**CHAPTER 1**

**INTRODUCTION**

**1.1 Background to the Study**

As the challenges of globalization and modern migration assume more sophisticated dimensions, the need for further transformation and restructuring of Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) becomes expedient. This is unlike the past when immigration duties had a narrow operational scope.

Critics have consistently asked these questions:“Why is NIS, a Department under Ministry of Interior instead of External Affairs Ministry since their activities are anchored more on immigrants?”NIS duties include revenue generation and combating irregular migration using public relation approach.

Ajayi (1997) notes, in Public Relations, no amount of campaign can improve a bad service or product. That is why organizations could devote more time to improving their corporate image and look more inward than outward. Where external image is promoted at the expense of good internal image, it is going to be short-lived because the service seekers or customers will soon uncover the truth.

Some of the major goals of public relations are to create, maintain and protect the organization’s reputation, enhance its prestige and present a favourable image. Image building is essential in the eyes of an organization’s publics be them internal or external. Therefore how an organization relates to its public can make or demean it. Effective public relations requires knowledge based on analysis and understanding of all factors that influence public attitude towards the organization.

NIS, being under the Board of Customs, Immigrations, Prisons, CIPB, in early 1990’s suffered major problems. The Board was saddled with the affairs of the Civil Service Commission in relation to Recruitment, Promotion and Discipline. Having made progress in this direction, the Board further received power from the Federal Government of Nigeria, FGN, to assume full responsibility of the three Services-Customs, Immigration and Prisons.

In its policies and programme of action to move the three services forward, a major paralytic policy made by the board within the period under review is “transfer of service”. This policy has long inhibited growth of the service in many facets including its character and image. No sooner had the Nigeria Customs Service, NCS, exited from the Board (CIPB), than the Board of Immigrations and Prisons (IPB) expanded with the addition of Civil Defense Corps and Fire Service, forming what is now called Civil Defense, Fire and Immigration Prisons Board (CDFIPB)

CDFIPB, now does the same functions as it were, CIPB. Even though the new Board is perceived an umpire on the affairs of these services that made it up, there have been growing interference on its core duties from the Ministry of Interior. The latest was the infamous recruitment exercise of 15th February, 2014, alleged to have been conducted by Nigeria Immigration Service. This huge mistake was not from the board (CDFIPB,) neither NIS, but the Ministry of Interior. In NIS war against irregular migrants, the use of checks points, control post and fencing lines in border communities and coastal water boundaries needed be applied. Before these measures can be introduced, the service needs the understanding of the hosts who could equally act as informants, thereby easing the challenges that come with the job. To identify with its objectives, the communities need to be intensely sensitized. The lack of this has often led to conflicts resulting to burning of the service checkpoints or invasion and destruction of its control posts by host communities.

In this information age, it is necessary to educate, sensitize and even inundate the various publics with information regarding functions, facilities, rules and penalties for defaults and the NIS expectations from them.NIS, Akwa Ibom State Command, Uyo, with a public relations unit, is one of the forty-three (43) Commands in the federation charged with the responsibility of executing immigration functions. This study seeks to assess public relations practice of this service and its impact on her corporate image.

**1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Nigeria Immigration Service, NIS, has long suffered image problems since inception.In August 1963, the newly born NIS, was deeply cloaked in the old traditions of the civil service. As it seeks a better corporate identity, efforts were made within the last two decades at the leadership level to establish a Public Relations (PR) section in the NIS headquarters, Abuja. Although not managed by Immigration officers of professional public relations qualifications at a time, the PR section, even without its own budget allocation and unnecessary interference to its duties by its management, seems to have wobbled to progressive stability. Today almost all the forty-three (43) commands of NIS in the Federation have PR units. However, the proliferation of PR units across length and breadth of NIS seems to have failed to address irregular migration of prohibited persons which hitherto had metamorphosed into MAITASINE of 1990 and most recently, BOKO-HARAM – a ravenous threat to the safety, peace and tranquility of Nigeria nation. Also, a prolonged scourge of human trafficking. It seems that NIS, Public Relation sections and Units have failed to establish unwavering policies and programme of actions which remain defiant even in the face of changing times of this democratic dispensation. A case in point is the infamous NIS recruitment of Feb. 15th 2014.

A Few years ago, NIS was not part of Akwa Ibom State’s security apparatus. It was denied its due recognition owing to what seems to be a public relations error. However, with the ascendancy of His Excellency, Governor Godswill Akpabio, the service was reintegrated after demonstrating what appears to be a goodwill engagement.

NIS, PR unit, Uyo, is an appendage of the overall forty-three (43) Command PR units of NIS with headquarters in Sauka, Abuja.However, it seems the lack of budgetary allocations, and inordinate abuse of its independence appears to flow from the top to the bottom. As a result NIS Uyo’s PR unit is yet to carve a niche for itself through PR practices and subsequently give NIS, Akwa Ibom State Command a desired corporate image.

The pertinent question is: What constitutes the public relations practice of NIS, Akwa Ibom State Command and how has the practice affected its corporate image?

**1.3 Objectives of the Study**

This study sought to:

1. determine the nature of Public Relations practice of NIS, Akwa Ibom State Command, Uyo.
2. identify the objectives and the functions of the Public Relations unit in NIS, Uyo.
3. determine the practice of Public Relations in the employment and management of employees in NIS, Uyo.
4. assess the Public perception of the corporate image of NIS in Uyo.
5. ascertain if Public Relations practice of NIS, Uyo has impacted on its corporate image.
6. identify the various strategies used by NIS Public Relations unit, Uyo to impact on its corporate image.

**1.4 Research Questions**

This study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the nature of Public Relations practice in NIS, Uyo?
2. What are the objectives and functions of the public relations unit of NIS, Uyo?
3. To what extent has public relations practice in NIS, Uyo, enhanced employment and management of employees?
4. What is the public perception of the corporate image of NIS, Uyo?
5. How has public relations practice in NIS, Uyo contributed to its corporate image?
6. What are the strategies used by NIS, PR unit, Uyo to impact on its corporate image?

**1.5 Significance of the Study**

NIS, Uyo is one of the forty-three (43) commands in the Federation charged with the responsibility of executing Immigration functions.Public Relations unit of NIS, Uyo, is an appendage of the overall family of forty-three (43) PR units of NIS which have the PR section of NIS, Sauka, Abuja, as its arrow-head.

This study would therefore be of immense help to the service by assessing its PR performance and short comings. It would also help to recommend policies that would handle her corporate image sufficiently. It would equally serve as reference material for researchers and other academics by providing empirical evidence on the public relations strategies employed by the NIS, Uyo.

**1.6 Delimitations of the Study**

This study is restricted to all aspects of public relations practice in NIS, Uyo. Special attention is given to the relationship with her internal staff (employee) and external publics because of its overwhelming impact on the corporate image of the service.

**1.7 Limitations of the Study**

In the course of data collection for this research, the researcher encountered challenges in the area of human relations as it pertains to collection of information from ECOWAS/Expatriates-external publics, as many among the participants were illiterate in English language. There was also the constraint of data collection from interview instruments as the researcher and assistant had to work on appointments by the PRO and Comptroller of Immigration, Akwa Ibom State, Uyo.

It was quite a herculean task completing the interview sessions because the office of a State Comptroller of Immigration Service is a busy one as a result most secured appointments were marked by disappointments. These limitations, however, did not pose serious threats to the validity of the study’s conclusions.

**1.8 Definition of Terms**

Public Relations: - This is the planned and sustained effort by Nigeria Immigration Service, Uyo to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding with its publics.

Publics: -All individuals affected by the policies and actions of the service. E.g. Nigerians, Expatriates, ECOWAS/African citizens, Employees (Immigration Officers).

Public Relations Practice: - The involvement of public relations practitioners in the act of establishing goodwill and mutual understanding between an organization and its publics.

Migration: - Movement from one place to another.

Immigration: - Movement inwards from one country to another in order to reside and establish.

Emigration: - Movement outwards from home country to another.

Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS): - A department of the Ministry of Interior charged with the responsibilities of immigration.

Immigration Officer: - Employee of NIS, an executioner of migration functions.

Image: - The Nigeria Immigration service appearance or status, good or bad as seen by the public.

Expatriate: - Any non-Nigerian employed by an indigenous or joint venture company to work in such company.

Aliens: - Non-Nigerians who are not also commonwealth citizens

Corporate Image: - The composite picture of Nigeria Immigration Service, its publics, and the Public Relations practice.

Section: - An administrative branch of Nigeria Immigration Service

Unit: - An administrative group that is complete by itself but is part of a section.

ECOWAS: Economic Community of West African States.

CERPAC: Combined Expatriate Residence Permit and Aliens Card.