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Strategic Public Relations in Post-Gaddafi Libya for Non-Profit Organizations: A Focus on the Rebuilding Efforts of Bokra and Attawasul

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Strategic Public Relations in Post-Gaddafi Libya for Non-Profit Organizations: A Focus on the Rebuilding Efforts of Bokra and Attawasul

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Abstract

This article focuses on understanding the strategic role Public Relations (PR) plays in positioning NGOs and helping them achieve their set out objectives in Libya- Post-Civil war era. The researchers analyzed two Non-Profit Organizations (NGOs) that operate in Libya - Bokra and Attawasul. NGOs like any other organization have publics they need to communicate and appeal to and as such it goes without saying that they channel their communication messages in such a way that their message is clear and resonates soundly with their intended audiences. This is even more pertinent in a country like Libya. Public Relations ensures that organizations are favorably looked upon by their publics by communicating in the right way. This study was premised on the Social Marketing Theory and dealt with understanding Public Relations and how it is used by NGOs in Libya. Based on the findings of this study, it was determined that Public Relations especially through social media, indeed plays a significant role in the process of getting donors and volunteers for NGOs in Libya. To arrive at this conclusion, questionnaires were distributed to staff and volunteers of the organizations under study and interviews were also conducted with top management staff of both organizations.

Keywords: non-governmental organizations, public relations, social marketing theory, post-Gaddafi Libya



Relaciones Públicas Estratégicas para Organizaciones Sin Ánimo de Lucro en la Libia Post-Gaddafi: El Caso de los Esfuerzos de Reconstrucción de Bokra y Attawasul

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Resumen

Este artículo se centra en el estudio del rol estratégico que juegan las Relaciones Públicas (RP) en el posicionamiento de las ONG y en cómo les ayuda a conseguir los objetivos que se trazan en la Libia post guerra civil. Los investigadores analizaron dos organizaciones sin ánimo de lucro que operan en Libia –Bokra y Attawasul. Las ONG, cómo cualquier otra organización tiene un público con el que necesita comunicarse e interpelar, y como tal ni que decir tiene que canalizan sus mensajes comunicativos de una manera que éstos queden claro y resulten convincentes a su pretendida audiencia. Esto es aún más pertinente en un país como Libia. Las Relaciones Públicas aseguran que las organizaciones sean consideradas favorablemente por su público por comunicarse adecuadamente. Este estudio se basó en la Teoría del Marketing Social y trató de entender las Relaciones Públicas y cómo estas son usadas por las ONG en Libia. En base de los resultados de este estudio se determinó que las Relaciones Públicas especialmente a través de los medios sociales juega efectivamente un papel significativo en el proceso de conseguir donantes y voluntarios para las ONG en Libia. Para llegar a estos resultados se distribuyeron cuestionarios entre la plantilla y el voluntariado de las organizaciones estudiadas y se realizaron entrevistas con técnicos y directivos de ambas organizaciones.

Palabras clave: organizaciones no gubernamentales, relaciones públicas, teoría del marketing social, Libia post-Gaddafi



Public relation as we have come to know it in recent times goes beyond getting or trying to get publicity for your company, client or organization. It has become a multi-layered art form that is imperative for any organization to carry out in order to be able to thrive in a very competing economy (Rivero & Theodore, 2014). Generally speaking Public Relations (PR) is simply a way of developing and maintaining mutually beneficial relationship between an organization and its numerous internal and external publics. These publics are, but not limited to an organization's target audience, client and all stakeholders including the staff of the said organization.

According to Lewis & Kanji (2009), non-profits are organizations that are created or established with the main purpose of serving the public without any consideration for profits. Such organizations include charitable organizations, social welfare organizations, labor and agricultural organizations, business leagues, social clubs, fraternal societies, veterans' organizations, employees' associations and political organizations.

To achieve their goals NGOs need to interface and relate with people, be able to convince them to join their cause or to ask for their help either in terms of money or time. How they go about their activity and how much help they eventually get all boards down to how much PR they can do in a lot of cases. This industry though not-for-profit is very competitive, with numerous organizations fighting for very limited contributions from a very limited number of potential contributors. It is therefore only wise for them to attract the attention of the right kind of people through any means possible, one of those means is Public Relations (Rivero & Theodore, 2014). The importance and role of public relations on sustainable development cannot be overemphasized (Banks & Hukme, 2013). NGOs have helped focus the attention of government and the general public on important national and international issues that have long ranging implications for sustainable growth and development (Allagui & Al-Najjar, 2018) This is also the case in Libya as since the Arab uprising which left Libya practically destroyed with public infrastructure hardly working and the people of Libya suffering untold hardship, NGOs have been there to help Libyans through their hard times. They have directed international attention to some of the worst hit places/regions in the country and have been on ground to help stabilize the

region. This study hopes to find out the role Public Relations plays in ensuring continued support and contributions for NGOs in Libya post-Gaddafi era.

The purpose of this study is to scrutinize the role of Public Relation in non-profit organization in allowing people to work together to achieve common nonprofit goals, objectives, or/and humanitarian missions. The study also aims if possible to answer the following questions: what are the goals and objectives of the organizations under study? And to what extent has social media helped NGOs achieved their set out goals and objectives?

Non-Governmental Organizations and What They Do

NGO as a broad term is often described as a private company free of government interference that may or may not make profit, this is the definition favored by the UK public Law project according to Sunkin, Bridges and Meszaros (1993). From the definition an NGO can be viewed as any company outside those owned by the government, so Facebook by this definition is an NGO. A better definition is the one put forward by David Lewis and Nazneen Kanji (2009), who stated that NGOs are organizations concerned with either or a combination of social, economic or political change. What this definition implies is that NGOs are by set-up and definition concerned with social, human and economic development at national and international levels. Vakil (1997) defines it as self-governing institutions or organizations that are private and not-for-profit set up with the main purpose of improving quality of life for the less privileged and disadvantaged in the society. From the definitions proffered by Vakil (1997), we can deduce that, not all non-government companies are actually NGOs except by name, but only companies that meet the criteria set by these definitions can be regarded as NGOs. Therefore for the purpose of this research NGOs are as described by David Lewis and Nazneen Kanji. What NGOs do can be classified into 3 basic roles according to Lewis (2010) and they are:

1. Implementer: this role involves NGOs trying through different means to gather and mobilize funds and resources in order to help

those in need. This help can be rendered in different ways from healthcare, microfinance to help small businesses, agriculture extension, human rights amongst others.

2. Catalyst role: in this role NGOs act as agents of change. A catalyst can generally be defined as someone or something that can bring about change. NGOs acting in this capacity inspire and contribute to improved thinking on how to bring about and promote change. These actions may be directed at companies, governments and other institutions.

3. Role of Partner: in this capacity NGOs work alongside other stakeholders in order to achieve some sort of social change or help the disadvantaged or less privileged people in the society. This role reflects the growing need for collaboration between government/corporations, donors and humanitarian groups in order to provide a specific input in a project. An example of this sort of collaboration is the collaboration between the USAID and the ministry of Health in Libya to provide free vaccination to the children in Libya.

In general NGOs can be seen as a reflection of societal needs. NGOs are usually involved in causes that would help make their immediate environment a better place (Lewis, 2010). So it is common to see the Red-cross in war-torn areas where there is a likelihood of people needing their help and in more developed countries, causes like gender equality and similar causes are more commonly pursued. One can deduce that NGOs spring up or go to where they are needed and they, in a lot of cases, reflect the immediate needs of such society. So it is not surprising that the popular NGOs in Libya are the ones that care for the wounded such as the Red Cross and the ones advocating for equal rights for children and other welfare advocacy groups for women and children.

Public Relations and its Role In NGOs

The earliest definition of Public relations dates as far back as the early 20th Century and was attempted by the Public Relations Society of America (PSRA); they described it as the means through which an organization and its numerous publics mutually adapt to one another. This definition by the PSRA focuses on the idea that for PR to be effective it has to be mutually beneficial to both the organization and its target publics.

Public Relations to the professional management and business person is indispensable to the smooth running of their organization. In fact it is sometimes assumed that the difference between a company succeeding, and remaining relevant and a company folding up after a short while might just be how well they perform public relations (Benoit, 1995). This is even more so for NGOs today as the industry has become cutthroat and has even attracted scammers and fraudsters disguising as NGOs to defraud unsuspecting publics into parting with their hard earned money (Nikkhah & Redzuan, 2010). This has made it pertinent for companies both for-profit and non-profit to engage in good PR to ensure that their organization and their brand are always viewed positively.

Like any other organization, NGOs also need to be in the good books of their target audiences to survive and continue to exist. And to ensure that they are not short on goodwill and loyalty from their target audiences and the general public, it is important for NGOs to carry their publics along. Publics of NGOs have been described as any people that are directly or indirectly involved in the organization, be it as a volunteer, management of the organization, staff, community where such an organization exist or the recipients of the organization's services (Lewis, 2003). NGOs are mostly not-for-profit and as such there is a delicate line that must not be crossed when promoting their brand and soliciting funds for their cause in order not to come across as greedy or exploitative. This delicate line can be nicely towed using the principles and practice of Public Relations, where customers are engaged and made aware of a course without having to feel exploited (Wilcox, 2005 as cited in Fawkes, 2007). Wilcox goes on to explain that for NGOs to achieve their goals and agenda, it is pertinent that companies engage in PR. Proper PR would make it a lot easier for NGOs to gather the

kind of support they need, support in terms of Volunteers, financial and other kind of support that would make achieving their goals easier.

Dan Baker (as cited in Feinglass, 2005) advises that for an NGO to effectively engage proactively with its publics, such an organization must first take care of its internal publics which involves stakeholders that are intimately engaged in the day to day running of the organization. The organization using proper PR techniques should be able to motivate their employees to get the work done.

In the light of this, we can conclude that NGOs need Public Relations for the following reasons:

1. They depend almost completely on donations from individuals and other fund-raising campaigns
2. To get these donations, they must attract through any means, the attention of potential donors and financiers.
3. They must find a way to get information about their organizations and its activities out to the public.
4. They must maintain a cordial relationship with relevant media outlets if they are to achieve their aims and objectives.

In conclusion, one can safely assume that PR is very important to the smooth-running of any organization including NGOs hence why they are constantly evolving their communication tools to reach and engage their audience. PR is the lifeblood of any NGO and should be taken seriously, if they are to remain competitive and relevant in the long run.

Research Hypothesis

Based on current understanding in the field of Public Relations as it relates to Not-for-profit organizations, it is clear that there is very little research on how modern technologies come to play in promoting Corporate and organizational ideals and engaging not-for-profit target audiences especially as it has to do with developing nations such as Libya and other sub-Sahara Africa. Based on identified gaps from similar/related research in this field, the researchers have developed a hypothesis that would help guide this study

and also some assumptions that would help in proving or disproving the main hypothesis.

The main hypothesis is:

H₁: Social media plays a major role in the PR efforts of NGOs in Libya.

Research Assumptions

To properly prove or disprove this hypothesis, the researchers chose to make use of some assumptions that would be proved or disproved and help lead to answering the Hypothesis. The following are the assumptions developed based on the research objectives to help guide this study:

1. NGOs do not engage in PR because they assume it would deplete their very limited budget
2. To engage in PR, NGOs would have to spend a lot of money
3. NGOs in Libya carry out limited but effective PR activities
4. PR activities carried out by NGOs result in a lot of awareness and support for their cause
5. NGOs in Libya make use of new media technologies such as social media to engage their target audiences more than traditional media

Theoretical Framework

The social marketing theory focuses on how socially-valuable information can be properly promoted. Applying this theory would help organizations promote behaviors that work in favor of their organization and discourage behaviors that do not align with their agenda for social change (Lefebvre, 2000). Drawing from the field of sociology and psychology, it seeks to understand how societal and psychological factors can be manipulated to increase efficacy of media campaigns. It seeks to identify and proffer solutions to any barrier that might prevent the effective flow of necessary information (Novelli, 1990). Social marketing can therefore be defined as

the design, implementation and control of programs seeking to increase the acceptability of a social idea or practice in a group.

The theory is based on the idea that people will irrespective of their demographic, adopt new behaviors and attitude towards a brand or product if they feel there is something in it for them (Kotler & Lee, 2008). What this implies is that people intentionally seek out personal benefits before deciding on adopting new ideas or brand and if there is no benefit to them, there is a very high likelihood that such a brand would not be favorably looked upon. This is directly related to NGOs and how they constantly seek to improve their image and reputation among their supporters and other publics. Therefore any NGO using Public Relations as a means of reaching and influencing their publics must ensure that they meet the needs of their consumers if they are to derive the benefits of their PR campaign.

Social marketing theory has become increasingly popular since the 1970s and used constantly to cause behavioral change for example telling people to stop smoking because smokers are liable to die young is perfect application of the social marketing campaign. The audience stands to gain something if they heed the advice (which is longer life or a chance to reduce the likelihood of getting cancer) while the campaign organizers also stand to gain something which is to reduce smoking generally (Lefebvre, 2013). This example clearly shows a mutually beneficial relationship being sought by the organizers of the campaign which is what Public Relations is all about.

Contextual Perspective

Libya During and Post Gaddafi Era

This section provides a succinct historical perspective of Libya before and after the uprising of 2011 and touches on the events that led to revolution that saw the overthrow and eventual killing of Gaddafi the erstwhile leader of Libya for the past 42 years.

Muammar Gaddafi came to power by overthrowing king Idris on September 1, 1969. One week after dethroning King Idris, Muammar Gaddafi was named the new commander in Chief. He was the leader or face of the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) and was strongly against the

interference of foreign countries in the political landscape of their country (Beblawi, 1987). The RCC was made up of 12 members mostly from humble backgrounds and they made and decided all the subsequent rules in Libya. It was not long before members of the RCC started plotting to overthrow Gaddafi. By 1975 after numerous attempts to oust him, Gaddafi had reduced the RCC to just 5 members loyal to him. He ran Libya with an iron fist- allowing public executions and humiliation of anyone that dared oppose him (Achcar, 2013).

Despite the way he chose to run the country; through fear and intimidation, Libyans had access to good healthcare, education and affordable housing – the average income during his regime was about 12,000 USD, far higher than most African countries. The People’s Social Leadership Committees (PSLC) were charged with the job of seeing to the disbursement of government money to the people in form of students grants and subsidized housing, but punished anyone that spoke against or opposed the government (Chivvis & Martini, 2014).

Gaddafi was later accused of supporting terrorist organizations which led to deterioration in relationships between Libya and western countries- most especially the UK and US- which in turn resulted in trade embargoes and restrictions on Libya.

With oil prices falling in the 90s, it became difficult to maintain the level of financial stability Libyans were used to and as such tensions were beginning to increase which put Gaddafi in a very precarious situation at home (Achcar, 2013). To reduce the financial burden, Gaddafi in 2003 capitulated to the demands of the west to stop his weapons of mass destruction program. This eased the tensions between the US and Libya and by 2004 the US lifted the sanctions imposed on Libya. According to some authors (Al-Khalidi & Payne, 2013) although the relationship between Libya and western countries seemed to have improved around this period, there is no denying the fact that these problems led to the eventually killing of Gaddafi.

Since the fall of Gaddafi in 2011, Libya is yet to get its bearing; politically, economically and otherwise (Serwer, 2011). Civil war has been a real threat since the collapse of the regime with different factions threatening to and picking up arms in defense of an ideology or a region. Since it has

been difficult to set up a working government, militias and Jihadist groups have taken up large territories in the country and human rights violations are on a daily increase in Libya (Chivvis & Martini, 2014).

From the foregoing it is clear that Libya is still a long way away from the liberation they sought when they fought the regime, because it seems situations have only deteriorated overtime. The rebuilding efforts of NGOs, Civil Society and the government is yielding results gradually and given time, the fortunes of Libyans should significantly improve.

Relevant Research on NGOs and Public Relations

This section shall briefly examine some recent articles and academic publications on the role of Public Relations in NGOs.

Nurcin Coskun (2007) in his research on the importance of PR in non-profit organizations, found out that although a lot of NGOs understand the value of using PR techniques in promoting and building relationships, they do not usually effectively carry out PR activities due to lack of funds and the ability to gather a lot of volunteers for some of their community outreach programs. The research was organized in New Zealand and studies two NGOs in the country. The author made use of a combination of methods to gather data- in-depth interviews and survey methods. Another major finding of the research was that when they decide to do some PR activities, they are usually done at random and they do not make any long term plan to sustain their PR actions as a major strategy for the organizations under study. Although the research was properly conducted, the limited number of NGOs under study and their scope of activities make it difficult to generalize the finding of this research. It however serves well as a backdrop for further research into the subject matter.

Banks and Hulme (2013) in their research on the roles of NGOs in development and poverty eradications and reduction, found out that NGOs have helped in eradicating poverty by ‘depoliticizing’ the process of helping the poor. They suggested that for NGOs to be able to conduct their functions effectively, it is important that they leave room for dialogue between themselves and those they serve so as to know their immediate needs and create sustainable programs to help tackle these needs. Similarly in their

research on NGOs and nation building and development, Will and Baker (2013) tried to understand the roles non-profit organizations play in helping remodeling and repairing homes and the impact on the society in general. It was found out that NGOs invest a considerable amount of money in helping the poor live in safer and healthier environments by helping them improve on their houses and provide basic home fittings like mosquito nets etc. that makes it healthier to live in such houses. The efforts of NGOs according to this study have led to revitalizing distressed and hitherto dangerous neighborhoods, making them accessible, safe and healthy.

Methods

This section provides an overview of the case study. Succinct description of the research design is presented alongside information on the sampling, data collection and data analysis techniques used.

Overview of the Case Study: Attawasul and Bokra Organization in Libya

In order to achieve the objectives of this research two NGOs in Libya were studied. These organizations were chosen because they are local and therefore are grassroots oriented but with international backing and legitimacy. These organizations were created in response to the war of 2011 and are at the very core of the rebuilding process in Libya and as such would be very relevant to this study. This section shall briefly describe the association, what they stand for and what they have to offer.

Attawasul Association is an NGO set up immediately after the Libyan uprising of 2011, with the main purpose of supporting and helping in the creation of a democratic and constitutional Libya and also serves as a board member of the coalition of the NGOs in Libya (acted.org). The main mission of the association is capacity building through the provision of social, cultural and psychological support geared towards empowering women, youths and children in Libya. They hope to achieve the following in the immediate and long term:

- Provision of an enabling atmosphere for people especially women, children and youths of the community to improve the skills such as artistic, technical and leadership skills amongst others.
- Develop programs and initiatives that would protect and safeguard the rights of women and children in the community and also promote and emphasize the inclusion of women in the running of the society.

Since its establishment Attawasul has carried out outreach programs throughout Libya and has organized open public discussions, debates, organized workshops and as well as human development programs that focus on improving the role of women and youths in the development and establishment of a newly democratic Libya (www.tawasul-libya.org). They also work on improving awareness on violence against women and the rights of women in Libya. They have been involved in a lot of projects in the 6 years since their establishment, most notable is the organization of the first ever international Libyan women conference in Tripoli in November 2011, another seminar organized in December of the same year on a principled approach to constitution making, in 2012 they organized a massive youth conference which saw over 300 youths in attendance from all parts of Libya and other Arab countries. This was organized in association with Bokra youth Organization (acted.org).

Apart from organizing seminars and outreach programs in Libya, the Attawasul association also publishes a major newspaper; the 'Uprising of the Free' – newspaper targeted at youths in Libya (tawasul-libya.org). They also run 3 programs on radio targeted at women, youths and children respectively.

The second organization under study is Bokra Organization and similar to the Attawasul, it was established post 2011 Libya uprising in November of 2011. Bokra is a civil society organization whose main focus is on youth empowerment in post-Gaddafi Libya. The name derives from the translation of the word Bokra which means to look to the future or in simpler terms, 'tomorrow'. It denotes a fresh start.

According to their mandate, they hope to help the rebuilding efforts in Libya by encouraging and facilitating through different means a more open and tolerant society where the younger generation in Libya can become part

of the whole social and political process. The aims and goals of Bokra organization can be summarized as follows:

- To develop and grow their community and the country in general by implementing the ideas and visions of the youths in Libya.
- Help youths in Libya achieve their personal and collective goals and ensure the voices and opinions are heard.
- To participate in community and civic activities in Libya.
- Translate youths' ideas into reality.
- Youth empowerment and ensures the reduction in generational gap between them and the older generation in Libya.

Bokra consistently and regularly collaborates with other NGOs and organizations all over the world to ensure that their organizational objectives are attained in good time. Bokra has worked with Attawasul to organize a youth conference and also createS videos encouraging people to participate in the electoral process in Libya. Perhaps one of their major achievements to date is the collaboration with H2O-another NGO in Libya- as they worked together to monitor and prepare reports on the performance of the GNC (Libya's General National Congress). The project was popularly known as Eye on Congress and the reports on the project were regularly published in local media with the sole aim of helping the public regain some level of trust in the government of Libya (acted.org).

Research design

The researchers made use of a mixture of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies (Mixed) to retrieve data from the staff and volunteers in Bokra and Attawasul; both NGOs based in Libya

The data collected from the questionnaires and interviews represents the respondents' views and opinions on their NGO and how Public Relations plays a role in it. Both organizations have combined staff strength of about Thirty (30) based on the information gotten from the contact person in these organizations. Bokra has eighteen (18) full and 192 volunteer staff while Attawasul have twelve (12) full staff and ninety two (92) volunteers. Therefore 100 questionnaires were sent to each of them and a total of 182

questionnaires was and deemed usable for the study. Also interviews were conducted with the project coordinators. A pretest of the questionnaire was conducted in Girne American University, North Cyprus to confirm that the questionnaire was easy to understand and relevant to the study. The result of the pretest showed that the questionnaire was in fact relevant to the study, in addition to this, a reliability test was conducted using SPSS and it was confirmed that the questionnaire is both valid and reliable based on the Cronbach Alpha score of .855.

Method of Data Analysis

Table 1.

Hypothesis, assumptions and the statistical tests carried out

HYPOTHESIS

S/N	HYPOTHESIS	TEST
1	Social media plays a major role in the PR efforts of NGOs in libya.	Simple frequency and analysis of the interviews
ASSUMPTIONS		
1	NGOs do not engage in PR because they assume it would deplete their very limited budget	Simple frequency and analysis of interviews
2	To engage in PR, NGOs would have to spend a lot of money	Simple frequency
3	NGOs in Libya carry out limited but effective PR activities	Frequency Distribution and analysis of Interviews
4	PR activities carried out by NGOs leads to a lot of awareness and support for their cause	Simple frequency and analysis of interviews
5	NGOs in Libya make use of new media technologies such as social media to engage their target audiences more than traditional media	Simple frequency and analysis of interviews

Data was retrieved from two sources; survey and in-depth interviews, therefore the analysis of retrieved data adopted a multi-dimensional approach.

The analysis of the interviews involved transcribing the interviews and then through deductive reasoning finding out what part of the interview best

answers some of the assumptions and the main hypothesis of the research. The analysis constantly weaved between using the questionnaire and interviews to prove or disprove the hypothesis and assumptions.

Results

New Media Usage among NGOs in Libya and the Financial Implications

When asked to describe their task and what they mostly do, 30% of Bokra respondents said they basically organize events, 30% said they work on different projects, 20% work as team leaders, 10% team member and 10% project manager. While 30% of Attawasul staff said they organize events for their organization, 10% work in finance, 10% work as team leaders, 30% work as team members and 10% work as project manager.

What this implies is that these NGOs make do with their internal staff thereby limiting the cost needed to employ the services of external consultants. The head of the PR department at Attawasul, when asked about the financial implications of engaging in PR activities such as fundraising and call to actions, he explained that “although this activities are expensive, the organization have been able to achieve most of their PR activities by ensuring that most of the activities that can be done in-house are not outsourced”, he further stated that,

Social media has made a lot of our job easier, we have a social media page which is very active and on this page, we discuss our plans and activities and engage our stakeholders. It is cheap and very effective in ensuring that we get information about our organization and its activities out there to our stakeholders

80% of the total respondents from both organizations claim they carry out publicity campaigns, while 20% say they do not. 55% of the total respondents claim that they are personally involved in publicity campaigns while 45% say they are not. When asked how well they think the public know about their organization 50% of Bokra staff say they are very well known and another 50% claim they are somewhat well known which implies that they are generally sure that their organization is popular in Libya. 70%

of Attawasul staff thinks their organization is very well known and 30% say they are somewhat well known. When asked to judge what the public's knowledge was based on, 40% of Bokra staff said through Facebook and social media, 30% said people know them through the projects they do in their communities, 10% said public events and another 10% said word of mouth. 20% of Attawasul staff said people know about them based on their reputation, 40% said through Facebook and other social media and 30% said through feedback they send out. When asked if the local media report on their activities, 40% of Bokra staff said they do, 40% said they do not know and 20% said they do not report on them. 80% of Attawasul staff said news media report on their activities while 20% said they do not. On the type of coverage they get, 70% of Bokra staff said they do not know, 20% said positive coverage and 10% said negative coverage. 70% of Attawasul staff claim they receive only positive news coverage by local media and 30% said they do not know.

This is supported by the interview conducted with the Team leader at Bokra, Farag Zughaid, who is quoted as saying,

From the results we have achieved so far, I can categorically state that our publicity efforts have been largely successful...we are an NGO and as such rely for funding from well-wishers and other international organisations and we have made use of social media and other platforms to reach out to these people. Our Facebook page is constantly updated with information about our activities and it is through this platform that we get most of our feedback.

When asked what role the traditional media such as television and radio play in their PR activities, Farag stated that,

It is sometimes difficult to get major TV and Radio stations to talk about us, and promote our activities. Most times the only time we make the news is when we are involved in very big activities with more prominent NGOs as partners. Moreover, our organization is more focused on youths and social media has proven very reliable in engaging this particular group of people. This is not to say that the radio and TV stations do not play a role, but due to our very limited funding, we must prioritize. So we mainly make use of

social media and our in-house newspaper and magazine publications to engage our stakeholders and promote our activities.

To carry out some of their community outreach programs which is also a PR activity, both Attawasul and Bokra made it clear that they also employ the services of volunteers which is usually affordable as the majority of the volunteers work for free and only expect a letter of recommendation and some transportation allowance.

Toha Sweadik, an executive member of the board of directors in Attawasul when asked how they engage in community services, the cost implication and how they raise money for this activities, is quoted as saying that,

Community outreach is a big part of our activities here at Attawasul. How do we get young men and women to be part of the building process if we do not engage them on a personal level? We conduct outreach programs at least twice a year – moving from one location to another and talking to community members, sharing pamphlets and soliciting for support and participation in our activities. These outreaches have been very effective, as we now have about one thousand two hundred (1200) volunteers due largely to this activity. The only cost usually associated with this are logistical, such as transport, public address systems and sometimes venue cost, most of the people that are involved in this activity are volunteers who are working for free and because they believe in our vision for a better Libya.

This position is supported by Farag Zughaid who explained that they also engage in outreaches and other community activities in order to take the message of hope directly to the people. He explained that volunteers also make up the large part of the facilitators and participants so far.

From the foregoing, we can conclude that the NGOs under review make use of a combination of traditional methods of fundraising and awareness creation such as community outreaches and social media interactions with their target audiences. These activities range from very expensive to affordable. However, these NGOs have adopted a more affordable method of carrying PR activities – using social media and in-house publications to engage their stakeholders and volunteer staff to carry out community

outreaches. Limiting their use of traditional media (which can be costly) for big events.

This aptly proves the first and second assumptions false as NGOs in Libya have found ways to engage in PR activities without necessarily having to spend a lot of money.

The analysis above also supports the fifth assumption which states that ‘NGOs in Libya make use of new media technologies such as social media to engage their target audiences more than traditional media. The interviews conducted with key stakeholders and from the results of the survey stated above, it is quite clear that social media is a major component of the PR activities amongst NGOs in Libya.

PR Activities and Stakeholder Engagement

When asked how often they carry out community activities, 60% of Bokra staff said very often, 30% not very often and 10% said seldom. 90% of Attawasul staff said they engage in community services very often and 10% said very seldom. When asked about public support for their organization, 60% of Bokra staff says they get public support, 20% say they don't and 20% do not know. 40% of Attawasul staff claim they have public support, 40% do not know and 10% say No. on how often they use volunteers 30% of the total respondents from both organization said they use volunteers monthly, 65% says occasionally and 5% says rarely.

From the results above, it is clear that the bulk of PR activities are limited to social media, community outreach and press releases. However based on the level of acceptance and continued growth and relevance of these organizations, it is clear that their PR activities are very effective. In fact both Bokra and Attawasul claim they solicit for funds and volunteers only through Public Relations activities and nothing more.

This is supported by interviews conducted with staff of Attawasul and Bokra.

Toha Sweadik, of Attawasul when interviewed stated that,

...These outreaches have been very effective, as we now have about one thousand two hundred (1200) volunteers due largely to this activity. The only cost usually associated with this are

logistical, such as transport, public address systems and sometimes venue cost, most of the people that are involved in this activity are volunteers who are working for free and because they believe in our vision for a better Libya.

80% of all respondents from both organizations are of the opinion that PR activities are very useful and important to their organizations and they all agree that awareness through social media, international events publicized in local media, as well as the jobs they have done all aid in their popularity within the region. Second to social media interactions, the next most popular reason people become aware of their organizations is through strong goodwill they possess and grow through activities they carry out in the region. It is therefore worth noting that PR activities indeed help increase awareness and support for NGOs.

It is clear from the above that Public Relations activities engaged in by Attawasul and Bokra has led to increased awareness and stakeholder engagement. This therefore proves the third and fourth assumptions true. The main hypothesis based on the findings and analysis of the data was proven to true, therefore NGOs in developing nations rely heavily on Public Relations through social media to engage their audiences and solicit for support.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, we can conclude that indeed Public relation is important to the continued existence of NGOs in developing nations and more particularly in Libya. The findings clearly show that NGOs in Libya primarily make use of Public Relations through social media to engage the publics and solicit for funds.

This study systematically captures different PR practices that NGOs implement to engage the public within a timeframe and in a geopolitical and socio-economic context that has not been covered yet by research. Further investigation of such PR practices carried by other NGOs in different countries may help highlight reoccurring patterns to make theoretical sense out of such patterns. The patterns can be further examined in connection to the political and ideological background (if any) of NGOs which may in turn influence the public opinion and the judgment of NGOs practices in

different countries. All in all, by filling this gap in literature, this study may open the door for more studies to investigate the PR practices in carried by NGOs in developing countries.

Moreover, This study was time limited and therefore the researchers could not properly analyze publicity campaigns of NGOs (in Libya) which would be very beneficial to the study in this field, the researchers thereby suggest, that a study into analyzing TV and radio campaigns of NGOs in developing countries should be carried out to find out the identifying characteristics of these messages and what they hope to achieve, also an audience study of how the public receives and interprets these messages should also be conducted to have a bird eye view of the issue. Also a comparative analysis of TV and other media PR messages of NGOs in developing and first world countries should be done to find out if there is any significant difference in how NGOs in different societies engage their publics and solicit or funds and if the message is different.

Finally, it is suggested that the same research carried out here should be done with a larger sample size to find out if the findings would remain the same and would help validate the results of this study.

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