Reviewing the Identification Theory and its Appliance in Community Relations Practices in the Petroleum Industry in Nigeria

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Abstract

The Identification Theory suggests that corporate organisations see themselves as role models deliberately willing to share the same identity, values or norms with their host community. The theory advocates that corporate organisations consciously desire to identify with host communities as a way of demonstrating their willingness to partner, or feel the pulse of the community, identify with them in times of crisis, natural disasters, cultural festivals, end of year celebrations, etc. Organisations do this by drawing the attention of their publics to their activities in order to demonstrate their resolve to firmly affiliate themselves with the communities where they operate. This engagement is however geared towards sharing common grounds of interest which in the long run should solidify mutual understanding between an organisation and its host community moreover, in the petroleum industry where relationships between corporate organisations and their hosts are seldom fraternal due to serial disagreements/crises between them. The idea of Identification theory is for corporate organisations to market themselves to their publics with the ultimate aim of gaining mutual trust and understanding for industrial peace and tranquility.

1.   Introduction:

The incessant agitations and disagreements between corporate organisations and their host communities in Nigeria especially, the International Oil Companies (IOCs) in the Niger Delta have become too alarming. This development has over the years impacted negatively on the mutual relationships between the organisations and their hosts. For instance, the incidences that led to the utter destruction of Umuechem Community in Rivers State, Nigeria between 30th and 31st October, 1990; the infamous hanging of the Ogoni Nine in 1995, the massive oil spill that occurred in Ibeno along the Atlantic coast in 2012, and the countless shutting down of oil flow stations and other facilities belonging to the IOCs across the Niger Delta.

In all of these, human and animal lives have been lost, properties destroyed, families separated unceremoniously, communities allegedly pitched against each other due to the divide and rule syndrome, issues of unemployment in the region, etc. have severely hampered the mutual relationships between the companies and the host communities. This paper attempts to explain the postulation of the Identification theory and how corporate organisations use it to ameliorate battered relationships with their host. This is done as modern organisations attempt to show audiences how they are like the organisation but different from other competitors seeking their attention. Organisations must strive to get community members see themselves as part of the organisation through activities geared towards creating identification.

The identification theory of course, is the necessary recipe needed by corporate organisations especially in the Nigerian petroleum industry to mend broken ties, create new relationships and even reinforce moribund relationships. The Identification theory advocates the concept of synergy and seamless communication from the corporate organisation to the community and vice-versa. This process will on the long run, provide long lasting peaceful environment where business thrives and the organisation in turn, attends to its corporate social responsible in an atmosphere where the organisation is not only seen as a corporate citizen but accepted as one that shares their norms, values and identity.

2.   Importance of Community Relations Planning

In everyday life, humans carry out activities that are necessary to enable them achieve their goals. But where such activities are haphazardly planned, the goal for which the activities are carried out cannot be achieved. Broom, Cutlip, and Center (2009) gave four basic fundamental factors that could help in community relations.

a.   Defining the Problem (or Opportunity):

Broom, Cutlip and Centre (2009) identify that one of the steps to effective community relations practice is probing and monitoring knowledge, opinions, attitudes and behaviours of those concerned with or affected by the acts and policies of an organisation. This is where an organisation's intelligence function comes in. It provides the foundation for all the steps in the problem solving process by determining, "what is happening now".

b.   Planning and programming: ``

Nwodu (2007) has identified that responsible community relations practice requires proper articulation of programmes for efficiency. This implies that information gathered is used to make decisions about programmes, publics, objectives, actions and communication strategies, tactics and goals. This involves looking at the findings from the first step into the policies and programmes of the organisation. The second step in the process helps us to know what we have learned about the situation, what we should change, do or say.

Lattimore, Baskin Heiman, Toth and Leuven (2004) say that, as far as planning is concerned is generally classified into two broad categories: strategic and tactical. Strategic plans are long-range plans, usually made at the upper levels of management, and they involve decisions concerning major goals of an organisation, and polices for their implementation. While, tactical plans involve specific decision about what will be done at every level of the organisation to accomplish the strategic plans. Strategic planners typically "deal with future events" and must therefore rely on relatively uncertain data (p.116). Ogayi (2016) says planning is the basic function of management. It deals with charting out a course of action and deciding in advance the most appropriate course of action for achievement of pre-determined goals. Ogayi (2016) maintains further that planning is future oriented and determines an organization's direction. It is a rational and systematic way of making decisions today that will affect the future of an organisation (p.81).

George (2000) posits that 'those who fail to plan, plan to fail'. This is true of the public relations process; indeed, of all project management activities (p. 43).

In the same vein, Udoakah (2004) says that if every staff of an organisation or majority of them would strive always to perform his or their duties according to set standards and with decorum, it is doubtful if there would be an organisation with a bad image. So, for an organisation to get a good image is 'team work, a collective responsibility' (p. 1). Benson-Eluwa (2003) posits that planning a programme is a major part of the responsibility of public relations

practitioner. Benson-Eluwa (2003) states that there are three forms of plans for public relations: (1) Functional (2) Project (3) Comprehensive

1)   Functional: According to her, you can consider press relations as functional planning
2)   Project Planning: participation is an exhibition or a conference can be accepted as project planning
3)   Comprehensive planning: This according to her involves a campaign, planning the details, costing them, implementing them and assessing the results of the campaign. The actual process of planning may highlight facts and factors of an organisation that need to be developed. Often before the implementation of the plans can take place, facts or factors revealed by the planning will need to be developed or co-ordinated into a more functional efficiency (pp.49 – 50).

c.   Taking Action and Communicating:

This third step involves implementing the programme of action and communication designed to achieve the specific objectives for each of the publics to accomplish the programme goal. The questions in this step are, "who should do and say it, and when, where, and how?" "Nwodu (2007) argues that "community relations exercise cannot be done without active collaboration with the target community" (p.211). The implication is that effective community relations must involve the people for whom such programmes are intended from project planning to implementation. Community relations programmes are done with the people and not for the people.

d.   Evaluating the Programme:

Sometimes, an organisation's well-intended community relations programme may fail to address the concerns for which such programme was initiated. This is the case when some greedy elements in the community hijack a community relations programme such that the benefits of the programme does not reach the poor, the needy and downtrodden in the community who suffer most due to the negative effects of the activities of the organisation (Nwodu, 2007). An assessment or evaluation of the effects of a community relations programme on the well-being of those the programme was executed helps the organisation to uncover the true state of affairs in the community to avert unsuspecting dangers.

Planning is an important process that an organisation or individual will not play with. It is a blue print that guides an organisation or an individual in the planning process. Gregory (2010) stresses that a good starting point when thinking about public relations and planning is to look some of the recent definitions of public relations. She emphasizes UK's institute of public relations definition. Public relations practice is the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics.

Gregory (2010) reiterates that at the heart of this definition is the notion that public relations have to be planned. It is a deliberate, carefully thought-out process. It also requires ongoing (sustained) activity that is not haphazard. It is concerned with initiating (establishing) and maintaining a process of mutual understanding. In other words, he stresses that it involves a dialogue where an organisation and its various publics seek to listen to each other (p.3).

Jefkins and Yadin (1998) states that there are four important process of planning. This includes the following:

(a)   That it is important to set targets for PR operations – against which results can be assessed
(b)   That it is obvious to estimate the working hours and other costs involved

(c)   That it is important to select priorities which will control (i) the number and (ii) the timing of different operations in the programme?

(d)   Jefkinsand Yadin(1998) believe that deciding on the feasibility of carrying out the declared objectives should be based on the availability of (i) sufficient staff of the right person; (ii) physical equipment such as office machines, cameras or vehicles;(iii) an adequate budget. They expressly state that words that have to be given priority in the planning process are working hours, priorities, timing, resources, equipment and budget (p.5). Public relations plan should predict the future and show which course of action is most likely to accomplish the various public relations objectives. Wilson and Odgen (2009) further maintain that "the development and maintenance of relationships should be the goal of an organisation's community relations strategies" (p. 273).

3.   The Concept of Crisis

When an organisation in the same business as yours suffers a crisis, it is a warning to your organisations (Fearn-Banks, 2002). Fearn-Banks (2002) advises that organisation should watch for prodromes and make attempts to stop a crisis at this stage before it develops into a full blown crisis (p. 9).Sommers (2009) sees crisis as a series of activities that are designed to minimize the damage related to a crisis, and it is easier to implement an established, well designed plan when a crisis occurs than to create one on the spot. Sommers (2009) further emphasizes that the speed with which you recognize, respond, and emerge from a crisis can make a critical difference to the long-term success of your company or organisation. Once a crisis occurs, it is important to take a systematic, open approach to dealing with the media.

Dunn (1988) advises that the right place for public relations is at the top; reporting to the managing director a very senior person. Dunn (1988) reiterates that the public relations executive must guide and advice, must know about everything happening in the company or in the client's organisation and, most important of all, he or she must anticipate. George (2016) citing Seitel states that crisis is a situation that has reached a critical phase for which dramatic and extraordinary intervention is necessary to avoid or repair major damage (p. 417). Smith (2009) posits that the purpose of issue management is to deal with issues before they get out of hand. When that happens, the issues become a crisis. Smith (2009) therefore states that crisis is the name given to the process by which an organisation deals with out-of-control issues.

In the view of Adenekan (2000) 'a crisis, is a stage at which all future events affecting a person or an organisation will be determined. It is a major turning point, resulting in permanent drastic change'. He further adds that it is far more crucial than most issues or emergencies. Adamolekun and Ekundayo (2007) see crisis to a large extent, is an unanticipated occurrence that affects adversely the reputational stability of an enterprise such that the basic objectives of setting up that organisation may no longer be realized. In many cases, crisis may occur as a result of error in management's judgment, equipment failure or sabotage from various sources (pp 131 – 132).

   4.

A crisis is a state of unrest which disrupts an organisation's progress. It is a state of disagreement, hostility or confusion whose negative effects can adversely affect the operations of business, if it is not constructively managed. According to Coombs (2000), a crisis is a significant threat which can produce negative consequences on the operations and image of an organisation if it is not properly handled. It is an extraordinary event or series of events that adversely affect the integrity of the products, the reputation or the financial stability of the

organisation or the health or well-being of employees, the community or the public at large (Wilcox and Cameron, 2006). A crisis is a sudden occurrence or event that can disrupt an organisation's planned schedule, resulting in stress or discomfort, depending on the gravity of its consequences on the organisation and its activities.

Babalaye (2013) states that before any occurrence could be regarded as a crisis, such occurrence must be accompanied by an element of negative consequences on the activities, images, publics of the organisation or the society at large. "Depending on the gravity and level of occurrences a crisis may have either a short term or long term negative effects on the organisation or the public at large" (p.207). Ledingham and Bruning (2000) view crisis as a violation of the social rules or expectations held by stakeholders and, thus, a disruption to the relationship. Owing to the negative effects of crisis, which could be the loss of revenue (financial loss), reputation or a major threat to public safety, public relations practitioners must put in place practical measures which can be adopted, at least to mitigate or minimize the negative consequences of a crisis. Such measures are put in place preparatory to averting serious consequences which destroy the image or reputation of the organisation or cause heavy financial burden, litigations or strain relationship between the organisation and any of its publics.

Sachdeva (2009) sees a crisis as a moment of danger, or suspense, which can do serious harm, if not resolved in time. This moment of danger could have taken some time to develop, perhaps, as a series of problems, which can in itself were not big enough, and which reached crisis point almost unnoticed, or it could be a sudden catastrophe, which took everyone unaware with harmful consequences. Collins (2009) sees a crisis as any event that causes the sudden and catastrophic stoppage of an organization's primary activity or service. Collins (2009) further emphasizes that in the face of such catastrophic, failure to define in advance what constitutes a crisis in your organisation and to prepare a communication plan, can result in chaos when the crisis strikes. In that scenario, you will be faced with the dual problems of managing not only the crisis but also the all-important internal and public perceptions of how things are being handled and whether that organisation can or should survive (p. 248). Fearn-Banks (2002) advises that in a crisis situation, when everyone else is in a state of panic, public relations practitioners must have a calming attitude of "This is not as bad as it seems" or "This could be worst (p. 4).

4.   Management of Organisational Crisis

Management of crisis does not simply imply the managing of a crisis that has occurred. Crisis management involves three strategic measures–pre-crisis management measures, on the crisis management measures and the post-crisis management measures (Nwodu, 2007, Reddi, 2009). We shall examine these crisis management stages one by one.

a.   Pre-Crisis Management Measures

The Pre-crisis management measure is proactive. It involves first and foremost the cultivation and demonstration of responsible corporate attitude targeted at maintaining mutual relationship between an organisation and the various stakeholders it has dealings with as well as putting in place practical mechanisms to handle potential conflicts. The pre-crisis management measure is a preparatory approach not only to check the occurrence of a conflict but also to put measures in place suppose a crisis situation takes the organisation unawares. Reddi (2009), describing the nature of organisational crisis, states that "every organisation must think the unthinkable, or expect the unexpected, and prepare an emergency plan for implementation as and when a crisis occurs" (p. 195).

The Pre-crisis Management Measures make a demand on organisational management to be mindful of their activities, to constantly evaluate the organisation's relationship with its various publics and to lead a viable crisis management team, especially due to the inevitability of conflict within and outside the organisation (Gamble and Gamble 2002; Nwodu, 2007). The pre-crisis management effort thus involves the exercise of due diligence to forestall the occurrence of challenging situations that could disrupt the operations of an organisation or distort the image of the organisation thereby orchestrating a sour relationship between the organisation and concerned publics. Nwodu (2007) has identified some pre-crisis management approaches:

b.   Demonstration of Responsible Corporate Attitude:
This demands that the pursuit of organisational goals or objectives must be done with caution in order not to infringe the wellbeing of other members of the environment (Nwodu, 2007). The demonstration of responsible corporate attitude also demands respect towards some social and cultural affiliations of the people of the locality in which the organisation operates as well as strict adherence to legal or operational regulations (Ogunsanya, 1991; George, 2006). The demonstration of corporate arrogance towards the members of an organisation's host community, just as it is with any of its publics, or the disregard/ of legal or operational guidelines by an organisation can result in grave consequences. This accounts for why the organisation must conduct its activities with caution and must be seen to do so by its publics (Nwanne, 2015).

c.   Engage in Periodic Risk Audit
As an organisation enlarges its production capacity for production firms, for instance, and workforce, so it involves itself in higher crisis risks (Nwodu 2007). The implication of this expansion is that the organisation must always evaluate the nature of risks its operations exposes it to. Nwodu (2007) states that one sure measure towards managing the risk an organisation's operations or activities expose it (organisation) is to constantly carry out a periodic risk audit. Mackey, (2004) states that the risk audit exercise of an organisation involves carefully examining the organisation's activities against crisis situation which such activities are vulnerable to the place of the organisation's risk audit exercise or effort is to be mindful of the circumstances that could become the consequences of the organisation's actions.

d.   Cultivation of Public Confidence
What cultivation of public confidence does to an organisation is what true friendship does to individuals. Nwodu (2007) contends that "there is nothing as good as building sound reputation when the going was good" (p.89). The indispensable place of mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics accounts for the compelling necessity of responsible public relations practice by corporate organisations. The importance of this is because if members and different groups that have dealings with the organisation know and trust the personality and character of the organisation, it will be pretty easier for such organisation to handle or manage difficult circumstances than an organisation with a poor reputation (Mackey, 2004, Mathur, 2005, Nwanne, 2015).

e.   Constitution of a Crisis Management Team:
This involves the creation of a crisis management unit within the public relations department of an organisation. The purpose of this team is to equip professionals with the capacity to deal with challenging circumstances that could rock the activities of an organisation (Gamble & Gamble, 2002). Nwodu (2007) suggests that members of the crisis management team must be exposed to hypothetical crisis situations in order to keep them viable. Fearn-Banks

(2002) argues that organisations with a viable crisis management team will do well in terms of managing an actual crisis in the event of the occurrence of one than the organisation that does not have a crisis management team in place.

Mackey (2005) talks about ways of thanking people after a crisis have passed. It may be appropriate for senior personnel to visit those affected, or their families. It may also be necessary to make speeches or give interviews which outline the organisations considered assessment of what went wrong and what measures it is taking as a result. A severe crisis may provide the incentive an organisation needs to genuinely reflect on its structure, policies and mission. Mackey (2005) emphasizes that a round of thank you speeches to outside and internal audiences can provide a useful opportunity to announce plans for future improvement. During the crisis, the public relations team should have kept a good record of its part in limiting the damage to the organisation's reputation.

Regester and Larkin (2008) advice that members of the team need to be grouped together in a 'war room' adequately equipped with telephones, fax machines, internet access, photocopiers, a telephone and radio (to monitor news reports) and boards around the room on which new information and decisions are recorded. Regester and Larkin (2008) added that 'the role of the log-keeper cannot be underestimated' (p. 209). Bell & Smith (1999) argue that when a company finds itself in the spotlight by choice or circumstances, every word spoken or written by the company's spokespeople has great significance for the corporate image, public confidence, employee morale, and perhaps company survival.

The pre-crisis management approach, as noted earlier, involves the creation of a structure that serves as a sentinel to the activities of an organisation. The essence of this watch as identified by (Reddi, 2009), is due to the fact that it could be catastrophic for an organisation to wait for crisis to occur before efforts can be made to resolve it. What this means is that a corporate organisation must be proactive to discover and deal with those issues or circumstances that are capable of constituting major disagreements between it and any of its publics.

Fearn-Banks (2002) emphasizes that crisis detection is necessary when dealing with crisis situation which refers to a system within the organisation in which key personnel are immediately notified of a crisis. An organisation has a considerable advantage if it knows about a crisis before its publics do, especially before the news media get the tip (p. 10).

5.   On the Crisis Management Measures

Management of crisis, according to Nkwocha (2009) is managing a crisis that has already occurred. It involves taking sporadic, largely uncoordinated actions to deal with the crisis. It is fire brigade and reactive in nature. Guth and Marsh (2000) suggest that the term crisis is often misused by those who do not know it has a specific meaning. Everyone could see that flood, hurricanes or earthquakes can usually be classified as crises. They ask if events like a flat tire, missed homework or being stood up on a date also constitute crises? Problems are common place occurrence and fairly predictable. They usually can be addressed in a limited time frame, without public attention or without draining an organisation's resources. Crises tend to be less predictable.

It is on this note that Guth and Marsh (2000) state that it is impossible to shield a company from crisis. Crisis should be taken as a variable or factor which can erupt at any time, be it within and outside. A firm knowledge of its inevitability is crucial in preparing for and

managing its occurrence. Crises can be violent and non-violent. Most times, organisations are taken by surprise by its occurrence.

Newson, Turk and Kruckeberg (2010) add that a good plan should include an easy to use fact sheet and give good background information. This is why Fearn-Bank (2004) observes that a crisis communication plan (CCP) is more or less a blue print detailing what actions an institution should take when they have crisis. This plan, for example, specifies in detail who will say what as well as various channels through which the organisation can reach out to its publics and stakeholders.

Ajala (2001) comments that before an organisation can succeed where there is crisis, public relations practitioners, Smith (2009) calls it intercessors should learn how to avert worst case scenario, because crisis threatens the high priority values of the organisation. Ajala (2001) emphasizes that a crisis need not be a disaster such as a crashed airplane or an explosion in a factory. What Ajala meant here is that most threats to company stability are rarely so dramatic. However threats can have disastrous effects on a company but the effects may be minimized (p.175).

Ajala (2001) observes that communication channels are usually disrupted by crisis. Sometimes such disruptions tend to make many demands on the personnel who take care of the communication channels. It is on this note Ajala (2001) sees crisis as a period of uncertainty which brings undue internal and external pressure on the organisation. Such pressures in the case of a disaster may come from relations of victims, the media who desire attention, civil society, the government and other members of the public. Thus, a well-rehearsed crisis management plan will assist the organisation to not only tackle such pressures to learn quickly how to respond to these increased activities.

This learning process according to Ajala (2001) is the best during pre-crisis preparations. She adds that the key to good crisis management is anticipation and adequate preparation. Ajala (2001) offers the following tips for such preparation:

a.   Imagine the worst thing that could happen in your organisation. However, while it occurs it may not do damage as you anticipate.
b.   Hold regular brainstorming session with various unit heads on the anticipated occurrences for a company. It could be a fire disaster, tampering with products, kidnap of the company's executive, etc.
c.   Develop possible responses to these emergencies
d.   Put in place a crisis management team this should rehearse possible crises scenarios (p.178). Austin and Pinkleton (2006) present in outline format, complete communication programme plan. According to Austin and Pinkleton (2006) the programme plan includes: goals, objectives, strategies, tactics, a calendar for implementation and completion and a proposed budget.

Babaleye (2013) observes that for an event to be a crisis in a public relations sense, "there must be an element of a negative effect on the image of the organisation, its publics and the society at large" (p.211). He observes that it must be an unplanned occurrence or a sudden disruption to the normal process or planned procedure. Therefore, the occurrence or crisis calls

for an emergency response to correct what has happened. It demands top most attention of the leaders of the organisation.

Babaleye (2013) argues that a crisis provides everyone an opportunity to rise to the occasion and bring their creative energies together to find ways of solving the problem. A crisis may have a short or long term impact or negative effects on the organisation. A crisis may have profound effect or damage on the reputation of an organisation or constituents.

Babaleye (2013) identifies three related threats posed by crisis, namely: (a) threat to public safety (b) threat of financial loss (c) reputation loss. Most PR executives know that corporate crisis attacks the reputation of the organisation, apart from financial loss; it can lead to loss of lives and destruction of property.

6.   Post–Crisis Management Measures

According to Nwodu (2007), no crisis is over until it is over. What this means is that a crisis is not over once initial respite has been recorded following the withdrawal of the parties involved from the disagreement. The Post-Crisis Management Measures involve the effort of the organisation to determine the resolution of the crisis. According to Reddi (2009), it involves taking stock of the steps that were taken in the resolution of a crisis and measuring the degree of success recorded. This effort is not only required in preparation of future events but also to regain the grounds (relationships, reputation etc.) lost during the period the organisation went through the furnace of the crisis. Emphasizing the necessity of the post-crisis effort of the organisational management, Reddi (2009) argues that:

> By maintaining a profile, being visible, accessible, involved in industry and community matters and not being known only for having experienced a crisis, the company has the best chance of regaining any ground lost during the crisis and winning respect from the industry and the community(p.195).

The post-crisis management measures thus involve the organisation in evaluating its crisis management strategy that was experimented during the crisis that has been resolved and watching the cooperation of the parties involved with respect to the terms of agreement reached during the resolution of the crisis. Also, the post-crisis management effort provides the avenue for the organisation to show gratitude to individuals and groups (within and outside the organisation) that played different roles in the resolution of a crisis. Nwodu (2007), suggests that after the resolution of a crisis, the organisation must organize thank you fora for internal and external publics of the organisation for the understanding and effort in resolving the crisis.This interaction enables the organisation to further determine the true turn of events regarding its relationship with the publics or parties that were involved in the crisis.

The Post-crisis Management effort also requires the effective communication of the outcome (resolution) of the crisis to inform the publics of the organisation, the state of affairs regarding the crisis. Nwanne (2015) argues that this communication is fundamental following the fact that once a crisis involving an organisation occurs, public attention is usually drawn to the organisation. It therefore, becomes necessary that the public know the true state of affairs in order to save their confidence in the organisation. This is especially due to the fact that prudence in the management of crisis is a critical factor in determining the corporate personality of an organisation by its publics (Ogunsanya, 1991; Jefkins and Yadin, 1998; Ndimele and Innocent, 2006; Nwodu, 2007).

7.   Causes of Crisis in Organisations.

Babaleye (2013) cites Black (1998) as classifying crises in organisations into Known unknown and Unknown. The former describes the type of misfortune that may occur because of the nature of the business. For a manufacturing company for example, a product recall or tampering or a fire outbreak is always a possibility. Thus, the nature of the services provided by a company determines the nature of a crisis. In any organisation staff-management disagreements can be classified as known unknown. Other possible crises may be road accidents, airline crash, shipwreck are classified under known unknown. These disasters are known because we anticipate that they may occur. However, how and when they occur is unknown. In situations where occurrences are classified as unknown, natural disasters like earthquake, Tsunami, flooding etc are such occurrences. Similarly, bombs attacks by terrorists cannot be predicted. We can anticipate them. But if cases of kidnapping and terrorist acts are growing in a company's area of operations such crimes should be anticipated and classified as known unknown. During crisis, the best approach is to maintain a well-rehearsed communication policy; it is during the crisis that the communication plan is put into action.

Ajala (2001) list some of the basic points that should be carried out by a communication expert during the period of crisis: Establish a new headquarter if the size of the crisis demands such. It provides the advantage of keeping visitors under control; Guide reporters to the disaster area if management allows it; Keep a log of facts given out with times they were released; Always know whom to talk to; Remember photos can be as harmful as words, so be alert to photographs; Don't deny that a crisis exists; Don't refuse to answer media questions;   Don't release partial or inaccurate information or delay giving vital information to the media; Don't conceal unfavorable facts which may slip out to the media anyway; Don't release names of victims until their families have been contacted; and finally, the crisis management office must remain open to engage the media throughout the duration of the crisis (p.179).

Despite the measures organisations put in place towards ensuring that their operations run without hitches, they at one time or the other encounter unfavourable situations (crisis). The reason for this is because crises are natural and inevitable occurrences. They cannot be entirely eliminated. Wilcox and Cameron (2006) reporting the study conducted by Steven Fink on organisational crisis, submit that 89 percentage of client executive officers were of the view that crises are almost inevitable in the life of corporate organisations. Since this is the nature of crisis, it becomes pertinent that corporate organisations put viable structures in place to tackle any occurrence of crisis before they escalate. The absence or failure of a corporate organisation to put functional crisis management structures in place could be costly, since the negative effect of a single crisis can be devastating.
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Wilcox and Cameron (2006) say that a study by Steven Fink "found out that 89 percent of the client executive officers of fortune, 500 companies reported that a business crisis was almost inevitable. However, 50 percent admitted that they did not have a crisis management plan (p.259).
This state of unpreparedness is dangerous in our present, even changing times. It is even more dangerous to be caught unawares by a crisis. The level of damage to the reputation of the organisation will be more severe.

8.   Conclusion

This paper undertook an exposition of the postulations of the identification theory that modern corporate organisations tend to identify with the culture, norm and value of its host environment in order to demonstrate their willingness to share in their identity. The implication is that organisations make efforts to draw audiences' attention to their activities. Heath (2005) maintains that identification has become a rhetorical concept that has become important in public relations as they (organisations) compete to garner public support for their survival.

Identification theory is an on-going engagement between organisations and their various publics to explore common grounds and share common interest. Many organisations these days attempt to show audiences how they are like the organisation but different from other competitors seeking their attention. Organisations therefore, must strive to get community members see themselves as part of the organisation through activities geared towards creating identification.

The application of this theory by corporate organisations especially in the petroleum industry in Nigeria is very appropriate. This is so, because the industry has been constantly plagued by crises for as long as one can remember. This theory provides the leeway whereby managements of corporate organisations can re-strategize their community relations strategies/tactics and hopefully re-engineer a process that will overhaul the old system and make things right for both the community and the organisations.

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