

EVALUATION OF PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGIES OF FAAN FOR CORPORATE IMAGE BUILDING OF NNAMDI AZIKIWE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT ABUJA

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Abstract

This study examined the public relations strategies used by the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN) to build and maintain the corporate image of Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport, Abuja. The study was guided by Excellence Theory and Image Restoration Theory and adopted a survey research design. Data were collected from airport users and stakeholders using structured questionnaire. Out of 300 questionnaire distributed, 285 were properly completed and returned, giving a 95% response rate. The data were analysed using frequencies and percentages. The findings showed that FAAN relies mainly on media publicity, customer service relations, social media communication, and press releases to engage its publics. Social media emerged as the most effective communication channel, while a considerable number of respondents viewed the airport's public image positively. Most respondents also agreed that FAAN's communication efforts had improved their confidence in the airport and supported areas such as information dissemination, passenger management, and customer relations. However, inadequate funding, poor communication facilities, negative public perception, and staff attitude continue to limit these efforts. The study concludes that FAAN's public relations activities have contributed to improving the airport's corporate image and operational effectiveness. It recommends increased investment in digital communication and modern facilities, improved customer service, and regular staff training to strengthen professionalism and public confidence.

Keyword: Public Relations; FAAN; Corporate Image; Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport; Public Perception.

Introduction

The Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN) is responsible for the management, development, and maintenance of federal airports in Nigeria, including Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport (NAIA), Abuja. As the major gateway to Nigeria's Federal Capital Territory,

NAIA plays an important role in facilitating domestic and international travel, economic activities, and diplomatic engagements. Consequently, the airport's corporate image is important to passengers, stakeholders, investors, and the general public, as it also contributes to the perception of Nigeria's aviation industry (FAAN, 2020; Oladipo, 2019). Public relations (PR) is an important management function through which organisations build and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with their publics. It involves strategic communication, media relations, customer engagement, stakeholder management, and crisis communication aimed at creating understanding, trust, and a favourable organisational image (Cutlip, Center & Broom, 2013; Asemah, 2011). For an organisation such as FAAN, effective PR is particularly important because airports operate in a highly visible service environment where passengers' experiences and public perceptions can significantly influence corporate reputation.

Over the years, FAAN has employed various PR strategies, including media publicity, press releases, public announcements, social media communication, customer relations, and communication during service disruptions. These efforts are intended to provide timely information, manage public concerns, promote transparency, and strengthen public confidence (FAAN, 2021). The communication of airport modernization and infrastructural improvements has also been used to project NAIA as a modern and competitive aviation hub (ICAO, 2020).

Despite these efforts, challenges such as flight delays, congestion, inadequate facilities, service inefficiencies, and complaints about customer service may negatively affect the public image of the airport. These challenges make effective communication and stakeholder engagement essential for maintaining public confidence and managing the airport's reputation (Ogunbodede, 2022). Corporate image is particularly important because a favourable image can enhance public patronage, customer confidence, stakeholder relationships, and organisational effectiveness (Omale, 2017; Ehikwe, 2015). Although previous studies have examined public relations and corporate image in different organisational settings, there remains a need for more empirical attention to the PR strategies used by FAAN at Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport, Abuja, and their contribution to corporate image building. This study therefore evaluates the public relations strategies employed by FAAN in building and sustaining the corporate image of NAIA, with particular attention to their effectiveness, public perception, and the challenges affecting their implementation. The study also seeks to provide useful recommendations for improving communication, customer relations, and public confidence in the airport.

Statement of Problem

Corporate image is important to the success of aviation organisations because it influences public perception, passenger satisfaction, and stakeholder confidence. For the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN), maintaining a positive image at Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport (NAIA), Abuja, is particularly important because the airport serves as a major gateway to Nigeria's capital and an important point of contact for both local and international travellers (Oladipo, 2019). With FAAN's efforts to improve infrastructure, service delivery, and public communication, challenges such as flight delays, congestion, poor customer service, and facility limitations continue to affect public perception of the airport (Adebayo, 2021; Ogunbodede, 2022). Although FAAN uses strategies such as media relations, press releases, social media engagement, passenger feedback, and crisis communication, concerns remain about how effectively these strategies address public concerns and build lasting confidence (Nwosu, 2017; Adetunji, Nwosu, & Akintunde, 2024).

Existing studies on public relations and image management in Nigeria's aviation sector have largely focused on airline branding, with limited attention to airport management and the role of

PR in shaping airport corporate image (Ekanem & Nwachukwu, 2024). This gap makes it necessary to examine how FAAN's public relations strategies contribute to the corporate image of Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport. Therefore, this study evaluates the PR strategies employed by FAAN and their effectiveness in building and sustaining a positive corporate image at the airport.

Objectives of the Study

This study is guided by the following objectives:

1. To Examine the public relations strategies adopted by FAAN at the Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport.
2. To Assess the effectiveness of these strategies in shaping public perception and corporate image.
3. To evaluate the role of public relations in managing crises and negative publicity at the airport.
4. To determine the relationship between public relations practices and corporate image building.

Review of Literature

Concept of Public Relations

Public relations (PR) is an important part of how an organisation communicates and maintains good relationships with the people who matter to its success. Asemah (2022) explains that modern PR developed mainly in the early twentieth century, with pioneers such as Ivy Lee and Edward Bernays playing important roles in its growth. While Ivy Lee emphasized honesty and openness in communication, Bernays focused on understanding public attitudes and using communication to influence behaviour (Wilcox, Ault, & Agee, 2006). Over time, PR has moved beyond simple publicity to become an important management function concerned with communication, reputation, trust, and relationship building. In Nigeria, public relations developed through different stages, including political propaganda, public information, broadcasting, and eventually professional practice (Otubanjo et al., 2010). Earlier forms of government communication were mainly one-way, with little opportunity for the public to provide feedback. Modern PR, however, places more emphasis on dialogue, transparency, feedback, and building lasting relationships between organisations and their publics.

For an organisation like the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN), public relations is particularly important because of its constant interaction with passengers, employees, government agencies, the media, and other stakeholders. FAAN can use PR strategies such as media relations, customer communication, community relations, public affairs, crisis communication, and social media engagement to provide information, address complaints, manage difficult situations, and maintain public confidence. Media relations remain an important PR tool because the media can greatly influence how the public understands an organisation and its activities. Similarly, good employee and community relations can promote cooperation and goodwill, while effective crisis and issue management can help an organisation respond quickly to problems that may affect its reputation. Corporate social responsibility can also strengthen public trust by showing concern for the welfare of stakeholders and surrounding communities.

In the case of FAAN, these strategies are important for shaping how passengers and other stakeholders perceive its airports. Clear and timely communication can help reduce uncertainty,

respond to complaints, manage service-related challenges, and present the organisation as professional and responsive. Therefore, effective public relations is an important part of FAAN's efforts to build and maintain a positive corporate image at Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport, Abuja.

Concepts of Corporate image building

Corporate image building is the process through which an organisation works to create and maintain a positive impression among its stakeholders. This impression is influenced by how the organisation communicates, the quality of services it provides, how it responds to problems, and the way it relates to the public. Kotler (2003) describes corporate image as the beliefs, ideas, and impressions people have about an organisation. Fombrun (1996) similarly explains that a good corporate reputation develops gradually from an organisation's performance and its relationship with stakeholders. Public relations is an important part of building this image because it helps organisations communicate with their publics and maintain good relationships with them. Asemah (2011) describes PR as a two-way communication process through which organisations develop positive relationships and influence public attitudes. In the same way, Asemah, Ibrahim, Nwaoboli and Asemah (2022b) explain that PR supports organisational growth by helping to manage communication and relationships with different groups.

In practical terms, PR activities may include media relations, employee communication, community relations, crisis management, sponsorship, and the regular provision of information to the public (Asemah, 2009). When these activities are properly managed, they can help an organisation gain public acceptance, respond to concerns, and maintain goodwill. Corporate image is particularly important in the aviation industry because passengers often judge an airport by their experiences with its services, facilities, staff, and communication. Effective PR can help airport authorities provide timely information, respond to passenger complaints, manage crises, and communicate improvements in their services (Okafor & Udeh, 2024; Ekanem & Nwachukwu, 2024). For FAAN, therefore, maintaining clear and consistent communication with passengers and other stakeholders is essential to building public confidence and sustaining a positive image of Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport, Abuja.

Review of Empirical Studies

A number of studies have examined the relationship between public relations and corporate image. Generally, the findings show that when organisations communicate effectively and maintain good relationships with their stakeholders, they are more likely to enjoy public trust and a positive image. However, poor coordination and inconsistent communication can have the opposite effect.

Chiakaan and Shallum (2023), in their study of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), found that weak and poorly coordinated public relations contributed to negative public perceptions and credibility problems. Similarly, Akpan (2025) found that PR activities at the Nigeria Immigration Service had a positive effect on corporate image and organisational effectiveness, although inconsistent communication and public dissatisfaction remained challenges. Odey et al. (2023), in their study of MTN and GLO Nigeria, found that effective PR improved corporate reputation, customer loyalty, and organisational performance. Henry, Ndolo, and Igbara (2021) also found that PR helped First Bank of Nigeria maintain a positive corporate image and build better relationships with its stakeholders. Earlier studies by Odey (2014) and

Maduabuchi (2006) likewise showed that PR contributes to favourable corporate image and organisational development. They recommended better training for PR staff and stronger public enlightenment activities.

Okpala and Rabi (2024) identified media relations, crisis communication, corporate social responsibility, and digital engagement as important PR strategies. Their study found that these strategies could improve corporate image, but also noted that public trust suffers when what organisations communicate does not match the quality of services they provide. Ekpo, Okereke, and Omojefe (2024) reached a similar conclusion, showing that good community relations and meaningful stakeholder engagement can help organisations overcome negative perceptions and build goodwill. In the aviation industry, the role of PR is particularly important because passengers often form their opinions of an airport from their experiences and the information they receive. Adetunji et al. (2024) found that proactive communication, community engagement, and quick responses to service problems can improve stakeholder trust.

Adeniran et al. (2024) observed that PR efforts at Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport still require greater consistency, inclusiveness, and stakeholder involvement. Micheal and Adesina (2023) also pointed out that poor coordination between PR departments and operational units can make it difficult for public institutions to manage their reputation effectively. These studies suggest that PR strategies such as media relations, customer communication, crisis management, community relations, and digital engagement can play an important role in building a positive corporate image. However, most existing studies have focused on banks, telecommunications companies, and other public institutions, with relatively limited attention to airport management in Nigeria. This creates a gap that the present study seeks to address by examining the public relations strategies used by FAAN and how they contribute to the corporate image of Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport, Abuja.

Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by Excellence Theory and Image Restoration Theory. Both theories help explain how public relations can be used to build a positive corporate image and respond to situations that may damage an organisation's reputation.

Excellence Theory

Excellence Theory emerged from a study of effective communication management supported by the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC). The theory is mainly associated with Grunig and other scholars who examined how public relations can contribute to organisational effectiveness (Grunig, 1992; Dozier et al., 1995; Grunig et al., 2002). The theory sees public relations as more than simply passing information to the public. It argues that PR works best when it is treated as an important part of management and when organisations maintain open, two-way communication with their stakeholders. Listening to the concerns of the public, responding to feedback, being transparent, and involving stakeholders in relevant decisions can help an organisation build trust and maintain good relationships.

This theory is relevant to FAAN because the organisation deals with passengers, employees, government agencies, the media, and other stakeholders on a regular basis. At Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport, effective communication and attention to passengers' concerns can help

FAAN understand public expectations, improve service delivery, and strengthen its corporate image. The theory therefore provides a basis for examining how well FAAN uses communication and stakeholder engagement to build public confidence

Image Restoration Theory

Image Restoration Theory was developed by William L. Benoit to explain how organisations respond when their reputation is threatened by a crisis, criticism, or other negative events (Benoit, 2015). The theory suggests that when an organisation's image is damaged, the way it communicates with the public can influence whether confidence is lost or restored. The theory identifies several strategies that organisations can use to protect or repair their image. These include denying responsibility, explaining or reducing responsibility, reducing the seriousness of the problem, taking corrective action, and apologising or accepting responsibility. The most appropriate response depends on the nature of the situation and how the public views the organisation's level of responsibility (Benoit, 2015; Coombs, 2021).

The theory is particularly relevant to FAAN because airport operations can sometimes involve flight delays, service complaints, facility problems, and other issues that attract public and media attention. How FAAN responds to such situations can have a direct effect on public perception. Prompt communication, sincere apologies where necessary, and visible corrective action can help rebuild public confidence and protect the airport's reputation.

Application to the Study

The two theories complement each other in this study. Excellence Theory explains how FAAN can build a favourable image through open communication, stakeholder engagement, and good relationships with its publics. Image Restoration Theory, on the other hand, explains how FAAN can respond when its image is threatened by service failures, complaints, or negative publicity. Together, the theories provide a useful foundation for evaluating the public relations strategies used by FAAN in building and maintaining the corporate image of Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport, Abuja.

Methodology

The study adopted a quantitative descriptive survey design to examine how FAAN's public relations strategies influence the corporate image of Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport, Abuja. The study population consisted of 1,200 respondents, made up of FAAN staff, airport passengers and visitors, and other stakeholders within the airport environment. Using Taro Yamane's formula with a 5% margin of error, a sample size of 300 respondents was obtained. The respondents were selected using stratified and simple random sampling techniques to ensure that the different stakeholder groups were adequately represented.

Data were collected mainly through a structured questionnaire covering media relations, customer communication, crisis management, stakeholder engagement, and corporate image. Interviews with selected FAAN officials and other stakeholders were also used to provide additional insights. The questionnaire was reviewed to ensure that the items were relevant to the objectives of the study. A pilot test involving 20 respondents was conducted, and the instrument recorded a Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.82, indicating good reliability. The questionnaires were administered directly to the selected respondents, who participated voluntarily and were

assured that their responses would be kept confidential. The completed questionnaires were coded and analysed using frequencies and percentages, with the results presented in tables and charts where necessary. The findings were used to assess how effectively FAAN's public relations activities contribute to the corporate image of Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport, Abuja.

Data Presentation

Table 1: Frequency of FAAN Communication with the Public

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very Often	95	33.3
Often	110	38.6
Sometimes	60	21.1
Never	20	7.0
Total	285	100

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The findings in Table 4.1.3 show that FAAN communicates with members of the public on a fairly regular basis at the Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport. Out of the 285 respondents, 110 respondents (38.6%) said that FAAN communicates with the public often, while 95 respondents (33.3%) said that it happens very often. Also, 60 respondents (21.1%) indicated that FAAN communicates with the public sometimes, while only 20 respondents (7.0%) said that FAAN never communicates with the public.

Table 2: Most Effective Communication Channel Used by FAAN

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Television/Radio	65	22.8
Social Media	95	33.3
Airport Public Announcements	80	28.1
Newspapers/Magazines	45	15.8
Total	285	100

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 2; shows the communication channels that respondents consider most effective for FAAN in passing information to the public. From the 285 respondents, 95 (33.3%) identified social media as the most effective channel. This was followed by airport public announcements, with 80 respondents (28.1%). Also, 65 respondents (22.8%) chose television and radio, while 45 respondents (15.8%) considered newspapers and magazines to be the most effective.

Table 3: Rating of Airport Public Image

Response Frequency Percentage (%)

Excellent	70	24.6
Good	130	45.6
Fair	60	21.1
Poor	25	8.7
Total	285	100

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 4.1.5 shows how respondents rated the public image of the airport. The findings indicate that 130 respondents (45.6%) rated the airport's public image as good, while 70 respondents (24.6%) rated it as excellent. On the other hand, 60 respondents (21.1%) considered the image to be fair, while 25 respondents (8.7%) rated it as poor

Table 4: Respondents' Confidence in the Airport Due to FAAN Communication Efforts

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	90	31.6
Agree	120	42.1
Disagree	50	17.5
Strongly Disagree	25	8.8
Total	285	100

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 4: shows the respondents' views on whether FAAN's communication efforts have increased their confidence in the airport. The result indicates that 120 respondents (42.1%) agreed that FAAN's communication efforts have improved their confidence in the airport, while 90

respondents (31.6%) strongly agreed. On the other hand, 50 respondents (17.5%) disagreed, while 25 respondents (8.8%) strongly disagreed.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study provide an understanding of how FAAN's communication with the public relates to the image of Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport and the confidence of its users. Overall, the results suggest that communication plays an important role in how members of the public perceive the airport and develop confidence in its operations.

One of the major findings of the study is that FAAN communicates with the public fairly regularly. A large proportion of the respondents, 38.6%, said that FAAN communicates with the public often, while another 33.3% reported that communication occurs very often. Together, these figures represent 71.9% of the respondents. This suggests that communication between FAAN and the public is relatively visible and consistent at the airport. This is important because airport users depend on timely information, particularly when there are changes in flight operations, security procedures, safety measures or other issues that may affect their experience. When people receive information regularly, they are more likely to understand what is happening around them and feel that the organisation is keeping them informed. At the same time, the fact that some respondents indicated that communication happens only sometimes or never shows that there are still gaps that FAAN needs to address. Improving the consistency of communication could help ensure that more members of the public feel adequately informed.

Another important finding concerns the communication channels used by FAAN. Social media was identified by the highest number of respondents (33.3%) as the most effective channel, followed by airport public announcements (28.1%). Television and radio accounted for 22.8%, while newspapers and magazines recorded 15.8%. The preference for social media is understandable given the way people increasingly obtain information. Social media allows information to be shared quickly and can reach a large number of people within a short period. For an organisation such as FAAN, this can be particularly useful when information needs to be communicated quickly to passengers and other members of the public. However, the strong rating given to airport public announcements shows that traditional forms of communication have not lost their relevance. Passengers who are already at the airport may need immediate information that can be provided through announcements. This suggests that FAAN would benefit from using different communication channels together rather than relying on one platform.

The study also found that the public image of the airport was generally viewed positively. Almost half of the respondents (45.6%) rated the airport's image as good, while 24.6% considered it excellent. This means that 70.2% of the respondents had a positive view of the airport's public image. Only 8.7% rated the image as poor, while 21.1% considered it fair. This generally positive perception is significant because an airport's image is shaped not only by its physical facilities and quality of services but also by how effectively it communicates with its users. People are more likely to develop a favourable impression of an organisation when they receive useful information and feel that their concerns are being recognised. FAAN's communication activities may therefore be contributing to the positive image reported by a majority of the respondents. However, the respondents who rated the image as fair or poor should not be overlooked. Their views indicate that there are still concerns that need to be identified and addressed if FAAN is to maintain and further improve the airport's image.

The findings relating to public confidence are particularly noteworthy. A total of 42.1% of respondents agreed that FAAN's communication efforts had increased their confidence in the airport, while 31.6% strongly agreed. Combined, 73.7% of the respondents expressed a positive view on this issue. This indicates that communication is not simply about passing information to the public; it can also influence how people feel about the organisation and its ability to manage airport operations. The study suggests that effective communication is an important tool for building a favourable public image and strengthening confidence in Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport. FAAN can build on the positive perception identified in this study by making greater use of social media while maintaining airport announcements, television and radio, and other relevant channels. More importantly, communication should remain regular, clear, accurate and responsive to the needs of airport users. In this way, communication can become more than an administrative activity; it can serve as a practical means of building trust and maintaining a positive relationship between FAAN and the public.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the study concludes that FAAN's public relations efforts have played an important role in improving the corporate image of Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport, Abuja. Through media publicity, customer relations, social media, and public announcements, FAAN has been able to improve communication with airport users, build public confidence, and create a more positive perception of the airport. However, challenges such as inadequate funding, limited communication facilities, negative public perception, and poor staff attitudes still affect the effectiveness of these efforts. The study therefore concludes that maintaining a good corporate image goes beyond communication; it also depends on good service delivery, professional staff, efficient operations, and regular engagement with the public. FAAN should continue to improve its public relations practices, particularly through the use of technology and a stronger focus on the needs and concerns of airport users.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. FAAN should make better use of social media and other digital platforms to keep the public informed, while also continuing to use traditional media and public awareness campaigns.
2. FAAN should regularly seek feedback from passengers and other stakeholders through surveys and other simple feedback channels. This will help the Authority understand public concerns and improve its services.
3. FAAN should strengthen its crisis communication so that accurate and timely information can be given to the public whenever emergencies or negative issues arise.
4. FAAN should give greater attention to its Public Affairs Department by providing adequate resources, staff training, and better communication facilities. Staff should also be encouraged to maintain a professional and customer-friendly attitude, as good service and effective communication are both important for maintaining a positive image of the airport.

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