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Public Relations Strategies and Customer Satisfaction in Nigeria's Electricity Distribution Companies: Insights from Ibadan Electricity Distribution Company

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Abstract

In Nigeria, weak communication between electricity distribution companies and customers has fuelled inefficiencies, dissatisfaction, and mistrust. This study investigates how public relations (PR) strategies influence customer satisfaction, focusing on the Ibadan Electricity Distribution Company (IBEDC). A mixed-methods design was adopted, combining surveys and interviews with 353 consumers in the Ibadan metropolis. Results show that customers are aware of PR strategies such as media engagements, SMS alerts, town hall meetings, community programs, and customer care services. However, the impact of these efforts was undermined by persistent challenges, including irregular power supply, overbilling, and poor complaint resolution. While media and community engagement improved awareness and relationship-building, they were insufficient to overcome frustration with unreliable service. Stakeholder meetings and local radio programmes like *Imole De*, which provide direct feedback opportunities, were highly valued interactive platforms. The study concludes that although PR enhances communication and visibility, it cannot substitute for consistent service delivery. For long-term customer satisfaction, electricity distribution companies must integrate effective communication with tangible improvements such as reliable supply, transparent billing, and responsive service. Aligning PR with service delivery is essential to

rebuilding public trust, fostering loyalty, and ensuring the sustainability of Nigeria's electricity sector.

Keywords: Brand Loyalty, Customer Satisfaction, Customer Relations, Electricity Distribution, Public Relations Strategies, Stakeholder Engagement, Service Quality.

Introduction

Nigeria's electricity sector continues to face persistent challenges in delivering quality customer service. Despite reforms aimed at improving the sector post-privatisation, customer satisfaction remains low due to recurring issues such as irregular power supply, inaccurate billing, limited customer engagement, and lack of transparency. The poor communication structure between electricity distribution companies (EDCs) and their consumers is central to these issues. According to Lawal et al. (2021), the communication gap between customers and EDCs has been a recurring issue in Nigeria, which has led to inefficiencies, commercial losses, and a lack of trust in the country's power sector. This communication breakdown results in reduced customer trust, resistance to bill payments, and vandalism of electricity infrastructure, further affecting the financial sustainability of the distribution companies. (J.D Power, 2024) report highlights the factors influencing customer satisfaction in the electric utility sector, emphasizing the importance of communication, corporate citizenship, and pricing.

The failure to prioritise effective communication strategies has also contributed to customer apathy and a negative perception of the Electricity Distribution Companies, especially when consumers perceive the companies as exploitative or indifferent to their complaints (Sule, 2010). Many customers rely on estimated billing, which they view as unfair, and experience long delays in fault resolution and feedback, deepening dissatisfaction. As Eniola Victor Olamide et al. (2025) observe, such conditions create a vicious cycle: poor service, while weak communication reduces customer satisfaction, which leads to revenue losses and underinvestment in service improvement, perpetuating more crises. These patterns threaten the distribution companies' operational capacity and Nigeria's broader energy goals. Studies specific to Nigeria, such as the work by O. Obafemi (2024), demonstrate that customer satisfaction in utility services is influenced not only by service reliability but also by the responsiveness and visibility of public relations strategic intervention efforts.

In response to these challenges, public relations (PR) offers a strategic solution that can help bridge the widening gap between EDCs and consumers. PR is more than image management; it is a structured communication process that builds mutual understanding and goodwill between organisations and their stakeholders (Grunig & Grunig, 1989). By applying deliberate and audience-tailored communication strategies such as press releases, community forums,

social media engagements, SMS alerts, and stakeholder events, EDCs can reshape public perception, address grievances proactively, and cultivate customer loyalty. The Institute of Public Relations (UK) defines PR as "a deliberate, planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics" (Ugwoke, 2019), which underscores its relevance to addressing communication inefficiencies in customer-centric sectors like electricity providers as a public utility service provider.

Transparent communication and proactive outreach activities can foster trust, strengthen brand loyalty, and improve satisfaction levels, particularly in contexts where service delivery may face operational or regulatory challenges

Lessons from other industries further support the transformative potential of PR. For example, in the Nigerian banking industry, institutions such as Guaranty Trust Bank (GTB) and Access Bank have used PR and digital platforms to communicate service changes, handle crises, and build brand loyalty through transparency and responsiveness (Henry et al., 2021). Likewise, in the telecommunications sector, firms like MTN and Airtel have adopted community engagement programs, feedback mechanisms, and customer-centric PR strategies to address service dissatisfaction and reduce churn rates (Amegavie et al., 2019). These sectors demonstrate that well-executed PR initiatives grounded in stakeholder listening and responsiveness can turn adversarial relationships into collaborative ones that are more profitable.

Applying these strategies to the electricity distribution sector could yield similar outcomes. Suppose EDCs like the Ibadan Electricity Distribution Company (IBEDC) invested in structured, localised, and culturally-sensitive PR campaigns; there might have been a better relationship with its customers and an improvement in its business. In that case, the company may improve customer understanding of operational limitations, reduce misinformation, and build trust in ongoing reforms. This would improve customer satisfaction, which would lead to better revenue collection and infrastructural development. By institutionalising PR practices like town hall meetings, weekly radio programs (e.g., *Imole De*-Light has come, complaint hotlines, and online feedback systems. Thus, IBEDC can reframe its image from that of a distant monopoly to a responsive public service provider.

Thus, this study has used the IBEDC as an example of the typical EDs in Nigeria to examine the roles played by public relations strategies on customer satisfaction based on the services provided by the EDs to the consumers. It explores the types of PR strategies employed, their frequency of use, their perceived effectiveness by customers, and their impact on public perception and customer loyalty. By situating the research within the broader discourse on communication, energy governance, and stakeholder engagement, the study seeks to offer practical and context-specific insights that could aid in repositioning EDCs in Nigeria as trusted partners in national development.

Statement of the Problem

Despite privatisation and reform efforts in Nigeria's power sector, Electricity distribution companies struggle with financial sustainability and poor management, leading to poor customer satisfaction. These challenges are primarily driven by unreliable electricity supply, estimated billing, poor customer engagement, and a lack of transparency in service delivery. As a result, many customers have developed deep mistrust toward electricity providers and often resist paying bills, citing unfair billing practices and inconsistent power availability. This resistance has led to widespread non-payment, energy theft, and customer apathy, all of which directly reduce the revenue-generating capacity of Discos.

The inability of Discos to generate adequate revenue severely constrains their capacity to invest in critical infrastructure such as metering systems, grid upgrades, and network maintenance, further aggravating supply unreliability. This creates a vicious cycle where poor service delivery leads to increased customer dissatisfaction, fuelling additional revenue losses and service decline. Discos play a central role in breaking this cycle as the primary interface between the power sector and consumers. However, they have mainly underutilised one of their most potent tools: public relations strategies.

Poor communication, inadequate feedback mechanisms, and the absence of clear customer education programs have left most consumers disconnected from the policies and constraints that affect power distribution. This communication vacuum worsens service perception and contributes to conflict between the public and Discos. While some PR efforts, such as community forums, weekly radio shows, and online updates, exist in companies like the IBEDC, their structure, consistency, and effectiveness in driving customer satisfaction remain underexplored.

Given this context, it becomes imperative to evaluate how PR strategies can help rebuild public trust, improve transparency, and restore customer satisfaction in ways that also support operational and financial stability. This study therefore, seeks to investigate the influence of public relations strategies on customer satisfaction within IBEDC, exploring the potentials of PR to shift the company's public image from that of an adversarial entity to a trusted service partner.

Objectives of the Study

1. To explore the public relations strategies adopted by the (IBEDC) for customer satisfaction.
2. To evaluate the degree to which IBEDC applies public relations strategies to improve customer relations within Ibadan Metropolis.
3. To assess the effectiveness of these strategies in addressing customer needs and enhancing satisfaction.
4. To assess customers' perceptions of, and satisfaction with IBEDC's public relations practices.

Research Questions

1. What are the public relations strategies employed by IBEDC uses to achieve customer satisfaction?
2. To what extent does the IBEDC apply public relations strategies to improve customer satisfaction in Ibadan Metropolis?
3. How effective are the public relations strategies used by the Ibadan Electricity Distribution Company in enhancing customer satisfaction?
4. How satisfied are customers with the public relations strategies of the Ibadan Electricity Distribution Company?

The Concept of Public Relations

According to the founding fathers of public relations, Ivy Ledbetter Lee and Edward Louis Bernays, Public Relations is "practically as old as society." Public relations emerged from the fundamental urge to establish and enhance human relationships, which existed from the moment God created Adam and Eve Taye Babaleye & Victor Aganbi, 2018). Public relations has always been a human idea. The development of public relations between the creator and the creature improved their connection by fostering understanding and peace. However, public relations were around when Moses lived. Moses wanted someone to deliver the word to the Israelites on his behalf since he stutters. Since his brother Aaron was selected, he served as a liaison between Moses and the Israelites. According to the Bible, Aaron worked as a public relations officer. As a result, public relations has existed since the dawn of humanity, although in an amateur capacity

Britain introduced the practice of Public Relations in Nigeria via colonisation. The colonial authority and its compliant officials, led by Mr D.C. Fletcher, established a Public Relations practice in Nigeria. As a facet of Journalism, Public Relations emerged as a significant component of public communication throughout the colonial era. The pioneers were individuals not native to the region. Numerous established publications were already receiving support from the public and government officials. The government recognised the necessity for an additional communication channel that would discreetly express its sentiments to the populace without the complexities of deliberate message formulation. In 1940, during the Second World War, the government emphasised the necessity for enhanced communication channels, particularly for presenting and analysing war-related information. This ultimately prompted the government to create an information office that disseminated accurate details on the military activities to the public via wireless communication (Taye Babaleye & Victor Aganbi, 2018).

This occurred on January 1, 1944. In late 1944, the information agency was restructured as the Public Relations office to specifically focus on image cultivation and fostering positive perceptions of the war. The Public Relations Office started a role that significantly benefited the Nigerian press and its audience. It made its information facilities available to them and supplied images on the prosecution of the war. Two Nigerian newspapers, the West African

Pilot and Daily Service, published editions on this subject, advocating for establishing a permanent Public Relations office as early as the 1940s. The Public Relations organisation established by the colonial administration transformed into the Federal Information Service in 1950.

In 1963, the Public Relations Association of Nigeria (PRAN) was founded as a governing authority for Public Relations activity in Nigeria (Taye Babaleye & Victor Aganbi, 2018). The body metamorphosed to the Nigeria Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) in 1969 and was chartered in 1990 to train members and regulate the practice of Public Relations in Nigeria.

According to Ugwoke (2019), the Institute of Public Relations (UK) defines public relations as a planned, organised, and ongoing effort to establish and keep mutual understanding between a corporation and its publics. Public relations aims to develop goodwill by ensuring that a firm and the public understand one another.

Customer Satisfaction

When a customer's demands are addressed, the services are deemed satisfactory, and the whole experience of consuming the goods and services becomes favourable, the consumer is considered satisfied. (Deryana et al., 2024). The reaction of consumers to fulfilment is what constitutes consumer satisfaction (Guido, 2014). How happy a customer is determined by the discrepancy between their expectations and the quality of the goods or services they receive. When a customer's expectations are fulfilled, they are considered satisfied. These customers often purchase these goods and contribute to their promotion, which eventually boosts sales of those goods. (Alanazi et al., 2016). A firm with happy customers is more likely to make more profit and be in operation for a long time. In the past, studies on consumer satisfaction with various items have been conducted to gauge how happy customers are with them. (Jou et al., 2022)examines how the adoption of online payment systems by electric utility providers influences service quality and customer satisfaction, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. (Al-Dwairi et al., 2024) elaborate on the significance of transparency and meaningful customer engagement in building trust.

Moreover, Hansemark & Albinsson (2004) state that a customer's overall attitude towards a service provider or their emotional reaction to the discrepancy between what they expect and anticipate is known as customer satisfaction. Accordingly, customer satisfaction is known as the sense of joy, contentment, or occasionally dissatisfaction resulting from contrasting the product's real advantages with their own or the product's expectations. To better understand the precise sentiments of their consumers, organisations must establish a customer service quality scale with three levels or more (Duc et al., 2021)

Public Relations Strategies and Their Impact on Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is vital in organisational performance, particularly in service-oriented industries. It is typically described as the emotional and psychological consequence of a customer's assessment of a product or service against their expectations (Guido, 2014).

Satisfaction arises when perceived performance meets or surpasses expectations; conversely, disappointment may compel customers to seek alternatives (Alanazi et al., 2016)

Satisfaction encompasses both functional performance and emotional reactions, like joy, wrath, or apathy, rendering it a multidimensional concept (Duc et al., 2021). It affects not just repurchase intentions but also long-term loyalty, profitability, and market share (Alanazi et al., 2016). The subjective essence of satisfaction indicates that value is evaluated not objectively, but rather as experienced by individual consumers (Deryana et al., 2024) Public relations play a vital role in influencing these feelings. Effective public relations practices enhance consumer happiness by improving brand legitimacy, encouraging positive relationships, and cultivating positive emotional connections. Activities like distributing promotional items, hosting customer forums and appreciation events, and facilitating transparent information exchange foster a positive brand image and cultivate consumer goodwill(Grunig & Grunig, 1989). These strategies aim to enhance client loyalty and facilitate post-service involvement.

Furthermore, public relations serve as a feedback system, allowing organisations to track satisfaction levels over time, discern changing consumer demands, and evaluate performance internally and publicly (Henry et al., 2021). Customer satisfaction facilitates strategic decision-making by identifying discrepancies between anticipated and actual service delivery, informing service enhancements and tailored interaction.

Customer satisfaction is affected by several economic, social, and psychological elements, and the strategic use of public relations assists organisations in managing these complications. Effective management of consumer expectations and consistent value delivery via public relations fosters both instant satisfaction and sustained organisational success (Furrer, 2002).

Theoretical Framework

This study employs two theoretical frameworks: Stakeholder Theory and Situational Theory to examine the impact of public relations strategies on consumer satisfaction at IBEDC in Ibadan metropolis.

1. Stakeholder Theory

Stakeholder Theory, initially presented in the 1960s and further refined by Freeman in the 1980s, posits that organisations operate within a network of interactions that encompasses not just shareholders but also consumers, workers, suppliers, communities, and other entities (Freeman & McVea, 2001). The notion asserts that enterprises must prioritise value creation for all customers, rather than only for their owners. It reinterprets corporate purpose to encompass ethical obligations, stakeholder involvement, and the generation of shared value. Despite criticisms suggesting it might facilitate management opportunism or provide ambiguity about financial allocations. Advocates contend that stakeholder theory promotes enhanced accountability and ethical corporate governance (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). It is especially beneficial for comprehending how public relations (PR) may improve stakeholder

involvement and foster enduring consumer satisfaction. Public relations strategies such as media relations, customer events, and stakeholder communication functions as instruments to manage relationships, bolsters consumer trust, and fulfils customer demands.
Stakeholder Theory elucidates how public relations methods enhance consumer satisfaction by contributing to perceived value, reputation, and loyalty.

2. Situational Theory

The Situational Theory of Publics, formulated by (Grunig & Grunig, 1989), elucidates the circumstances in which individuals communicate and actively participate in issue resolution. The theory distinguishes audiences according to their degrees of issue awareness, constraint recognition, and involvement: non-publics, latent publics, aware publics, and active publics. These parameters forecast how individuals acquire, analyse, and react to information.
Active publics acknowledge an issue, feel involved, and perceive a few limitations. They are more inclined to participate in communication and request organisational answers. Conversely, passive publics require intentional communication techniques to enhance their awareness and engagement.
This approach emphasises the necessity of customising the communication approach for various audience groups in public relations. Public relations specialists must ascertain the sector to which their audience belongs and design targeted campaigns accordingly. Transforming a passive audience into an engaged one may necessitate problem framing, relevance reinforcement, and solution exposure (Kim & Grunig, 2011)
In customer satisfaction, situational theory aids public relations practitioners in identifying unsatisfied customers and comprehending the communicative behaviours that indicate their discontent. It allows organisations to proactively interact with disgruntled or worried consumers, thereby reducing reputational risk and improving service responsiveness.

Application of Stakeholder Theory and Situational Theory to Public Relations Strategies and Customer Satisfaction

Both theories emphasize that effective public relations go beyond media visibility and brand promotion, focusing instead on building relationships and facilitating communication that address stakeholder concerns and encourage public participation. While Stakeholder Theory provides the ethical and managerial foundation for engaging all relevant parties, Situational Theory offers a strategic framework for designing communication initiatives based on audience behaviour and levels of involvement.
In the context of the IBEDC, stakeholder theory advocates for ethical accountability and customer-centric practices. In contrast, Situational Theory provides a framework for recognising and addressing customer discontent, including public protests regarding billing or poor and irregular electricity supply. Public relations strategies guided by these theories improve consumer satisfaction by proactively resolving issues and fostering trust via honest communication.

Methodology

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative and qualitative designs. The quantitative aspect utilized a descriptive survey design, while the qualitative component involved a Key Informant Interview with IBEDC officials. This design enabled comprehensive analysis of the relationship between public relations strategies and customer satisfaction.

The study population comprised electricity consumers of the Ibadan Electricity Distribution Company (IBEDC) in Ibadan metropolis, Oyo State, estimated at 3,551,961 (National Population Estimates, 2016). A multistage sampling technique was employed. In the first stage, IBEDC operations were stratified geographically into five zones: Capital Building (Ring Road), Dugbe Business Hub, Oojo Zonal Office, Agodi Regional Office, and Molete Head Office to ensure city-wide representation. Using the Taro Yamane (Yamane, 1967) formula with a 5% margin of error, 400 questionnaires were distributed proportionally across these zones, and 353 valid responses were analyzed.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and a key informant interview guide. The questionnaire included sections on demographics, public relations strategies, their usage, and customer satisfaction. Research assistants, in collaboration with IBEDC customer relations officers, administered the questionnaires, while the Key informant interview was conducted with the Head of Branding and Corporate Communications.

Instrument reliability was established through a pilot test among 20 respondents outside the main sample, yielding a Cronbach's alpha of 0.752**,** indicating acceptable internal consistency. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS (Version 28)**,** employing descriptive statistics to summarize responses. Qualitative data from the KII were analyzed thematically to identify patterns and insights relevant to the study objectives.

Ethical principles were strictly observed. Participants provided informed consent, and confidentiality and anonymity were ensured. All data were securely stored and used solely for academic purposes.

Results and Findings

Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion of Findings

400 copies of the questionnaire were administered to residents of the Ibadan metropolis consuming electricity from IBEDC. Out of this figure, 353 were successfully ticked and returned.

Table One and Research Question One: What are the public relations methods the Ibadan Electricity Distribution Company uses to achieve customer satisfaction?

Table 1: IBEDC's Public Relations Strategies **(N=353)**

Items	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
IBEDC staff maintain a courteous and supportive attitude toward customers.	28.1	35.4	27.2	9.4
Company staff engage the public through mass media platforms as part of their media relations efforts.	30.3	37.4	14.7	17.6
The customer care unit provides prompt responses to customer inquiries and complaints.	27.8	29.5	22.6	20.1
Regular interactive sessions are organized in Ibadan to strengthen customer relations.	30.3	42.8	13.6	13.3
IBEDC sponsors a weekly television programme, *Imole de, Light*, aired on BCOS, OGTV, and NTA Ibadan, as part of its media engagement.	31.2	39.9	13.9	15
Information is shared with customers through SMS notifications and text messaging services.	30.6	34.3	15.6	19.5
The company implements community programmes and routinely interacts with local residents.	36	37.4	16.4	10.2
Broadcast media serve as the company's primary channel for advertising, compared to other platforms.	34	45.9	10.5	9.6
Cultural events and community celebrations are occasionally sponsored to build goodwill with customers.	5.5	6.2	32.8	55.5
Print advertising, especially through newspapers, is also used from time to time.	27.8	41.6	13.3	17.3
Weekly stakeholder meetings are scheduled with groups of 250–500 consumers to address issues and provide updates.	43.6	33.2	14.4	8.8
Online advertising is employed to disseminate information and reach a wider customer base.	44.2	40.8	10.8	4.2

SA= Strongly Agreed, A= Agreed, D= Disagree and SD Strongly Disagree

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation for RQ1

	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	T	Sig
Male	193	6.34189	53.512	4.183	.000
Female	160	4.87442	44.731	3.112	.000

Data in Table 1 reveal a nuanced perception of IBEDC's public relations strategies. Over 60% of respondents (28.1% strongly agreed, 35.4% agreed) acknowledged the courteous and supportive attitude of staff, indicating that personal interactions remain a key driver of customer satisfaction. Similarly, mass media engagement through radio and television was recognized by 67.7% of respondents, suggesting that traditional broadcast channels remain effective for broad communication.

Stakeholder meetings and regular interactive sessions also received strong support, with nearly three-quarters of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing, highlighting the value of structured, face-to-face engagement in building trust and reinforcing customer relationships.

Digital outreach showed mixed results: online advertising was positively received by 85% of respondents, reflecting its effectiveness in reaching diverse audiences, whereas SMS communication garnered moderate approval, indicating room for improvement in direct messaging strategies.

Community programmes and routine local interactions were well-rated (73.4% agreement), demonstrating that in-person community engagement fosters goodwill and strengthens the company's public image. Conversely, cultural events and community celebrations were largely dismissed, with over 88% of respondents disagreeing, revealing a gap in experiential engagement that could enhance brand loyalty if leveraged. Print advertising received moderate acknowledgment, suggesting it plays a supportive rather than central role in IBEDC's communication strategy.

Overall, these findings suggest that IBEDC's strengths lie in personal interactions, community engagement, and media relations, while gaps remain in digital messaging, cultural initiatives, and some aspects of customer care responsiveness. For electricity distribution companies, this underscores the importance of integrating traditional, digital, and community-focused PR strategies while continuously addressing operational and experiential gaps to maximise customer satisfaction and loyalty.

The IBEDC Public Relations Officer emphasised adopting Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC), incorporating public relations, advertising, customer service, direct marketing, event-based outreach, and social media. These strategies are tailored to customer segments based on education, demographics, and accessibility, ensuring appropriate communication channels for each group.

In conclusion, the findings confirm that IBEDC actively applies a wide range of public relations strategies, as outlined in the study's conceptual framework. These include traditional and digital approaches to enhance customer engagement and satisfaction.

Research Question Two: To what extent does the Ibadan Electricity Distribution Company apply public relations strategies to improve customer satisfaction in Ibadan Metropolis?

Table 3: Level of use of PR strategies

Items "How"	VL (%)	L (%)	H (%)	VH (%)
IBEDC staff are helpful and approachable.	7.9	27.2	32.9	32
IBEDC communicates effectively through media.	12.1	14.4	41.5	32
Customer inquiries are handled promptly.	11	12.4	34.6	42
IBEDC organizes interactive customer events.	24.1	40.8	20.7	14.4
The weekly programme *"Imole de, Light Up"* is consistently broadcast.	6.5	20.4	37.1	36
IBEDC sends regular updates via text messages.	9.7	17.2	42.4	30.7
IBEDC engages actively in community programmes.	8.5	11	47	33.5
IBEDC advertises through TV and other mass media.	6.2	19.3	43.9	30.6

Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviation for RQ2

	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	T	Sig
Male	193	5.56221	67.458	6.584	.000
Female	160	4.38176	87.314	4.433	.000

Table 3 presents respondents' perceptions on how Ibadan Electricity Distribution Company (IBEDC) utilises public relations strategies. Most respondents rated IBEDC staff as helpful and approachable, with 7.9% very low, 27.2% low, 32.9% high, and 32.0% very high. This suggests that IBEDC staff are generally perceived as supportive and accessible to customers.

Regarding media communication, IBEDC communicates effectively through media**,** 12.1% very low, 14.4% low, 41.5% high, and 32.0% very high, indicating that media-based engagement is frequently practiced. Similarly, customer inquiries are handled promptly, received 11.0% very low, 12.4% low, 34.6% high, and 42.0% very high, showing that the customer care unit generally responds timely to customer queries.

Engagement through physical forums was rated lower: IBEDC organizes interactive customer events**,** 24.1% very low, 40.8% low, 20.7% high, and 14.4% very high, suggesting that interactive meetings with customers in Ibadan are infrequent and not sufficient.

For the weekly television programme, the weekly programme "Imole de, Light Up" is consistently broadcast**,** 6.5% very low, 20.4% low, 37.1% high, and 36.0% very high, indicating high visibility and regular broadcast. Communication via SMS was moderately effective: IBEDC sends regular updates via text messages, 9.7% very low, 17.2% low, 42.4% high, and 30.7% very high.

Community engagement was positively rated, with IBEDC actively engaging in community programmes**,** receiving 8.5% very low, 11.0% low, 47.0% high, and 33.5% very high, showing strong participation in community initiatives. Advertising through broadcast media, IBEDC advertises through TV and other mass media, had 6.2% very low, 19.3% low, 43.9% high, and 30.6% very high, highlighting broadcast media as a key communication channel.

Supporting these findings, the IBEDC Public Relations Officer noted a multifaceted public relations strategy tailored to customer demographics and communication preferences. Initiatives include weekly phone-in TV/radio programmes on major stations such as BCOS, OGTV, and NTA Ibadan, featuring customer education, complaint handling, and service updates. Social media targets younger, tech-savvy audiences, while community engagement focuses on rural areas through face-to-face forums. Print media is used selectively for critical information or clarification.

The analysis confirms that IBEDC employs diverse and targeted public relations strategies across media channels and community programs to enhance customer engagement and communication effectiveness.

Research Question Three: How effective are the public relations strategies used by the Ibadan Electricity Distribution Company in enhancing customer satisfaction?

Table 5: Effectiveness of IBEDC PR Strategies (N=353)

Items	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
Customers find IBEDC's press releases informative.	21.8	15.2	25.2	37.7
IBEDC delivers satisfactory quality of service to customers.	19.5	17.8	19.8	42.8
IBEDC's use of social media for communication is effective.	9.1	25.2	31.7	34
IBEDC maintains a positive relationship with the community.	26.9	37.9	24.4	10.8
IBEDC maintains a positive relationship with media outlets (NTA, OGTV, BCOS).	55.5	27.3	11	6.2

Table 6: Mean and Standard Deviation

IBEDC Customers	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	T	Sig
Male	193	6.76432	54.427	7.547	.000
Female	160	4.41421	63.219	2.888	.000

Table 5 presents the findings on the effectiveness of public relations strategies employed by the Ibadan Electricity Distribution Company (IBEDC) in enhancing customer satisfaction. The results reveal a nuanced picture, with respondents expressing mixed perceptions about the company's PR efforts and service quality.

Regarding press releases, customers' responses suggest limited effectiveness in meeting informational needs. Only 15.2% of respondents strongly agreed and 21.8% agreed that press releases were informative, while a larger proportion, 25.2% disagreed and 37.7% strongly disagreed, indicating dissatisfaction. This suggests that press releases, as a standalone communication tool, may not be resonating with the intended audience.

Service quality perceptions were similarly divided. While 19.8% strongly agreed and 17.8% agreed that IBEDC delivers satisfactory service, a combined 62.3% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, highlighting a perceived gap between service delivery and customer expectations. This indicates that, despite PR efforts, operational shortcomings continue to impact overall satisfaction.

Digital engagement through social media also showed mixed effectiveness. Only 9.1% of respondents strongly agreed and 25.2% agreed that social media communications were effective, while 31.7% disagreed and 34% strongly disagreed. This underscores existing gaps in IBEDC's online engagement strategy, suggesting that social media, although a potentially powerful tool, is not fully leveraged to address customer needs or foster meaningful interaction.

Community relations, however, received relatively more positive feedback. A combined 64.8% of respondents (26.9% strongly agreed, 37.9% agreed) acknowledged that IBEDC maintains positive relationships within the community, indicating that in-person initiatives and local engagement are more visible and better received than other communication channels.

Media relations emerged as the company's strongest PR strategy area. More than 80% of respondents (55.5% strongly agreed, 27.3% agreed) recognized IBEDC's effective engagement with media outlets such as NTA, OGTV, and BCOS. Only 17.2% expressed disagreement, suggesting that media partnerships are a well-established and credible channel for the company to communicate with the public.

Overall, the findings reveal a complex pattern: while community and media relations are effective and well-perceived, press releases, service quality, and digital engagement lag behind. This indicates that IBEDC's PR strategies have strengths but also critical gaps, offering valuable insights for electricity distribution companies seeking to enhance customer communication and satisfaction.

An interview with the Public Relations Officer at the IBEDC Ring Road Head Office, in Ibadan revealed that public relations is central to building customer trust. Strategies such as press releases, radio and TV advertisements, interviews, and community campaigns are employed to inform customers about developments, including tariff changes. However, these efforts are constrained when broader issues such as service delivery, government regulation, and infrastructural limitations affect public perception. The officer emphasised that while advertising serves as a reminder, public relations facilitates deeper engagement by explaining the context behind service challenges and company initiatives.

In conclusion, despite strong media and community engagement, the data indicate that IBEDC's public relations strategies have a limited impact on customer satisfaction due to gaps in service delivery and ineffective communication in certain areas, particularly press releases and social media.

Research Question Four: How satisfied are customers with the public relations strategies of the Ibadan Electricity Distribution Company?

Table 7: Customer Satisfaction Level with PR Strategies of IBEDC

Items	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
I receive electricity supply consistently.	22.3	24.1	22.7	30.9
Electricity is available whenever I need it.	11.3	17	32.4	39.3
I maintain a good relationship with IBEDC officials.	22.3	40.8	21	15.9
The electricity charges are higher than the actual consumption.	16.1	58.4	11.9	13.6
I am satisfied with using the prepaid electricity meter.	15.3	51.8	23.3	9.6
I am satisfied with using the postpaid electricity meter.	6.2	11.3	26.7	55.8
IBEDC staff provide prompt and helpful service.	23.8	30.9	19.8	25.5

Table 8: Mean and Standard Deviation for RQ4

IBEDC Customers	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	T	Sig
Male	193	7.65489	27.644	5.664	.000
Female	160	5.73632	23.939	3.453	.000

Table 7 presents respondents' feedback on their level of satisfaction with services provided by the Ibadan Electricity Distribution Company (IBEDC). Respondents' perceptions of electricity supply and service quality were varied. Regarding supply consistency, I receive electricity supply consistently, 22.3% strongly agreed, 24.1% agreed, 22.7% disagreed, and 30.9% strongly disagreed, indicating irregular supply. Similarly, electricity is available whenever I need it, 11.3% strongly agreed, 17.0% agreed, 32.4% disagreed, and 39.3% strongly disagreed, further reflecting inconsistency in electricity availability.

In terms of interpersonal relations, I maintain a good relationship with IBEDC officials**,** 22.3% strongly agreed, 40.8% agreed, 21.0% disagreed, and 15.9% strongly disagreed, showing generally positive experiences with company officials.

Concerning billing, the electricity charges are higher than the actual consumption**,** 16.1% strongly agreed, 58.4% agreed, 11.9% disagreed, and 13.6% strongly disagreed, suggesting customer concerns regarding overbilling. Satisfaction with metering systems varied: I am satisfied with using the prepaid electricity meter, 15.3% strongly agreed, 51.8% agreed, 23.3% disagreed, and 9.6% strongly disagreed, while I am satisfied with using the postpaid electricity meter**,** 6.2% strongly agreed, 11.3% agreed, 26.7% disagreed, and 55.8% strongly disagreed, indicating a strong preference for prepaid meters.

Customer service ratings were mixed: IBEDC staff provide prompt and helpful service**,** 23.8% strongly agreed, 30.9% agreed, 19.8% disagreed, and 25.5% strongly disagreed, reflecting varied experiences with staff responsiveness.

An interview with the IBEDC Public Relations Officer emphasised that limited electricity supply due to IBEDC's position at the tail-end of the electricity value chain contributes to low satisfaction. The officer cited poor quality of supply, regulatory limitations from the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC), political interference, and customer resistance to payment as key operational challenges.

In summary, the data suggest that while interpersonal relations with IBEDC staff are generally positive and prepaid metering is preferred, customer satisfaction remains low due to irregular power supply, perceived overbilling, and systemic challenges within Nigeria's electricity sector.

Discussion of Findings

This study examined the effect and influence of public relations (PR) strategies on customer satisfaction with the Ibadan Electricity Distribution Company (IBEDC) in the Ibadan Metropolis. The findings indicate that customers are aware of a wide range of PR strategies by the company, including customer care, publicity, advertising, events, social media engagement, media relations, community involvement, and SMS messaging. These strategies

collectively shape customer perceptions and experiences, confirming that public relations is a vital tool for managing public image and fostering stakeholder engagement. In relation to the first research question, *"What are the public relations methods the IBEDC uses to achieve customer satisfaction?"* the study clearly identified that IBEDC employs a mixture of traditional and modern communication strategies, demonstrating a comprehensive approach to reaching its diverse customer base. This aligns with findings from international studies, where utility companies in countries such as South Africa and India similarly use integrated PR strategies, combining media outreach, community engagement, and digital platforms to influence customer perceptions(Moyo, 2020). This directly fulfils the first objective of exploring the PR strategies adopted by IBEDC in enhancing customer satisfaction.

Further analysis showed that IBEDC strategically applies these PR strategies across multiple platforms and adjusts them according to customer demographics and locations. The company uses an integrated marketing communications approach, combining media relations, mass messaging, community forums, and targeted campaigns to engage specific client segments. Urban and more educated customers are primarily reached through social media and scheduled radio/TV broadcasts, such as *Light Up, Imole De*, aired weekly on BCOS, OGTV, and NTA. Meanwhile, semi-literate and rural populations are engaged through community meetings and face-to-face interactions. Comparable approaches have been documented in the energy sectors of Kenya and Brazil, where segmented PR strategies improved public understanding and engagement among diverse populations (Kori et al., 2020). This addresses the second research question, *"To what extent does the IBEDC apply public relations strategies to improve customer satisfaction in Ibadan Metropolis?"* by showing that the company applies PR consistently and purposefully, fulfilling the second objective related to evaluating the degree of PR strategy application in improving customer relations.

Despite the careful planning and thorough execution of these strategies, the study revealed that PR alone does not ensure complete customer satisfaction. While these efforts enhance IBEDC's public image and provide avenues for consumer interaction, 51.6% of customers reported dissatisfaction with the company's services. This finding directly addresses the third research question, *"How effective are the public relations strategies used by IBEDC in enhancing customer satisfaction?* by showing that although PR strategies positively influence attitudes and communication, they cannot replace the need for tangible service improvements, such as reliable electricity supply and transparent billing practices. Similar patterns have been observed in international studies, including in Pakistan and South Africa, where utility PR initiatives enhanced perceptions but were insufficient to overcome service delivery challenges(Moyo, 2020).The use of tailored PR approaches based on customer segments mirrors practices in other countries. Therefore, while PR is effective in shaping perceptions, its capacity to fully satisfy customers is limited without complementary operational performance.

The study also investigated the fourth research question, *"How satisfied are customers with the public relations strategies of IBEDC?"* and found a complex relationship between

customer satisfaction and PR activities. Interviews revealed that regulatory constraints imposed by the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC), customer reluctance to pay bills, governmental interventions, and infrastructural limitations hinder the effectiveness of PR strategies. The finding that PR efforts alone cannot ensure full customer satisfaction reflects global patterns. Studies in European electricity providers indicate that while PR improves customer perception, operational performance such as reliable supply and transparent billing is the primary driver of satisfaction(Kovacs et al., 2021). These challenges explain why, despite extensive PR efforts, customer satisfaction remains moderate. Customers appreciate the communication, engagement, and education provided by IBEDC's PR initiatives, but their overall satisfaction is still undermined by systemic service issues, highlighting that effective public relations must be accompanied by operational improvements to fully meet customer expectations.

Overall, the study demonstrates that IBEDC's PR strategies are comprehensive, well-organised, and aligned with best practices in stakeholder engagement. The findings show that the study's research questions have been partially fulfilled: the study successfully identifies PR strategies, assesses their application across different customer segments, evaluates their influence on customer perceptions, and investigates customer satisfaction levels. However, the high dissatisfaction rate indicates that PR alone cannot guarantee full customer satisfaction. This underscores the need for further research to explore the direct impact of service delivery infrastructure on customer satisfaction, the long-term effects of PR on loyalty and retention, the role of employee performance in complementing PR, and the influence of regulatory policies and governmental interventions on public perception. Such studies would provide a more holistic understanding of the interplay between public relations, operational performance, and customer satisfaction in the electricity distribution sector.

These findings not only confirm patterns observed in Nigeria but also resonate with global experiences in utility management. The interplay between PR strategies and operational performance is a universal phenomenon, highlighting the need for both effective communication and service delivery to achieve full customer satisfaction.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Electricity distribution companies (EDCs) utilise a range of public relations (PR) strategies, including customer service, advertising, social media engagement, community participation, and short message service (SMS) notifications, all of which can significantly influence customer satisfaction. These strategies are applied across multiple platforms, such as radio and television programmes, online media, and in-person community activities, with careful consideration of different customer segments. While these PR strategies can enhance brand image and foster engagement, their effectiveness is often moderate, as many customers still experience dissatisfaction due to factors beyond the company's direct control, such as tariff adjustments, government regulations, and infrastructural limitations. This illustrates a common challenge across EDCs: a disconnect between public relations efforts and actual

service delivery or customer expectations, where extensive communication alone may not fully satisfy the customer base.

The study indicates a clear relationship between the strategic use of PR and customer satisfaction. For EDCs, this highlights the importance of developing and implementing effective PR strategies that clearly communicate value to both existing and prospective customers. In a competitive environment where customer loyalty cannot be assumed, PR is essential not only for enhancing brand image but also for securing patronage and ensuring operational sustainability. Customer satisfaction emerges as a critical factor in attracting and retaining clients, and PR strategies are central to creating positive perceptions, promoting engagement, and fostering trust.

To improve customer satisfaction and strengthen corporate reputation, EDCs should focus on several key areas. First, companies must cultivate a positive reputation and goodwill within their communities, which requires addressing service delivery challenges such as reliability, responsiveness, and transparency. Second, companies should implement robust mechanisms for customer feedback, enabling clients to freely provide suggestions and recommendations for improving services. Third, engagement with media professionals is important; fostering strong relationships through invitations to community events, cultural celebrations, or public programmes can enhance media coverage and strengthen public perception. Fourth, customer relations initiatives should be inclusive, with outreach efforts, informational materials, or small tokens distributed to all customers rather than a select few. Finally, sponsorship of local events, sports programs, and social initiatives can further cultivate goodwill and reinforce the company's image among its customer base.

In conclusion, the study demonstrates that effective public relations, when integrated with operational improvements, is essential for EDCs to achieve sustainable customer satisfaction and a positive corporate image. While PR alone cannot resolve service delivery challenges, it provides critical channels for engagement, education, and relationship-building. By combining strategic public relations with tangible improvements in service reliability and responsiveness, electricity distribution companies can enhance customer trust, foster loyalty, and support long-term business success.

Contribution to Knowledge

The findings of this study demonstrate that public relations strategies significantly influence customer satisfaction at the Ibadan Electricity Distribution Company (IBEDC), reinforcing the critical role of PR in organizational success. Beyond the immediate context of IBEDC, the study contributes to the broader body of knowledge by providing empirical evidence on how strategic PR initiatives such as customer care, media engagement, community participation, and targeted communication affect customer perceptions, brand loyalty, and service acceptability. By systematically linking specific PR practices to measurable customer outcomes, the research offers valuable insights for both scholars and practitioners seeking to understand the mechanisms through which public relations can enhance customer satisfaction.

Moreover, it extends existing theory by highlighting the interplay between PR strategies and operational constraints in the electricity distribution sector, providing a practical framework that other organizations can adapt to improve stakeholder engagement and foster long-term customer loyalty.

If the results of the study can be multiplied to cover the rest of Nigeria, there would be a lot of improvement in the epileptic position of the country's electricity supply to consumers. This study therefore holds a key value to be considered on the entire country's power supply system and make the country industrialized as it is in other advanced countries of the world.

Data Availability

Data available on request from the authors.

Declaration of Interest Statement

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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