas of Lusaka City comprised sex, age, education, religious denomination among others demographic characteristics illustrated below:
With regards to sex, it was found that 55 were female from the total sample of 80 respondents and accounted for 69% while 25 were male and accounted for 31%. It can therefore be categorically depicted that the majority of the sample was dominated by female respondents while the minority were male.
Furthermore, with respect to the age of respondents, 10 respondents were aged 15-19, 22 were aged 20-24, 25 respondents were aged 25-29 and 23 respondents were aged 30 and above. To this effect, it can be argued and seen that the majority of the sample was aged 25-29 years old while the minority was aged 15-19 as illustrated in the above bar chart.
With respect to the education background of respondents, 25 attained a university education, 30 attained college education, 7 were in high school, and 18 had no tertiary education. Thus, the findings showed that the majority of respondents attained secondary education while the minority attained tertiary education.
Furthermore and as illustrated in FIGURE 5.0 above, the findings on religious denomination were as follows, 5 respondents belonged to reformed church and accounted for 6%, 4 belonged to other churches and accounted for 5%, 31 belonged to catholic and gave rise to 39%, 12 belonged to Jehovah’s witness and accounted for 15%, 8 belonged to Seventh day Adventist and gave rise to 10% and 20 respondents belonged to Pentecost and accounted for 25% of the sample. Henceforth, the majority belonged to catholic while the minority belonged to other churches.
4.4. KNOWLEDGE OF CUSTOMERS TOWARDS THE ROLE OF PR IN PROMOTING CR.

FIGURE 6.0: Understanding of role of Public Relations in Customer Relationship

FIGURE 6.0 showed the awareness levels of customers about PR relations in promoting customer relationship. 4 respondents said they did not know and accounted for 5%, 21 said they said no and accounted for 26% while 55 said they were aware and accounted for 69% of the sample. Thus, it can be deduced that the majority were aware about public relations while the minority did not know.
In addition, they were asked what they knew about public relations as illustrated in FIGURE 7.0 ABOVE, 49 said they were knowledgeable about public relations, 23 had mixed feelings or were unsure about what public relations is as a whole, 5 respondents said they knew very little and 3 respondents said they had no knowledge about public relations. Generally, it can be argued that the majority understood the basics about public relations while 23 percent didn’t fully understand its functions and wholesome picture.
When asked if they thought public relations plays a role promoting customer relations, 31 of the sample said no and accounted for 39% while 49 said yes and accounted for 61%. For this reason, it can be considered that the majority agreed that public relations plays a vital role in promoting customer relationship while the minority disagreed. For evidence sake, refer to Figure 8.0 above.
In addition, when asked the extent to which public relations play a role in promoting customer relationship, 45 respondents said greater extent and accounted for 56% while 35 said lesser extent and accounted for 44% of the sample. As illustrated in FIGURE 9.0 ABOVE, it was seen that the majority said greater extent and while the minority said lesser extent.
FIGURE 10.0: Knowledge of customers regarding the role of public relations in customer relationship

Going forward, FIGURE 10.0 depicted how knowledgeable customers were regarding the role of public relations in promoting customer relationship. The findings generated showed that 33 respondents were not knowledgeable and accounted for 41% while 47 respondents said were knowledgeable and accounted for 59%. Thus, from the findings, the majority were knowledgeable while the minority was not.
When asked about the measures that can be used to promote the knowledge of customers regarding the role of public relations in promoting customer relationship, 1 respondent did not know and accounted for 1%, 11 said encouraging customers to advertise their products and accounted for 14%, 31 said educating customers about social media and accounted for 39% and 37 said sensitizing customers about the importance of public relations and accounted for 46%. As illustrated in FIGURE 11.0, the majority suggested sensitization of customers about the importance of public relations while the minority did not know of any measures.
Last but not the least, customers were asked concerning what can be done to public relations in order to strengthen and promote good customer relationship. **FIGURE 15.0 ABOVE** showed that 35 respondents suggested strengthening communication ties between organisations and customers, 34 suggested good practices of open door policy’s in company’s and 11 did not know. As a consequence, it can be concluded that the majority suggested establishing good values while the minority did not know.
4.6 THE PERCEPTION OF CUSTOMER TOWARDS THE ROLE PR IN PROMOTING CR.

On the other hand, an interviewed guide was used to obtain information as the study used both quantitative and qualitative methods. In other words, for quantitative method, data was collected through self-administered questionnaires. In addition, these questionnaires included close-ended questions designed to create data that would be easily quantifiable. The information gained by the closed ended questions allowed researchers to categorize respondents into groups based on how knowledgeable they were about Public Relations.

On the other hand, the open ended questions provided the researchers with an insight on the opinions of the participants on the subject matter. To that effect, secondary information would be collected and deemed necessary for the purpose of this study in order to yield accurate findings. However, the study was more quantitative than qualitative. Secondary sources or data such as the library, internet documents, and media publications were also used so as to form a concrete perspective and starting point of the study.

The public is knowledgeable about the role public relations plays in customer relations, they stated that public relation was viewed as a positive synergy for promoting customer relationship as it allows them to advertise their numerous products. Furthermore, they also stated that public relation is also great importance as it gives customers access to wide range of products on demand and also enables them to look market.
CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS OF DATA

5.1 Analysis of Overall Findings

With regards to findings on background information of the respondents, it can therefore be categorically depicted that the majority of the sample was dominated by female respondents while the minority were male, they were aged 25-29 years old while the minority was aged 15-19 as illustrated in figure 2.0, the majority of the sample was married whereas the minority was widowed, findings showed that the majority of respondents attained secondary education while the minority attained tertiary education and the majority belonged to catholic while the minority belonged to other churches.

The findings point to the objectives set out as indicated at the beginning of this research which was to establish public understanding of the role of public relations in promoting customer relationship. The specific objective were to;

1. Ascertain the knowledge of customers regarding the role of Public Relations in promoting Public Relations.
2. Ascertain public perception towards publics.
3. Establish the attitude of customers towards the role of Public Relations in promoting Customer Relationship in Lusaka City.

A majority 69 percent of the population under study acknowledged the role public relations plays in promoting customer relations while 26 percent said they didn’t think public relations played a role in promoting customer relations. This finding answers the object number one

49% of our scoop study were knowledgeable about public relations and what it is all about acknowledging it as a link between the organization and the customers/publics and play a vital role in creating mutual understanding and acceptance between the two parties vital in promoting customer relations.
49% said PR does play a role in promoting customer relations acknowledging it as and to knowledge of customers toward the role of public relations in promoting customer relationship, the majority were aware about public relations while the minority did not know, the majority knew very much about public relations while the minority knew average, the majority agreed that public relations play a vital role in promoting customer relationship while the minority disagreed, the majority said to a greater extent, they knew about public relations and the minority said lesser extent, the majority were knowledgeable about public relations while the minority was not and the majority suggested sensitization of customers about the importance of public relations while the minority did not know of any measures.

Not only do the public realise the critical role that public relations plays in promoting customer relations, they also acknowledge that the overall objective of mutual understanding and goodwill is in establishing birth service satisfaction for customers as they point to establishing good values in the PR practice and putting customers first.

In literature review in Chapter 3 the above statement is backed up by (Krumer, 2011) who notes that customer relationship is a major component of service satisfaction. With better service provided to the customer in return strong relationship bonds are created between the company and customers.

With respect to the findings on attitude of customers toward the role of public relations in promoting customer relationship, the majority agreed that there was a relationship between public relations and customer relationship while the minority disagreed; the majority agreed that there was a positive between public relations and customer relationship while the minority did not know, that the majority agreed that there was customer dissatisfaction while minority disagreed and stated that there was customer relationship and the majority suggested the need for establishing good values while the minority did not know.
Furthermore, with respect to perception of customers on public relations in promoting customer relationship, they stated that public relation was viewed as a positive synergy for promoting customer relationship as it allows them to advertise their numerous products. Furthermore, they also stated that public relation is also great importance as it gives customers access to wide range of products on demand and also enables them to look market. Henceforth, customers’ view on how they rated public relations in their area and particularly in promoting customer relationship, was that public relations was moderate as it gave them information regarding markets, price fluctuations, a wide variety of products and so on and so forth. In addition, when asked for their view of public relations in promoting customer relationships, they emphasized the need for sensitization programs by reaching out to the people about the importance of public relations to them and society as a whole.
CHAPTER SIX CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter draws a conclusion on the research subject matter based on data the findings.

It ties the objectives to the findings and goes into literature review to give a reflection of how public knowledge of the role of public relations in promoting customer relations is key in bringing about appreciation of the practice and that

6.1 CONCLUSIONS

This discourse attempted to establish how knowledgeable the public is about the role of Public Relations in promoting Customer Relations.

First of all it is important to note that the role of public relations in promoting and enhancing customer relations at the Lusaka City Council is undeniable. The Public Relations activities create and improve the image of the council by establishing relationships between the two groups through developing understanding and goodwill. It analyses public perception and attitude, identifies the organizations policy with the public and executes programmes for communication with the public. Trust, commitment, ethical practices, fulfillment of promises, mutual exchange, emotional bonding, personalization and customer orientation have been reported to be the key elements in the relationship building process (Levitt, 1986; Gronroos, 1994; Morgan, 1994; Gummesson, 1994; Bejou et al, 1998) and this is also exhibited by Grunig’s two way symmetrical model of public relations upon which this research is pegged on. In the research, the population under study suggest ethical practices be observed.

The model proposes a two way bargaining, negotiations and communication platform between the organization and its public to be able to bridge the gap and build good image.
The research concludes that the public is knowledgeable about the role of public relations at the Lusaka City Council as well as its role in promoting customer relations.

Furthermore, the knowledge of customers toward the role of public relations in promoting customer relationship, indicated that the majority were aware about public relations and agreed that it plays a vital role in promoting customer relationship while the minority disagreed, the majority said to a greater extent, they knew about public relations and the minority said lesser extent.

Notably, findings on attitude of customers toward the role of public relations in promoting customer relationship, showed that majority agreed that there was a relationship between public relations and customer relationship while the minority disagreed; the majority agreed that there was a positive between public relations and customer relationship while the minority did not know.

Not only do the public realise the critical role that public relations plays in promoting customer relations, they also acknowledge that the overall objective of mutual understanding and goodwill is in establishing service satisfaction for the public as the council goes about in its service delivery.

A public that is more knowledgeable about the role of public relations in customer relations makes them more receptive to PR campaigns and meet the objective creating mutual understanding and goodwill. Knowledge also creates an appreciation that companies are concerned about their product users and not just focused on making money but on their money makers who are the public.

This knowledge enhancing customer-company relationships customer satisfaction because as we are all well aware, PR thrives on research to better understand its public and create messages specifically tailored for a particular public, this

What this research has not attempted to answer however is to what extent the lack knowledge about the role of knowledge by the public on the role of public relations in customer relations has an effect on PR campaigns and the results intended. There still remains a research gap, therefore, the researcher feels other researchers can venture into this area.
6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- For Public Relations to promote good Customer Relationship it is highly emphasized and suggested there is need to Enhance communication ties between the council and its target audience, also in order to avoid information gaps.
- An open door policy encourages transparency and accountability, the local authority should embrace this phenomenal.
- Since social media has become an important part of companies’ marketing strategy. It is significant to recommend that for public relations to promote good customer relationship in the council public relations professionals should be the first to embrace the power of social media.
- It is important to note Public Relations plays an important vital role in enhancing image of customer in the eyes of the public. Thus Public Relations is not projecting the negative as positive but it is the process of communication with the group with whom in the organization existing and with whom the organization functions.
REFERENCES


Appendix C: Questionnaire

THE CAVENDISH UNIVERSITY

TOPIC: THE ROLE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN PROMOTING CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP IN LUSAKA CITY.

Dear respondent,

I am a fourth year student from Cavendish University carrying out a research on the above subject matter. You are part of the randomly selected sample from the entire Lusaka City. Therefore, I am kindly asking for your assistance by providing information in this questionnaire. The information you will provide will be purely used for academic purposes and will be treated with high levels of utmost confidentiality.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Answer all questions. Either tick [✓] or write in the given space.

2. Do not indicate your name or include any sensitive personal information.
SECTION A: BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT THE RESPONDENT.

1. What is your Sex?
   1. Male [    ]
   2. Female [    ]

2. How old were you on your last birthday?
   1. 15-19 [    ]
   2. 20-24 [    ]
   3. 25-29 [    ]
   4. 30 and above [    ]

3. What is your Marital Status?
   1. Single [    ]
   2. Married [    ]
   3. Divorced [    ]
   4. Separated [    ]
   5. Widowed [    ]

4. What is your highest Level of Education?
   1. University [    ]
   2. College [    ]
   3. High School [    ]
   4. None [    ]

5. What is your religious denomination?
1. Catholic
2. Jehovah's Witness
3. Seventh Day Adventist
4. Pentecost
5. Reformed Church
6. Others, specify

SECTION B: THE KNOWLEDGE OF CUSTOMERS TOWARD THE ROLE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN PROMOTING CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP.

6. Are you aware of Public Relations in promoting customer relationship?
   1. Yes
   2. No
   3. I don’t know

7. If yes, how much do you know about Public Relations?
   1. Very much
   2. Little
   3. Very little
   4. Average

8. If No, do you think PR plays a role in promoting customer relationship?
   1. Yes
   2. No

9. If yes, to what extent?
   1. Lesser extent
   2. Greater extent
10. If No to question 8, do you think customers are knowledgeable about the role of PR in promoting customer relationship?

1. Yes [ ]
2. No [ ]

11. What do you think must be done to promote the knowledge of customers regarding the role of PR in promoting customer relationship?

1. Sensitizing customers about the importance of PR [ ]
2. Educating customers about Social Media [ ]
3. Encouraging customers to advertise their products [ ]
4. I don’t know [ ]

**SECTION C: THE ATTITUDE OF CUSTOMERS REGARDING THE ROLE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN PROMOTING CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP.**

12. Is there a relationship between PR and customer satisfaction?

1. Yes [ ]
2. No [ ]

13. If Yes, what type of relationship?

1. Positive [ ]
2. Negative [ ]
3. Don’t know [ ]

14. If your answer to 12 is No, do you think there is customer dissatisfaction?

1. Yes [ ]
2. No [ ]

15. What do you think must be done to PR in order to promote good customer relationship?

1. Establishing good values [ ]

2. Rendering attention to customers [ ]

3. I don’t know [ ]

Thank you so much for your cooperation and most importantly your participation in this research.
APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW GUIDE

THE CAVENDISH UNIVERSITY

TOPIC: THE ROLE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN PROMOTING CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP.

Dear respondent,

I am a fourth year student from Cavendish University carrying out a research on the aforementioned topic. Therefore, I am kindly asking for your assistance by providing me with information in this interview guide. This information will be purely for academic purposes and will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Answer all questions by writing in the given spaces provided and also by ticking where necessary.

2. Do not indicate your name or include any sensitive personal information that will lead to your identification.
SECTION D: THE PERCEPTION OF CUSTOMERS TOWARDS THE ROLE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN PROMOTING CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP.

1. How do customers view PR in your own understanding?

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2. Do they view it to be of great importance in promoting Customer Relationship? Give reasons for your answer

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3. How do you rate customers’ view of PR in your area?

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4. In your own understanding, how would you describe the role of PR in promoting Customer Relationship?

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5. What do you think must be done to customers’ view of PR in promoting Customer Relationship?

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Thank you for your support and contribution in this study.