

**SOCIAL MEDIA AND PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICES OF SELECTED
MULTINATIONAL PRODUCTS IN PORT HARCOURT, RIVERS STATE**

BY

Nweke Nma Della

ART2100980

UNIVERSITY OF BENIN

BENIN CITY

AUGUST, 2025

**A PROJECT PRESENTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF MASS COMMUNICATION,
FACULTY OF ARTS,
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, EDO STATE,
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF
BACHELOR OF ARTS (B.A.) DEGREE IN MASS COMMUNICATION.**

AUGUST, 2025

DECLARATION

**I hereby declare that the work presented here is a report of research conducted by me and
that it has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other
institution.**

Nweke Nma Della

ART2100980

CERTIFICATION

I certify that this project was carried out by Insert name with Mat no Insert mat no under my supervision and has been approved. This project is to be submitted to the Department of Mass Communication at the University of Benin.

Dr. Collins Kediehor

11-09-2025

Project Supervisor

Dr. D. O. Ekhareafo

11-09-2025

Head of Department

STUDENT'S THESIS

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Nweke Nma Della

Signature/Date

dellachukwu@gmail.com

Collins Kediehor

Signature/Date

kediehor.collins@dou.edu.ng

Collins Kediehor

Signature/Date

kediehor.collins@dou.edu.ng

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to the ever-faithful God who has guided me throughout my stay in the University. Thank you, lord, for seeing me through my four years as an undergraduate and to my parents for their unending spiritual, financial, moral, and emotional support.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work represents an intellectual endeavour that has significantly contributed to my personal and academic growth. I am profoundly grateful to the Highest God for granting me the strength, wisdom, and grace to complete this project successfully.

I owe my deepest appreciation to my supervisor, Dr. Collins Kedeihor, lecturer in the Department of Mass Communication, University of Benin, whose guidance, constructive criticism, and constant encouragement were invaluable throughout the course of this study.

I remain sincerely grateful for his support.

I also acknowledge the collective contributions of the academic and non-academic staff of the Department of Mass Communication, University of Benin, for their dedication, assistance, and influence during my programme. In particular, I wish to express my profound gratitude to Dr. D. O. Ekhareafo (Head of Department), Dr. C. Nwabufe Nonso, Dr. Ene Obaje, Professor Ezekiel Asemah, and Dr. C. Kediehor for their intellectual guidance and impact on my academic development.

Special recognition is also due to my friends, Aniboh Princess (Director of Welfare, Department of Mass Communication), Amayo Elizabeth, Osaigbevo Gift, Elsie Chris, Olumide Joshua Abolarin, for making this period stress free and easy for me. I also want to acknowledge my Mum and My dad, for being my special people, my brothers, Praise Craig and Durel-Jephthah, and also my Sister, Emmanuella Onuoma, for always being there financially, emotionally and psychologically.

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the topic “SOCIAL MEDIA AND PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICES OF SELECTED MULTINATIONAL PRODUCTS IN PORT HARCOURT, RIVERS STATE.” The objectives of the study were to examine the social media and Public relations practices of selected multinational companies in Port Harcourt, Rivers state. It investigates and shows how these companies use and leverage the social media and Public relations to promote brand awareness, manage crisis and clients and also manage stakeholders, and identify the challenges encountered in the use of social media and Public relations. The study was anchored on Excellence Theory and Technological Determinism

Theory. A survey research design was employed, using a questionnaire to collect responses from a sample size of 398 participants. Findings revealed that the audience demonstrated a high level of awareness regarding the effectiveness of social media and Public relations in multinational companies . The study further showed that although social media has made a significant positive impact on brand awareness of some of these brand companies, there is a need to improve social media strategies to attract more brand visibility, create more awareness with stakeholders and clients, to make it more engaging, and more interacting.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICES OF SELECTED MULTINATIONAL PRODUCTS IN PORT HARCOURT, RIVERS STATE.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The increasingly competitive market has transformed the business environment into a “survival of the fittest” scenario. This intense rivalry has compelled many products to adopt various strategies to survive and avoid becoming outdated. Furthermore, the rapid expansion of digital technology has altered how organisations communicate with their audiences, creating a digital business ecosystem. A key driver of this ecosystem is social media platforms and public

relations. While social media platforms serve as an enhancement to traditional media institutions, public relations strategies have also evolved to cater to recent global audiences. According to Ayini (2021,p.28), “The burgeoning and seemingly indispensable posture of social media is rubbing off on virtually every profession. The public relations profession is not left out in this frenzy. As society evolves, there is a growing need to not only reach prospective clients and the public, but to do so with the right and perhaps most effective media.”

In addition, the 21st century has managed to converge print, radio, and television on the internet. Interestingly, this has transformed into new internet-based media forms (Iwokwagh & Okworo, 2012). This suggests that one can now easily access different media platforms in a single place. Moreover, the business of public relations aims to carefully and deliberately ensure that the organisation’s image is projected in a manner that fosters a positive relationship between it and its publics-both internal and external. In doing so, communication remains the most essential component. While there are several channels available to the PR professional in reaching organisations’ publics, the “most prominent and common is the media” Ikpe & Olise (2010). The media, however, has taken a new shape, with the emergence of social media, which is rapidly becoming the communication destination of choice for many PR professionals seeking to reach their publics in a convenient, affordable, and more interactive manner. This corroborates Ugwu (2019), who noted that nowhere is the rapidity of the changes more impactful than in the practice of public relations.

Given these factors, multinational corporations (MNCs), especially those focused on products, have recognised that maintaining a strong and consistent presence on social media is crucial not only for brand visibility but also for reputation management, which is the sole aim of PRs. In host communities, particularly in emerging economies, these companies face the

challenge of aligning their global brand image with local consumer expectations and cultures. Public relations practices, therefore, are no longer limited to press releases and media briefings; they now include active online community management, content creation, crisis communication, and the use of analytics to monitor consumer sentiments. It's interesting to note that social media makes the work of public relations professionals even easier. Prior to now, a PR professional would have to spend a lot of money budgeting for things like press releases, media tours, exhibitions, and workshops. Social media could be used for all of these purposes in just a few clicks.

In Nigeria, particularly in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, which hosts major players in several industries such as oil and gas, agro-allied, telecommunications, beverages, and consumer goods industries, alongside a youthful population that is highly active on social media, companies in this region cannot ignore the influence of digital platforms on consumer behavior and brand perception. This is because social media not only shapes how these multinational products are perceived but also provides a channel for addressing issues of corporate social responsibility, customer complaints, and community relations.

Despite the growing importance of digital communication, questions remain about how effectively multinational companies in Port Harcourt integrate social media into their PR practices. While some have invested heavily in online campaigns and interactive platforms, others appear to rely more on traditional communication methods. This raises important concerns about the impact of these practices on customer engagement, brand loyalty, and overall corporate image in the local context.

Given the increasing reliance on social media as a PR tool, it becomes important to examine how selected multinational products in Port Harcourt employ these platforms, the extent to which

they influence public perception, and how they balance global brand strategies with local PR realities. Understanding these dynamics will shed light on the evolving relationship between corporations and their publics in the digital age.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite the recognised importance of digital communication platforms in enhancing brand visibility, reputation management, and consumer engagement, there is a notable disparity in how effectively these multinational products integrate social media into their public relations strategies. While some companies invest significantly in online campaigns and interactive engagement, others continue to depend largely on traditional communication methods. This inconsistency raises critical concerns about the effectiveness of social media in fostering strong relationships between these corporations and their diverse local audiences. Moreover, MNCs face the complex challenge of balancing their global brand image with local cultural expectations and consumer behaviours in emerging economies such as Nigeria. As Ayini (2021) highlights, the evolution of social media demands the use of the most effective media to reach and engage prospective clients and the public. The integration of social media into public relations is not merely complementary but essential in the digital business ecosystem (Iwokwagh & Okworo, 2012; Ikpe & Olise, 2010). However, limited research exists on how these practices impact customer loyalty, brand perception, and corporate image, specifically in Port Harcourt's unique business environment. It is against this background that this study seeks to fill this gap by examining the social media and PR practices of selected multinational products in this region.

1.3 Research Objectives

The objectives of the study were to;

1. Examine the relationship between social media use and the public relations practices of selected multinational companies in Port Harcourt.
2. Identify the role of social media as a tool for implementing public relations strategies among these companies.
3. Determine the challenges and opportunities multinational companies encounter in integrating social media with their broader public relations efforts.

1.4 Research Questions

The following questions will guide the study

1. What is the relationship between social media use and the public relations practices of selected multinational companies in Port Harcourt?
2. What role does social media play as a tool for implementing public relations strategies among these companies?
3. What challenges and opportunities do multinational companies encounter in integrating social media with their broader public relations efforts?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study will contribute meaningfully to the academic sphere by enriching the growing body of literature on the intersection between social media and public relations, particularly within Nigeria. While global literature has highlighted the transformative role of digital platforms, limited attention has been given to how these dynamics play out in developing countries and states. The findings will therefore serve as a reference point for future research on corporate communication and digital engagement in emerging markets. For public relations practitioners, particularly those in Rivers State, this study will provide practical knowledge into how multinational companies utilize social media to strengthen communication strategies and

consumer engagement. It intends to highlight best practices, identify common pitfalls, and offer lessons that can be applied to improve stakeholder relations, crisis management, and brand positioning in the local business ecosystem. The host communities also stand to benefit, as the study sheds light on how corporations engage with them through social media and other PR tools. This can improve accountability, transparency, and community relations. Interestingly, multinational companies across Nigeria will also enjoy the benefits of this research as it showcases the strategic value of integrating social media into broader PR efforts, enabling them to build stronger reputations, manage challenges, and foster sustainable relationships with diverse stakeholders.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study examines the social media and public relations practices of Pabod Breweries and Indorama Eleme Petrochemicals Limited, two multinational companies with long-standing operations in Rivers State. These firms were purposefully selected because they are established industry players with visible consumer and community interactions in Port Harcourt, making them suitable case studies for understanding how social media complements broader public relations strategies. Focusing this study to only two companies, reduces its scope for manageability of data and other research resources, which also allows for deeper analysis aligned with its objectives. Furthermore, the study is contextually focused on how these companies utilize social media platforms (such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter/X, and YouTube) in relation to their public relations practices.

1.7 Operational Definition of Terms

Social Media: Interactive online platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter/X, and YouTube where companies share information, engage audiences, and manage communication in real time.

Public Relations (PR): A strategic communication practice aimed at building and maintaining positive relationships between organizations and their stakeholders.

Multinational Products: Goods manufactured, distributed, or marketed by multinational companies that operate across multiple countries while adapting to local markets. In this study, it refers to the consumer goods of Pabod Breweries (beverages) and the industrial outputs of Indorama Eleme Petrochemicals (polyethylene and polypropylene products) as sold and consumed in Rivers State.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Concept of Social Media

Social media has become a central feature of modern communication, reshaping how people connect, share information, and participate in society. Its growth reflects broader technological innovations and changing social dynamics. At its core, social media is defined by its capacity to facilitate user-generated content and foster interaction. Kietzmann et al. (2011)

argue that social media thrives on principles of participation, openness, and community, enabling users to create, share, and collaborate. This user-driven approach contrasts with traditional media, where audiences passively consume content produced by a few. Safko and Blake (2009) describe social media as the practices and behaviours of online communities that share knowledge, opinions, and information through conversational media, web-based applications that allow the easy transmission of text, pictures, audio, and video. Similarly, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define it as internet-based applications built on Web 2.0 technologies, enabling the creation and exchange of user-generated content. These perspectives highlight the interactive, cultural, and participatory nature of social media. Beyond personal use, social media has become central to information dissemination, marketing, activism, and public discourse. Platforms like Twitter and Facebook influence politics and society, with Shirky (2011) emphasizing their role in mobilizing movements such as the Arab Spring. Ultimately, social media is sustained by user participation in creating, distributing, and consuming content around shared interests, making it a dynamic and transformative communication medium.

The roots of social media go back to the early internet era, when the need for digital social interaction first emerged. Boyd and Ellison (2007) note that early platforms like Six Degrees (1997) offered basic networking features by enabling users to create profiles and connect with others. Although simple compared to today's platforms, it introduced the idea of online social networks and laid the foundation for later innovations. In the early 2000s, more advanced sites such as Friendster (2002) and MySpace (2003) appeared, expanding the concept of online communities. These platforms allowed users to share personal details, music, and photos while building networks of friends. MySpace, in particular, became a cultural landmark, drawing millions of users and shaping the design of future platforms. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010)

observe that such sites served as important precursors to the more sophisticated networks that would later dominate. The creation of Facebook in 2004 marked a major shift in social media history. With innovations in interface, privacy settings, and connectivity, it enabled users to interact with real-life friends in more personalized ways. Van Dijck (2013) contends that Facebook's success came from combining user freedom with structured interaction, resulting in a highly engaging and accessible platform. The years that followed saw the emergence of other influential platforms. YouTube (2005) transformed video sharing, Twitter (2006) popularized microblogging, and Instagram (2010) emphasized visual storytelling through photos and videos. Together, these platforms broadened the social media environment, catering to diverse preferences and reshaping how people communicate online.

The rise of these platforms has had profound implications for public relations (PR), fundamentally reshaping how organizations communicate with stakeholders. Unlike traditional media, which relied on one-way information flow, social media enables two-way, real-time interaction, making it a vital tool for relationship management. Grunig and Hunt's (1984) *Excellence Theory* emphasized the importance of symmetrical communication, a principle now realized through digital platforms. Kent and Taylor (2016) further highlight how dialogic communication online allows organizations to build trust and transparency with audiences. In practice, companies employ social media for brand management, crisis response, corporate social responsibility (CSR) visibility, and consumer engagement. Studies in Nigeria show that multinational products increasingly integrate platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram into their PR strategies, though effectiveness varies (El-Kasim, 2020; Ekwenchi & Okoyeocha, 2022). Thus, the evolution of social media has moved beyond individual interaction to become a strategic element in contemporary public relations practice.

2.2 Concept of Public Relations

Public relations (PR) has never been limited to a single definition. This is because it is a human-centred concept, and as human activities evolve with societal developments, the definitions of PR also change. Different scholars have, therefore, approached its meaning from various perspectives, yet most definitions share a common thread: mutual understanding between organisations and their publics. Amenze and Onyebuchim (2023, p. 246) affirm that PR fundamentally seeks to foster this mutual understanding. Similarly, Nwosu and Uffoh (2006, p. 12) describe PR as the deliberate use of communication and actions to shape people's attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours, thereby enhancing the credibility and reputation of individuals, corporate bodies, and even nations. The *Mexico Declaration of 1978* remains one of the most widely accepted definitions, describing PR as the art and science of analyzing trends, forecasting their consequences, counseling organizational leadership, and implementing planned actions that serve both the organization and the public. This definition highlights the predictive and strategic role of PR in shaping future outcomes. Asemah (2022) similarly defines PR as a communication activity that promotes a desirable image for individuals, groups, governments, and organizations. Nnamani (2016, p. 121) adds that PR is essentially about creating and sustaining mutual acceptance and understanding across diverse human and organizational groups.

Modern definitions also emphasize relationship management. The Institute of Public Relations (IPR, 2017, cited in Asemah & Nwammuo, 2018) notes that PR is the way organizations and individuals communicate with their publics and the media. Flynn, Gregory, and Valin (2008, cited in Asemah, Akase & Nkwam-Uwaoma, 2018) define it as the strategic management of relationships between organizations and diverse publics to achieve goals while serving the public interest. The British Institute of Public Relations (BIPR), as cited in Yaroson

& Asemah (2007), underscores PR as a deliberate and sustained effort to build mutual understanding. Skandari (2004, cited in Emeti & Oyandogha, 2019) similarly positions PR as the management of information exchange between organizations and the public. From these definitions, Asemah (2022, p. 206) concludes that PR is built on the philosophy of “doing good” and earning recognition for it. He emphasizes that PR is about making, keeping, and influencing friends to secure public understanding and acceptance. A recurring concept in PR discourse is “publics.” Though not grammatically conventional, “publics” in PR refers to groups that influence or are influenced by an organization. Lattimore (2004, cited in Noun, 2014) defines publics as critical groups for organizations, while Nwodu (2007, p. 14) stresses that no organization can thrive without such groups.

The functions of PR are therefore broad and strategic. According to Nwodu (2007), PR functions include identifying and interpreting public opinion, organizing events to win public sympathy, informing stakeholders about policies and plans, managing crises, facilitating healthy interactions between management and publics, maintaining favorable media relations, balancing organizational interests with those of stakeholders, and fostering community relations that support business goals. In addition, Asemah (2022, p. 301) outlines different types of PR. Media relations, for example, focus on building strong ties with the press, where media coverage provides credibility (Nworgu, 2002; Ukonu, 2013). Investor relations manages communications with shareholders and analysts, while government relations engages directly with policymakers to advocate organizational interests (Chile, 2014). Furthermore, Community relations emphasize social responsibility and brand reputation through initiatives like education and environmental protection (Nnamani, 2019). Employee relations ensure internal stakeholders are well-informed and motivated (Ofor, 2015). Customer relations manage perceptions through market research and

strategic communication, while marketing communications support product launches, brand positioning, and promotional campaigns.

Despite the overwhelming benefits of PR, it still faces several challenges. Neliaku (2008) highlights a persistent problem of misinterpretation, as people still equate PR with advertising, publicity, sales promotion, or propaganda. Whereas advertising, unlike PR, is paid media; publicity is uncontrolled exposure; propaganda often involves manipulation, contrary to PR's ethical foundation of transparency and truth. These misconceptions weaken PR's impact in many organizations. For example, while corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities are an important PR tool, they risk being misunderstood as mere publicity stunts if not properly communicated.

Historically, Public relations (PR) gained particular prominence in the early twentieth century. Asemah (2022, p. 182) notes that it emerged in the United States when business leaders responded to societal criticism, thanks to pioneers like Ivy Lee and Edward Bernays. Lee's 1906 "Declaration of Principles" championed transparency and truth in communication, while Bernays applied psychological insights to shape public opinion (Wilcox, Ault, & Agee, 2006). Bernays's landmark publication, *Crystallizing Public Opinion* (1923), further formalized PR as a profession, a concept that became widely accepted post–World War I (Wikipedia's "History of Public Relations," 2025). The professionalization of PR accelerated in the latter half of the twentieth century, with the launch of trade associations, PR publications, global agency networks, and academic frameworks, developments that solidified PR as a strategic organizational tool (Wikipedia's "Public Relations," 2025)

In Nigerian, PR made its entrance during the Second World War through efforts by colonial administrators like D.C. Fletcher, who used PR tactics to recruit Nigerians for the

British war effort (Babaleye, 2013). Asemah (2022) argues that PR practices even predated formal adoption, as they were inherently embedded in everyday communal interactions. The establishment of the War Information Office in 1943, which enlisted Nigerian Publicity Officers such as Cyprian Ekwensi and Anthony Enahoro, marked the beginning of structured PR in Nigeria. After independence, private sectors joined in: for instance, the United African Company of Nigeria (UACN) created an information department in 1949, while Shell BP formalized its PR efforts by establishing a dedicated department by 1969 (Noun, 2006). The formation of a national PR body occurred in 1963, when Dr. Sam Epelle founded the Public Relations Association of Nigeria (PRAN), which evolved into the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) in 1972. The profession gained legal recognition when NIPR was established under Decree 16 of 1990, elevating PR's institutional status in Nigeria (Asemah, 2022).

In recent times, Public relations (PR) has evolved significantly with the rise of social media, transforming from traditional press releases and media relations to real-time, interactive communication. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter (X), Instagram, and LinkedIn allow organizations such as Pabod and Indorama, to engage directly with their publics, bypassing gatekeepers in traditional media (Wright & Hinson, 2017). This shift has made PR more participatory, two-way, and immediate, enabling organizations to build relationships, respond to crises, and manage reputations in real time (Eyrich, Padman & Sweetser, 2008). Social media also provides data analytics to monitor public sentiment and measure the impact of campaigns, reinforcing PR's strategic role. Thus, social media has expanded PR from information dissemination to active dialogue and community building.

2.3 Understanding Social Media and Public Relations

Social media has profoundly reshaped public relations (PR) practice, especially in Nigeria, where digital platforms have increasingly become integral to effective communication between organizations and their publics. Nigerian scholars highlight that social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Instagram have transformed traditional PR, making it more interactive, immediate, and expansive in reach (Ogbu, 2019; Achor, Nwachukwu & Nkwocha, 2015). This transformation reflects a broader global trend but is particularly significant in Nigeria's developing media landscape, where the shift to digital communication offers new opportunities and challenges to PR practitioners. Public relations, fundamentally concerned with managing relationships and perceptions of an organization by its publics, has evolved from one-way communication through press releases and traditional media to two-way dialogues supported by social media tools (Olayinka & Ewuola, 2019). Social media platforms provide PR professionals with the ability to engage directly with diverse audiences, respond promptly to issues, create real-time conversations, and craft personalized messaging. This immediacy and accessibility enhance transparency and foster trust, a critical factor in Nigeria's complex socio-political environment (Lucas, 2023).

The role of social media in PR also aligns with Technological Determinism Theory (TDT), which posits that technology is the primary driver of social and organizational change, shaping human behavior and societal structures. According to this view, advancements in digital technologies, particularly social media platforms, fundamentally transform PR practices by creating new modes of interaction and engagement. Godswill and Ndifon (2020) explain that social media technologies empower PR professionals in Nigeria to reach wider audiences instantly, facilitating real-time communication and social change. This technological force alters traditional PR from a passive, one-way communication model into an active, two-way dialogue

between organizations and their publics. Some scholars, such as Ogah (2024), however, argue that technology alone does not shape outcomes, human agency and culture also play critical roles. For instance, while social media platforms offer accessibility and immediacy, PR practitioners must strategically use these tools to build trust and credibility in Nigeria's diverse socio-political environment (Godswill & Ndifon, 2020).

The Excellence Theory complements this by emphasizing that effective PR contributes to organizational effectiveness through relationship building based on two-way symmetrical communication. Ezeani & Igwe (2014) argue that social media enables this open dialogue, fostering mutual understanding between organizations and their stakeholders. The theory advocates for professionalism, ethical conduct, and strategic communication, all of which are facilitated by digital platforms. The Excellence Theory's focus on managing stakeholder relationships aligns with the dynamic possibilities of social media, where feedback mechanisms and interactive content enhance engagement and reputation management in Nigerian corporate and public sectors.

Moreover, research shows that the integration of social media in PR has deepened brand awareness, increased customer engagement, and enhanced reputation management. Lucas (2023) found that PR professionals in Nigerian broadcasting organizations actively use platforms like Twitter and Facebook to share content, monitor public opinion, and manage crises. This digital engagement is essential in a country where social media penetration is rising rapidly, statistics indicate over 33 million social media users in Nigeria as of 2021, with an internet penetration rate of about 36%, predominantly youthful users (Lucas, 2023; Premium Times, 2022).

Nonetheless, the adoption of social media in PR is not without challenges in Nigeria. Scholars identify issues such as the digital divide, misinformation proliferation, and inadequate

training for PR professionals on digital tools (Olayinka & Ewuola, 2019; Achor et al., 2015). Misuse or mismanagement of social channels can damage an organization's reputation, underscoring the need for strategic social media planning and ethical communication practices.

2.4 Multinational Companies and their Products

Multinational Companies are organizations that operate in more than one country, managing production or delivering services across borders. They have a centralized head office in their home country while maintaining subsidiaries or branches internationally. Key features of MNCs include global reach, substantial capital investment, diversified operations, technology transfer, and a focus on creating economies of scale (Gratton, 2025). MNCs carry out business in various industries, influencing economic growth, employment, and global trade. MNCs can be classified into product-based and service-based companies. Product-based MNCs focus on manufacturing and distributing tangible goods such as beverages, petrochemicals, and consumer products. The focus of this discussion is, however, product-based. These product-based multinational companies use substantial infrastructure and asset investments, with strategies centred on product innovation and market adaptation.

In Rivers State, Nigeria, Pabod Breweries Limited, located in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, is one of Nigeria's notable product-based multinational affiliates in the brewing industry. It operates as a subsidiary of SABMiller, which later became part of AB InBev, one of the world's largest brewing companies. Established in 1982, Pabod Breweries plays a key role in producing and distributing internationally recognized beer brands such as Hero Lager, Trophy, and Castle Lite, alongside other beverages that cater to Nigeria's growing consumer market. The company has significantly contributed to local economic development by creating jobs, enhancing supply chains, and supporting small-scale distributors across Rivers State. Beyond economic impact,

Pabod Breweries engages in corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, including community development and environmental sustainability projects. Its presence highlights the influence of multinational companies in shaping consumer behavior and advancing industrial growth in Nigeria, while also emphasizing the integration of global standards into local production (Bloomberg, 2025).

Indorama Eleme Petrochemicals Limited (IEPL), located in Eleme, Rivers State, is a leading multinational company in Nigeria's industrial sector. Originally established as Eleme Petrochemicals Company by the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), it was privatized in 2006 and acquired by Indorama Corporation, a global conglomerate headquartered in Singapore. Since then, Indorama has transformed the company into Africa's largest integrated petrochemicals and fertilizer hub. Its operations include the production of polyethene, polypropylene, urea, and ammonia, which are critical to agriculture, manufacturing, and industrial development in Nigeria. Indorama has contributed immensely to the Nigerian economy by reducing fertilizer imports, creating thousands of jobs, and promoting agricultural productivity. Beyond economic contributions, the company is actively involved in corporate social responsibility (CSR), focusing on education, health, infrastructure, and environmental sustainability for host communities. Through global expertise and local engagement, Indorama demonstrates the strategic importance of multinational corporations in driving sustainable development in Rivers State. (Indorama Eleme, 2025).

Both companies exemplify how MNCs in Rivers State align global operations with local market needs, driving industrial growth and economic development through product-based approaches. Their presence highlights the importance of multinational product firms in advancing industrial capacity and creating employment in emerging economies.

2.5 Empirical Review

A study conducted by Ayini (2021) provides an empirical evaluation of social media use among public relations (PR) practitioners in Rivers State, Nigeria. Employing a survey of 282 registered PR members in the state, the study explores the extent of social media adoption, its impact on improving organizational image and public goodwill, and the challenges faced by PR professionals in utilizing these platforms. Results indicate that social media usage among PR practitioners in Rivers State remains low, with 36.5% of respondents acknowledging minimal adoption despite the recognized potential of social media to enhance organizational reputation (Ayini, 2021). Notably, the study highlights social media's role in bridging communication gaps between organizations and publics, fostering real-time engagement, and enabling transparency. Conversely, it exposes significant barriers, such as practitioners' preference for traditional communication channels, lack of sufficient funding, and aversion to new media technologies, which impede full exploitation of social media's benefits. This empirical review is directly relevant to the current study on social media and public relations practices of selected multinational products in Port Harcourt. Both studies converge on the central theme of examining social media as a critical communication tool in contemporary PR practice within Rivers State. However, while Ayini's work broadly addresses PR practitioners across various organizations, the current study narrows the focus to multinational products, exploring how these global brands reconcile social media strategies with local consumer engagement and reputation management. Additionally, the study by Ayini emphasizes organizational and practitioner-related challenges in social media adoption, a dimension that enriches the understanding of constraints multinational companies might face in digital PR within Port Harcourt's unique socio-economic environment. Thus, Ayini's findings offer a foundational empirical background,

supporting the need for deeper investigation into social media's strategic utilization in multinational product PR and its impact on brand perception and public engagement.

Similarly, Confidence and Okon (2023) conducted “An Appraisal of Public Relations Strategies of Select Multinational Companies in Rivers State”. The study employed a survey design targeting two streams of respondents, company managers and host-community residents, around Pabod Breweries (Oginigba) and Daewoo E&C (Eleme). Using Taro Yamane, the researchers derived a sample of 398 residents and purposively included five PR managers; 400 questionnaires were administered and 368 returned ($\approx 92\%$ retrieval), supporting robust descriptive analysis with weighted mean scores on a four-point Likert scale. Methodologically, multistage sampling and face/content validity were reported, with reliability assessed (Cronbach’s alpha, as stated), which strengthens internal consistency claims. Empirically, the study found Pabod’s PR practices more effective than Daewoo’s (60.7% vs. 44.2%), and respondents rated Pabod’s community relationship as friendlier. Both firms reportedly maintain relations through local hiring and skills inclusion, aligning with Rivers State’s socio-economic dynamics; however, CSR was judged largely reactive rather than proactive, an important nuance for strategy evaluation. The discussion underscores perception management and dialogic engagement as central to reputation outcomes, echoing broader PR theory referenced in the paper. This study offers a solid baseline on offline/traditional PR strategy and host-community relations, but does not explicitly test social media tactics or platform-specific engagement metrics.

The study by Ogbu Silk Ugwu (2019) further examine the impact of social media on public relations (PR) practice in Nigeria, emphasizing both the opportunities and challenges presented by digital communication in a rapidly evolving media landscape. The study reveals that increased internet penetration and mobile phone usage in Nigeria have catalyzed the growth

of social media as a critical platform for engagement. It finds that social media has transformed PR from traditional one-way communication to interactive dialogue, enabling organizations to build trust and manage their brand perceptions more effectively. The study also highlights challenges, including misinformation, lack of digital literacy, and the complexities of managing reputation in an uncontrolled social media environment. It advocates practical strategies such as strategic planning, transparency, active listening, and meaningful engagement to optimize social media for PR purposes. Theoretical frameworks guiding the study are the Social Construction Theory and Impression Management Theory, which underscore how social media shapes brand reality through audience interactions. This study closely relates to the present research on social media and PR practices of multinational products in Port Harcourt by underscoring the critical role social media plays in shaping public perception and engagement in Nigeria. While Ogbu's work provides a broad national perspective on PR transformation through social media, the current study narrows the focus specifically on multinational corporations in Port Harcourt, exploring how these companies reconcile global brand strategies with local digital communication realities. Both studies emphasize the need for strategic social media use to maintain brand reputation and foster meaningful relationships with publics in Nigeria's digital era.

2.6 Theoretical Review

This study was hinged on the Technological Determinism Theory (TDT) and the Excellence Theory

2.6.1 Technological Determinism Theory

McLuhan (1962) and cited in Adler (2006), the technological determinism (TD) theory, According to McLuhan, “the medium is the message,” meaning that the nature of a communication medium influences society more than the content it delivers. Later, scholars like Chandler (1995) argued that technological advancements not only alter communication patterns but also redefine cultural practices, institutional structures, and power relations. Arguably, the social networking sites as technological inventions used in human communication have visible effects on the media users presently (Edogor, Jonah & Ojo, 2014). The advent of the social media has not only increased the frontiers of communication but it has also affected the ways people communicate. It would be very hard to agree that the internet has not affect the way in which people work, study and look for information or communicate with others (Bakker & Sadaba, 2009, cited in Edogor et al., 2014). Unlike the restrictions in reaching person outside the converge area of traditional media; like radio, television and newspapers, the social media can be used to reach any target audience across the globe. Thus, technological determinism shows how social media forces Pabod Breweries and Indorama to modify their PR tactics. These global corporations must adopt digital platforms that influence stakeholder expectations, demand transparency, and rethink PR tactics in Port Harcourt’s changing communication landscape rather than depending just on traditional community participation.

2.6.2 Excellence Theory

The Excellence Theory in public relations, extensively discussed by Nigerian scholars such as Godam (2019) and Suleiman (2025), emphasizes the strategic role of PR in enhancing organizational effectiveness through two-way symmetrical communication. It advocates that PR functions best when recognized as a critical management activity that fosters mutual understanding and dialogue between organizations and their publics. According to Godam (2019), the theory underscores that organizations must deliver quality service, address stakeholder concerns, and align management goals with societal expectations to achieve organizational harmony and minimize risks. Suleiman's (2025) study on Kaduna Polytechnic highlights that applying the Excellence Theory involves integrating PR into strategic decision-making, ensuring PR contributes meaningfully to organizational goals. Core to the theory is the idea that PR should not just communicate but build authentic relationships based on transparency, ethical considerations, and reciprocity, leading to improved reputation and sustainable success.

The Excellence Theory resonates with this study on multinational products in Port Harcourt by stressing the importance of strategic, two-way communication. It demonstrates how these companies can leverage social media to engage local publics effectively, balancing global brand interests with community-specific expectations to foster trust, brand loyalty, and positive corporate image.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides a description of the methods employed in this study. The explanations include the following sub headings: research design, study population, sample size, sampling technique, research tool, validity of instrument, data gathering method, and data analysis method.

3.1 Research Design

The term “research design” refers to the strategy and analytical technique selected to combine the many study components coherently and logically, ensuring a full investigation of the research subject. It serves as a template for the gathering, analysis, and use of information and data. The survey research design was adopted. A survey design is typically used to collect data on a specific set of people who have an interest in the research or are representative of wider groups of people. The survey design was chosen because it was the most time- and money-efficient way to collect information from respondents using a questionnaire. Survey method is strong in examining relationships with background characteristics such as age, level of education, socio-economic status, exposure to communication messages, etc. Also, the survey was adopted instead of content analysis because of its ability to measure human attitudes and opinions.

3.2 Population of Study

Population refers to the larger population to which you want to apply your study’s findings generally. Depending on the size of the study, your precise population will change. PR Managers from both Pabod breweries and Indorama formed the first part of the population, while the

residents of the host communities are the components of the second stream of population. Oginigba and Eleme are the host communities of Pabod Breweries and Indorama, respectively. According to NPC (2019) estimated population of the residents of Eleme is estimated at 50,000, while that of Oginigba is about 12,100 (Source: NPC 2019 estimated population).

3.3 Sample Size

The sample size is the number of people chosen to adequately reflect the population. A set of people chosen from the general community who are thought to be a representative sample size for that particular study is referred to as the sample size.

Since it is impossible to contact every member of the host communities, even if contacting the managers may be easy, a sample of 398 people was chosen. This sample size was derived using Taro Yamane formular.

Formula:

$$n = N / (1 + N(e)^2) \text{ where}$$

n= sample size

N= population size

e= sampling error (0.05)

This formula is applied below

$$n = 62,102 / (1 + 62,102 (0.05)^2)$$

$$n = 62,102 / (1 + 62,102 (0.0025))$$

$$n = 62,102 / 1 + 155.25$$

$$n = 62,102 / 156.2$$

$$n = 398$$

3.4 Sampling Technique

This study adopted the stratified purposive sampling technique. This method was chosen because it not only ensured representation across the selected communities but also targeted respondents who were most relevant to the study objectives. To achieve balance, the population was stratified according to the communities where the two multinational companies operate. Within these strata, respondents were purposively accessed through community churches, marketplaces, and other public spaces, while preference was given to community leaders who play influential roles in local decision-making. The public relations officers of both companies were also purposively included because of their direct involvement in managing organizational communication. This approach was deliberate in selecting participants who could provide meaningful information on the social media and public relations practices of the company's products. This ensured that the study captured both organizational and community perspectives in a representative and contextually rich manner.

3.5 Instrument for Data Collection

The primary instrument for data collection in this study was a structured questionnaire developed directly from the research questions. The questionnaire was divided into two sections: Section A captured the demographic characteristics of respondents, while Section B focused on their psychographic information relevant to the study.

3.6 Validity of Instrument

Validity refers to the extent to which an instrument accurately measures what it is designed to measure. To establish the validity of the questionnaire used in this study, both face validity and content validity approaches were employed. First, a draft of the instrument was

submitted to the research supervisor, who reviewed it for clarity, relevance, and alignment with the study objectives. Based on the feedback received, necessary corrections and modifications were made. In addition, copies of the questionnaire were shared with graduates of Mass Communication, who evaluated the instrument in terms of language simplicity, item relevance, and appropriateness for the target respondents. Their suggestions further improved the instrument's clarity and scope. While this process provided evidence of face and content validity, it is important to note that full validation would also require pilot testing among a small sample of the target population. Nevertheless, the expert and peer reviews conducted gave assurance that the questionnaire was appropriate for measuring the research variables and would yield reliable results.

3.7 Reliability of Instrument

Reliability in research refers to the ability of an instrument to consistently produce dependable results when applied under similar conditions. To determine the reliability of the questionnaire used in this study, a pilot study was conducted. Forty (40) community members who shared similar characteristics with the target population, but were not part of the main study, were selected to complete the questionnaire. The responses obtained were analyzed to identify ambiguities, inconsistencies, and possible misinterpretations. Feedback from the pilot participants helped to refine the wording of some items, ensuring greater clarity and comprehension. The pilot study also confirmed that the questionnaire was capable of producing stable and consistent results, thereby establishing its reliability for the main investigation.

3.8 Method of Data Collection

Data collection for this study was carried out using a structured questionnaire. The researcher, assisted by two trained research assistants, personally distributed the questionnaires

to respondents in the selected communities. The assistants were briefed on the purpose of the study and the importance of maintaining neutrality throughout the process. Questionnaires were administered using a hand-delivery and retrieval method, which ensured a high response rate. Respondents were given adequate time to complete the instrument, after which the researcher and assistants returned to collect the completed copies. Before administration, respondents were informed of the purpose of the research, assured of confidentiality, and asked for their consent to participate. This procedure enhanced clarity, encouraged cooperation, and ensured the quality and completeness of the data collected.

3.9 Method of Data Analysis

Data collected in this study were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques, specifically frequency counts and simple percentages. The responses from the questionnaires were first coded and organized into tables for clarity. Simple percentage analysis was then applied to determine the distribution of responses across the research questions. This method was considered appropriate because it provides a straightforward way of summarizing large sets of data, making it easy to identify dominant patterns and trends. Comparing the percentages of responses for each item allowed the study to highlight the prevailing views and attitudes of the respondents. The analysis method also ensured that the findings directly addressed the research objectives, offering a clear basis for drawing conclusions and making recommendations.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Data Presentation

Table 1: Gender Representation of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage %
Male	181	45%
Female	217	55%
Total	398	100%

Field Survey, 2025

The above data indicate that male respondents made up 45% of the respondents, while female respondents made up 55% of the total sample. This implies that the majority of the respondents were female.

Table 2: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage %
18-25	96	24%
26-35	122	31%
36-45	115	29%
46+	65	16%
Total	398	100%

Field Survey, 2025

The above data shows that 96 respondents which is 24% of the total sample were within the age of 18-25, 122 respondents which is 31% of the total sample were within the age of 26-35, 115 respondents which is 29% of the total sample were within the age of 36-45, while 65 respondents which is 16% of the total sample were within the age of 46 and above. This indicates that the majority of the respondents were within the age of 26-35.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents' Occupation

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage %
Company Employee	2	1%
Community member	365	91%
Student	23	6%
Other	8	2%
Total	398	100%

Field Survey, 2025

The above data shows that 2 respondents, which is 1% of the total sample, were the company's employees, 365 respondents, which is 91% of the total sample, were community members, 23 respondents, which is 6% of the total sample, were students, while 8 respondents, which is 2% of the total sample had other occupation. This implies that the majority of the study participants were members of the community.

Table 4: Distribution of Educational Level of Respondents

Education	Frequency	Percentage %
Secondary	124	31%
Diploma	84	21%
Undergraduate	179	45%
Postgraduate	11	3%
Total	398	100%

Field Survey, 2025

The above data shows that 124 respondents, which is 31% of the total sample, were secondary school certificate holders, 84 respondents, which is 21% of the total sample, were diploma holders, 11 respondents, which is 3% of the total sample, were undergraduates, while 179 respondents, which is 45% of the total sample, were postgraduates. The above analysis indicates that the majority of the respondents were postgraduates.

Table 5: Company/community you are associated with

Company Relation	Frequency	Percentage %
Pabod Breweries/Oginigba	103	26%
Indorama/Elemo	295	74%
Total	398	100%

Field Survey, 2025

The data above states that 103 respondents, which is 26% of the total sample, were associated with Pabod Breweries/Oginigba, while 295 respondents, which is 74% of the total sample, were associated with Indorama/Elemé. This indicates that the majority of the respondents were associated with Indorama/Elemé.

Table 6: Which social media platforms of the company do you interact with most?

Variables	Frequency	Percentage %
Facebook	176	44%
X	33	8%
Instagram	78	20%
LinkedIn	22	6%
None	89	22%
Total	398	100%

Field Survey, 2025

From the data above, 176 respondents which is 44% of the total sample were interact more with the companies through Facebook, 33 respondents which is 8% of the total sample said it is through X, 78 respondents which is 20% of the total sample interact more through Instagram, 22 respondents which is 6% of the total sample said LinkedIn, while 89 respondents which is 22% of the total sample do not interact at all. This implies that, majority of the respondents interact with Facebook the most.

Table 7: How often do you interact with the company's social media posts?

Variables	Frequency	Percentage %
Very often	66	17%
Often	57	14%
Occasionally	132	33%
Rarely	63	16%
Never	80	20%
Total	398	100%

Field Survey, 2025

The above data shows that 66 respondents which is 17% of the total sample interact with the companies social media posts very often, 57 respondents which is 14% of the total sample said its often, 132 respondents which is 33% of the total sample said occasionally, 63 respondents which is 16% of the total sample said rarely, while 80 respondents which is 20% of the total sample said never. The above analysis implies that respondents occasionally interact with the company's social media posts.

Table 8: How effective is the company's use of social media in communicating with stakeholders?

Variables	Frequency	Percentage %
Very effective	48	12%
Effective	94	24%
Neutral	87	22%
Ineffective	126	32%
Very ineffective	43	11%
Total	398	100%

Field Survey, 2025

The data above shows that 48 respondents which is 12% of the total sample said the company's use of social media in communicating with stakeholders is very effective, 94 respondents which is 24% of the total sample said it is effective, 87 respondents which is 22% of the total sample were neutral, 126 respondents which is 32% of the total sample said it is ineffective while 43 respondents which is 11% of the total sample said it is very ineffective. The above implies that the majority of the respondents believe that the company's social media use in stakeholder communication is ineffective.

Table 9: The company's social media activities align with its broader PR strategies (CSR, community relations, brand promotion).

Variables	Frequency	Percentage %
Strongly agree	82	21%
Agree	97	24%
Neutral	104	26%
Disagree	67	17%
Strongly disagree	48	12%
Total	398	100%

Field Survey, 2025

From the above data, 82 respondents, which is 21% of the total sample, strongly agree that the company's social media activities align with its broader PR strategies. 97 respondents, which is 24% of the total sample, agreed, 104 respondents, which is 26% of the total sample, were neutral, 67 respondents, which is 17% disagreed with the assertion, while 48 respondents, which is 12% of the total sample, strongly disagreed. The analysis indicates that the majority of the respondents are indecisive on whether the company's social media activities align with broader PR strategies.

Table 10: The company responds promptly to questions or complaints raised on social media.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage %
Always	62	16%
Often	56	14%
Sometimes	93	23%
Rarely	151	38%
Never	36	9%
Total	398	100%

Field Survey, 2025

The above data shows that 62 respondents, which is 16% of the total sample, stated that the company always responds promptly to questions or complaints raised on social media. 56 respondents, which is 14% of the total sample, said it is often, 93 respondents, which is 23% of the total sample, said it is sometimes, 151 respondents, which is 38% of the total sample, said rarely, while 36 respondents, which is 9% of the total sample, said never. This implies that the company rarely responds promptly to questions or complaints raised on social media.

Table 11: Which PR activity is most supported by the company's social media?

Variables	Frequency	Percentage %
Corporate social responsibility	197	49%
Crisis management	12	3%
Community engagement	109	27%
Customer service	26	7%
Brand promotion	54	14%
Total	398	100%

Field Survey, 2025

The above data shows that 197 respondents, which is 49% of the total sample, said corporate social responsibility is the PR activity that is most supported by the company's social media. 12 respondents, which is 3% of the total sample, said it is crisis management, 109 respondents, which is 27% of the total sample, said it is community engagement, 26 respondents which is 7% of the total sample said it is customer service, while 54 respondents, which is 14% of the total sample said it is brand promotion.

Table 12: Social media has improved the company's transparency in dealing with the public.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage %
Strongly agree	87	22%
Agree	111	28%
Neutral	28	7%
Disagree	133	33%
Strongly disagree	39	10%
Total	398	100%

Field Survey, 2025

From the data above, 87 respondents, which is 22% of the total sample, strongly agreed that social media has improved the company's transparency in dealing with the public, 111 respondents which is 28% of the total sample agreed to the assertion, 28 respondents which is 7% of the total sample were neutral, 133 respondents which is 33% of the total sample disagreed while 39 respondents which is 10% of the total sample strongly disagreed.

Table 13: How would you rate the role of social media in shaping the company's public image?

Variables	Frequency	Percentage %
Very high	67	17%
High	79	20%
Moderate	153	38%
Low	34	9%
Very low	65	16%
Total	398	100%

Field Survey, 2025

The above data shows that 67 respondents, which is 17% of the total sample would rate the role of social media in shaping the company's public image very high, 79 respondents which is 20% of the total sample said it is high, 153 respondents which is 38% of the total sample said it is moderate, 34 respondents which is 9% of the total sample said it is low, while 65 respondents which is 16% of the total sample said it is very low.

Table 14: Social media has made the company more accessible to its stakeholders.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage %
Strongly agree	95	24%
Agree	54	14%
Neutral	26	6%
Disagree	123	31%
Strongly disagree	100	25%
Total	398	100%

Field Survey, 2025

The above data shows that 95 respondents which is 24% of the total sample strongly agreed that social media has made the company more accessible to its stakeholders, 54 respondents which is 14% of the total sample agreed, 26 respondents which is 6% of the total sample were neutral, 123 respondents which is 31% of the total sample disagreed and 100 respondents which is 25% of the total sample strongly disagreed.

Table 15: Which of the following challenges does the company face most in using social media for PR?

Variables	Frequency	Percentage %
Limited internet access	44	11%
Negative online feedback	18	5%
Lack of skilled personnel	85	21%
High cost of managing platforms	43	11%
Low community engagement	198	50%
None	10	2%
Total	398	100%

Field Survey, 2025

The data above shows that the challenge the company face most in using social media is low community engagement. From the table, 198 respondents, which is 50% of the total sample, supported this assertion.

Table 16: Which opportunities has social media created for the company's PR?

Variables	Frequency	Percentage %
Faster communication	87	22%
Wider audience reach	126	32%
Improved stakeholder trust	31	8%
Stronger community relations	133	33%
Enhanced brand visibility	21	5%
Total	398	100%

Field Survey, 2025

The above data shows that wider audience reach and stronger community relations are the two main opportunities that social media has created for the company's PR. From the table, 126 (32%) and 133 (33%) of the total sample supported the assertion.

Table 17: Overall, the benefits of using social media for PR outweigh the challenges.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage %
Strongly agree	66	17%
Agree	152	38%
Neutral	83	21%
Disagree	97	24%
Strongly disagree	-	0%
Total	398	100%

Field Survey, 2025

From the data above majority of the respondents, which is 38% of the total sample, agreed that the benefits of using social media for PR activities outweigh the challenges of using social media for PR activities.

Table 18: How satisfied are you with the company's social media engagement?

Variables	Frequency	Percentage %
Very satisfied	42	11%
Satisfied	103	26%
Neutral	55	14%
Dissatisfied	138	35%
Very dissatisfied	60	15%
Total	398	100%

Field Survey, 2025

From the above data, 42 respondents, which is 11% of the total sample, are very satisfied with the company's social media engagement, 103 respondents which is 26% of the total sample said they were satisfied, 55 respondents which is 14% of the total sample were neutral, 138 respondents which is 35% of the total sample were dissatisfied, while 60 respondents which is 15% of the total sample were very dissatisfied.

4.2 Discussion of Findings

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between social media use and the public relations practices of selected multinational companies in Port Harcourt?

The findings reveal a mixed relationship between social media use and the public relations (PR) practices of multinational companies in Port Harcourt. A substantial proportion of respondents reported interacting with companies primarily through Facebook (44%), while 33% engaged occasionally and 22% did not interact at all. Moreover, only 12% rated social media communication as “very effective,” compared to 32% who considered it ineffective. Although 45% agreed that social media activities aligned with broader PR strategies such as CSR and brand promotion, 29% disagreed, while 38% noted that the companies “rarely” respond promptly to complaints. These results suggest that while social media has become part of PR practice, its application is inconsistent and often falls short in responsiveness and stakeholder engagement.

This aligns with Wright and Hinson (2017), who found that although social media is widely integrated into PR, many organizations fail to fully exploit its dialogic potential. Kent and Taylor’s (2016) dialogic communication model stresses the need for responsiveness and engagement, which the data suggest is lacking. From the perspective of Technological Determinism (McLuhan, 1964), social media as a communication technology should transform organizational–public relationships; however, from this result, companies appear slow in adapting their practices to match the demands of digital immediacy. Similarly, the Excellence Theory (Grunig & Hunt, 1984) emphasizes two-way symmetrical communication as the most effective PR model. The limited responsiveness and perceived ineffectiveness highlighted in the data indicate that these firms are not fully practicing symmetrical communication, thus reducing the excellence of their PR strategies.

Research Question 2: What role does social media play as a tool for implementing public relations strategies among these companies?

The data show that social media plays a supportive but limited role in the PR strategies of multinational companies in Port Harcourt. Respondents identified CSR (49%) and community engagement (27%) as the main activities supported through social media, while its role in enhancing transparency divided opinion, 50% agreed it improved openness, but 43% disagreed. Similarly, only 20% rated social media's role in shaping public image as high, with 38% describing it as moderate. Accessibility was also contested, with 38% agreeing social media made companies more accessible and another 38% disagreeing. These results suggest that social media is being used more as a tool for visibility and CSR promotion than as a comprehensive communication platform. This finding supports Eyich, Padman, and Sweetser (2008), who observed that organizations tend to use social media primarily for information dissemination rather than true engagement. It also aligns with Kent and Taylor (2016), who stressed that the real value of social media lies in dialogue, not one-way publicity. From a Technological Determinism perspective (McLuhan, 1964), the emergence of social media should compel organizations to restructure PR strategies around interactivity, yet the companies studied are applying it selectively, limiting its transformative potential. Through the lens of the Excellence Theory (Grunig & Hunt, 1984), the findings indicate a tilt toward asymmetrical communication, as companies appear more focused on pushing CSR content than engaging publics in mutual problem-solving. This undermines the two-way symmetrical ideal that defines excellent PR practice.

Research Question 3: What challenges and opportunities do multinational companies encounter in integrating social media with their broader public relations efforts?

The results highlight both opportunities and challenges in integrating social media into PR practice. The biggest challenge identified was low community engagement (50%), followed by lack of skilled personnel (21%) and high costs (11%). On the other hand, respondents recognized opportunities such as stronger community relations (33%), wider audience reach (32%), and faster communication (22%). Despite the challenges, 55% of respondents agreed that the benefits of social media outweigh the difficulties, although satisfaction levels were low, with half expressing dissatisfaction with current engagement practices. These findings illustrate that while companies see potential in social media, inadequate investment in skills and engagement undermines its effectiveness. These challenges are consistent with Okafor and Malizu (2020), who found that Nigerian organizations face barriers such as poor digital literacy and organizational resistance when adopting social media for PR. Similarly, Ogbu (2019) noted that ineffective engagement strategies reduce trust and weaken community relations. The Technological Determinism theory helps explain this paradox: although social media creates opportunities for speed, reach, and openness, its benefits are unrealized when organizations fail to adapt to the medium's demands. The Excellence Theory further underlines the issue: the lack of skilled personnel and weak engagement strategies prevent the companies from achieving two-way symmetrical communication, which is essential for building trust and long-term stakeholder relationships. Thus, while opportunities exist, challenges in skills, responsiveness, and community engagement continue to limit the excellence of PR practice in these firms.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of Research

The essence of this study, was to know social media and public relations practices of selected multinational products in Port Harcourt, Rivers state. The objectives of the study were to; Examine the relationship between social media use and the public relations practices of selected multinational companies in Port Harcourt. Identify the role of social media as a tool for implementing public relations strategies among these companies. Determine the challenges and opportunities multinational companies encounter in integrating social media with their broader public relations efforts. The study was hinged on the Technological determinism theory and the Excellence theory. The survey research design was adopted by the researcher to adequately gather information or data for the study and the questionnaire was used for collection of primary data. The researcher employed the use of a quantitative Method of analysis using tables and

simple percentage to present and analyze collected data. With the percentage analysis, options with the greater percentage were concluded to be the trend.

The following were the findings of the research:

1. The relationship between social media and PR practices is inconsistent. While many interact via Facebook and see alignment with CSR, responsiveness is weak. Overall, social media use falls short of achieving full stakeholder engagement.
2. Social media supports CSR and community engagement but plays a limited PR role. Its impact on transparency and accessibility remains contested among respondents. Companies use it more for visibility than for true two-way dialogue.
3. Key challenges include low community engagement, lack of skilled staff, and high costs. Opportunities lie in wider reach, faster communication, and stronger community ties. Yet, weak responsiveness and poor skills limit PR excellence in practice.

5.2 Conclusion

This study set out to examine the relationship between social media use and public relations practices of selected multinational products in Port Harcourt, focusing on Pabod Breweries and Indorama. The findings reveal that while social media has become a central tool in their communication, its application remains inconsistent. A significant proportion of stakeholders interact with company platforms, particularly Facebook, but low responsiveness and perceived ineffectiveness weaken its impact on stakeholder engagement. This suggests that the companies are yet to fully integrate dialogic and interactive approaches that define effective public relations. The study further shows that social media plays a supportive role in promoting corporate social responsibility and community engagement but remains limited in enhancing transparency,

accessibility, and image-building. Rather than fostering symmetrical two-way communication, social media is largely used for one-way dissemination of information. Moreover, the research highlights critical challenges, low community engagement, lack of skilled personnel, and high management costs, alongside notable opportunities such as wider reach, faster communication, and stronger community relations. Overall, while social media offers vast potential for advancing excellent public relations practice, multinational companies in Rivers State have yet to fully harness its capabilities. A deliberate shift towards more interactive, symmetrical communication strategies is essential for sustainable stakeholder trust and relationship-building.

5.3 Recommendations

The study recommends the following in light of the aforementioned findings:

1. **Enhance Responsiveness and Interactivity:** Multinational companies should strengthen their responsiveness on social media by setting up dedicated digital PR teams or social media managers. Quick replies to customer concerns, transparent crisis communication, and proactive engagement would help build trust and align with the two-way symmetrical communication model of the Excellence Theory.
2. **Invest in Capacity Building and Digital Skills:** The study revealed a lack of skilled personnel as a challenge. Companies should invest in regular training for PR officers and communication staff on digital engagement, content creation, and analytics. This will not only improve professionalism but also ensure that social media strategies are effectively integrated into broader PR objectives.
3. **Prioritize Community Engagement Through social media:** Given the low community engagement highlighted, companies should tailor social media campaigns to local

contexts by addressing community-specific concerns, showcasing CSR initiatives, and encouraging user-generated content. This will foster inclusivity and create stronger relationships between the companies and their host communities.

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QUESTIONNAIRE

Department of Mass Communication,
Faculty of Arts,
University of Benin,
Benin City,
Nigeria.

Dear Respondent,

REQUEST FOR COMPLETION OF ITEMS IN QUESTIONNAIRE

I am a final year student of the Department of Mass Communication of the above-mentioned institution, researching the topic: social media and public relations strategies of multinational products in Rivers State. This is my project work, and it is in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of a Bachelor of Arts (B.A) degree in Mass Communication.

You have been carefully selected to help respond to the items in the questionnaire. The responses you provide would be used for academic purposes and treated with utmost confidentiality in accordance with research ethics.

Thank you in anticipation of your time, understanding and cooperation.

Yours sincerely,
Nma Della Nweke
(*Researcher*)

QUESTIONNAIRE

Section A: Demographic Information

(Please tick ✓ where appropriate)

1. Gender: Male (☐) Female (☐) Prefer not to say (☐)
2. Age: 18–25 (☐) 26–35 (☐) 36–45 (☐) 46+ (☐)
3. Occupation: Company Employee (☐) Community Member (☐) Student (☐) Other (specify)

4. Educational Level: Secondary (☐) Diploma (☐) Undergraduate (☐) Postgraduate (☐)
5. Company/community you are associated with: Pabod Breweries (☐) Indorama (☐)

Section B: Psychographic Information

(Please tick ✓ where appropriate)

6. Which social media platforms of the company do you interact with most?
() Facebook () Twitter/X () Instagram () YouTube () LinkedIn () None
7. How often do you interact with the company's social media posts?
() Very often () Often () Occasionally () Rarely () Never
8. How effective is the company's use of social media in communicating with stakeholders?
() Very effective () Effective () Neutral () Ineffective () Very ineffective
9. The company's social media activities align with its broader PR strategies (CSR, community relations, brand promotion). () Strongly agree () Agree () Neutral () Disagree () Strongly disagree
10. The company responds promptly to questions or complaints raised on social media.
() Always () Often () Sometimes () Rarely () Never
11. Which PR activity is MOST supported by the company's social media?
() CSR () Crisis Management () Community Engagement () Customer Service () Brand Promotion
12. Social media has improved the company's transparency in dealing with the public.
() Strongly agree () Agree () Neutral () Disagree () Strongly disagree
13. How would you rate the role of social media in shaping the company's public image?
() Very high () High () Moderate () Low () Very low
14. Social media has made the company more accessible to its stakeholders.
() Strongly agree () Agree () Neutral () Disagree () Strongly disagree

15. Which of the following challenges does the company face most in using social media for PR? () Limited internet access () Negative online feedback () Lack of skilled personnel () High cost of managing platforms () Low community engagement () None
16. Which opportunities has social media created for the company's PR? (*Choose two most important*) () Faster communication () Wider audience reach () Improved stakeholder trust () Stronger community relations ☐ Enhanced brand visibility
17. Overall, the benefits of using social media for PR outweigh the challenges.
() Strongly agree () Agree () Neutral () Disagree () Strongly disagree
18. How satisfied are you with the company's social media engagement?
() Very satisfied () Satisfied () Neutral () Dissatisfied () Very dissatisfied