

AN EVALUATION OF THE COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES USED BY THE COMESA PUBLIC RELATIONS UNIT TO DISSEMINATE INFORMATION ABOUT THE COMESA CUSTOMS UNION TO CROSS BORDER TRADERS IN SELECTED COMESA MEMBER STATES.

By

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A report submitted to the University of Zambia in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Degree of Master of Communication for Development (MCD).

THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA,

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Declaration

I, Bridget Ndalela Kakuwa, declare that this report,

- (a) Represents my own work;
- (b) Has not previously been submitted for a degree at this or any other University; and
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Approval

The report of Bridget Ndalela Kakuwa is approved as fulfilling the partial requirements for the award of the degree of Master in Communication for Development (MCD) by the University of Zambia.

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Abstract

The world has witnessed unprecedented formation of trading blocks, involving both developed and developing countries. One such trading block is the Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) which has a membership of nineteen states. The trading blocks are said not only to enhance trade but also to enlarge the market size of a particular trading block. These trading blocks pursue what is commonly known as regional integration which is simply the process in which states countries enter into regional agreements in order to enhance regional cooperation through regional institutions and rules. The main aim of regional integration is to improve the living standards of participating countries. Regional integration undergoes different stages of which COMESA has now reached the third stage of regional integration known as Customs Union.

A Customs Union is simply a merger of two or more customs territories .It involves the linking together of two or more economies regardless of geographical proximity through the removal of barriers such as tariffs and immigration controls. COMESA launched its customs union on 7th June 2009. The launch of the COMESA Customs Union has provided the impetus for this study.

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the communication strategies which were used by the COMESA Public Relations Unit to disseminate information about the COMESA Customs Union to cross border traders in selected COMESA member states. The study used the triangulated approach of qualitative and quantitative approach for data collection and analysis. The results revealed that information about the COMESA CU was not adequately disseminated to cross border traders.

The member states sampled revealed that cross border traders are ignorant about the COMESA CU. There was no explicit communication strategy used to disseminate information to the target audience, furthermore the target audience was not clearly defined thus making information dissemination unfruitful.

The participative approach of communication which is encouraged when creating awareness about an innovation (in this case COMESA CU) was totally neglected. The theory of innovation adoption propagated by Rogers (1983) posits that if an innovation is not known, few or no one at all will adopt the innovation. Despite the COMESA PR unit's sole existence being to disseminate information, little strides were taken to ensure effective dissemination of information about the COMESA CU to the intended audience.

The development is saddening bearing in mind that COMESA is still undergoing many stages in pursuant of deepening regional integration agenda such as common market followed by economic and monetary union and ultimately economic integration. These stages need to be communicated effectively to member states in order for them to embrace them. COMESA programs are very important and useful for the economic growth of member states; therefore, people have the right to be effectively informed about their happenings.

Dedication

This report is dedicated to my champion parents Mr. Musheke Kakuwa and Martha Muchimba Kakuwa, for awakening in me an endless desire to attain greater heights in life. Their continuous encouragement and of course support enabled me to complete this programme. Furthermore, their role in introducing me to the true God, the source of wisdom and understanding at a very tender age can not be overemphasized. I thank my dad for challenging me that unless I surpass his level of educational attainment (Masters) I will not be deemed educated in his sight, which leaves me with yet another huge responsibility of furthering my studies. May God continue giving you many more days so that you will live to see the finished product of your work.

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I am extremely grateful to my supervisor, Dr Isaac Phiri, for his guidance and knowledgeable insights throughout my research. I am exceedingly thankful to the mass communication professionals who influenced my thinking and confirmed as valid many concepts I originally held. I pay special tribute to Mr. Fidelis Muzyamba, Mr. Kenny Makungu, Dr Bwalya and Mrs. Carole Chibbonta for their many insightful lectures and for their objectivity.

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Many thanks go to COMESA Secretariat for permitting me to work in their organization. My presence at COMESA aroused in me an interest in regional integration, thereby providing an impetus for this study.

It would be unrealistic of me not to acknowledge the MCD Class of 2009, for their friendliness, warmth, inspiration, encouragement and unrelenting support when the going really got tough. To you colleagues I say "Let's keep together".

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AGOA-Africa growth and Opportunity Act

BC-Before Christ

CARICOM- Caribbean Community and Common Market

COMESA- Common Market for East and Southern Africa

COMESA CU-Common Market for East and Southern Africa Customs Union

COMESA PR-Common Market for east and southern Africa Public Relations

CET- Common External Tariffs

CMA-Custom Management Act

CTN-Common Trade Nomenclature

CU- Customs Union

DRC-Democratic Republic of Zambia

DI-Domestic Investment

E-COMESA Newsletter-Electronic Newsletter

EU- European Union

EAC- East African Community

FTA- Trade Area

FDI-Foreign Direct Investment

GATT Free - General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

GDP-Gross Domestic Product

HIPC-Highly Indebted Poor Country

IMF-International Monetary Fund

LDC- Less Developed Countries

MERCOSUR- Southern Cone common Market

NAFTA-North American Free Trade Area

NTB-Non Tariff Barriers

PTA- Preferential Trade Area

ROO- Rules of Origin

SACU- Southern African Customs Union

UNECA-United National Economic Commission

UAE-United Arab Emirates

WTO- World Trade Organization