

**The Use of Social Media for Crisis Communication
during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Insights from Fast-
Moving Consumer Goods (FMCGs) Companies in
Nigeria**

Osundaja Ebenezer Osundare

Submitted to the
Institute of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
Communication and Media Studies

Eastern Mediterranean University
May 2022
Gazimağusa, North Cyprus

Approval of the Institute of Graduate Studies and Research

Prof. Dr. Ali Hakan Ulusoy
Director

I certify that this thesis satisfies all the requirements as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Communication and Media Studies.

Prof. Dr. Senih Çavuşoğlu
Dean, Faculty of Communication and
Media Studies

We certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate in scope and quality as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Communication and Media Studies.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ülfet Kutoğlu Kuruç
Supervisor

Examining Committee

1. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ülfet Kutoğlu Kuruç

2. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sevilay Ulaş

3. Asst. Prof. Dr. Baruck Okal Opiyo

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the use of social media platforms by five Nigerian FMCG companies for crisis communication and management during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study focused on how five companies used social media for external crisis communication with their consumers/clients during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. The study was anchored on the Situational Crisis Communication, Social-Mediated Crisis Communication (SMCC) Model and Media Dependency theoretical frameworks. Both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies were used to gather data using an online questionnaire to collect data from 122 employees from Corporate Communications, Public Relations, Administrative, and Human Resource departments of the selected five FMCG companies in Nigeria. Five interviews were conducted with the Heads of Department of the Public Relations in these companies to gain clarifications on the quantitative results.

The research findings show that a reasonable number of the surveyed FMCG companies (60%) had a crisis management plan, and the plans were implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the results indicated that these companies used social media for external crisis communication (with consumers) during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially when the pandemic started. These companies extensively used social media platforms (mainly Facebook, Instagram and Twitter) to share health tips on COVID-19, eliminate fake news and misinformation about the pandemic and to inform the public of their companies' contributions to vulnerable citizens affected by the lockdown during the pandemic. Facebook was the most frequently used social media platform for these communications during the

COVID-19 pandemic. Study concludes that social media offer both advantages and disadvantages for external crisis communication but the advantages outweigh the disadvantages. There exists a vital need for FMCG companies in Nigeria to have a plan for crisis situations, and use the merits of social media platforms for effective crisis managing.

Keywords: COVID-19 Pandemic, Social Media, Crisis Communication, Fast-Moving Consumer Goods, Nigeria, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram

ÖZ

Bu çalışma, Nijeryadaki beş Hızlı Tüketim Malları (FMCG) şirketinin COVID-19 pandemisi sırasında kriz iletişimi ve yönetimi açısından sosyal medya platformlarının kullanımını araştırmıştır. Çalışmada yer alan, FMCG şirketlerinin COVID-19 pandemisi sırasında paydaşlarıyla kriz iletişimi açısından sosyal medyayı nasıl kullandıklarına odaklanmıştır. Çalışma, Durumsal Kriz İletişim Teorisi (SCCT), Sosyal Aracılı Kriz İletişimi (SMCC) Modeli ve Medya Bağımlılığı Teorisi üzerine kurulmuştur. Bu çalışmada hem nicel hem de nitel araştırma metodolojileri kullanılmıştır. Nijerya'daki beş FMCG şirketinin kurumsal iletişim, halkla ilişkiler, idari ve insan kaynakları departmanlarından seçilen 122 çalışandan veri toplamak amacıyla çevrimiçi bir anket kullanılmıştır. Nicel sonuçlar hakkında açıklamalar elde etmek için de bu şirketlerin Halkla İlişkiler departmanlarının bölüm başkanlarıyla beş görüşme yapılmıştır.

Araştırma bulguları, ankete katılan Nijeryalı FMCG şirketlerinin makul bir kısmının (% 60) bir kriz yönetim planına sahip olduğunu ve planın COVID-19 pandemisi sırasında uygulandığını göstermiştir. Ayrıca, sonuçlar, seçilen FMCG şirketlerinin, özellikle pandeminin başında, kriz iletişimi (tüketicilerle) için sosyal medyayı kullandıklarını göstermiştir. Bu şirketler, COVID-19 pandemisi hakkında sağlıkla ilgili ipuçlarını paylaşmak, pandemi hakkındaki sahte haberleri ve yanlış bilgileri ortadan kaldırmak ve şirketlerinin pandemi sırasında karantinadan etkilenen savunmasız vatandaşlara katkıları hakkında kamuoyunu bilgilendirmek için sosyal medyayı özellikle de Facebook, Instagram ve Twitteri yoğun bir şekilde kullanmıştır. Facebook, COVID-19 pandemisi sırasında bu şirketlerin en çok kullandıkları sosyal medya platformu olmuştur. Sosyal medya, kriz iletişimi için hem avantaj hem de

dezavantajlar sunmakta; ancak avantajlar dezavantajlardan daha ağır basmaktadır. Nijeryalı FMCG şirketlerinin kriz durumlarında bir kriz planı uygulamaları ve krizi etkin bir şekilde yönetmek için sosyal medya platformlarının avantajlarından yararlanmaları hayati bir önem taşımaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: COVID-19 Pandemisi, Sosyal Medya, Kriz İletişimi, Hızlı Tüketim Malları, Nijerya, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram

DEDICATION

To my family:

My mother, Comfort Osundare

My siblings:

Osundokun Osundare

Osunpeju Faoye

My very good friend

Olanrewaju Akande

I do not know if this project could have been completed successfully without the thought of making you all proud and your support and encouragement kept me going. Thank you for believing in me even when I sometimes felt I had lost faith in myself.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I want to thank God for keeping me alive and protecting me throughout my years in a foreign land. I want to thank my supervisor, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ülfet Kutoğlu Kuruç for her assistance, patience, guidance, constant support, encouragement and corrections throughout the writing of the thesis. I also want to thank her for teaching Mass Communication and Society so well in the first year of my master's degree. This course gave a foundation for writing this thesis. Thank you for giving me enough knowledge to move to the next stage of my life. I am forever grateful to my family for their unwavering support, motivation, and encouragement. Thank you for the financial and emotional support throughout my program; I am sincerely thankful.

It is also important to appreciate the five Nigerian FMCG companies that contributed valuable data to the research. To the management and staff of PZ Cussons, Nestle Nigeria, Unilever Nigeria, Dangote Group, and Nigerian breweries, I sincerely appreciate your time and efforts in participating in this research. To my friends who contributed to my success in a way or the other, I am grateful to you all, and I wish you all the best of luck in life. This thesis will not have been a success without the constructive feedback from Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sevilay Ulaş and Asst. Prof. Dr. Baruck Opiyo. Thank you for taking time to read and offer valuable corrections that helped improve the thesis. To all my instructors who gave me background knowledge, pieces of advice, quality lectures and courses helpful in writing this thesis; I am grateful to you all.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 General Overview and Background of the Study

There is an evident rise in the number of crises in our world today. Crises can be defined as “unexpected and unpredicted events that come with reputational threats for companies” (Coombs, 2010, p. 20). In another definition, a crisis is a high consequence, low possibility incident that can threaten organizational productivity, legality, and viability (Shrivastava, 1987; Junhong & Ruth, 2010; Rubens, 2020). According to Rodriguez & Jantunen (2007), three rudiments make up the basic definition of crises: elements of shock, dangers to organizations and short period decision-making. As elicited by Coombs (2015), an occupational crisis occurs when an unforeseeable event threatens important shareholder expectations and has a substantial impact on a firm's performance and results in negative repercussions (Coombs, 2015). Crises have ample consequences for an organisation's internal and external stakeholders. If crises are not properly managed and curtailed by organizations, they may turn into a full-blown disaster that adversely affects every shareholder (Drennan *et al.*, 2015; Rubens, 2020).

Managing a crisis is of utmost importance when these sudden events happen. Crisis management is how an organization deals with significant events that pose harm and threats to the company, the public, or stakeholders. Crisis management means a company has a well-established system that can safeguard the organization and its stakeholders during a threat (Coombs, 2015; Chan, 2018). Crisis management deals

with dangers that have already happened (Hertati *et al.*, 2020). Proper management of a crisis by a firm positively portrays the company to stakeholders and the public (Derani, 2016). By properly managing crises, organizations can create a chance for dialogue and educate the public (Chan, 2018). Poor crisis management has the possibility of degenerating into misperception, resentment and damage a firm's reputation (Sellnow & Seeger, 2013). A well crisis response plan, response team, and communication techniques are needed to deal with these unforeseen occurrences.

Crisis communication is rooted in crisis management. Crisis communication can be defined as the gathering, handling, and using of info vital for tackling a crisis (Coombs, 2010; Fritzsche, 2012). All responses of an organization to an unexpected crisis can be regarded as crisis communication. Crisis communication is vital in achieving success in the management of the crisis. During a crisis, a firm should relate with every element of its organizational chain, be it the general public, stakeholders, consumers, employees, contractors, investors (Daszak *et al.*, 2020; Hertati, 2015). Crisis communication is needed whenever organizations are caught in situations such as an industrial accident or fire, an employee caught in illegal acts, natural disasters, and pandemics (Salminen, 2017). In order to maintain the firm's reputation and prevent bad media attention, crisis communication focuses on media relations and other external stakeholders (Heide & Simonsson, 2020). "How a firm communicates during and after a crisis can significantly aggravate or alleviate the magnitudes of a calamity" (Ulmer, Seeger & Sellnow, 2007, p. 5).

The advent of digital communications has complicated the management and communication of crises all over the world (Veil, Buehner, & Palenchar, 2011). Social media is a potent online reputation management tool which permits two-way communication. Social media is described as a "many-to-many" channel of

communication instead of the traditional media that offers “one-to-many” communication (Ki & Nekmat, 2014). According to Landau (2011), immediacy, accessibility, and universality are three of social media's dominant traits. The number of social media subscribers is fast increasing at a pace of twenty percent each year (Appel *et al.*, 2020). As of January 2022, there are 4.65 billion social media users with 2.91 billion Facebook users, 436 million Twitter users, 1.478 billion Instagram users, 2 Billion WhatsApp users (Statista, 2022). Many firms have social media presence on most of the widely used social media platforms that abound on the Internet (Anttila, 2014). This social media presence translates to corporate communication and relations between these companies and their shareholders on this modern communication platform (Fritzsche, 2012).

Social media platforms have become an essential channels that companies use in communicating with their consumers during crises (Mamic & Almaraz, 2013; Richey *et al.*, 2016). Social media platforms present organizations with new potentials and risks than orthodox media in crisis communication and management (Jensen, 2014). The rapid pace and the user-centred nature of social media platforms present rare challenges to the accurate and efficient implementation of crisis management strategies (Ki & Nekmat, 2014; Zhu *et al.*, 2017). According to research, social media platforms can be beneficial when managing crises by facilitating quick and effective dissemination of information (Heverin & Zach, 2010; Harman, 2011; Hand & Ching, 2011; Jin, Liu, & Austin, 2011). Educating the general populace on risks, instituting an avenue for an open online discussion and fostering noticeable support of a company or cause are approaches of employing social media during crises (Chan, 2018).

Yearly, companies face disrupting incidents that hinder their production and management plans. According to Waldman (2019), around four hundred natural

disasters and forty armed battles occur worldwide annually. These disruptive events stimulate organizations to reformulate their management plans to alleviate the adverse impacts of these occurrences and utilize the presented prospects (Morrish & Jones, 2019; Hoekstra & Leeftang, 2020). All around the world, social and economic turmoil have resulted from the current COVID-19 pandemic. On December 2019, the first new strain of the Coronavirus was confirmed in Wuhan, China. Within China, the virus spread quickly and then moved to neighbouring countries. On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) proclaimed COVID-19 a pandemic (World Health Organization, 2020). A year and a few months after the declaration by WHO, the world has witnessed a surge in the number of infected people, with over 177,000,000 registered cases and 3,000,000 deaths globally (WHO, 2021). Individuals, companies, governments were affected as they could not implement and execute their initial plans (Park, 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic poses a serious health catastrophe globally. COVID-19 pandemic is the severest crisis the world has faced since World War II, according to UN Secretary-General (Lederer, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic impacted societal relationships, assemblies, external trade, international interactions, and worldwide businesses. Many organizations faced extreme disturbances in their operations due to the pandemic, and it came with severe economic impacts. Many companies witnessed an organizational crisis due to this health disaster. Moreover, preventive measures such as lockdowns, long-term quarantine, and interruption of private and public undertakings had a vast and unfavourable effect on total demand, particularly on exports and consumption (Shen *et al.*, 2020; Kartikawangi & Dahesihsari, 2020). Furthermore, these measures interrupted international supply chains of services and goods. Small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) suffered the impact of the decline

in imported goods demand (Schleicher, 2020; Sheth, 2020). Some companies were left with no choice but to shut down totally or operate at a decreased capacity. Other organizations increased their workload to sustain public support for the health sector and everyday goods (Czypionka *et al.*, 2020).

One of Nigeria's most important industrial sectors is Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG). Companies that trade low-cost products in continual high demand, such as food and beverages, pharmaceuticals, personal and home, primarily typify the FMCG sector (Kabuoh *et al.*, 2020). These are products that generate a quick income at a low cost (KPMG, 2016). The FMCG sector is also recognized as the consumer-packaged goods sector. The FMCG sector is the core for economic development and growth in developing countries like Nigeria. In 2019, the Nigerian Stock Exchange's (NSE) market capitalization highlighted that the FMCGs sector constituted 17% of the total equity value on the NSE (KPMG, 2020). The FMCG sector also contributes to a rise in capital savings, employment, and poverty mitigation (Binuyo, Ekpe & Binuyo, 2019). Due of the COVID-19 pandemic, the FMCGs suffered a variety of economic difficulties. Crisis management strategies are necessary for FMCGs firms to keep their operations functioning in the face of economic difficulties (Suh & Lee, 2018; Buul & Omundi, 2017).

Suh & Lee (2018) argued that, manufacturers need to admit that their reaction to the novel COVID-19 pandemic will substantially affect their business. Companies should use resilient plans to manage and carry on with operations during disruptive occasions such as the novel pandemics. According to American Productivity & Quality Center (APQC), when facing these extraordinary challenges, companies need to make changes to enhance their internal and external performance. These modifications can be in modifying their business continuity strategies, downsizing, and changing policies

and strategies to oversee the workforce (APQC, 2020). Thus, a deep understanding of crisis management and communication is vital to implement changes effectively and curtail the adverse effects of such modifications (Shin, Taylor & Seo, 2012; Oreg, Bartunek, Lee, & Do, 2018). Moreover, FMCG companies should be more active and receptive to consumer needs. One of the means of accomplishing this is through clear communication between companies and their target market. This approach will give companies a smooth ride through the crisis (KPMG, 2020). In order to keep the public informed and involved during times of crisis, an organisation must figure out the best ways to connect with their consumers (Werliin & Kokholm, 2016; Hoekstra & Leeflang, 2020).

The adoption of social media to manage and combat crises has become a novel global sensation. In the face of ambiguity during catastrophic crises, many individuals turn to social networking sites to retrieve efficient information about the disaster regions and disseminate information to support people who are injured. Moreover, governments and corporate organizations also employ social media to monitor the crisis circumstances, update people as per crisis status, limit the spread of misinformation, respond to questions of victims' families, and direct donations to the causalities. (Donthu & Gustafsson, 2020; APQC, 2020) Social media presents both unprecedented challenges and prospects for companies regarding crisis communication (Lucinda & Jin, 2017). "Companies are left with no alternative but to integrate social media into crisis management. Choosing how to do it is the only option" say Jin, Liu & Austin (2014, p. 9).

Social media has played prominent roles in many natural disasters recently, such as the China earthquakes (Li, 2014; Boas *et al.*, 2020), Australian bushfires in 2009 (Close, Berselli & Burger, 2012), earthquake and nuclear disaster in Japan (Jung,

2012), and the 2011 Thailand flood which lasted several months (Kaewkitipong, Chen & Ractham, 2012). Moreover, the world has also witnessed some organizational crises that shook companies. Examples are The B.P. Oil Spill in 2006 at the Gulf of Mexico that caused massive ecological pollution (Ye & Ki, 2014). Other examples include the Costa Concordia calamity in Italy in 2012 that saw thirty-two people murdered (Alexander, 2012); the Sony data theft in 2011 where the credit card particulars of hundreds of hundreds of clients were snooped out (Olaniran *et al.*, 2014); and the product retraction of Toyota because of security problems concerning the gas wheels in 2011 (Cole, 2011).

Companies are usually incapable of preventing crises from happening. Still, they can discover the crisis early and employ managing approaches to reduce the threats (Obrenovic *et al.*, 2020). Organizations' response to crises (crisis management and communication) becomes vital to prevent significant image loss and boost customers' retention (Coombs & Holladay, 2012; Fritzsche, 2012). Using social media as a communication platform for crisis communication and management has drawn substantial attention from several academics (e.g. Cole, 2011; Jung, 2012; Ye, 2014; Li, 2014). Despite the collection of extensive research that underlines the essential role of social media in crisis communication and management, limited efforts have been made to companies' use of social media in crisis communication. Moreover, no single research has examined the role of social media in crisis communication and management during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in the Nigerian FMCG sector context. In addition, research on the use of social media to communicate crisis during crisis management is still growing and requires further examination. Thus, this research aims to address the use of social media platforms by selected FMCG

companies in Nigeria for communication of crisis and its management during the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.2 Problem Statement

Crises are inevitable for organizations, but the question remains “when and how will they occur”? Despite the unavailability of organizational crises, many companies do not have what it takes to tackle these sudden events, as they have no crisis management plans (Adkins, Thornton & Blake, 2009). Crisis can deter everyday administrative functions and inhibit companies from achieving their primary objectives. Crises have tremendous consequences for the internal and external stakeholders of an organization. If crises are not adequately managed and curtailed by organizations, they may turn into a full-blown disaster that adversely affects every shareholder (Drennan *et al.*, 2015; Rubens, 2020). Thus, corporations need to safeguard themselves against the interfering forces of a crisis through proper crisis management and communication. A robust crisis management plan helps organizations to avert initial crises occurrence and pull through quickly from those crises that have happened with less damaging impacts on their competitive status (Herbane, 2010).

Employing social media channels for crisis communication and management has challenged companies in numerous ways. Firstly, the dual communication of social media means that consumers are no longer unreceptive recipients of news from conventional media. Instead, these users can actively generate contents that can affect the company negatively (Sung & Hwang, 2014; Gruber *et al.*, 2015). In addition, social media has accelerated the spread of rumours and fake news through its free access to content creation by stakeholders (Park *et al.*, 2012; Oh, Agrawal & Rao, 2013). In addition, consumers (stakeholders) can observe an organization’s reaction to a crisis

with social media platforms. This can influence shareholders' behavioural intention and, subsequently, the reputation of the company (Xia, 2013; Floredu, Cabiddu & Evaristo, 2014). Hence, due to these challenges posed by social media, organizations need to understand the manner and mode of communication during a crisis.

Many companies have embraced social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn for transmission of messages and communication with the public. However, there is a concern as many companies use social media as mere advertising and marketing tools for their businesses. Research suggests that most companies do not yet fully comprehend the usage of social media for crisis communication despite the advantages and drawbacks of social media use during a crisis (Bailey, 2013; Ott & Theunissen, 2015). This deficiency in understanding is dangerous for these companies. It can lead to mismanagement of a crisis and threaten an organization's competitive advantage. This problem might be due to the lack of knowledge of how social media can be employed in crisis and management communication. Based on research, no study has investigated the use of social media platforms for crisis communication and management in Nigerian industries, especially in the context of Nigerian FMCG sector. This research will fill the space by analyzing how five FMCGs in the Nigerian market use social media platforms for crisis management and communication during the Coronavirus pandemic.

1.3 Aim of the Study

This study aims to address how five Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCGs) companies in Nigeria used social media platforms for crisis communication and management during the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.4 Research Objectives

The specific objectives of the research are to:

- i. ascertain the availability and implementation of crisis communication plans by Nigerian FMCG companies during the COVID-19 crisis.
- ii. find out the extent in which these companies use social media for external crisis communication with their consumers during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- iii. identify the merits and demerits of using social media as a communication tool during the COVID-19 crisis for these companies.
- iv. identify the most effective platform of social media that these companies used in reaching their targeted consumers during the COVID-19 crisis.
- v. ascertain the importance of using social media as a monitoring tool for crisis by these companies during the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.5 Research Questions

The research questions of this research are as follows:

- i. Do selected FMCG companies in Nigeria have crisis management plans?
- ii. How did the selected Nigerian FMCG companies communicate with their consumers (public) on social media platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- iii. What are the benefits and shortcomings of employing social media platforms as a communication tool for FMCG organizations during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- iv. What is the most efficient platform of social media that selected Nigerian FMCG companies used in communicating with their targeted audience during the COVID-19 pandemic?

- v. Is it important for selected Nigerian FMCG companies to monitor and evaluate social media during the COVID-19 pandemic?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This research is of paramount importance in different ways. It presents theoretical and practical consequences for academicians and PR (Public Relations) experts. Firstly, this study contributes to bridging the knowledge gap connected with social media usage in crisis communication among FMCG companies in Nigeria. Since social media is a novel communication system, this study will provide valuable insights into the organizational use of social media platforms for crisis communication. This will be a response to current demands for quantitative studies in the field.

The study strengthens the call for organizations to have crisis management plans before a crisis occur. As many companies use social media for profit-making and competitive edge, this research points out the importance of using social media as a crisis management and communication tool. The supplementary knowledge presented in this research effort may help companies formulate programmes and policies that will aid crisis management. Moreover, findings from the study may function as a facilitator for replica studies. It is believed that a better perception of crisis management will allow companies' directors and superior managers to design and enact appropriate tools and intervention models. Lastly, this study crucially evaluates the potentials and risks social media holds for crisis communication and offers actionable recommendations for FMCG companies when facing a crisis.

1.7 Assumptions

Two assumptions were made in this study. The first was that those who took the time to complete the survey did so in an open and honest manner, drawing on only their own experiences and knowledge when answering the questions. Secondly, it was

assumed that all interviews would be conducted online and studied in detail after they were conducted.

1.8 Scope of the Study

This study examines how Nigerian FMCG companies used social media channels to communicate and handle the COVID-19 pandemic. The study is built on Coombs's (1995) Situational Crisis Communication Theory, the Social-Mediated Crisis Communication (SMCC) Model (Austin *et al.*, 2012) and Media Dependency Theory. It employs both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Five Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCGs) companies in Nigeria that were deeply hit by the Coronavirus pandemic are selected for the study via an Internet search. Online questionnaires and online interviews are used as data collection tools from employees in Corporate Communications, Public Relations, Administrative, and Human Resource departments of these companies. The survey and interview questions are tailored to how these companies used social media platforms to communicate with their target audience (consumers) during the pandemic.

1.9 Limitation of the Study

As this research has its advantages, it is hit by some setbacks. Firstly, the crisis communication of this study will only be focused on the consumers. Other segments of the business modules such as employees, investors, suppliers, regulators, government agencies will not be included in the research. This is delimiting in its essence as these stakeholders are of high importance to companies. Moreover, one of the study's most significant drawbacks is the lack of sufficient time. The research was done over a limited period of time (one month). Furthermore, there are different approaches to crisis management using social media. This study will only use the triangulation approach (i.e., both qualitative and quantitative methods). Other

approaches such as content analysis, document analysis, artefact analysis are not considered. The final limitation of the study is that it focuses only on five companies in Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) only. This sample size is a limitation itself. Moreover, the sectors such as aviation, oil and gas, and education which are greatly affected by the Coronavirus pandemic were not considered in the study.

1.10 Definition of Key Terms

The following terms are used in the thesis:

Crisis: A crisis can be defined as an unexpected and unpredicted event that comes with reputational threats for companies (Rubens, 2020).

COVID-19: Also known as Coronavirus, it is a respiratory tract disease that occurs due to acute severe respiratory syndrome from the coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2).

Crisis management: Crisis management is how an organization deals with significant events that pose harm and threats to the company, the general public, or stakeholders. (Coombs, 2015; Chan, 2018).

Crisis communication: Crisis communication is defined as the gathering, handling, and propagating info vital for tackling a crisis (Coombs, 2010; Fritzsche, 2012).

Stakeholders: Also known as shareholders, these are individuals or general public or group affected by the operations of an organization's or those that can affect a company's performance or achievement of its objectives (Chan, 2018). Stakeholders include investors, governments, suppliers, political groups, employees, trade associations, customers and communities (Park, 2021). In this study, stakeholders are used in the context of consumers (those that communicate with organizations in two-way communication on social media platforms).

Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCGs): The Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) are companies that trade low-cost products in continual high demand, such as pharmaceuticals, food and beverages, home and personal care (Kabuoh *et al.*, 2020).

Social media: The term "social media" refers to a collection of web-based apps that are built on the conceptual and scientific underpinnings of Web 2.0 and enable the production and sharing of User Generated Content (UGC) (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Facebook: Facebook is an online social media platform that provides users to establish profiles, publish information about themselves such as images and comments, and respond to other users' postings (Smith, Fischer & Yongjian, 2012). As of September 2021, there is an estimated 2.91 billion Facebook users (Statista, 2021).

Twitter: Twitter is a free social networking website that enables certified members to disseminate concise messages known as tweets (Sensis, 2015). It started in 2006 and gained worldwide popularity, with 186 million monthly active users in 2021 (Statista, 2021).

Instagram: Instagram is a platform for picture sharing and social interaction. Members may post photographs and short clips with their connections. It was acquired by Facebook in 2017 and has 1.074 billion users (Statista, 2021).

1.11 Organization of the Study

This research is divided into five chapters. The first chapter serves as an introduction to the study. It includes a background to the study, a problem statement, the study's purpose, objectives, research questions, the study's significance and scope, as well as the study's delimitations and limits. Chapter two evaluates the literature review in light of the study's objectives, theoretical and conceptual frameworks. The third chapter discusses the study's research methodology. The chapter discusses the research design, target population, sample size and sampling process, data collecting

procedure, data analysis techniques, and ethical considerations. The fourth chapter discusses data analysis, presentation of quantitative and qualitative results and discussions. Chapter 5 concludes the study by providing a summary, conclusion, and suggestions. Finally, insights for future research are included.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter examines the literature on crises, crisis management, crisis communication, and the use of social media in crisis management and communication. Effective crisis management includes averting crises, preparing for potential crises, recognising and responding to crises, and analysing crisis actions and stakeholders' perceptions once the crisis is over (Coombs, 2014). There is little or no literature assessment on crisis communication and management in the Nigerian context. As a result, the majority of the literature evaluated comes from different nations throughout the world.

The chapter introduces the concepts of crises, types of crises, crisis typology, crisis characteristics and COVID-19 as a health crisis. The chapter then goes to great length about crisis communication and management. In addition, the importance of social media and its many platforms for crisis communication was also addressed. The Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCGs) sector is also given consideration. In addition, the chapter provides case studies of previous organizational crises and how social media played a role in their communication and management procedures. The study's theoretical foundations are explored in the last section of the chapter.

2.1 Literature Review Methodology

Many platforms were contacted for a complete literature review to give a comprehensive literature assessment. The majority of the materials utilized in the research were found using Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, Taylor and Francis,

Sagepubs and Emeraldinsight as resources. Catchphrases including "crisis," "crisis communication," "social media", "COVID-19", "Health crisis", and "crisis management" were used in the early search. The relevance of the abstracts to the research was first determined. The study was chosen and documented based on the significance of the setting and search terms.

According to Google Scholar search results, 101 articles were downloaded in total. Emerald Insight also ran a search using these keywords and found 19 articles related to the conversation. Other platforms (Sagepubs, ScienceDirect, Taylor and Francis) provided 37 articles in total. These databases were used to download a total of 157 publications. The acceptable publications were chosen based on the authors' definitions, explanations, theories, and frameworks. A total of 41 papers were scrutinized and used as literature reviews for case studies. Full text, scholarly (peer-reviewed) publications and dissertations were the only sources of information. They only included articles written in the English language. Furthermore, the publications used for case studies were restricted to studies published between 2011 and 2021.

2.2 Overview of Crises

The term "crisis" is misused and repeated informally outside of academic circles. People may refer to a crisis as a personal crisis, a financial crisis, an economic crisis, or a crisis inside a company or organisation. The organizational crisis seems to garner much attention from the academic world from all these types of crises. Many authors have given different definitions for an organizational crisis (Zaremba, 2010; Ulmer *et al.*, 2015). Early scholars such as Hermann (1963) defined an organizational crisis as a perturbing event typified an ingredient of shock, causing threats and necessitating a rapid response. It has an unforeseen occurrence and cones great intensity. It produces endangering situations for a business and adversely influences a

company and its shareholders. A crisis, on the other hand, is of the highest relevance and requires an immediate reaction.

There are five common characteristics of an organisational crisis that have been identified by McCoy (2014) and Ulmer *et al.* (2015). To begin with, a crisis within a company is unforeseeable. The magnitude and timeframe of a crisis cannot be predicted, despite the fact that certain crises may be foreseen and prepared for by organisations. In the same way, a crisis may have the capacity to overwhelm any crisis management plan. To put it another way, there is a disruption of daily life during a crisis. As a result, crises are distinct from regular organisational issues in that they necessitate a wide range of non-routine techniques to deal with.

The third component is that a crisis can create remarkable uncertainty for both stakeholders and the management. The sources and effects of an organizational crisis cannot be known without suitable examination. The fourth feature is that crisis is a threat that has the ability to tarnish the reputation of an organization, work operations and even completely destroy a company. A crisis can, despite its negative impact, provide an organisation with opportunities to learn, make tactical adjustments, and improve its operations (McCoy, 2014; Ulmer *et al.*, 2015).

Coombs (2014) gave one of the most widely accepted definitions of crisis that has been adopted by different studies. When an unexpected incident has a significant impact on the perceived interest that stakeholders have in a company, an organisation is said to be experiencing a crisis, according to this definition. Because it is perpetual, corporations must address incidents that are identified as crises by shareholders. The stakeholder's expectations would be harmed if the issue were not addressed. Mismanagement of a crisis may have long-term negative effects on an organization's credibility, image, and ability to function.

Summarily, the crisis definition given by Coombs (2014) covers two key arguments. Firstly, a crisis is unpredictable but not unforeseen. Organizations know that crises will ultimately happen, but the timing is unknown. A crisis can suddenly affect an organization; therefore, they have an element of unpredictability. Secondly, a crisis breaks stakeholders' expectancies about the actions and reactions of organizations and subsequently threatens the relationship between businesses and stakeholders and the reputation of the company.

2.2.1 Types of Crisis

There are many possible types of a crisis based on different definitions of crisis. Crisis management researchers have developed several perceptions on types of crisis. Differentiating between numerous types of crises is essential because the requirements for efficient crisis management is dependent on the crisis type (Kent, 2010). According to Coombs & Holladay (2002), crisis type is the framework that people use to understand an occurrence. Pauchant & Mitroff (1992) categorize crisis types in terms of their fundamental causes into seven groups, namely: break cluster, external economic confrontations, external information attack, psycho group, mega damage, perceptual crises, and work-related health diseases.

In Gundel (2005), four types of crises are identified, namely: ad-hoc, unanticipated, conventional, and fundamental. Conventional crises may be predicted in advance and their effects on other elements are well-known; as a result, their likelihood and preventative actions are well-known. There may be a lack of preparedness for unanticipated crises since they occur seldom. It is possible to predict intractable problems but the response may be at odds with other advantages and some harm may be permanent. In this case, organisations should focus on detecting the faulty system and preparing for a potential incident. Fundamental crises pose the

greatest threat since they are unpredictable and cannot be anticipated. The 9/11 terrorist act is a prime illustration.

A crisis might be created by either internal or external components, and crises could be unexpected or planned before the emergence of social media (Lerbinger, 1997; Capozzi & Rucci, 2013; Ulmer *et al.*, 2015). Internal crises are instigated by seeming deliberate actions and administration failures that may befall as a result of maladministration, fraud or misbehaviour and affected a company's values (Capozzi & Rucci, 2013). Internal crises, according to Ulmer *et al.* (2015), include the following: sabotage, workplace violence, substandard risk management, bad employee relations, corrupt administration, and aggressive takeovers, among others.

Internal sabotage is the purposeful destruction caused by an internal stakeholder. Workplace violence refers to employees who engage in more aggressive behaviour in response to what they view as unjust treatment from their bosses. Employee dissatisfaction is a direct result of a lack of confidence between workers and management, which in turn hurts the company's reputation. Failure to respond swiftly and effectively in the face of a possible danger to an organisation's existence constitutes an inadequate risk mitigation. Hostile takeovers, for example, are not supported by the present administration. In situations where a company's leadership is at the root of a crisis, it is deemed unethical leadership crisis. It is the most severe crises to an organisation and the most challenging to recover from (Ulmer *et al.*, 2015).

Internal crises are more often than not seen as deliberate, whereas external crises are more often than not seen as unexpected. Pandemics, natural disasters, economic downturns, and technical mishaps all fall under the category of external or conventional crises. An external crisis is one that the company's board has no way of predicting or containing. With meticulous preparation and rigorous safety

regulations in place, even the most well-respected companies may be affected by unexpected events outside their control (Ulmer *et al.*, 2015). Lerbinger (2012) opined that these classes of crises could overlap. For instance, an external crisis in the form of a technological failure may be the result of maladministration, which is internal.

Booth (1993) divided crises into three categories: acute crises, creeping crises, and long-term crises. An acute crisis is the typical view of a crisis, which is a sudden, unexpected incident (e.g. tremor). In most circumstances, when an acute crisis leads to misunderstanding in the crisis centre and area of hit, it creates a great extent of inventiveness in the reaction to the crisis (Boin *et al.*, 2005). A creeping crisis is the second category of crisis. In creeping crises, there is a gradual build-up of vulnerable pressures and conditions over a period. A typical example of a creeping crisis is global warming. Most times, creeping crises are often unrecognized or discarded in their initial phases, and thus they have a tendency to produce a 'business as usual' reaction. A chronic/long-term crisis is the third category, and this type of crisis can linger for a long period of days (Parsons, 1996). Crises that persist for a long period can exhibit both slow creeping and rapid onset. They are referred to be chronic since there is no end in sight to them.

Lerbinger (1997) classified seven categories of crises into three clusters, namely: physical crises like technological crises and natural disasters; human-oriented crises such as conflicts and fights; and management failure crises such as biased management values, dishonesty and management misbehaviour. Coombs (2011) blended the crisis typologies proposed by Pauchant & Mitroff (1992) and Lerbinger (1997) into one main comprehensive typology shown in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Typology for Crisis Type (Adapted from Coombs, 2011, p. 23).

No	Crisis	Description
1	Natural disasters	An organisation is harmed by natural occurrences such as pandemics, tornadoes, earthquakes, hurricanes, floods, and storms.
2	Rumours	False or damaging information is spread about a business or its products with the intent of harming the business or its customers.
3	Workplace violence	Current or former worker attacks other workers at the workplace.
4	Product tampering /Malevolence	External individuals attack the company using dangerous strategies such as cyber hacking, product tampering, terrorism.
5	Challenges	Dissatisfied shareholders assert that the organisation is functioning improperly.
6	Technical-error accidents	The organisation's technology fails and leads to workplace fatalities.
7	Technical-error product damage	A flaw or possibly dangerous product is produced as a result of a piece of equipment or technologies that the organisation has employed or provided.
8	Human-error accidents	An accident is caused by a human error.
9	Human-error product harm	A faulty or potentially hazardous product is the consequence of a mistake made by a human.

10	Organizational errors with no injuries	Administration engages in activities that may put stakeholders at risk or intentionally defy the constitution.
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Furthermore, Coombs (2014) offered the most contemporary method of classifying a crisis, and this is based on its relationship with “welfare and public safety”. Thus, its management can be based on traditional public relations practices or social media-based that poses threats to organizational reputation. There are two types of crises: conventional and social media. Concerns for the safety and well-being of the public, as well as disputes with governmental activities, are typical of conventional crises. Conventional crises spawned the development of crisis management strategies (Coombs, 2014). However, a social media crisis, on the other hand, occurs because of the communication offered by social media platforms. If a company's public image is damaged, then this type of crisis can be just as damaging as other types of crises.

The term "Internet crisis potential" was used by Conway *et al.* (2007) to describe social media crises. In the view of these scholars, crises are caused by stakeholders' worries about the firm's ideals and social responsibilities, as well as characteristics of the Internet that permit shareholders to voice their opinions. Additionally, Coombs (2014) classified social media crises into three categories, including consumer dissatisfaction, organisational misuse, and impediments. In the context of social media, the term "organisational misuse" refers to statements that deviate from the norms of appropriate communication (Chung, 2014). Coombs (2014) asserts that social media crises involving irate consumers are basically customer service issues.

Finally yet importantly, challenges arise when shareholders believe a business is operating recklessly or inappropriately, or when standards are established that might lead to such behaviour. When expectations are not met, consumers take matters into their own hands. They aim to tarnish an organization's reputation by enabling a crisis. There are three basic categories of crises: organic, malignant, and exposé (Coombs, 2014). When the earlier actions of an organisation are no longer seen tolerable by shareholders owing to a shift in consumer expectations, this is known as an organic crisis. Integrating stakeholder values into corporate practises is one goal of organic crises. When stakeholders notice that a company's actions do not match its words, this is known as an "exposé crisis." An example is a corporation that promotes itself as environmentally friendly but yet engaging in gas flaring as a method of waste disposal. To sum things up, a malignant crisis is one in which stockholders desire to portray a corporation as a body that has to be fixed. Activist shareholders that have a long-standing dispute with a corporation are the most likely to raise this issue (Coombs, 2014; Chung, 2014).

2.2.2 Stages of a Crisis

Fink (2002) says that a crisis goes through four stages: prodromal, acute, chronic, and resolution. The caution stage is the initial phase. If a problem is foreseen in advance, it is considerably easier to handle. Contrarily, if a crisis appears unexpectedly and cannot be recognized before its occurrence, thus it is difficult to control. The second stage is the acute stage, whereby the crisis has occurred, and its prevention is at the point of no return. A crisis may have some impact, even if it can't be controlled. Despite this, Intensity and rapidity are the two most distinguishing features of the crisis at this point. The third stage is the chronic stage that is also known as the clean-up stage. This stage is a phase of reclamation and self-analysis. Additional

crisis management preparation frequently happens in this crisis stage. Lastly, the last phase is the crisis resolution stage, and this phase gives the possibility of turning the crisis into a prospect. The classification of crisis stages given by Coombs & Holladay (2012) has three distinct stages, namely, the pre-crisis, the acute-crisis and the post-crisis stages.

a) Pre-Crisis Stage

Upon the discovery of a crisis, there would be awareness and alert messages to necessary authorities by the person who discovered the crisis. Typically, the crisis is only internally known and without the initial knowledge of the public. Then, the concerned parties bear the responsibility of investigating the situation and deciding whether it has the possibility of degenerating into a critical threat (Coombs & Holladay, 2012). If it is assumed the situation is not serious, therefore, no measure is needed. As a result, steps will be taken if the crisis has the potential to become out of hand. Taking responsibility of the problem and preventing it from worsening are the company's responsibilities when this is brought to their attention. If this is done appropriately, the crisis shifts from a destructive to a progressive direction.

Prevention in the pre-crisis stage entails reducing identified threats that might result to a crisis. This is an element of a company's risk management plan. Developing the crisis management plan, choosing and training the crisis management team, and performing simulations to evaluate the crisis management plan and team are all components of the preparation process. When companies have a crisis management plan that is reviewed at least yearly and a crisis management team, they can effectively manage crises. Companies should test their crisis management plans and teams at least once a year and prepare some crisis messages in advance to ensure that they are prepared in the event of a crisis.

b) Acute-Crisis Stage

When a crisis is recognised and noticeable outside the boundaries of a single firm, it has entered the acute stage of crisis management. Crises at the acute stage have no solution other than addressing the root cause of the crisis. This phase does not permit preventative measures, but its major concern is reducing damages. A crisis management team is required at this point to deal with the situation. Persons with experience and expertise in crisis management form cross-functional crisis management teams (Coombs & Holladay, 2012). At this stage, the personnel of the crisis management team are also making use of the emergency mass messaging system for their organisation, whether it be a local company or an industrial corporation, in order to inform their external stakeholders about the crisis. A natural disaster like the COVID-19 pandemic usually necessitates this step after prior crisis management tactics have failed (Chung, 2014). Companies benefit from having a crisis plan in place during this stage of the crisis. It is also necessary to make certain that all staff receive information and announcements of relevance and, in the best circumstances, that the productivity of the organisation can be maintained.

During the acute phase of a crisis, it is very vital to have clear and concise communication to guarantee that all affected parties are informed of the situation and given all of the pertinent instructions. At this phase of crisis, emergency personnel are also requested to arrive at the location of the incident. As the crisis moves closer to being resolved, the primary focus of communication should switch to giving relevant external stakeholders with frequent updates, changing earlier directives, suppressing rumours, and consulting with management and response teams.

c) Post-Crisis Stage

The post-crisis stage begins after the crisis has passed the acute-crisis stage and has been managed. All-clear signals and reassuring communications are used at this point to demonstrate the community, shareholders, and consumers the consequences of the crisis. During the post-crisis period, the organization's main objectives are to recover losses, assess the crisis management system's effectiveness, and identify required adjustments. Post-crisis therapy is also a part of this stage of communication (Coombs & Holladay, 2012). When a crisis has passed, it is necessary to do an evaluation: which strategies have proved effective? How can a company better prepare for potential crisis, and what is the next line of action? This assessment is extremely important to the company's long-term performance. Regarding communications, this implies that staff must be notified of any potential changes (Argenti, 2002). Concurrently, it is necessary to gather the diverse experiences of the personnel and obtain more insights. Hence, engagement with the employees is crucial throughout this time. In this sense, the crisis may lead to significant reforms and progress (Chung, 2014).

It can be seen that in the post-crisis stage, the company resumes normal operations. The crisis is no longer the company's primary focus, but it still demands monitoring. As mentioned before, image restoration may be maintained or commenced at this stage. There is a need for crucial follow-up communications. Moreover, during a crisis, companies often pledge to offer further information. In the post-crisis stage, companies and the crisis managers must fulfil their informational commitments or potentially lose their public's credibility. In addition, the company must provide updates on the recovery phase, remedial measures, and crisis probes. The extent of

expected follow-up communications relies on the amount of information pledged during the crisis and the duration of the recovery journey.

2.2.3 Characteristics of Crisis

Every crisis comes with its uniqueness. Each has its own underlying causes, consequences, rhythm, period, and unknowns (Boin *et al.*, 2005). However, according to many scholars, all crises share some common characteristics. These characteristics include unforeseen threats, uncertainty, high level of worry on policy-makers, the supposition that vital and instant verdicts need to be taken under the duress and presence of inadequate info, the probability of violence, time constraint and a stressful environment (Boin *et al.*, 2005; McConnell & Drennan, 2006; Zdziarski, Dunkel & Rollo, 2007). Since crises occur unexpectedly, it endangers stakeholders' interests and leads to many hesitations, and it is occasionally considered a terrifying problem to deal with (Gilbert & Lauren, 1980).

The fundamental foundation of an organization, as well as fundamental human needs (such as well-being, occupational health and safety), are jeopardised by crises (Mitroff, 2001; Boin *et al.*, 2005). A crisis's sense of impossibility and complete lack of forewarning causes a great deal of distress (Schneider, 1995). Today's crises are increasingly incomprehensible in a world of deregulatory policies, globalisation, information and communication technology, viral mutation, and other forms of hyper-terrorism, to name a few trends (Lagadec & Carli, 2005). The current state of affairs is becoming more complex as the type of challenges has evolved to become universal (Rosenthal *et al.* 2001). Because a crisis in one country may swiftly spread to other countries, it is no longer restricted to the initial location (Boin & Hart, 2003).

A moment of unpredictability in which a significant shift is on the horizon might be described as a crisis. According to Rosenthal (1998), crises are not

occurrences that can be accurately specified in place or time. Instead, a wide range of legislative, socioeconomic, and organizational operations must be interrupted during lengthy periods of high instability, high risk, and high philosophy (Rosenthal, 1998). In addition to disrupting and frightening executive bodies' everyday operations and routine organisational tasks, crises have a dampening effect on the public (Laufer, 2007). When a government's capacity to handle a crisis using its own workforce is inadequate, it is a critical situation (Ozerdem & Jacoby, 2006). Furthermore, a crisis scenario is capable of posing significant difficulties and can be managed using dynamic or second-order knowledge and procedures rather than regular or prescribed answers (Turner, 1994).

Political, institutional, temporal, informational, and problem complexity all fall under the umbrella of crisis complication. Natural catastrophes, especially, often turn political because of their impact on both the people involved in the political structure and the structure itself, which is referred to as "political complexity" (Olson, 2000). It is important for political opponents, administrations, and a wide variety of social institutions including the media to focus on crises. The interests of a wide range of players and stakeholders might be adversely affected by crises (Stern, 2000). As a result, the political diversity of crises is critical. Many people and organisations are drawn into crises at different times, from different perspectives, and with differing motives because of institutional complexity. This is due to the fact that they have divergent points of view due to the fact that their roles, responsibilities, geographical locations, educational backgrounds, and other aspects of their administrative and political backgrounds differ (Stern, 2000).

Synchronic and diachronic views of the temporal problem are both possible. From the diachronic point of view, a prior recognition of important characters and

shareholders affects crisis awareness and attitude. Past and current events have a significant impact on crisis behaviour and perception from both a synchronic perspective. To put it another way, the existing administrative environment is a major factor (Stern, 2000). A crisis situation's decision-making process is complicated by the availability of conflicting information. Ironically, crisis managers have difficulties due to a lack of knowledge and a lack of resources. A crisis is characterised by a lack of information (Coombs, 2007). For making critical judgments in times of crisis, there may not be complete and accurate information available (Celasun, 1994). Overloading the brain with too much information can be just as damaging (info pollution). Decision-makers may become immobilised or ignorant if they do not have processes in place to deal with the constant stream of information that comes their way (Stern, 2000). Further complicating matters is that both the idea of an independent state and major players have an impact on crises.

Conclusively, Boin & Hart (2003) asserted that crises are chaotic and dynamic processes and not isolated incidents precisely sequenced on a rectilinear timescale. Simmering tension can turn into an eruption depending on how the situation is handled in the political sphere, mainstream media, and the public at large, as well as how physical measures are outlined and analysed (Boin & Hart, 2003). It is possible, from a sociological perspective, to start a workable definition of crisis by stating that it emphasises gaps and pauses in fundamental concepts of political and social order (Rosenthal, 1978). Regardless of the cause of a crisis, it always involves several layers of conflict between individuals and organisations (Hart, 1993). Table 2.2 summarises the most important characteristics of crises.

Table 2.2: General Characteristics of Crisis (Hart, 1993, p. 46).

An unsteady timing: A pivotal change is imminent.
Difficulty in handling: Crises cannot be handled by regular and prearranged structures.
Processes in disarray: Internal and external conflict on several levels at the organisational and individual levels.
High level of fretfulness: Crises produce severe emotional stress, panic, fear, etc.
Crises disrupt a broad array of geopolitical, socioeconomic, and organizational processes.
Informational complication: Information deficiency and overload problem.
Institutional complication: At different times and from different perspectives, a number of leaders and groups are dragged into crises.
Political Complication: Crises have an effect on political order and its actors.
Temporal complication: Crisis behaviour and perception are affected by past experiences of main actors and stakeholders.
Threatening: Threats to basic human requirements such as wellness and safety.
Time limitation: Every crisis calls for quick judgments within a limited timeframe.
Transnational: Ability to spread to neighbouring countries.
Uncertainty: Uncertainty and unforeseen consequences are inherent in any crisis.
Unexpectedness: Appeared without warning or media attention.
Uniqueness: Every crisis has its own fundamental characteristics, time frame, outcomes, and tempo.

2.2.4 COVID-19 as a Health Crisis

COVID-19 was called the 2nd pandemic of the 21st century on March 11, 2020, by the World Health Organization (WHO). This is because COVID-19 is a new virus that hasn't been seen before (WHO, 2020). In Wuhan, China, there was an outbreak of COVID-19. It was caused by the Severe Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome Coronavirus-2, which caused Coronavirus-2 (SARS-CoV-2). As a single-stranded, encapsulated positive-sense RNA virus, SARS-CoV-2 travels via the airways and the mucous membranes of infected individuals. An acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS) that can be fatal can be caused by the virus, which has a wide spectrum of symptoms. The treatment of this rare illness is largely supportive because there are no approved medications (Xu *et al.*, 2020). There were more than a thousand cases of the disease within two months of the first case being reported in Wuhan. Shortly after the outbreak, the infection rate skyrocketed. As of November 28, 2021, over five million people had died as a result of an estimated 261 million illnesses over the world (Worldometer, 2021).

Since the implementation of mobility limitations to prevent the spread of the virus, economic activities have been suspended and hindered all over the globe. The world has never seen anything like it in the previous few decades. As human and health conditions have worsened, many economies have suffered greatly as a result (World Bank, 2020). Since this pandemic has had such an influence on people's lives and the economy, it is not simply a health crisis but also a social one. On top of all this, there is a good chance that the pandemic would worsen global inequality and poverty. Stopping progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) would be impossible in this circumstance, thus action and attention must be given right away

(Cohen, 2020). People and nations' well-being has become more dependent on the environmental-health-economic interaction, according to Sarkodie & Owusu (2020).

When it comes to the global economy, the pandemic has affected both producers and consumers simultaneously. The outbreak disrupted demand on the supply side by lowering job performance and the supply of stocks and services. Company closures, mobility issues, and social isolation all disrupted the supply of services and products. There was a decrease in investments and household consumption because of the spread of infectious diseases like the virus and the loss of jobs (Chudik, Mohaddes, Pesaran, Raissi, & Rebucci, 2020). There is a worldwide economic disaster due of the pandemic's impact on demand and supply, and people are dying as a result of the collapse of businesses as a result. Sarkodie & Owusu (2020) and Sarkodie & Hens (2020) are among the researchers who have published papers in this area. As a result, a decline in gross domestic product was predicted for the majority of countries. It is therefore a problem of both health and economics that is preventing global sustainable development as a result of this pandemic (Nicola, 2020; Pirouz, 2020; Fernandes, 2020).

2.3 Crisis Management: An Overview

Organizations use crisis management to avoid the commencement of crises, effectively manage those that have already happened, and protect themselves, their stakeholders, and their industry from harm (Pearson & Mitroff, 1993; Coombs, 2014). Crisis management, according to Coombs (2011), is "a combination of elements aimed to combat crises and to decrease the real losses suffered" (Coombs, 2011, p. 23).

Prevention, preparation, reaction, and evaluation are the four factors. The goal of prevention is to avoid a catastrophe from occurring by identifying warning indicators and implementing preventative measures. The crisis management plan,

identifying crisis vulnerabilities, and training a crisis management team are all part of the preparation process. The application of preparedness components to a crisis and recovery from the crisis, which implies returning to regular operations after a crisis, are referred to as response and recovery. Evaluation of crisis response, identification of strengths and shortcomings, and revision of preventative, preparation, and response activities are all part of the review (Coombs, 2014).

Crisis management is a set of procedures to be followed in the case of an impending crisis, which includes identifying the symptoms, putting in place necessary protections, and recuperating from the crisis with the least level of destruction possible (Simola, 2014). Crisis management as an array of measures that involve anticipating and foreseeing potential crises, planning for them, identifying their features, creating salvage and learning techniques and arranging rescheduling as well as implementing these methods (Civelek, Çemberci & Eralp, 2016).

Another definition of crisis management is "a series of interconnected evaluations and investigations conducted by a firm in order to forestall crises that affect the principal products, service, production procedure, workers, ecosystem, and citizens" (Janis, 1989, p. 3). The process of crisis management is one of decision-making. Its qualities are comparable to those of strategic management concepts since it is a unique type of management. Crisis management attempts to ensure that companies are prepared for crises while also taking the necessary measures to recover quickly and economically (Cesta, Cortellessa, & Benedictis, 2014).

Rather than focusing on whether or not a crisis would affect the firm, today's administrators must evaluate where, when, how, and in what fashion a crisis may arise, as well as who and how many people may be affected. To prevent and heal from crises that can occur at any time, corporate managers must commit more work to crisis

management training. Prior to an incident, it is critical for firms to undertake crisis management planning (Huang & Su, 2009).

2.3.1 Stages of Crisis Management

Pre-crisis, crisis and post-crisis paradigms have been utilised by researchers for decades to adequately manage and assess crises. No one has claimed credit for creating the concept, although it is widely used in studies and has received the endorsement of many crisis communication professionals (e.g., Seeger, Sellnow, & Ulmer, 2003; Coombs, 2014). Some argue that because these three stages are so broad, they may be used as a framework for a variety of crisis management strategies. This concept describes crisis management as a continual, preventative attempt to not only respond to but also avert crises from happening. Pre-crisis, crisis, and post-crisis are the three phases of crisis management (Coombs, 2011).

2.4 Crisis Communication

The term "crisis communication" refers to the exchanges between a company and its stakeholders during a moment of crisis (King, 2002; Heath & Millar, 2004; Fearn-Banks, 2011). Messages of crisis communication transmitted by an organization to its stakeholders during a crisis are referred to as crisis response (Benoit, 1997; Hale, Dulek & Hale, 2005). While crisis communication messages can take many different forms and be sent via many means, what sets them apart from other organizational communications and distinguishes them as crisis communication messages is that they are expressly linked to a negative circumstance.

Several academics have stressed the relevance of crisis communication because it influences stakeholder views of the crisis and the organization experiencing it, and hence affects the crisis' long-term repercussions (Benoit, 1997; Floredu, Cabiddu & Evaristo, 2014; Simon, Goldberg & Adini, 2015). Excellent crisis

communication, regardless of the communication medium, may alleviate the negative consequences of a crisis (Floreddu, Cabiddu, & Evaristo, 2014) and even transform the crisis into an opportunity, resulting in positive stakeholder perceptions (Diermeier, 2011).

During a crisis, organizations may interact with stakeholders through multiple channels such as social media platforms, websites, and mass media. Schultz, Utz, & Göritz (2011) suggest that crisis communication routes are even more significant than the crisis response message in crisis communication. It is important to choose crisis communication platforms wisely so that the desired messages penetrate their target audience (Argenti, 2002). Information is essential to crises, thus crisis communication attempts to control and construct information in such a way that it benefits all of the parties involved. When faced with a crisis, people's ability to comprehend news can be reduced by as much as 80%, according to Gilman (2004). It is therefore imperative to use considerable caution when it comes to crisis communication (O'Neill & Ewing, 2020).

2.4.1 Considerations and Steps for Crisis Communication

Aiming to help crisis managers, Ulmer *et al.* (2015) provided five processes for evaluating the response: (a) establishing objectives, (b) collaborating with the crisis audience, (c) determining the possible sources of a crisis, (d) comprehending the uniqueness of publics and reacting to them, and (e) evaluating the response's effectiveness. Because objectives dictate strategy, determining the goals for crisis management is the first stage in crisis response. According to Coombs (2014), the goal should be to not only protect a company but also to minimise the effect of a crisis on the individuals directly impacted by it.

It is one of the objectives of a pre-crisis communication effort to predict a probable disaster (Zaremba, 2010). Understanding and establishing relationships with stakeholders in advance of an emergency, planning for the communication process during an emergency, and reducing the amount of discomfort among stakeholders are some examples of strategic initiatives that can be implemented in the wake of a crisis. Defending business image, garnering positive media attention and spreading awareness about a company's objectives are other examples of efforts that can be taken (Lerbinger, 1997; Zaremba, 2010; Coombs, 2014; Ulmer *et al.*, 2015).

The second phase in crisis communication is working with those who are watching the situation unfold (Coombs, 2014; Ulmer *et al.*, 2015). This includes all media and relevant actors who are explicitly or implicitly influenced by a crisis. Collaborative crises necessitate that companies carefully examine the people they want to reach and how they want to influence their audiences' thoughts and actions (Zaremba, 2010). Furthermore, while the goal is to involve all stakeholders and audiences, businesses must nevertheless take into account the variety of their target audiences. Audiences can be classified as victims, workers, rivals, customers, or press outlets based on their daily interactions with a company. Different communication strategies and messages are required for each group (Coombs, 2014). According to their importance in the success of an organization or their active involvement in a crisis or their impact and existing link with the relevant firms, stakeholders may also be classed into primary and supplementary stakeholders. Taking into account stakeholder diversity also entails taking into account cultural influences. For ethnically varied audiences, a culturally aware approach is recommended (Ulmer *et al.*, 2015).

Identifying the fundamental causes of a problem is the third step. Crisis communication cannot move ahead without a clear understanding of the root problem.

According to Ulmer *et al.* (2015), companies must actively seek out the fundamental cause of any crisis, as well as clarify stakeholders' concerns and develop remedies appropriately. At the same time, corporations must retain close relationships with the press and alternative outlets of information in order to keep them updated on crisis management developments and counter any false allegations.

Responding to diverse audiences is the fourth step. The first step is to figure out what kinds of information should be shared with stakeholders, and then to construct statements that reflect that (Zaremba, 2010). Reporters must contact everyone impacted by the problem in order to deliver a reaction narrative that adequately conveys the magnitude of the crisis and the efforts being taken to address it (McLean & Power, 2009; Ulmer *et al.*, 2015). The use of a single medium or message to reach all of a particular group's members is impossible (Ulmer *et al.*, 2015). A suitable reaction should also respect varied audiences' feelings, reassure them that the company will remain in contact, and take further efforts to reduce potential harm or tragedies. (Zaremba, 2010). The message should also be compassionate. Instead of focusing on the organization's advantages, it should be people-centred and demonstrate concern for stakeholders (Ulmer *et al.*, 2015).

Ultimately, analyzing the effectiveness or failure of crisis communication is the final phase. After a crisis has ended, organisations should reflect on their efforts and explore how to enhance crisis communication in the long run (Zaremba, 2010). Organizations should also designate a trustworthy spokesperson and dependable communication channels to implement all of these procedures better. In crisis communication, selecting a trustworthy, sympathetic, and effective spokesperson is critical (McLean & Power, 2009). An official representative, even though the media and consumers can get information from anybody involved, shows how concerned an

organisation is about a crisis. The lack of a senior-level representation may lead stakeholders to conclude that the organisation is ignoring the problem. If a company employs a poor communicator, the crisis communication message may never be delivered. Moreover, a bad communicator may aggravate the problem.

Organizations must pay special care to the implementation of platforms of communication in the event of a crisis. The characteristic of audience, the organization's expertise and reputation, and the message's content all play a role in determining which channels should be utilised to distribute communications (Zaremba, 2010). Call centres, phone lines, and reception create a classic information loop during an emergency (McLean & Power, 2009; O'Neil & Ewing, 2020). In order to get official information from a company, external stakeholders and the media regularly utilise these ways to get in touch with management. As a result, it is imperative that personnel in charge of these mediums are aware of the latest developments, important updates, and communication standards. The Internet may be a cost-effective, thorough, and engaging response platform, as indicated by McLean & Power (2009). There are several ways in which Internet use during crisis response can occur, such as through a firm's own online platform, client sites, social media, and even a "black" website, which is a crisis-focused site (Coombs, 2014).

2.4.2 Classifications for Crisis Communication

During a crisis, it is vital for an organisation to demonstrate that it is capable of handling the issue properly and thoughtfully. As a way to demonstrate this competence, companies should provide regular and up-to-date information to all relevant parties. Guaranteeing the public and averting irrational expectations are the goals of this management component (Coombs, 2014). For the sake of crisis response planning, Coombs (2014) distinguishes between three types of content: instructional

information, information adjustment, and managing reputation. The first type of information, instructional information, is devoted to educating the public on how to be safe. Both external (such as crisis circumstances) and internal (such as the announcement of product risks and the identification of items prior to a withdrawal) crises can benefit from this reaction.

Crisis managers must consider the concerns of stakeholders regarding security when developing instructional messages (Sellnow & Seger, 2021). It is essential to change information to comfort stakeholders that the organisation is actively responding to the issue and to show sympathy for individuals who are directly impacted. Ultimately and most significantly, reputation management is a sort of crisis response. This form of reaction, contrasting the prior two stakeholder-focused reactions, focuses on the institution, building on earlier caring messaging to rehabilitate or enhance company image with care (Malecki *et al.*, 2021).

2.5 Social Media

It is hard to deny that social media has risen in both prominence and significance over the previous decade. Being social is "*The inherent yearning humans have to connect with other similarly minded beings*" (Safko, 2010, p. 9). Humans have a need to be part of a community where they may feel at ease and share their experiences, opinions, and so on. The term "social media" refers to a tool that people may use to meet together with other people who share their interests (Safko, 2010). The term "social media" applies to a wide range of various social media platforms. According to the definition provided by Kaplan & Haenlein (2010), User Generated Content (UGC) can be created and shared on a variety of social media platforms. User-generated content, according to Scheepers *et al.* (2014, p. 43), "has a component of originality, is disseminated publicly (or at least broadly available) online, and is made

outside of a professional context". User-Generated Content (UGC) allows individuals to express themselves and engage with other online users (Smith, Fischer & Yongjian, 2012) and "may be considered as the total of all ways individuals utilize social media" (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Twitter tweets, Facebook postings, and YouTube videos are all examples of User-Generated Content (Smith, Fischer & Yongjian, 2012).

The term "social media" often known as "social media platforms" means "web-based services that let users do four main tasks. To begin with, it provides a safe space for individuals to construct a social or semi-public profile. Second, it aids them in communicating a range of other individuals with whom they have a relationship and in seeing and navigating their list of contacts, as well as those produced by individuals within the system, as previously said " (Boyd & Ellison, 2007, p. 22). Alternatively, this might be taken to indicate that all users on these platforms are able to engage with one another. They are the ones who create and upload content, as well as follow and comment on each other's actions, on these platforms. When it comes to interacting directly with stakeholders and collecting data, these are the platforms the organisation has used. In today's society, the Internet and social media are seen as the key tools for exchanging ideas and information.

As a result of social media's influence, companies have had to reassess how they plan to serve their customers, who are increasingly demanding real-time updates on the products and services they buy (Sutton *et al.*, 2008; Aula, 2009; Civelek, 2016; Haataja *et al.*, 2016; Gorm & Shklovski, 2016). In other words, social media allows individuals to communicate and exchange information in ways that traditional media cannot. Furthermore, social media has no time or space constraints since user-generated content may spread across countries and regions in seconds. (Kietzmann *et al.*, 2011). As a result, consumers may share information at any moment, which

presents a significant issue for enterprises throughout the world since customers trust other consumers more than they trust corporations (Kotler *et al.*, 2010).

2.5.1 Organisational Social Media Usage

According to Safko (2010), organizations should utilize social media to foster a meaningful connection with stakeholders. This is due to the fact that social media is more effective than conventional media because it allows for two-way interaction between a company and its stakeholders (Safko, 2010). Individuals are said to be in charge of social media since they can exchange information, experiences, ideas, etc. For example, people may learn from one another and share unpleasant or positive experiences. As a result, corporations may have less control over their corporate statements, as they must deal with heightened susceptibility when anybody may submit a negative remark and share it with a large number of others who share their views (Wang & Yang, 2020).

Customers are more likely to trust fellow customers than organizations since they have similar interests and have more in common with them. However, large corporations, for example, may be able to afford to recruit highly qualified staff who may use their influence to manipulate stakeholders on media platforms through adverts and in a more indirect way when stakeholders are unaware (Shklovski *et al.*, 2016). Likewise, corporations have the capacity to restrict information on their social media platforms, such as by removing critical stakeholder comments. As a result, even if consumers have additional chances on social media compared to conventional media, it might be claimed that the power dynamic between businesses and people is still unbalanced (Fuchs, 2014; Men, O'Neil & Ewing, 2020). In spite of this, social media has developed into a valuable resource for today's consumers to share and discuss their perspectives (Kotler *et al.*, 2010).

To put it another way, social media can let us communicate, interact, and work collaboratively with one another, all beyond the context of current organizational groups and institutions (Fuchs, 2014). Today, anyone with an Internet connection may publish anything to social media networks, and many of the individuals who use social media on a daily basis to share knowledge and other content would never have the same chances on broadcast media (Fuchs, 2014). It is said that because of the prevalence of social media, it is critical for businesses to be where their consumers are. Customers are on social media, which is why it is believed that it is critical for businesses to be active on the platform as well (Jensen, 2011). As a result, businesses may communicate with consumers and other stakeholders via social media. For example, a customer support tool might be provided (Safko, 2012).

Organizations may share vital information with anybody at any time via social media, making stakeholders' demands for the openness of the organization's actions simpler to meet. However, this appears to be the case only when firms are engaged and communicate with their stakeholders in an open and honest manner. Organizations can thus be present on numerous social media platforms without being more active or open than they are on their company website or through traditional media channels. When companies are transparent and accountable, they may reveal details about their operations to stakeholders; nevertheless, if the enhanced degree of openness is effective, companies may profit from a tighter and more productive connection with their stakeholders (Postman, 2009; Men, O'Neil & Ewing, 2020). Organizations now have a new channel and instrument for creating and strengthening their image, thanks to social media. Organizations may conduct one-to-many, one-to-one, and many-to-many dialogues with consumers through social media. A single company can sometimes personalize their presence in it, for as by speaking in a certain tone.

Organizations' image-building processes have been aided by social media, which has presented both benefits and difficulties. Crisis management in the social media ecosystem is an excellent example and learning point for businesses (Wang & Yang, 2020; Men, O'Neil & Ewing, 2020).

2.5.2 Characteristics of Social Media

The following are some of the features of social media (Odyakmaz, 2013, p. 35):

a) Interconnectivity: The two-way nature of social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter contrasts sharply with the one-way nature of traditional media. People are both producers and consumers of information at all stages of the communication chain.

b) Instantaneity: The key aspect of Internet communication is the instantaneous transfer of communications that cannot be performed by traditional media.

c) Not seeking a commercial profit purpose: Individuals who use the media for communication do not appear to be pursuing a commercial profit goal. Each social media platform, on the other hand, is already set up for commercial objectives, and users are exposed to adverts at every turn.

d) Connecting individuals and masses: Unlike conventional media, which is aimed at the masses and only communicates in one direction, the goal of social media is to exchange information with both the general populace and the people who use it.

e) Professionalism is not required: With conventional media, professionalism is required for message generation and transmission, but, in social media, being a computer user is sufficient.

f) Communication exists in social media, where hierarchical ties can be ignored: When identities are masked, however, this is relevant. When identities are evident, it is impossible to refer to someone in the higher echelons of society as "you." Social

media is a platform that allows individuals from all walks of life to connect and communicate without regard for their education, occupation, gender, or financial status.

g) Existing beyond the location and time: With the advancement of mobile communication technology, the time and place of contact via social media have become irrelevant. Messages may be sent and received by anybody, anywhere, at any time (If they are inside the coverage area, they are covered).

h) Message changeability: A message that has already been broadcasted cannot be changed or reversed using traditional media. Messages that have been sent, on the other hand, can be undone, altered, or amended in the social media environment.

i) Variation in property framework: Social media, like traditional media, is owned by a single person or organisation. In contrast to conventional media, the property structure of social media has no effect on the content. The manager's profits are not the major concern of social media users. It might be said that it is more liberated in this regard.

k) Information pollution: Social media plays a significant role in the creation of an information community that creates the false perception that "information is extremely easy to obtain," which is exactly the goal of modern-day capitalist system.

One of the most important merits of social media is that it permits people to create their own content. This function, as previously said, allows social media to create and disseminate material that is unregulated and unfiltered. Another aspect that attracts people to use social media is that messages and information are sent across vast distances and to large audiences in the most cost-effective method possible. A message or other data, such as a photo or clip that is meant to be disseminated can be transmitted to people from all sociocultural classes throughout the world in a short

period. Because of this, people and groups that want to be noticed on social media have more power (Wagner, Vollmar, & Wagner, 2014).

2.5.3 Message Flow Model for Social Media

With the use of effective message flow models, organizations and governments may monitor the advancement or alleviation of a crisis based on the perceptions of their consumers, as shown in Figure 2.1. The two-way communication of social media has an impact on the communication flow suited to social media usage, as shown in Figure 2.1. The activity taken by the target audience might be online, offline, or both. As a result, social media may be utilized to track real-time online reactions.

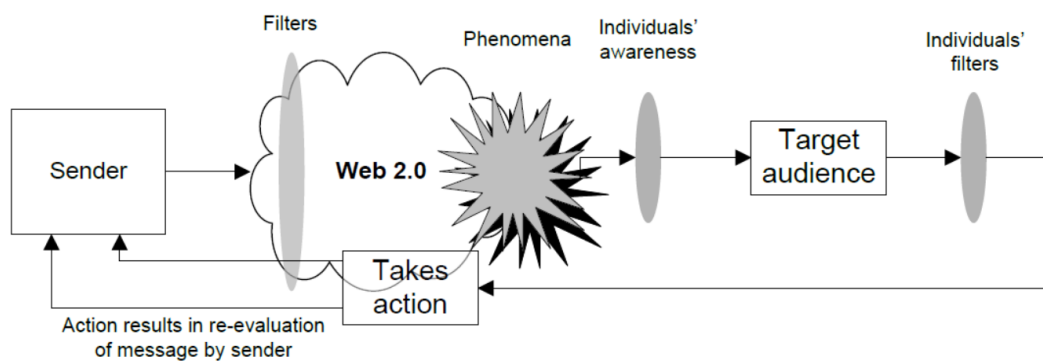


Figure 2.1: Message Flow Model for Social Media (Adapted from Van Niekerk, Ramluckan & Maharaj, 2011, p. 5).

2.5.4 Overview of Social Media Platforms

Almost any user-driven Internet platform can be referred to as a "social media platform." Digital tools, platforms, and applications all fall under the umbrella term "social media" (Haataja *et al.*, 2016). There are an infinite number of social media sites to choose from, and they all evolve at a rapid pace. For the purposes of this definition, social media platform refers to "a website or application operated by a third party that allows for user-to-user communication and the exchange of content while excluding

any content that the platform has created or has obtained through licencing from sources other than its users (Safko, 2010, p. 4). When we talk about "Social Media Platforms," we are talking about any channel via which material (such as but not limited to images/videos/messages/sound files) may be disseminated to large segments of the general public, or perhaps the broader population as a whole. Social media platforms allow their users to converse, share news, and publish their own work on the Internet in real time.

Facebook and Twitter are two of the most popular social media platforms for users to share information about their daily life and the content of others. Blogs, weblogs, discussion boards and picture and video sharing platforms are only few examples of social media platforms (Aula, 2010). YouTube, WordPress, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Snapchat are among the most popular services and platforms. According to Freberg (2012), the proliferation of social media is affecting corporate image and crisis communication. This is mainly because of the speed of social media and the huge number of people who use it.

2.5.4.1 Typology for Social Media Platforms

Researchers have attempted to construct a typology of social media as numerous social media programs have become accessible. Blogs, social platforms, Internet forums, and content creators are the five categories defined by Constantinides & Fountain (2008). There are six types of social media applications, according to Kaplan & Haenlein (2010): blogs, collective applications like Wikipedia, social media platforms like Twitter, video sharing platforms like YouTube, Internet forums like Reddit, and virtual gaming worlds like Overwatch. Based on features, Agarwal & Yiliyasi (2010) recommend blogs, media sharing sites, microblogging sites, social

bookmarking, social network sites, social news, and wikis as the top seven social media apps. Each of these applications is briefly defined in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3: Social media platform typology (Adapted from Agarwal & Yiliyasi, 2010, p. 14)

Application	Description	Example
Blogs	People can upload content in online journals, and others can remark on it.	Blogger, WordPress
Media sharing sites	People can share their multimedia material on these sites.	Instagram (Photos), YouTube (Videos), Snapchat
Microblogging sites	Sites where users use posts to exchange little quantities of information.	Twitter
Social bookmarking services	People use these sites to share and rate material they have found on the Internet.	StumbleUpon
Social network sites	Sites where individuals may exchange information and communicate with one another	Facebook, Google+, WhatsApp

Social news	People utilize these sites to share their news with others	Digg, Reddit
Wikis	Knowledge bases that are open to the public.	Wikipedia, Britannica

Many traditional offline companies have increasingly implemented social networking services into their activities in order to better reach and connect with their existing as well as potential clients. Numerous firms now leverage social media to build awareness of their companies and foster good relationships with their customers. (Saravanakumar & Lakshmi, 2012). Table 2.4 below gives differences between prominent social media platforms.

Table 2.4: Differences between social media platforms (Modified from Ramuluckhan, 2016)

Differences in platforms	Other Internet sources	Facebook	Instagram	Twitter
Communication flow	One-to-many	Many-to-many, one to many or one-to-one	Many-to-many	Many-to-many
Message flow	Organization--Public	Organization--Public Organization and public	Organization--Public Organization and public	Organization --Public Organization and public

Live Feature	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Speed	Slow	Medium	Fast	Fast
Text type	Articles, stories, blog posts, and website updates	Non-limited texts, videos, pictures, other links to websites	Photos with captions, short-video clips	140-character tweets includes hyperlinks to news articles, websites, videos, and images, among other things.
Receiving parties	Anybody with access to the Internet	Followers of the organization, websites and their friends on the platforms	Followers of the organization	Followers of the trending topics

2.6 Overview of Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCGs) Sector

Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) is one of the fastest-growing businesses in the manufacturing industry. They are also known as Consumer Packaged Goods (CPG). Pharmaceuticals, food and beverages, and home and personal care products are just a few examples of FMCG goods. People's day-to-day activities are

intricately linked to these systems (Kabuoh *et al.*, 2020). These are low-cost items that may quickly bring profit (KPMG, 2016). Fast-moving products are those that move quickly off the shelves of a store or supermarket due to the frequency with which customers use them (KPMG, 2020). The Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) sector is a substantial contributor to all economies of the world. Everyone, irrespective of social status, income, or other reasons, consumes such items (Olaore & Kuye, 2019). Processed foods, toiletries, snacks, over-the-counter drugs, clothing and footwear, consumer safety, sunglasses, beauty and personal care, tea and coffee, homecare, personal goods, frozen foods, soft drinks, pet care, tissue and grooming, toys and games are just a few examples of FMCG products (Ray *et al.*, 2016). It is more lucrative for the FMCG business because of the lower penetration rates, lower operating expenses and a well-established distribution network, lower per capita demand, a large consumer market and simple production techniques for the majority of items (Patil, 2016).

With an unstable economy, this industry is viewed as the safest place to invest. By 2025, the global market for this industry is estimated to be worth \$1.5 trillion, growing at a CAGR of 5.4%. (2018-2025). Increasing client awareness and changing lifestyles are the primary drivers of this company's success. FMCG products account for the vast bulk of household expenditures on a routine basis. Since there are so many FMCG products, customers and so many competitors on the market, there is a large amount of money going into the FMCG through the economy (Ashik, 2018).

In developing markets like Nigeria, the FMCG industry is at the heart of economic growth and advancement. There are about 120 million individuals in Nigeria's FMCG market, which is the largest in Africa, according to a 2019 FMCG industry research in Nigeria (US\$41.7 billion) (Adejare, Olaore & Udofia, 2021). In

2019, the FMCG industry in Nigeria is expected to contribute up to 5% of the country's total GDP. Additionally, the Nigerian stock exchange estimates that 17 percent of the equity value in Nigeria's market capitalization comes from the FMCG industry (KPMG, 2020). This demonstrates the sector's importance to the Nigerian economy. The Nigerian Breweries, VITAL Items, Nestle Nigerian Plc., Dangote Group, Coca-Cola, Unilever Nigeria, PZ Cussons, Friesland Campina Plc., Beloxxi Group, Chi Limited, and others are among the leading makers of fast-moving products on the Nigerian market.

2.6.1 Impacts of COVID-19 on the FMCG Sector

FMCG branches are frequently employed in the distribution system. In this age of federal regulation, product delivery becomes more difficult, and customers believe they can stay at home. Retail outlets were forced to close as a result of this plan (Khan *et al.*, 2018). As a result of these events, a number of businesses have reported experiencing extraordinary interruption. The lockdown and the resulting social isolation were intended to increase user activity by isolating major cities. In the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, Mahajan (2020) claimed that FMCG businesses were hardly hit. The organisations' reactions to this crisis include a more formative evaluation of logistics performance, prevention practises, hygiene and handwashing methods, a revised warehouse and transportation policy, the integration of information suppliers, the optimising of their product line, and an appraisal of crisis or emergency management plans. As a result, FMCG businesses were able to deal with the outbreak of COVID-19.

According to Soon Chan Ang's post 'COVID-19, Compound Challenges for Amazon, Walmart in India,' E-retailers such as Flipkart, Amazon, and Walmart expect to lose money because of the shutdown. As a result of the national lockdown, more

than 60 e-commerce fulfilment centres have shut down. Companies in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic experienced massive backlogs of vital product delivery by the end of March (Chouhan & Gandhi, 2020). Godrej Consumer Products (GPCL) Ltd's Director, Vivek Gambhir remarked that the lockdown has had a substantial impact on the FMCG sector. Consumer behaviour is changing, and demand for health-protecting and sanitary products is increasing. Because of a two-month lockdown in China, he forecasts a 21% drop in retail sales, with clothes sales down 31%, cosmetics down 13%, and personal care down 7% (less owing to increased demand for soap and hand sanitisers). Due to government standards, GCPL has also reduced the price of sanitisers drastically.

The major problem is to get manufacturing back on track while maintaining a sufficient supply chain (Laskar, 2020). Consequently, the income of FMCG companies has decreased significantly. Although the manufacturing sector as a whole has had a tremendous impact, FMCG has been the most impactful. Consumers were forced to stay at home as a result of the government's preventative and regulatory measures, which have a detrimental impact on the economy and businesses (Euromonitor, 2020). However, COVID-19 does not affect all firms identically. A number of industries that customers believe may assist mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 have benefited from the pandemic, including communications, air purifiers, laundry products and antibacterial therapies (Pawar, Shekam & Dutt, 2020).

2.7 The Relationship between Crisis Communication and Social Media

Social media's benefits and the utilisation of these channels by stakeholders have revolutionised traditional crisis communication techniques, but an organisational revolution is still required. Grunig (1992) has long advocated a two-way strategy to

crisis communication. Using social media, organisations and their stakeholders may communicate with each other in new and interesting manners, and stakeholders can utilise social media to communicate with companies and have their needs met more quickly than it used to be (Kelly, Kerry & Drennan, 2010). A previous research by Fraustino & Liu (2017) found that public-oriented methods to crisis communication now place more emphasis on incorporating stakeholder needs into organisational decision-making and communication than on protecting a company's image. Consequently, brand management and customer management are becoming increasingly interwoven. Corporate reputation management has become considerably more complex in the age of social media (Burke, 2011). Consequently, according to Schultz *et al.* (2012), social media is the "primary public relations channel" since it allows for more participatory and symmetric contact between businesses and their audiences, resulting in more efficient and ethical communication.

Social media has been more prominent as a crisis communication strategy in recent years (Coombs, 2012). It is critical for businesses to realize that social media is a blend of channels in this regard. When it comes to crisis communication, certain channels are more appropriate than others, and which channel is the most appropriate depends on the crisis scenario, the type of stakeholders, and the crisis response plan (Coombs, 2012). Obviously, if social media is to be used, the targeted stakeholders must be engaged on the platform. People must browse the web or become followers to have access to certain information on social media (Coombs, 2012). It is crucial to keep in mind that social media is a fast-moving medium, and Coombs proposes three fundamental guidelines to follow when connecting with stakeholders via social media:

- a) Be present at the moment (respond to posts and thus show concerns for what stakeholders think).

- b) Be in the thick of things (monitor the events as the crisis unfolds).
- c) Be ahead of the crisis (Coombs, 2012).

Stakeholders will detect a lack of information if the organization does not disclose the situation online. If you are unsure what to say, it is preferable to convey that you are unsure rather than answering poorly or not at all (Veil *et al.*, 2011). Stakeholders demand responses to their comments and posts on social media (Gonzalez & Smith, 2010). In terms of Coombs' situational crisis communication theory, it may be argued that Coombs takes a rather normative approach in recommending the three fundamental guidelines listed above. The three guidelines appear to be quite simple and universal, but as Coombs points out, being where the action is and being active where one's stakeholders are active in order to engage with them is usually the best option. When organizations utilize social media to educate people about crises, it shows that they are willing to keep their stakeholders abreast of the situation (Utz *et al.*, 2013).

As a result of social media's dynamism and fast nature, Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) advise companies to employ a set of social media standards regardless of what sort of social media platform is being utilized or what is being discussed (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The suggestions are grouped into two categories: "social media use" and "social behaviour." The first general guideline, "social media use," emphasizes the necessity of properly selecting social media sites and engaging with them. It is suggested that being present on all social media platforms is impossible and that an organization must therefore select the sites that are most relevant to the target population. It is recommended that a company be active on the platforms where its customers operate, as well as examine if consumers should be permitted to write comments on the social media accounts of the organization (Yu *et al.*, 2021).

When platforms are properly chosen, it is recommended that the company's social media operations be linked and connected with one another, not just on social media but also on conventional media platforms. Stakeholders may consider all of the organization's actions to be a component of its identity. Thus, it is critical to maintain consistency across all media platforms. Another social media advice is to make your pages open to everyone who has an interest in them, as well as to create a social media usage policy for all relevant personnel (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

The company must be active on its platforms and ensure that the information is continually updated, according to Kaplan & Haenlein's second general guideline, "social behaviour". Furthermore, in order for the organization to look open and transparent, it is recommended that it participate in dialogues with its stakeholders. Stakeholders may also expect the company to communicate with them, and it is recommended that the organization not only responds to unfavourable remarks but also engages in daily dialogues with a genuine interest in its stakeholders to learn what they want to hear and debate. It may be claimed that listening to and engaging with one's stakeholders just to take advantage of it later utilizing knowledge of what they prefer to hear and see appears strategic, if not cynical and manipulative (Guo *et al.*, 2021).

According to Coombs (2012), the goal of employing social media for communicating crises is the same as when using conventional media (Coombs, 2012). As a result, while Coombs does not fully disregard the medium choice, stating that the goal is the same on both, he does not appear to differentiate between them when it relates to crisis communication tactics. Therefore, the same crisis communication technologies and guidelines are still viewed as essential as long as companies recognize the variations in how stakeholders engage – both with the organizations and with each other. As a result, social media brings both opportunities and challenges for

companies. With this in mind, social media allows content to be disseminated internationally in seconds, reaching millions of individuals and prospective clients (Guo *et al.*, 2021). As a result of the speed with which information is shared on social media, organizations' communication has become more immediate and direct. Corporations may express themselves more quickly, making content more real and relevant to their target audience (Postman, 2009). Stakeholders are likely to demand to be regularly updated with fresh and relevant information when everything can be shared with everyone in seconds and when businesses' communication has altered owing to the emergence of social media.

If stakeholders anticipate expanded, fresher, and more relevant information on social media than conventional media, it might be argued that corporations find it more difficult to stay consistent in their crisis management plan to the extent Coombs proposes. It is probably simpler to produce consistent replies within the same normative strategy when corporations communicate through conventional media since firms may settle for a few properly planned responses in some circumstances (Reuther, Hughes & Kaufhold, 2018; Yu *et al.*, 2021). Organizations are expected to engage in ongoing and open conversations with their stakeholders on social media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Thus, it is reasonable to assume that it is more difficult for them to perform as normatively and steadily as Coombs (2012) and Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) recommended, in terms of both crisis communications plan and guidelines and recommendations in social media usage. When enterprises and their stakeholders communicate on social media is a two-way process, it appears that they must respond to a wider range of comments and attitudes than when communication is more sender-oriented in one-way processes (Safko, 2010). Furthermore, the crisis communication process appears to be more complicated, as businesses might be active on a variety of

social media networks while still dealing with the conservative media (Reuther, Hughers & Kaufhold, 2018).

Since social media facilitates two-way communication, it may be said that organisations can more easily communicate with their consumers during times of crisis when properly exploited as a crisis communication tool (Safko, 2010). On the other side, when information circulates faster than through conventional media, a problem can quickly grow. Everyone has the ability to publish material that may be harmful to an organization if the content of the comments is unfavourable, but companies also have the ability to connect with their stakeholders in new ways that can have a constructive effect on the stakeholders' perceptions of the problem. With these social media qualities, it is reasonable to question the idea that a company may be successful on social media provided it adheres to certain rules and laws (Saroj & Pal, 2020).

2.7.1 Advantages of Social Media Platforms for Crisis Communication.

Companies may engage with their stakeholders in a more personalised way because to the simplicity of social media platforms, such as their speed, reach, and interaction (Schultz *et al.*, 2012). For consumers, a company's use of social media in times of crisis may provide the impression that the company cares, which can lead to a more favourable impression of the company (Kerkhof *et al.*, 2011; Sweetser & Metzgar, 2007). Literature and practical experience stress the necessity of speed in crisis communication. Stakeholders will benefit greatly from social media's ability to get information out quickly. Organizations that fail to give timely information to the media and stakeholders often face criticism, speculations, and unsubstantiated claims. As a result, crisis communication necessitates the timely distribution of information to all stakeholders (McLean & Power, 2009; Coombs, 2014). It is also vital for companies to quickly and easily communicate with all stakeholders during a crisis. It is possible

to reach a wide audience using social media because of its five fundamental characteristics, according to Coombs (2014). These are:

- **Communities:** Individuals who share a common interest may easily and rapidly create groups.
- **Connectivity:** One piece of material may be tightly connected to another, resulting in a "web" of data.
- **Dialogue:** The channels make it easier to communicate.
- **Involvement:** Any social media user may produce, distribute, and respond to the material.
- **Transparency:** Owners of social media platforms allow people to publish and comment on their material (Coombs, 2014).

Social media users, as well as organisations, can more easily communicate during times of crisis when these five qualities are in operation. Many experts believe that companies may improve their social media visibility by establishing an online participation on platforms popular among key stakeholders before a crisis happens (Coombs & Holladay, 2012; Jaques, 2014). Businesses should use these platforms on a regular basis in order to raise their profile. Communication amongst users is another benefit of social media for crisis communication. Businesses may listen in on what their stakeholders have to say and engage with them directly with this feature. Because of interaction, organisations are able to learn more about how their stakeholders communicate about crises, allowing them to plan. On social media, consumers' voices are unequivocal indicators of an organization's current reputational status and whether or not stakeholders accept the crisis response actions (Coombs & Holladay, 2014). However, despite the fact that social media posts may not indicate a fair representation of all impacted stakeholders, they might provide certain brand metrics that could be

useful in crisis assessment. A crisis manager may assess stakeholder experience with a company's communication by examining social media posts and engaging certain stakeholders for more in-depth constructive input in terms of direct communication (Coombs, 2014).

During a crisis, social media platforms may help businesses have more customized and honest discussions with stakeholders. The study of Kerkhof *et al.* (2011) suggests that social media reactions may be regarded as more rational and dependable than traditional media responses. Individuals may view social media comments as more eloquent, personal, trustworthy, and reliable than traditional media responses since they generally feature casual language with a personalized connection. Because social media communications provided during crises may be conversational, Ford (2011) and Kelleher (2009) argue that organizations can display their warmth, understanding, and compassion to stakeholders. Stakeholders will be more trusting and satisfied if you communicate effectively. For example, victims of a crisis may assume that their perspectives are being recognized and that they are being sought. As a consequence, firms may look more accountable and dedicated when communicating via social media during a crisis (Pal & Saroj, 2020).

2.7.2 Disadvantages of Social Media Platforms for Crisis Communication

In the event of a crisis, however, social media's reach is limited. There is evidence that these platforms are incapable of sustaining the kind of dialogue essential for various types of crisis communication (Kent, 2010; Kent & Taylor, 2018). Dialogue, according to Lane (2018), is a form of communication in which the participants have an optimistic impression of one another and the communication they are involved in. It occurs when individuals want to communicate with one another in a way that is both courteous and sincere, and they feel that doing so will yield outcomes

that are both beneficial and satisfactory to both parties (Lane, 2018). Inadequate control over stakeholder communications, restricted access to certain target groups, and a lack of trust in some social media content can all impede crisis communication. However, Jaques (2014) pointed out that a crisis conveyed via social media can potentially accelerate significantly quicker even though the speed of social media platforms helps companies to respond to crises more rapidly and proactively.

As information spreads so quickly on social media, bad news may have far-reaching effects on an organisation in a matter of minutes, making crisis management far more challenging than it was in the days before social media (Ford, 2011). When it comes to social media crises, though, things may quickly turn around (Jaques, 2014). Social media will keep track of it even if the event is over quickly, making it easier for others to revisit it. Stakeholders and the media may make crises worse by readily connecting current issues to earlier problems or crises.

Another drawback of social media platforms for companies is that they constantly expose businesses to an audience seeking bad news. When it comes to monitoring an organization's actions, consumers and the press have access to social media. This increases the possibility of a crisis happening (Ford, 2011). One piece of bad news may quickly spread across several social media channels, exposing a corporation to even more negative reviews. When a crisis spreads, the communication efforts of every company become more apparent, which may raise expectations among key stakeholders. However, an organisation can regulate its own social media material, but it cannot dictate what other people think or do with it. However, Ford (2011) points out that an organization's voice is not the only one amid a crisis. Crisis managers have less control over social media messages, and the information they offer may be

misinterpreted by the public or witnesses to an occurrence, leading them to generate their own opinions on the incident.

Finally, as information received through these channels does not travel through a gatekeeper, many stakeholders believe it is reliable (Richter, 2014). The process of choosing and approving which stories make it through the "gates" of traditional news media to their intended audience is known as "gatekeeping" (McQuail, 2010). To mold, regulate, disseminate, or conceal information before it is made available to the public in the conventional media news routine, gatekeeping is required (Shoemaker, Eichholz, Kim, & Wrigley, 2001). Gatekeeping strives to improve the objectivity, credibility, and newsworthiness of conventional media material (Siah, Bansal, & Pang, 2010). The gatekeeping process in crisis communication is represented in the sources used. To create a trustworthy and newsworthy piece, reporters and editors must sort through rumours and contradicting stories. A number of criteria, including assertiveness, perceived trustworthiness, user-friendliness, and quotability, influences a journalist's source selection.

While people working in conventional media alone evaluate sources and newsworthiness, large audiences in the social media sphere review these qualities mutually. While traditional media has a gatekeeper or reporting standards in place, social media does not. Individuals can freely share whatever news they consider valuable to their peers from any source they perceive to be credible. As a direct consequence, social media users have the burden of determining the credibility of a news source. According to research, consumers of Internet news find it difficult to weed out irrelevant content. As a result, it is hard for individuals to assess Internet news objectively (Metzger, 2007; Xu, 2013). To adapt, users make over-generalization about Internet news based on previous encounters and quickly identify relevant

information. Users are selectively exposed to articles that have more practical value (motivation) and newsworthiness (capacity to assess) in this way (Metzger, 2007; Xu, 2013). A social media news narrative's factuality is influenced by a variety of factors, including the amount of online comments, the reliability of the source, and the story's current relevance. In the absence of expert gatekeeping, the veracity of a social media news story about a disaster may be called into suspicion (Xu, 2013).

For crisis communication, social media has both benefits and downsides. Because of the speed, transparency, and connection offered by these platforms, businesses could now communicate with stakeholders in a way that seems more intimate and authentic. Although speed may be a strength in crisis communication, it can also be a drawback since bad news spreads quicker than it does in traditional media. Some further negatives of social media include the potential for inadvertent crisis exposure, a limitation of influence over stakeholder interactions, limited access to certain targeted audience, and the lack of credibility of some social media content.

2.8 Country Profile

The study was conducted in Nigeria, a country located on Africa's western coast and it is the continent's most populous with a population of 216.7 million (Countrymeters, 2022). Nigeria is a nation of 36 independent states and is pluralistic and multicultural. Nigeria's Federal Capital Territory is Abuja, but Lagos is the country's largest metropolis and commercial centre. The country possesses many natural resources, most notably petroleum and natural gas reserves (Britannica, 2021). When it comes to nominal GDP and purchasing power parity (PPP), Nigeria's economy is the largest in Africa and the 27th largest in the world (Amosun, 2022). Because of its enormous population and economy, Nigeria is often referred to as the "Giant of Africa." It is considered a developing economy by the World Bank. Nigeria's

economy is diversified with growing production, finance, service, telecommunications, technology, manufacturing and entertainment industries. Nigeria's economy is mixed, consisting mainly of state-owned and private enterprises. As a result, it is classified as a mixed economy (World Bank, 2019).

Ogun state, situated in the South-western part of Nigeria, is now regarded as Nigeria's industrial heartland. Most manufacturers are situated there, and more businesses are relocating there, followed by Lagos state. The Nigerian Breweries, VITAL Products, Nestle Nigerian Plc., Dangote Group, Unilever Nigeria, Friesland CampINA Plc., Coca-Cola, Chi Limited, PZ Cussons, Beloxxi Group, and others are the main fast-moving product makers in Nigeria. Most of these companies and smaller ones also operate as distributors of fast-moving consumer items. According to the FMCG industry study in Nigeria 2019, FMCG spending in Nigeria was the biggest in Africa (\$41.7 billion). The FMCG market in Nigeria is about equivalent to the population of 120 million people (Webhaptic Intelligence Agency, 2021).

2.9 Companies' Profile

The study selected five FMCG companies in Nigeria, namely:

a) PZ Cussons Nigeria Plc.

PZ Cussons Nigeria Plc. is a Nigerian producer and distributor of consumer goods such as detergents, toiletries, soaps, and home appliances that are publicly traded. It is a sister company of the British corporation PZ Cussons Holdings, which holds the majority of the company's shares. PZ Cussons Nigeria has been in operation for almost 120 years, and its headquarters are located in Lagos. In 2006, the firm previously known as Paterson Zochonis Industries Plc. changed its name to PZ Cussons Nigeria Plc. The company has three industrial locations and a broad presence in Nigeria. PZ Cussons Nigeria Plc. produces and distributes a variety of consumer

goods and home appliances. Personal care items include Cussons infant products, Premier Cool Deo antiseptic soaps, and Morning Fresh, among many others. PZ Cussons Nigeria Plc. distributes milk products under the Coast, Nunu, and Olympic labels, refined palm oil and red palm oil under the Mamador and Devon King's brands, and YO! Yoghurt beverages. Their home appliances are sold under the Haier Thermocool brand. The company offers its electrical products via CoolWorld shops in Nigeria's main metropolitan areas.

b) Unilever Nigeria Plc.

Unilever Nigeria Plc. produces and promotes a variety of food, food ingredients, home and personal care goods for the wholesale and retail markets in Nigeria. The company manufactures and distributes soaps, toothpaste, dish cleaning liquids, washing detergents, lotions, baby items, petroleum jelly, tea, margarine, and bouillon cubes. Popular brands include Close-up and Pepsodent toothpaste; Lux, Lifebuoy, and Rexona soap; Vaseline creams and petroleum jelly; Lipton tea, Knorr and Royco bouillon cubes and flavouring; Sunlight dishwashing liquid; Omo laundry detergent; and Pears baby items. In 2001, the company, founded in 1923 and known initially as Lever Brothers (West Africa) Limited, changed its name to Unilever Nigeria Plc. Unilever Overseas Holdings BV is the parent company of Unilever Nigeria Plc. The company's headquarters are located in Lagos, Nigeria.

c) Nigerian Breweries

Nigerian Breweries Plc. is the biggest brewery in Nigeria, producing STAR, the most popular beer in the country. The company has one of the nation's most sophisticated brew plants, manufacturing various popular stouts, beers, primed beverages, malt drinks, carbonated soft drinks, cider, and energy drinks for domestic and international consumption. Lager brands include Heineken, STAR, Goldberg,

Gulder, Life, "33 Export", More, and Stella; stout is Legend; malt is Amstel Malta; ready-to-drink is Ace Passion; cider is Strongbow Apple Cider; soft drink is fayrouz, and energy drink is Climax. Nigerian Breweries Plc. has eleven breweries, two malting facilities, and twenty-six sales depots; has an expanding export market; and provides retailers and suppliers with sales, logistic, and marketing assistance. The product line is accessible in thirteen nations, including the United Kingdom, South Africa, the United States, and many Middle-East and West Company countries. Its headquarters are located in Lagos, Nigeria.

d) Nestle Nigeria Plc.

Nestle Nigeria Plc. is a Nigerian food production and marketing firm subsidiary of the world's biggest food and Beverage Corporation. The company manufactures a vast array of items for the wholesaling markets. In the food sector, well-known brands include Golden Morn, Maggi, Milo, Chocomilo; Nescafe, Nestle Pure Life, and Nido are examples of brands in the drinks market. The company's babies' line consists of the baby formula Nestle Nan and the infant cereals Nestle Nutrend, Nestle Cerelac, and Nestle Golden Morn. Nestle Nigeria also manufactures and distributes Pure Life still water. The company's headquarter is located in Lagos, Nigeria.

e) Dangote Group Plc.

Dangote Industries consists of at least thirteen subsidiaries engaged in five key industries: Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG), agro-processing, transportation, industrial, and energy. Four of the group's businesses are listed on the Nigerian Stock Exchange, with Dangote Cement, Dangote Sugar Refinery, Nascon Allied Industries, and Dangote Flour Mills being the strongest and most recognisable brands. Today, Dangote Sugar is a dominant brand that has significantly affected the Nigerian sugar

industry. Their Apapa sugar refinery is the biggest in Sub-Saharan Africa, boasting an installed capacity of 1.44MT per year.

2.10 Case Studies on the Social Media Usage in Crisis Management and Communication

Crisis managers of any corporation handling crises must perform some duties. They should have a crisis management plan (model) that they can implement and communicate with during and after a crisis. After a crisis, a properly implemented, effective, and efficient tactical crisis management approach may contribute to the organizational restoration, strength, and progress, as well as prevent future crises (Taneja *et al.*, 2014). Many research works have been carried out on the use of social media for crisis communication and management. Still, only a handful can be found in Nigerian and African literature.

A study by Ehondor & Unakalamba (2021) looked at how the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) used social media during the COVID-19 outbreak in Nigeria to communicate with the public. During the research, the researchers found that the NCDC's social media team's crisis communication efforts had a substantial impact on public image. Awareness of the NCDC's recommended preventative actions led to a change in public conduct. In spite of this, the NCDC's crisis communication on Facebook received little attention. Public uncertainty over NCDC Facebook messaging and a shift in public perception about the pandemic were found by the research.

In Nigeria, Adamolekun & Ogedengbe (2020) investigated crisis management and communication from the viewpoint of public relations. It also looked at the roots, types, aspects, qualities, templates, stages, and strategies for crisis management and crisis prevention, as well as the rudiments of crisis communication and the

stakeholders' expectancies during a crisis. The findings revealed that shareholders' expectations during a crisis are distinct and that these expectations are determined by a stakeholder's interests.

Ramluckan (2016) examined social media usage as a tool for communication during crises in a South-African context. One case study examined was “the #Feesmustfall” campaign across social media platforms in South Africa. The research established that social media is a vital communication tool during disasters and crises. Still, control systems are needed for their efficiency.

Simon *et al.* (2014) assessed the significant actions, lessons learned and use patterns from social media use in the Westgate mall crisis in Kenya. They used TwitterMate to gather, collect and analyse tweets from prominent hashtags generated by social media users, emergency responders, specific individuals, and NGOs. The study found that threat evaluation was updated through social media data. It concluded that social media presents an understandable, widely-available medium for a two-way flow of information between organisations and the public. During the crisis, all emergency responders employed and leveraged social media platforms for conversing among themselves and the public.

During the Ebola pandemic, the crisis communication plan suggested by Jeanine *et al.* (2021) centred on social media platforms (Pinterest and Twitter). Between the two platforms, significant differences in the presence of health behaviour and risk perception factors were observed. The authors advocate addressing public health specialists' Ebola-related anger, fear, and attitudinal biases. Examining the role of social media in crisis communication, Wang and Dong (2017) focused on product manipulation and multinational crises utilising desk research. They concluded that social media is an essential tool for crisis management and communication.

In Ki & Nekmat's (2014) research, the theory examined how Fortune 500 companies used Facebook communication as a form of corporate communication during a crisis. Remarkably, the authors discovered that the use of Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) yielded better results than employing traditional crisis management theories. The study disclosed that when receiving added responsibility, it got more undesirable responses from the public. They found that only a minute percentage (5.6%) of those organisations positively utilised social media for crisis communication. The authors submitted a solid association between a company's participation in two-way communication and the general positivity of stakeholders' perceptions of the organisation's crisis communication (Ki & Nekmat, 2014).

Sisco (2012) verified the consequences of SCCT reaction approaches from a charitable firm's perspective. The research conclusions established that companies attached the minor crisis responsibility to the victim situation and the most crisis responsibility to the preventable circumstances. This theory of SCCT was also tested after the outbreak of a pandemic. Kim & Liu (2012) utilised Situational Crisis Communication Theory to explore how governmental and corporate firms replied to the flu pandemic in 2009. From their results, it was discovered that governmental organisations stressed the provision of instructions and information to their audience (the public). On the other hand, corporate firms emphasised the management of reputation. The frequently adopted response strategies by these corporate companies were diminishment, denial, and bolstering response tactics.

In another research, Chewning (2015) examined the use of conventional media, social media (BP's Facebook page) during the 2010 BP oil spill crisis. The research found that the conventional media concentrated on the significant effect of the BP crisis on the environment. On the other hand, BP employed both social media and

conventional media to communicate the corrective measures to solve the crisis. BP attempted to reframe the crisis from an adverse incident to a state of action and recovery. The organisation showed it was proactive and concerned rather than carefree. Conversely, BP's stakeholders used Facebook to vent their anger and emotions. It was observed that BP employed its Facebook page for providing links to news reportage rather than communicating with its stakeholders. Muralidharan, Dillistone & Shin (2011) presented a similar submission. However, these authors added the responses from BP were fruitless in changing stakeholders' adverse opinions of BP that had developed due to the crisis, which could be a result of the crisis nature. The authors argued that the spill effects are a continuing crisis, and it may take time to be unravelled.

Dabner (2012) used a single case study methodology and investigated how a New Zealand University (the University of Canterbury) used Facebook after a colossal earthquake in 2010. The outcomes showed that the University used Facebook excellently during the crisis to provide information and enable stakeholders to relate with the university management. Similarly, Canhoto *et al.* (2015) used a single case study methodology. They studied how Dominos managed an organisational crisis in 2009. It was observed that Dominos underrated the speed and power of social media platforms in the beginning and let the crisis exacerbate. Conversely, after a while, the company posted an apology video on the same social media platform that spread the crisis. The authors suggested that companies should monitor the growth of stakeholders' opinions toward them. It is also incumbent for organisations to pinpoint the social media platforms that stakeholders often use to discuss crisis-related issues and ensure they made their presence felt on these platforms.

Ott & Theunissen (2015) examined how three big companies managed social media crises. The findings showed that these organisations do not know the importance of social media for crisis management. The authors suggested that these companies should employ social media platforms for two-way communication rather than disseminate information only. Using the chronology of the missing plane MH370 as a case study, Husain *et al.* (2014) highlighted the effects of social media on crisis communication. The utilization of social media technologies by public relations practitioners in crisis management was investigated using an online poll. It was determined that social media significantly improved crisis communication through altering crisis communication practices, such as how crises are reported and managed by businesses. Mirbabaie *et al.* (2020) conducted research to understand better the impact of sense making from Twitter crisis communication during the Hurricane Harvey tragedy. The findings highlighted the importance of information-rich players in communication networks, as well as the potential for their impact in crises like COVID-19 to reduce social media cynicism and facilitate sense making.

During the 2013 European floods in Austria, Goldgruber *et al.* (2019) looked at the use of social networking sites for crisis communication. A paucity of debate on the deployment of social media in official crisis communication was found, according to the research. Silva *et al.* (2014) evaluated how managers can tackle crises on social media platforms using three case studies of communication organisations. Results indicated that crisis planning is not consensual. It has obligatory and non-compulsory phases based on the incident.

Ly-le's (2019) study sought to identify Vietnamese firms' use of social media for crisis management and communication. Research found that, compared to conventional media, Vietnamese firms do not utilise social media for crisis

communication in the majority of cases. The researcher noted that the usage of social media in the pre-crisis phase of crisis communication is very crucial. Ly-le (2020) also did a comparative study on the use of social media for crisis communication by Vietnamese and American businesses. According to the findings of the study, Vietnamese and American companies have similar views and behaviors on the use of social media for crisis response.

Wigley & Zhang (2011) investigated how public relations practitioners employ social media in crisis communication and planning. Almost half of the practitioners said social media had been included in their crisis plans. In particular, the majority of them acknowledged using Twitter as part of their crisis preparedness, mostly to disseminate information. Researchers found that public relations professionals who use social media to prepare for crises had a greater level of confidence in their firm's ability to handle an emergency.

Brummette & Sisco (2018) examined the links that form around an organisational crisis (Chipotle's E. Coli Outbreak) and identified the most significant messages transmitted by the social media users and the conventional media. The results showed how Twitter could act as a framing tool for stakeholders in an organisation. Bygstad & Presthus (2012) examined a case study of two Scandinavian aircrafts' usage of Facebook for consumers' communication during the 2010 Ash crisis. The simplicity of Facebook allows more active communication between companies and their stakeholders. KFC and McDonald's used social media to manage their 2012 crises in China, according to Zhu *et al.* (2017). The findings showed that conventional insiders' judgments of blame attribution should be used to guide crisis response strategies. Furthermore, there were cross-cultural differences in perception

and usage of certain response methods (such as apologies)—the function of powerful social media users must be contextualized by culture.

Latonero & Shklovski (2011) presented a case study on social media use by the Los Angeles Fire Department. They argued that the practical usage of social media provided information and obtained information from the public during crises and was thoroughly connected to key people – called evangelists--- for employment of such technical inventions at the organisational level. Roshan, Warren, & Carr (2016) used a qualitative technique to investigate the usage of social media by seventeen significant Australian companies for crisis communication. According to the findings, large Australian organisations were not informed of the potential of social media for crisis communication when they employed it to respond to crises. Organizations frequently refuse to react to stakeholder messages or choose crisis response techniques that might jeopardize their image.

Using a situational crisis communication theoretical framework, the research by Kartikawangi & Dahesihsari (2020) focused on the responses of organisational communication strategies and practises to a crisis: The COVID-19 Pandemic. The findings demonstrate that all of the participants' organizations' organizational communication strategies and practices are primarily focused on the crisis preparedness and response stages. Proactive crisis management strategy, the formation of crisis management groups, and the development of supporting communication systems, such as the provision of health care facilities and communication processes for infected employees, are all crucial activities during the preparatory stage. All through the response stage, leaders and communication platforms used a wide variety of media and platforms. It was surprising to see a decrease in informal communication while formal communication was amplified and more accessible. Moreover, it was

found that assertive communication that conveyed positivity and encouragement, as well as adaptability to workers' needs and demands, were useful in helping workers completely absorb the information.

Liu & Pennington-Gray (2015) investigated the use of social media by hotels to control bed bugs. The study combined social media with the standard 4R crisis management methodology (readiness, reduction, reaction, and recovery). This article looks at how social media may be used at several stages of a bed bug crisis, such as risk mitigation, preparation, reaction, and recovery. In exploring and analyzing social media, Kaewkitipong, Chen & Ractham (2012) used a social media-based crisis management paradigm and the structuration theory. In the case of a foreseeable crisis, social media should be leveraged to meet a variety of communication needs.

Eriksson *et al.* (2016) investigated the use of Facebook and Twitter in times of crisis. Twitter was discovered to be more of a crisis prevention tool. Using hashtags, users were able to find out more about the problem (keywords). Facebook was more of a forum for arguments and discussion of the current problem. The Queensland Police Service has approximately two million Twitter followers at its maximum during the 2010/2011 Queensland floods in Australia (Olsson, 2014). They were able to follow the discussion as it moved around the topic, answering frequently asked questions. When assuming that the Internet is still up and operating, the growth of social media has been a big improvement during emergencies. When others in your network exchange and link content, it can help to lessen ambiguity.

While social media may be a very effective tool for communicating during times of crisis, some companies still have not harnessed these benefits according to various pieces of research. Jaques (2014) discovered, for example, that organizations frequently overlook monitoring operations and are therefore caught off guard by crises.

In the United States, for example, a 2011 poll found that 82 per cent of significant corporations were actively attempting to control their reputation. Only 34% of respondents used Internet monitoring, and only 10% used social media outlets (Burke, 2011). Monitoring and forecasting problems on social media are often overlooked in other countries (Ulmer *et al.*, 2015; Nguyen, 2014).

For many firms, social media is essentially another online platform for advertising goals (Kent, 2010). In the event of a crisis, they do not use these channels to communicate with their customers or stakeholders. Many organisations may respond to stakeholders, but only officially, according to Kent & Taylor (2018). The majority of people do not desire a true one-on-one conversation. Social media platforms are effective in crisis communication because they can handle all three stages of a crisis, according to public relations pros. While formulating strategies to manage possible emergencies, organisations may use these platforms to continuously evaluate and exchange information. Social media is yet to be used by many organisations at any phase of crisis communication. Despite their relevance, the aforementioned empirical (literature) analysis shows that organisational social media usage for crisis communication receives less research contributions from Nigerian academics. This study contributes to the current body of literature in this sector and address an identified gap.

2.11 Theoretical Frameworks

This study is conceptually anchored on the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) by Coombs (1995), the Social-Mediated Crisis Communication (SMCC) Model (Austin *et al.*, 2012) and Media Dependency Theory. These three theories are used to explore the corporate communication strategies adopted by FMCG companies in Nigerian on social media platforms in managing the COVID-19 crisis.

2.11.1 Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT)

Timothy Coombs proposed the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) in 1995. This gives a framework for understanding how to optimize crisis communication's brand protection and highlights how important elements of crises influence attributions as per the reputation of the company and the crisis itself (Coombs, 2007). SCCT was developed with the aid of Coombs' attribution theory (Coombs, 1995). According to the attribution theory, after an event occurs, individuals will strive to find out why it happened. Even if the persons involved have little to no awareness of the situation, they will assign blame to someone (Coombs & Holladay, 2010). To put it another way, according to Coombs' argument, a company's crisis response approach is determined by its crisis type and stakeholders' attribution of responsibility (Johansen & Frandsen, 2007).

Coombs' theory is mainly context-oriented and centred on public relations. There are purposeful and ongoing attempts made to establish and maintain cooperative relationship between a firm and the public via public relations (Public Relations News, 2013). From this definition, it can be inferred that public relations are communicating orally and in written form. Thus, it can be contended that public relations deal with managing relationships with stakeholders through oral communication and concrete actions to better the organization's reputation. For example, a company promoting high quality must live up to its words by delivering high-quality products and services. Hence, there must be a connection between what is promoted and the equivalent delivered actions to create a positive image.

Furthermore, according to Coombs (1995), the choice of crisis communication technique is linked to the company's crisis responsibility. According to him, there are three stages to a crisis: pre-crisis, crisis, and post-crisis. The three steps are designed

to develop normative techniques for optimizing the impact of crisis responses (Coombs & Holladay, 2010). As a result, Coombs' theory takes into account the context and condition of the crisis while determining the best crisis communication strategy for preserving the company's image. The organization can respond more quickly to a crisis by adopting a set of techniques for selecting a crisis communication plan (Heath & Millar, 2004). More than the business, the crisis communication plan is fine-tuned to the impacted stakeholders. This is because there are high expectations for the organization's response when it is given a responsibility mandate (Coombs & Holladay, 2002).

2.11.1.1 Crisis Type and Intensifying Factors

Coombs (2007) identified the first step of crisis management, known as the identification stage (pre-crisis). This stage deals with identifying the type of crisis type to evaluate the reputational threats the organization might suffer from the birth of the crisis. This stage has two steps. The first step deals with determining the crisis type and thus the danger that the crisis presents to the reputation and image of the company. These three degrees of reputational threats are severe, moderate and mild. The first step, as itemized by Coombs (2007), also addresses the level of attribution. Stronger attribution of responsibility creates more reputational damages (Coombs, 2007). Table 2.5 and Figure 2.2 outline the crisis types and levels of acknowledgement.

Table 2.5: Type of crisis by the level of responsibility (Adapted from Coombs, 2014, p. 15).

Victim Cluster: Minimal attribution of crisis responsibility
Violence in the workplace
Rumours
Natural disasters

Malevolence
Accidental Cluster: Low attribution of crisis responsibility
Product damage caused by a technical fault
Challenges
Accidents caused by a technical error
Preventable cluster: Strong attribution of crisis responsibility
Accidents caused by human error
Product damage caused by human mistake
Misconduct in the workplace

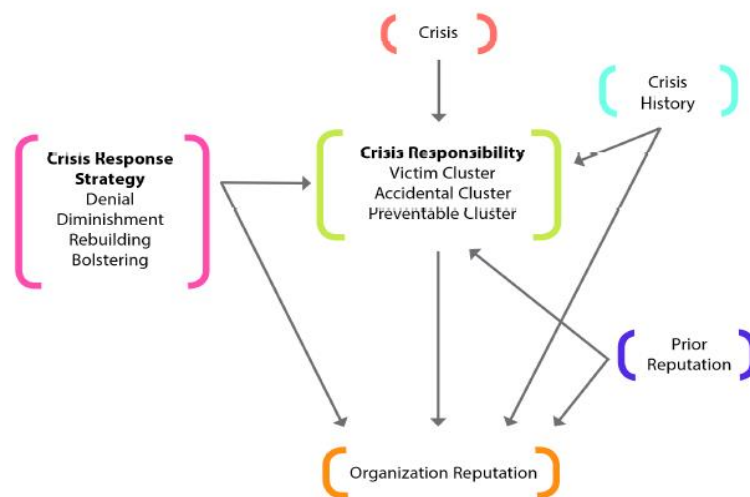


Figure 2.2: Situational Crisis Communication Theory
(Source: Coomb, 2007, p. 17)

Each sort of crisis, according to Coombs (2012), generates acknowledgements of responsibility among stakeholders (Coombs, 2012). From Coombs (2012)'s list of crisis categories, it can be deduced that the victim cluster of crises bears relatively little responsibility since stakeholders perceive the firm as a victim of the crisis. Accident cluster crises have a low attribution of responsibility, but avoidable cluster crises have a high attribution of responsibility since the corporation was intentionally participating

in the actions and behaviour that led to the crisis. Although most crises fall into one of the above categories, the firm and its shareholders may differ over the crisis-type. When this happens, the crisis management team should consider putting the stakeholders' framework into action (Coombs, 2012).

The intensifying elements are the second step two in the first stage. These variables may have an influence on stakeholders and are based on the company's crisis history and previous reputation, assuming the firm has previously experienced a comparable crisis. In this instance, stakeholders frequently assign the company greater blame than the crisis type predicts. Thus, the present issue will serve as a stronger link in the company's reputation. Reputational vulnerability is increased as a consequence of a negative past (Coombs, 2012).

2.11.1.2 Crisis Response Strategy

To begin the process of responding to the crisis, it is necessary to first determine the crisis-type and the brand damage it poses. According to Coombs (2007), companies' reputation is dependent on how the public can acknowledge firms' response to a crisis. A suitable crisis management plan will have the ability to reverse legalizations and safeguard the company's reputation in the public's eyes. This can translate to better finances for the company (Coombs, 2010; Kartikawangi & Dahesihsari, 2020). The basic reaction techniques may be classified into three postures: denial, diminishment, and rebuilding. In his suggested theory, Coombs (2015) presented ten crisis-response techniques capable of assisting organizational managers in implementing appropriate crisis-mitigation actions. Coombs (2015) categorizes the ten most common methods into four postures: diminishment, denial, reconstruction, and boosting.

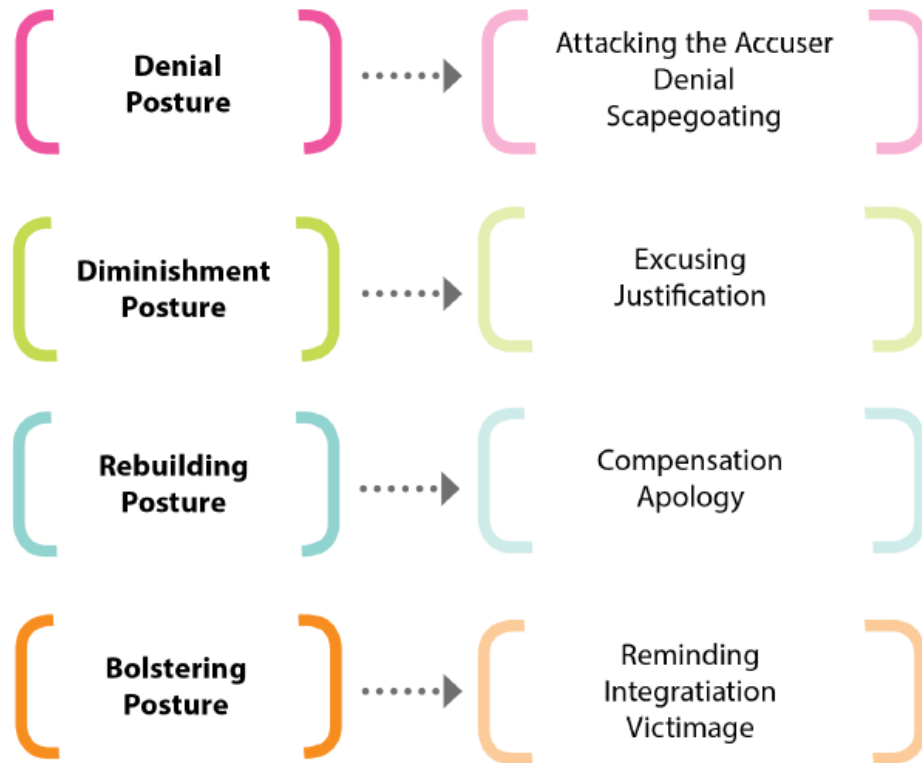


Figure 2.3: SCCT Posture Response Strategies
(Adapted from Coombs, 2015, p. 19)

In addition, Table 2.6 below briefly explains the ten response approaches that can be employed as a cluster analysis study.

Table 2.6: Crisis Response Approaches in the Situational Crisis Communication Theory Cluster Analysis Study (Source: Coombs & Holladay, 2009, p. 4)

S/NO	Strategy	Details
1	Apology	The management bores total responsibility for the crisis and seeks clemency from the shareholders.
2	Attack	The alleged management confronts the individual or group that asserts something is not in accordance with plan.

3	Compassion	As a form of compensation, the management offers cash gifts or other assistance to fatalities.
4	Concern	The management feels worried and shows concern for victims.
5	Denial	The management makes claims of no crisis and refutes it.
6	Excuse	The management makes efforts to curtail crisis responsibility by asserting a lack of intention to cause damage or incapability to control the event.
7	Ingratiation	The management sings applauses of other shareholders and reminds the public of previous virtuous works the organization had done.
8	Justification	The management tries to minimalize the alleged damages caused by the crisis.
9	Regret	The management shows remorse about the crisis.
10	Scapegoat	The management put blames on some external entities for the crisis.

When firms adopt a denial stance, they may deny or dismiss any link to the problem. The diminishment stance allows companies to reduce the attribution of crisis-related organizational limitations. A corporation might use the rebuilding stance to try to enhance its reputation and reclaim confidence in order to repair its image by taking responsibility. Each of the three postures reflects a distinct strategy with comparable communicative aims, indicating how much responsibility an organization seems to assume in a disaster and how much sympathy it appears to have for the victims (Coombs, 2004). The secondary technique, also known as the boosting posture

strategy, can be used in conjunction with the direct approach. An effective working connection between the organisation and its stakeholders is one of its primary objectives. (Coombs, 2004).

When a strategy is conciliatory and concerned with the fatalities, shareholders can perceive the company as taking on greater responsibility for the catastrophe. Defensive strategies, on the other hand, are intended to transfer blame away from the organization. By the organization's stakeholders, this might be seen as roughly reliable or unreliable (Coombs, 2007). According to Coombs, the company is unlikely to use more than one crisis communication strategy. With just a few exceptions, the techniques can be combined in a variety of ways. The purpose of denial techniques is to deny that a crisis exists, whereas rebuilding and diminishment approaches acknowledge that a problem exists. Denial tactics, according to Coombs, should not be used with rebuilding or diminishment efforts (Coombs, 2004). Furthermore, Coombs claims that taking revenge on the accused is a self-protective strategy.

2.11.2 Social-Mediated Crisis Communication (SMCC) Model

The SMCC framework emphasises the need of incorporating social media into the communications matrix (which also includes traditional media and word-of-mouth communication) during crises (Liu, Jin, Austin, & Janoske, 2012). The BMCC model (Blog-Mediated Crisis Communication) developed into the SMCC paradigm (Jin & Liu, 2010). Before, during, and after the crisis, crisis managers used the BMCC model to identify major blogs and develop communication tactics for these famous blogs. BMCC proposes that crisis managers with few capabilities must identify popular blogs to utilise resources and assess competences, as suggested by the BMCC model. The quality of a blog's content is determined by the blogger's ability to authenticate and verify facts, as well as their level of engagement and productivity. The BMCC model

proposes that well-known blogs address the emotional and informational needs of their readers during times of crisis by providing issue-specific opinion recommendations.

According to the original BMCC model, a blog's effect was evaluated using a specification matrix and offered reaction and recovery options depending on a number of organisational and crisis aspects (Jin & Liu, 2010; Liu, Jin, Austin, & Janoske, 2012). Following its expansion to encompass all social media platforms (blogs inclusive), the BMCC model became known as the Social-Mediated Crisis Communication (SMCC) (Liu, Jin, Austin, & Janoske, 2012). As a consequence of a continuous investigation into the impact of social media and social channels on crisis management, it was given a new name and a larger emphasis (Liu, Jin, Briones, & Kuch, 2012). This means that social media crisis communication model highlights the importance of blogs, offline interactions and newspapers on social media networks (Jin, Liu, & Austin, 2014).

An organisation, offline word-of-mouth communication, mainstream media, and social media all interact throughout the crises' pre-crisis, crisis, and recovery stages, as shown by the SMCC model. Figure 2.4 depicts the model in practice.

Social-mediated Crisis Communication Model

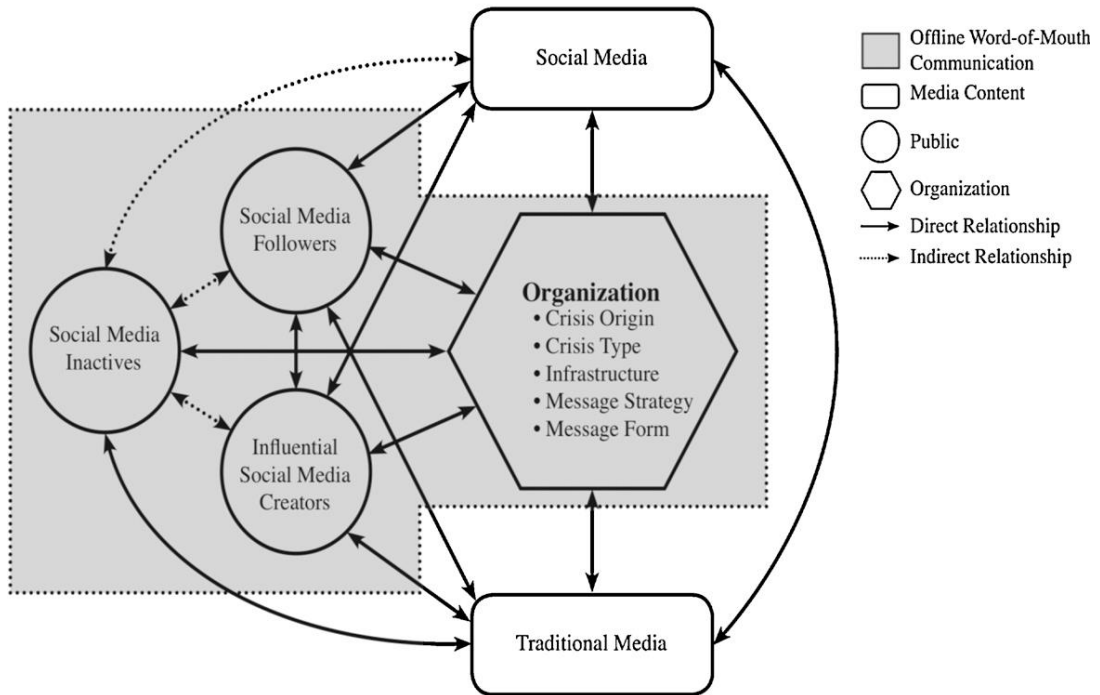


Figure 2.4: Social-Mediated Crisis Communication Model (Adapted from Jin, Liu, & Austin, 2014, p. 75).

The SMCC model's organizational block comprises five principles that organizations should consider while responding to emergent challenges and crises. They include the crisis source, the crisis nature, the structure of the organisation, the communication plan, and the messaging format. The crisis origin identifies the source of the problem, whether it is inside or external to the company, and has an influence on how the public assigns blame for the crisis (Coombs, 2007). Internal organisational crises (for example, discriminatory labour practises, corrupt administration, or mismanagement of funds) tend to elicit a more unfavourable response from the public than external crises (– for example, natural disasters or terrorist attacks) (Lee, 2004; Jin, Liu, & Austin, 2014). The attribution of blame is the basis for a number of different crisis messaging strategies (Jin & Liu, 2010).

Furthermore, depending on the characteristics of the crisis, the kind of crisis may be identified, which might affect the attribution of blame (Jin & Liu, 2010;

Coombs, 2012). There are three types of crises: victim-based (i.e., the firm is also a victim of the crisis), accidental (such as technology breakdowns) and deliberate, according to SCCT (i.e., the crisis is perceived as preventable and the organisation as placing people at risk). Companies should consider the impact of the crisis on masses and adjust their crisis response strategies as necessary. The third element is the structure of the organisation. In the context of crisis management, the question arises as to whether a company's communication should be universal or tailored to specific groups, such as media organisations and groups (Jin, Liu, & Austin, 2014). Crisis recovery may be facilitated more quickly if local authorities can convey a consistent narrative based on the causes of the crisis and the crisis itself (Liu, Jin, Briones, & Kuch, 2012).

In the SMCC model, a single company's crisis management issues are outlined, and their reaction to the situation is the primary repository of crisis information. A successful crisis plan integrates the viewpoints of several organisations, according to Atkins (2010), since crises seldom impact only one business. In circumstances when many organisations are engaged in a crisis, the technique might be applied. In addition, SMCC researchers are aware that external organisations and public and media responses to the crisis are beyond the framework of this model (Jin & Liu, 2010).

The communication strategy is represented by the message strategy, which is also known as the flow of information. There are two types of arrows in the flow of information: those that indicate direct connections and those that indicate indirect connections, as shown in Figure 2.4. Active social media users, for example, have a secondary link to the platform, collecting information from the network's producers and followers in this way. Using arrows to represent a two-way, reciprocal information flow is another useful representation of communication. In the case of a crisis, for

example, both traditional media and social media might benefit from the other's reporting by incorporating social media into their own content creation processes (Jin, Liu, and Austin, 2014).

The last component of organisation is the message form. Three methods of crisis communication are emphasised: conventional media, social media, and word-of-mouth on the offline side. It is important, in this model, to place the company in response to a crisis, as well as the primary audiences, inside a grey box to symbolise the pervasive nature of offline word of mouth contact between its customers and followers on social media. One of the most important aspects of using social media is that it has a direct impact on the organisation, its essential followers and the mainstream media. However, traditional media has a direct connection to key users and the organisation itself. The crisis message form explains how a crisis is disseminated or communicated. A range of crisis communications mediums are taken into account by the SMCC Model, including social media, traditional media, and offline word of mouth. These statements may be accepted more easily if they are presented in a certain way (Liu, Jin, & Austin, 2013; Schultz *et al.*, 2011). A recent study found that people are more willing to accept ambiguous statements from an organisation in times of crisis when crisis information is provided via conventional media (Jin, Liu, & Austin, 2014).

The SMCC model divides the information-seeking, generating, and disseminating public into three distinct groups based on their role in each stage of a crisis. These critical audiences include influential social media creators, inactive social media users, and social media followers (Jin, Liu, & Austin, 2014). Influential social media creators gather and disseminate crisis information over the Internet. Followers of social media creators absorb and disseminate content provided on social media, both

offline and online. Finally, those that do not actively contribute to social media are known as social media inactives. Though they are inactive, they obtain crises information from creators, social media followers, or other inactives through other means, such as word-of-mouth communication and mass media.

2.11.3 Media Systems Dependence (MSD) Theory

The media systems dependency theory developed by Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur (1976) is also used as a theoretical framework in this research. Media dependence is defined by Ball-Rokeach (1998) as “a theory regarding the causes and the implications of this dependency relations: its genesis; variation across individuals, time, and circumstance; and its consequences” (p.17). In the framework of Khalifa & Khalifa (2020), the following are the fundamental assumptions:

- a) Due to the constant changes in the overall balance of the social structure, the demand for information and news rises and diminishes.
- b) Access to information, simplicity of use, and other aspects of the media’s social structure all impact people’s motivations for seeking information. This dependency on the media system rises as more people turn to alternate news and information sources.
- c) Personal and societal objectives, individual demands and interests in receiving the information have a role in how much people rely on media sources for information. To some extent, the degree to which people are dependent on the media is determined by demographic factors (such as age, gender, social class, and education).
- d) When media systems provide a wide range of information services, the likelihood of accomplishing the media message of intellectual, behavioural, and physiological impacts increases, and the impact increases in times of conflict and crisis.

- e) Increased engagement with people and persuasion are more frequent for those who are media-dependent (p. 331).

Generally, the theory claims that as the public begins to rely on the media to satisfy their needs, the media subsequently becomes the foremost provider of information they consume (Li, 2014; Kasirye, 2021). In other words, connections are formed between people and the media due to media coverage of topics of interest to the public, such as news and information on a particular topic (Grant & Meadows, 2020). Researchers claim that “media dependency is not a one-way mechanism but rather the media, social system, and the public depend on one other”. Since its inception in the 1970s, the theory has served as a guide for research examining the interrelationship between media, society, and the general public. Despite this, new forms of technology have emerged that need testing of the theory to understand the consequences of media reliance on news coverage (Li, 2014; Kasirye, 2021). During various crises, such as the N1H1 outbreak (Hu & Zhang, 2014) and the China earthquakes (Jiang & Ouyang, 2008), social media was very instrumental in directing the public on what to do due to the reliance they have on their media platforms.

Thus, this study used these theories to know how the communication strategies FMCG companies in Nigeria used in managing relationships with their stakeholders (consumers) through online communication and concrete actions to better the organization’s reputation. SCCT theory guides the current research in understanding how FMCG companies related with one of their major stakeholders (primarily the consumers) as a way of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. In other words, SCCT guides this research to discover which crisis response strategies did FMCG companies employed when the COVID-19 pandemic started.

On the other hand, SCCT's major focus is on how an organization should handle and overcome crises. This theory does not fully justify this research, as it does not incorporate the type of communication medium used for crisis communication. Crisis communication conduct may be affected by a variety of information sources (social media, conventional media, or offline word-of-mouth communications), however the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) (Coombs, 2012) overlooks this. Thus, the SMCC model was used to describe the interaction between FMCG companies during the COVID-19 pandemic and their consumers (followers of influential social media authors who receive their crisis information on social media).

In addition, media dependency theory analyses the function of media during times of crisis and societal transformation. This theory provides a simple justification of how the social media plays a significant role during crises, making it easier to comprehend why social media should be used during crises. The theory illustrates how media organizations, individual journalists, and the public all share a dependency-based, organic relationship. Hence, this study used media dependence theory to illustrate how Nigerian FMCG companies relied on social media platforms to disseminate vital crisis messages to the public (consumers).

Chapter 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The preceding chapter discussed pertinent research on crisis communication, crisis management, and social media usage in crisis communications. This chapter discusses the research approaches and methods employed to carry out this study. This is because the methodology utilised to generate information on every scientific subject is critical (Ngulube, 2015). This chapter details the study's procedural techniques. Additionally, it highlights the research methodology by providing information about the population, research paradigm, sample size, sampling procedures, research techniques, research design, ethical clearance, data collection methods, research instruments and reliability and validity of the study. Additionally, the chapter gives the procedures for data analysis.

The research questions that this research provides answers to are:

- i. Do selected FMCG companies in Nigeria have crisis management plans?
- ii. How did the selected Nigerian FMCG companies communicate with their consumers (public) on social media platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- iii. What are the benefits and shortcomings of employing social media platforms as a communication tool for FMCG organizations during the COVID-19 pandemic?

- iv. What is the most efficient platform of social media that selected Nigerian FMCG companies used in communicating with their targeted audience during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- v. Is it important for selected Nigerian FMCG companies to monitor and evaluate social media during the COVID-19 pandemic?

3.1 Research Paradigm

A paradigm is described as "the web of epistemological, ontological, and methodological foundations" of the researcher (Guba, 1990, p. 17). The interpretivism paradigm is used in this study. Contrary to positivists, interpretative scholars argue that there are numerous interpretations of occurrences (Orlikowski & Baroudi, 1991). As a result, researchers rely heavily on participants' perspectives on the event under investigation, attempt to comprehend the meanings assigned to the phenomenon by others, and seek a common relativistic understanding (Creswell, 2014). In other words, interpretivist researchers study the event in its natural environment from the participants' perspective without imposing their own.

The interpretivist paradigm was used in this study. The interpretivist paradigm was appropriate for this study since social media is viewed as a social occurrence occurring within a geographical setting. The research concentrated on researching individuals rather than items, preferring to relate with the subject, permitting better knowledge of their social context and views. As there were no established dependent or independent variables in this study, it adopted an interpretative position. Thus, the researcher explores this study's organisational crisis communication phenomena by iterating between observation and interpretation, collecting suitable data (using both quantitative and qualitative approaches), then detailing the observations and results.

3.2 Research Approach

A research approach is "proposals and processes for study that cover the phases from general hypotheses to precise methods of gathering data, assessment, and presentation" (Creswell, 2014, p. 4). A study may be conducted inductively or deductively. According to Bryman & Bell (2005), a deductive method begins with a theory, develops hypotheses, and then experimentally tests the hypotheses. Inductive inquiry begins with the reality and progresses to theoretical considerations (Ly-le, 2019). While the deductive approach appears to be a linear process, numerous factors indicate that this is not the case. New theoretical ideas may emerge before the research conclusion, and the data collected may prove irrelevant. The data may not correspond to the original hypothesis or research questions (Ly-le, 2019).

The researcher implemented a deductive approach. It started with a study of the literature and then developed research questions. With the theory and study objectives in place, empirical research began by collecting primary quantitative and qualitative data from participants (a process known as "mixed approach" or "triangulation"). A deductive technique lets the researcher learn what the theories say about the topic and conduct a well-informed, practical assessment. The mixed-method involves "collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, synthesizing the two forms of data, and applying various designs that could incorporate various theories and theoretical foundations" (Creswell, 2014, p. 4). According to Creswell (2014), mixed-method design is advantageous when either a quantitative or qualitative approach alone is insufficient to offer an adequate grasp of the problem, but a combination of the two is. This study employed a mixed-method approach, with online surveys administered via online forms and in-depth analysis conducted via online interviews.

3.2.1 Quantitative Approach

Quantitative research is a technique for investigating the connection between variables to evaluate objective theories (Creswell, 2014). The quantitative technique was the guiding principle in this research since it was used to examine and quantify the problem using statistical data. For instance, the number of individuals who support or oppose specific assertions, the number of people who agree or disagree with a certain statement, the number of people who reply "no" or "yes" to a specific question, and, finally, the researcher's interpretation of the data (Fidel, 2008; Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). This is because the quantitative method often involves using measurements to ascertain the theory's validity and may be separated from the qualitative approach by its "epistemological and ontological considerations" (Bryman, 2012). This data collection method is defined by using close-ended questions and the analysis or presentation of data using numbers or numeric figures (Creswell, 2014). In quantitative research, questionnaires are the most frequently utilized data collection instrument. This research uses an online questionnaire. The questionnaire sought to assess how FMCG firms in Nigeria communicated with their customers during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as whether effective communication with their customers took place during the crisis.

3.2.2 Qualitative Approach

Qualitative research is described as "a technique for identifying and understanding the knowledge that people or organizations attribute to a societal or human event" (Creswell, 2014, p. 4). Qualitative research is regarded as exploratory. Qualitative research aims to thoroughly understand an individual's perspectives, motives, and underlying causes. Qualitative approaches, such as in-depth interviews, give a more thorough and complete description than a questionnaire. The interview

facilitated the free expression of thoughts and provided insight into the participants' perspectives, which aided the research. It enhanced communication with respondents and allowed for complement questions.

Interviews are viewed as a technique for eliciting personal information about the respondent's perceptions. This study adopted a semi-structured interviewing technique. The goal of a semi-structured interview is to get the interviewee and the questioner thinking critically and getting to the heart of what they are experiencing from each other. With the help of ideas or new information learned during the interview, the reported occurrence is investigated from multiple angles. Interviews that incorporate features of both structured and unstructured methods are referred to as "semi-structured." (Bernard, 2011). Due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic (which limits physical access to these companies), the duration of the study and geographical distance, an online interview was chosen.

3.3 The Study's Population

A population may be considered a vast collection of components from which a researcher derives a sample or extrapolates findings. Each feature that satisfies defined theoretical definitions has the possibility of being sampled (Neuman & Babbie, 2013). The study's population is a critical component of the study's design. The population collects all features of the inquiry that are suitable or pertinent for the research, such as individuals, organisations, or teams. (Gerring, 2012). However, Ngulube (2005) and Bless & Smith (1995) emphasised that the researcher must properly characterise the population before collecting data.

The target population for this research was workers of five FMCG companies in Nigeria who work in Corporate Communications, Public Relations, Human Resource, and Administrative departments. These departments were purposely chosen

because they have direct contact with the public (consumers) and are best equipped to respond to the study's questionnaire and interview questions. Though the administrative and Human Resource departments are not directly involved in crisis communication, they were included in the study because they play a huge role in crisis planning. The Human Resource department is vital in crisis communication and management because they understand the needs of employees and customers for a company's survival after a crisis. According to the data provided by the Human Resource (HR) managers of these companies, the total number of employees working in these departments is 1220. Thus, the total population for this study is 1220 employees.

3.3.1 Sample Size

When conducting a study, the sample size is the number of individuals or data considered in the study. Generally, the sample size should be no less than 10% of the population for most studies. Therefore, for this present research, the sample size is a minimum of 122 employees (i.e. 10% of the total population). However, since this study used purposive sampling for recruiting participants for the study, no general sample strategy is required to determine the number of study participants when using purposive sampling. According to Bernard (2011), the number of individuals who can be contacted by the researcher determines the sample size (Bernard, 2011). Therefore, the sample size for study equals to the number of employees who responded to the online questionnaire.

3.4 Sampling Methods

Sampling is the process of choosing a subclass or a proportion of the total population for analysis. Thus, the sample should be viewed as a proxy for the entire population (Bailey, 1994; Bless Higson-Smith, 2006). Non-probability and

probability sampling methods were used in this study. The FMCG firms that participated in the research were chosen using a random (probability) sample technique. A purposive (non-probability) sampling method was used to choose the respondents for the questionnaire and interviews. The following paragraphs explain how the research used these sampling methods in selecting the participants for this study.

3.4.1 Probability Sampling

Probability sampling pertains to the selection of a subset from a group based on the randomness theory, commonly termed as random selection or chance (Neuman, 2012). With random sampling, each member of a population has an even chance of being included in the sample, which is why the phrase "random sampling" is used (Ghauri & Gronhaug, 2005). The FMCG companies that participated in the research were chosen using a simple random sampling technique. Simple random sampling entails selecting a sample using randomly generated numbers. This is the easiest of all sampling methods, requiring a single random selection and no previous information of the populace.

This study selected ten FMCG companies using simple random sampling. Since the COVID-19 pandemic affected every firm in the FMCG industry, each company had an equal probability of being selected for the research. The researcher started with an online search of major Fast-Moving Consumers Goods (FMCG) companies in Nigeria. Moreover, there is no data to specify the number of FMCG companies in Nigeria. Thus, the researcher selected ten Nigerian FMCG firms randomly from a blog post that stated "Top 20 (twenty) FMCG companies in Nigeria" (Williams, 2021).

3.4.2 Non-Probability Sampling

The researcher employed non-probability sampling technique to recruit participants for the interviews and questionnaires. Purposive sampling was employed for this research. Researchers use this approach of non-probability sampling after determining their study purpose and the specific characteristics of eligible persons to recruit participants (Bernard, 2011; Jugenheimer *et al.*, 2014). Researchers can save time, money, and effort by screening out individuals who don't meet the criteria for the study. No general sample strategy is used to determine the number of participants to include in each stratum. The number of individuals who can be contacted by the researcher determines the sample size (Bernard, 2011). Finally yet importantly, Bernard (2011) asserted that researchers working with hard-to-find populations must depend on purposive sampling at all times. If the researchers are unable to get a random sample, they must use their social network to find respondents, send messages and request for participation, and wait for the right people to get in touch.

Due to the research's unique focus on usage of social media in crisis communication and management, the researcher resolved that the survey's respondents should have a strong background in public relations and crisis communication studies. They should be people who interact directly with consumers. Thus, the respondents to the questionnaire were purposefully chosen based on their departments within the selected firms. The study included all personnel in the Corporate Communications, Public Relations, Human Resource (HR), and Administrative departments of the ten chosen FMCG companies in Nigeria. Additionally, interviewees were purposefully selected using a non-probability technique. The sample population was carefully chosen based on their experience, skill, and understanding of the subject. These participants were crisis managers or Heads of Department (HODs) of Corporate

Communications/Human Resource department of selected FMCG companies in Nigeria.

3.5 Data Collection Method

The data collection method refers to the procedures and instruments used to conduct research within a specific research strategy, such as mixed methodologies, quantitative, qualitative, to guide the study (Creswell, 2014). This research was based on data derived from primary and secondary data sources to fully understand the research and make an appropriate generalization about the population of interest.

3.5.1 Instrument for Primary Data Collection

The primary source of data was obtained from the employees working in the corporate communication, public relations, administrative, and human resources departments of selected Fast-Moving Consumers Goods (FMCG) companies in Nigeria. Researchers create research instruments to help them reach their goals while conducting a research. The primary research instruments for this study are online questionnaire and an online semi-structured interview, both of which have the primary goal of addressing the research questions. Following up on the online questionnaire replies, the interviews were conducted in order to gain more insights.

3.5.1.1 Online Questionnaires

This study used a structured online questionnaire as one of its primary research instruments. The structured online questionnaire was used to gather information on respondents' viewpoints, knowledge, and experiences in this area of research. Close-ended questions need participants to select one of the provided possibilities. A close-ended inquiry offers participants a restricted number of response alternatives. The options may include "yes" or "no," range, frequency, level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction, or any other independently incompatible options. Responses with a

single yes or no answer make data entry, tabulation, and analysis easy and simple (Jugenheimer *et al.*, 2014). Additionally, the researcher included the option "other" to allow individuals to express themselves freely. The survey consists of ordinal and nominal responses to close-ended questions.

The questionnaire for this study is divided into five segments (See Appendix B). Section A was used to collect data on the participants' sociodemographic characteristics. Demographic data is significant because it enables comparisons by gender, educational level, and other variables. Additionally, demographic data may aid in the generalizability of findings (Neuman, 2006). The demographics section of this study's questionnaire gathered data on the number of employees, the duration of the service year, the job function, and the FMCG industry to which the firm belongs. The demographic questions aimed to ascertain the feasibility of utilising the sample population selected. The demographics section was also helpful in classifying the sub-groups to which each participant belonged.

Section B included questions on Nigerian FMCG companies' use of social media. Questions in this section were to gauge if these companies have strong social media presence on the Internet. Moreover, the questions were to ascertain what these companies use social media for, their frequency of using social media, if they monitor their social media accounts, and how they monitor the accounts. These questions featured multiple-choice, yes-or-no, frequency ranges, and other mutually incompatible possibilities.

The third section of the questionnaire (Section C) focused on asking questions related to the availability and implementation of crisis management plans by FMCG companies in Nigeria. This section was aimed at answering the first research question which was: "*Do Nigerian FMCG companies have crisis management plans?*" The

questions focused on ascertaining the presence and implementation of crisis management plans by FMCG companies in Nigeria during the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, there were questions relating to the inclusion of social media in the crisis management plans (e.g., if social media was included in the crisis management plans and the availability of crisis management teams).

The fourth section of the questionnaire was based on questions concerning how FMCG firms communicated with their customers. The section was based on the use of social media by FMCG companies during the COVID-19 crisis. This section aimed to answer two research questions namely;

“What are the benefits and shortcomings of employing social media platforms as a communication tool for Nigerian FMCG companies during the COVID-19 pandemic?” and “What is the most efficient platform of social media that Nigerian FMCG companies employed in communicating with their targeted audience during the COVID-19 pandemic?”

This will help to ascertain the extent in which these companies used social media during the COVID-19 crisis and the most effective social media platform used. The questions in this section were based on the 5-Point Likert scale of “Strongly disagree”, “Disagree”, “Undecided”, “Agree” and “Strongly agree”.

The last section (Section E) was used to ascertain if social media is an essential tool that was employed for crisis communication and management during the COVID-19 pandemic. It measured the significance of monitoring and employing social media for crisis communication during the COVID-19 pandemic. The questions in this section were based on the 5-Point Likert scale of “Strongly disagree”, “Disagree”, “Undecided”, “Agree” and “Strongly agree”. The 31st, 40th and 42nd of the survey questions were taken directly from the research of Ramluckan (2016). In addition, questions 38, 39, 41 and 43 were taken directly from the research of Ly-le (2019). Overall, the questions were simple to comprehend due to their clarity and brevity.

Online forms is one approach for quickly creating an online survey and collecting replies in an online spreadsheet. The survey was prepared using an online form (generated on www.questionpro.com¹). The Human Resource (HR) managers of the sampled population was e-mailed the generated URL link to the online form.

3.5.1.2 Online Interviews

Purposive sampling was used to choose participants for the interviews. The sample population was carefully selected based on their experience, skill, and understanding of the subject. These participants were crisis managers/Heads of Department (HODs) of Corporate Communications or Human Resource department. Initially, ten participants were selected since the researcher intended to use ten FMCG companies for the study. However, only five interviewees responded as only five FMCG companies showed interest to participate in the study. The interview was a semi-structured one. It was divided into two broad parts: “Crisis management during the COVID-19 pandemic” and “The Use of Social Media for Crisis Communication during the COVID-19 Pandemic” (See Appendix C). The interview questions were to gain more clarifications on the results obtained from the questionnaires.

The first section (Section A) of the interview aimed to ascertain the availability and implementation of crisis management plans by FMCG companies in Nigeria. Questions such as *“Were your company’s business strategies changed to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the company?”*, *“Is social media included in the crisis management plan of your company?”* were asked under this section. The section tackled the research question: *“Do Nigerian FMCG companies have crisis management plans?”* Section B of the interview questions aimed to assess the use of social media in crisis communication by FMCG companies in Nigeria. The questions

¹ QuestionPro is a leading survey solutions company that provides a wide range of applications to measure and manage customer experience, employee engagement, and the pulse of the audience.

were to elicit the extent these companies employed social media during the COVID-19 pandemic. Questions such as *“To what extent did your organization use social media during the COVID-19 crisis?”*, *“What do you think are the benefits or challenges of using social media during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic?”* were included under this section. It should be noted that questions 8a, and 10 were taken and modified from the research of Ly-le (2019). On the contrary, questions 12 and 13 were taken directly from the research Ramluckan (2016).

Furthermore, the researcher planned to use an online interview (Google Meet) to conduct oral interviews. Nevertheless, as the researcher proposed this communication medium to the interviewees, three of the respondents said they would prefer to have the interview in a written format instead of the oral form. Some interviewees responded that their schedules would not permit them to have an oral interview. Thus, the researcher agreed to their terms and changed the interview format to a written one for all the participants. The researcher emailed the interviewees the interview questions (in MS word format). The interviewees filled in their leisure time and forwarded the responses to the researcher. The names of the interviewees were confidential, and code names were used to represent each interviewee.

Regarding participants' demographic characteristics, three interviewees were males, while the remaining two were females. Three of them are working in the “Food & Beverages” category of the Fast-Moving Consumers Goods (FMCG) sector; one works within the “Alcohol and Cigarettes” industry. In contrast, one works with the “Personal Care” category of the FMCG sector. Three (3) of the interviewees are Heads of Department (HODs) of Public Relations department, one heads the Corporate Communications of his FMCG company while the last interviewee is the HOD of

Human Resource (HR) department. Table 3.1 illustrates the demographics of the survey participants, including their industry and gender.

Table 3.1: Demographics of interviewees

Interviewee	Gender	Category of FMCG
Interviewee A	Male	Food & Beverages
Interviewee B	Female	Personal Care
Interviewee C	Female	Food & Beverages
Interviewee D	Male	Food & Beverages
Interviewee E	Male	Alcohol & Cigarettes

3.6.1 Instrument for Secondary Data Collection

The secondary data source was sourced from previous research works (published and unpublished), textbooks, journals, newspapers, online publications, theses and relevant information from the Internet.

3.7 Reliability of Research Instrument

Instrumental reliability refers to the degree to which the outcomes of a certain test are consistent over a period of time. Methods for determining reliability include test-retesting, alternate forms of assessment, methods for determining internal consistency, the split-half approach, and methods for determining inter-rater reliability.

3.7.1 Cronbach's Alpha

Cronbach's alpha was also computed for the items on the questionnaire. Using Cronbach Alpha, you can determine how reliable and repeatable a questionnaire with a lot of Likert-type questions is (Laerd Statistics, 2013). Alpha (or Cronbach's alpha)

is intended to measure the item's internal consistency. The instrument is regarded reliable if the alpha value is at least 0.7 and above. Its formula is given as:

$$\alpha = \frac{N.\bar{c}}{\bar{v}+(N-1).\bar{c}} \quad (1)$$

Where:

- N = the number of items.
- \bar{c} = average covariance between item-pairs.
- \bar{v} = average variance.

Table 3.2 shows the Cronbach's Alpha of the questionnaire questions.

Table 3.2: Reliability of survey questions

Section	Title	Cronbach Alpha
A	Demographics questions	0.812
B	Organizational use of social media	0.832
C	Crisis Communication and Crisis Management	0.909
D	Social Media Usage for Crisis Communication during COVID-19	0.877
E	Social Media as Communication and Monitoring Tool	0.834

Table 3.2 shows the Cronbach's Alpha results. Generally, a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.7 and above is reliable (Neumann, 2012). All Cronbach Alpha values in this study are over 0.7, which indicates strong reliability.

3.7.2 Pre-Testing

Before administering the questionnaire, it is essential to do a pre-test to check that all respondents understand the questions and may be used for analysis. The pre-

test, by description is a limited assessment of a certain aspect of the study, was conducted for the questionnaire section of this research. Pre-testing is necessary for surveys since no interviewer is present when respondents provide their responses. It is easier to explain any uncertainties during an interview (Bryman & Bell, 2005). Pre-testing enables one to determine whether some questions are confusing, in the wrong sequence, or whether everyone answers similarly or identically, resulting in an uninteresting outcome.

The researcher conducted a pre-test of the survey by emailing it to his university colleagues and supervisor. The types of input requested were clarification of the question, recommendations for rephrasing or changes of words and phrases, and any other remarks that respondents believed were pertinent. The researcher evaluated the feedback and implemented necessary changes to create the final research instrument (i.e. questionnaire).

Pre-testing of the interview questions was conducted with the researcher's colleagues and friends. The types of input requested were clarification of the question, recommendations for rephrasing or rewording, and any other participants' pertinent remarks. The researcher evaluated the feedback and changed the final interview questions to the sampled group for administration.

3.7.3 Pilot Testing

Before collecting data, it is critical to do a test run of your survey questions. There are several ways to discover issues with the survey that could lead to biased responses via pre- and pilot testing. Once the final survey questionnaire had been designed, the researcher performed a pilot testing. The researcher was unable to find people from the exact target group (Fast-Moving Consumer Goods Companies in Nigeria). Thus, the researcher resorted to participants who are close to the target

population. The questionnaire was pretested using 25 workers from any sector in Nigeria. These participants were asked to complete the online survey as link was sent to them via WhatsApp. The survey was administered to the reviewers in the same manner that it would be in the final survey. After conducting the pilot study and receiving comments, the researcher was able to fine-tune the questionnaire before distributing it to the other participants. Everyone who took part in the pilot research commended the questionnaire for its timeliness and efficiency.

3.7.4 Procedure for Data Collection

Data were obtained from employees of the companies chosen for the study using online self-administered questionnaires and online interviews. Firstly, the data gathering approach began with a LinkedIn search for human resource (HR) managers in Nigeria's various Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) firms. On LinkedIn, introduction letters outlining the research goal were sent to these human resources professionals. LinkedIn is the largest professional networking site in the world. With 756 million users, LinkedIn is also one of the most influential social networking platforms. The managers were told of the study's significance. They were asked whether their organisations would be ready to contribute vital data for research. Positive replies were acknowledged until ten firms were chosen. However, the researcher ended up using only five companies as the other contacted companies indicated they will not be able to participate in the research (even after their initial positive responses).

The researcher then e-mailed these HR managers the link to the online questionnaire. Human resource managers have been instructed that only workers in the Corporate Communications, Public Relations, Human Resource, and Administrative departments will complete the survey. Prior to completing the surveys, all respondents

received an explanation statement informing them of the research's goals and why they are important for the study. Each respondent was supposed to spend between ten and twenty minutes completing the questionnaires. Participants were shown one question at a time while the surveys were done online with the help of the online survey application (www.questionpro.com). Submitting a completed survey meant agreement to take part in this study. Respondents may remove their replies at any moment prior to the survey's submission. Respondents were given the access to complete the survey between March 4, 2022 and April 7, 2022.

The researcher began monitoring the responses of the respondents as soon as data collection began. The total number of survey participants that filled out the online questionnaire was 136. However, only 122 surveys were valid because this is the number of participants who completed all questions in the online survey. The interviews were conducted with the heads of Corporate Communications departments of these FMCG firms in Nigeria. Google Meet was used to conduct online interviews.

3.8 Validity of Research Instrument

It is possible to define a study's validity as the degree to which the instrument used to collect the data is precisely assessing the hypothesis under consideration. When researchers talk about dependability, it is referring to how consistently a measurement's findings are the same no matter how many times other researchers do the experiment (Bless & Higgson-Smith, 2006).

3.8.1 Internal Validity Issues

There was no inappropriate pressure from the researcher or anyone else linked with the concerned institution on the survey respondents. The questionnaire was unable to distinguish between the emotions and attitudes of the study participants, which might have affected the study's outcomes.

3.8.2 External Validity Issues

Those in Nigeria's FMCG industry were the sole participants in this study. Because of this, the findings cannot be applied to other businesses. The findings may have been influenced by the use of purposive sampling. It is possible that it didn't reflect the whole workforce at these firms. The number of people who did not respond to the questionnaire is also likely to have reduced the sample size. The researcher received 136 survey responses but only 122 responses were valid.

3.9 Methods of Data Analysis

Creswell (2005) characterised data analysis as consisting of four steps: (a) analysing and interpreting data; (b) deriving conclusions about the data; (c) graphically displaying the data; and (d) narratively describing the findings concerning the study questions and objectives.

3.9.1 Descriptive Statistics

The quantitative data collected from respondents were analysed using descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics, according to Laerd Statistics (2015), make it possible to examine data. For instance, by constructing trends from the data, descriptive statistics characterise, show, and summarise data. Descriptive statistics enable the visual representation of data and encourage in-depth evaluation of the acquired information. The research presents the analysis of data using mean, frequencies, and tables.

For this study, Microsoft Excel (MS Excel 16) was used to enter, modify, and analyse quantitative data. The demographics data (the number of employees, the duration of the service year, the job function, and the FMCG industry to which the firm belongs) was analysed using cross-tabulation. It is most common to employ cross-tabulation analysis (also known as contingency table analysis) to examine numeric

data on a frequency distribution. To put it another way, cross-tabulations are essential data tables that help visualize a survey's complete sample as well as subsets of those who took part in the research.

The coding of a qualitative research is more time-consuming than the coding of a quantitative study (Bryman & Bell, 2005). The major aim of the interviews was to provide the researcher with a deeper insight of how FMCG businesses used social media during the COVID-19 outbreak. During the analysis of these interviews, the researcher was looking for relationships and themes that correlated with the quantitative data. As a result, the quantitative study might benefit from the qualitative research as well. An in-depth qualitative analysis is impossible since there are too few interviews and the researcher is aware that no generalisations can be drawn from them. Even so, they are critical to this thesis, especially for the analysis, because they shed light on the method used in the research. As part of the keyword study, the researcher also looked for things that make crisis management on social media work well.

3.10 Ethical Clearance

The ethical clearance procedure guarantees that a study's integrity is preserved and fully understood without compromising an organisations and individuals' rights to confidentiality. The study was conducted professionally and ethically to ensure the validity of the study's findings. Before engaging the participants, ethical clearance was obtained from the Board of Scientific Research Publication Ethics of Eastern Mediterranean University. Participants were informed of their choices and be free to engage in the study. Additionally, all responses from the online questionnaire and interviews were kept private and anonymous.

Chapter 4

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The results and analysis of quantitative and qualitative studies are presented in this chapter. The study was primarily quantitative. Thus, the findings from the quantitative research (questionnaires) are presented first. The qualitative and quantitative aspects of the study were validated by the interviews and questionnaires, respectively. The purpose of the interview was to seek clarifications and provide detailed responses to the research questions. As indicated in the previous chapter, the researcher chose ten FMCG companies in Nigeria. Unfortunately, only five companies showed interest in participating in the research. Attempts were made to reach other FMCG companies in Nigeria, but they did not reply, even after many messages.

Thus, the quantitative part of the research includes findings from employees of five Nigerian FMCG companies instead of the supposed ten firms that this study planned to use as a sample size. Moreover, data collection period was planned for two months. However, due to the scope of the study (using an online questionnaire and purposive sampling), data collection only lasted for one month (from March 4th 2022, to April 7th 2022). To ensure that the researcher received many survey responses, the researcher sent reminders to the Human Resource Managers of the chosen companies 2 times a week.

4.1 Presentation and Analysis of Quantitative Results

The quantitative study's findings are summarised in this section. Descriptive statistics were utilised in this study because it was predominantly quantitative.

4.1.1 Demographics Analysis of Participants

The demographics section of this study's questionnaire gathered data on the number of employees, the duration of the service year, the job function, and the FMCG industry to which the firm belongs. Table 4.1 shows the demographics analysis of the participants.

Table 4.1: Socio-Demographics Characteristics of the Respondents

Variables	Frequency (n=122)	Percentage (100%)
Number of Employees (n = 122)		
Less than 100	0	0
100-500	30	25.0
501-2000	74	60.0
Over 2000	18	15.0
Category of FMCG (n = 122)		
Home care	15	12.0
Personal care	24	20.0
Food & beverages	69	57.0
Alcohol & cigarettes	14	11.0
Over-the-counter drugs	0	0
Job Role (n = 119)		
Senior Manager	4	3.0
Operation Manager	13	11.0
Corporate Communications Officer	15	12.0
Public Relations Officer	27	22.0

Administrative officer	26	21.0
Human Resources Officer	34	28.0
Length of Service (Years) (n = 122)		
< 1	14	11.0
1-2	25	20.0
2-4	27	22.0
4-6	35	29.0
6-8	12	10.0
>8	9	7.0

As shown in Table 4.1, seventy-four respondents (61%) stated that the FMCG Company they are working with has a staff strength of 501 – 2000. None (0%) of the respondents work with an FMCG company with less than 100 employees. Thirty (28%) of the sampled FMCG workers opined that their company’s staff strength is between 100 and 500, while the remaining 18 workers (11%) work in an FMCG company with a staff strength greater than 2000. Regarding the company’s category in the Fast-Moving Consumers Goods (FMCG) sector, the results from Table 4.1 shows that a sixty-nine participants (57%) work in the “Food and Beverages” category of the FMCG sector. 24 participants (22%) work with companies that deal with “personal care” products, 14 (13%) work in the FMCG sector’s “Alcohol and Cigarettes” industry. Fifteen (12%) of the sampled participants works with the “Home Care” while none of the participants work with “Over-the-counter drugs” industry of the FMCG sector.

The findings also showed that four participants (3%) work as senior managers. 13 employees (14%) were operations managers, while 15 participants (12%) were Corporate Communications officers. Twenty-seven of the participants (22%) were public relations officers, 26 of them (28%) were administrative officers, and 34 employees (28%) were human resource officers. The remaining three participants (2%) did not choose any options but provided their job roles in the “Other please specify” space. Two of them work as “Business Communication Officers“, while the remaining one participant specified as a “Senior Officer”. Considering their length of service, 14 participants (115) have less than one year of experience, 25 participants (20%) have spent between 1-2 years. Twenty-seven participants (22%) have spent between 2-4 years, 35 participants (29%) have spent between 4-6 years, 12 respondents (10%) have spent between 6-8 years in their respective companies, and 9 participants (7%) have spent more than eight years.

4.1.2 Organizational Use of Social Media

Section B of this questionnaire gauges how participants’ FMCG companies use social media platforms. The questions in this section were measured on a three-scale of “Yes/No/I don’t know”. The findings are shown in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Social Media Presence of Surveyed FMCG Companies in Nigeria

Does your company have social media presence on the Internet?		
Answer	Frequency	Percent
Yes	122	100
No	0	0
Total	122	100

One of the questions under this section asked if the participants of the FMCG companies have a social media presence. All the participants (n =122) affirmed that their FMCG company has a social media presence.

Table 4.3: Social Media Usage of Surveyed Nigerian FMCG Companies

Answer	Frequency	Percent
Crisis communication	11	6
Customer engagement	72	40
Advertising	89	49
Competition analysis	8	4
Total	180	100

The next question was, “what does your company use social media for?” According to Table 4.3, 89 participants (49%) affirmed that their company uses social media for advertising, 72 (40%) of the participants opined that their organisation use social media for customer engagement, 11 participants (6%) chose crisis communication option, and eight (4%) chose competition analysis option.

Table 4.4: Frequency of Social Media Usage by Respondents

Answer	Frequency	Percent
Several times a day	10	8
Once a day	10	8
Several times a week	17	14
Once a week	45	27
Several times every month	13	11
Once a month	17	14

More seldom	10	8
Total	122	100

In addition, the participants were asked, “How often does your company use social media?” From Table 4.4 above, 45 respondents (27%) opined that their organisation make use of social media once a week; seventeen (14%) chose “once a month” while 17 participants (14%) chose “several times a week”. Moreover, ten respondents (8%) said they use social media more seldom in their company. Another ten participants each (8% each) chose “once a day” and “several times a day”, respectively. Hence, as indicated by the results, it can be inferred that most Nigerian FMCG companies use social media once in a week.

Table 4.5: Social Media Monitoring by Respondents

Answer	Frequency	Percent
Yes	35	29
No	87	71
Total	122	100

The last question under the “Organizational Usage of Social Media” section aimed at ascertaining if these selected companies monitor what their customers say about their brands on social media during the COVID-19 pandemic. As shown in Table 4.6, thirty-five participants (29%) said their company keeps track of what people say about the organisation on social media while 87 participants (71%) said their company does not monitor their social media accounts to know what their consumers are saying about their brands.

Table 4.6: How Surveyed Nigerian FMCG Companies Monitor Social Media

Answer	Frequency	Percent
Yes, in-house with the use of software	9	26.0
Yes, through external partner	8	23.0
Yes, but I do not know how it is monitored	12	34.0
No, we do it manually, in-house	6	17.0
Total	51	100

Additionally, the participants were asked how the monitoring is done and if their company uses any tools for monitoring people’s opinions about their brands on social media during the COVID-19 pandemic. As shown in Table 4.6, among the participants who responded “Yes” to the previous question, 12 of them (34%) said, “Yes, but I don’t know how it is monitored”, 9 (31%) said, “Yes, in-house with the aid of software” while 8 (23%) of the participants claimed the monitoring is outsourced to an external partner. The remaining six participants (17%) said they monitor social media manually within the company.

4.1.3 Availability of Crisis Management Plan

The first research question of the study was to ascertain the availability of crisis management plans in Nigerian FMCG companies. The questions in the third section (section C) of the questionnaire were designed for this research question. The findings are shown in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7: Availability of Crisis Management Plan and Team in Surveyed FMCG Companies during the COVID-19 Pandemic

	Frequency	Percentage
Does your company have a crisis management plan?		
Yes	41	34
No	60	49
I don't know	21	17
If your answer to the above question is yes, is social media included in your company's crisis plan?		
Yes	25	61
No	5	12
I don't know	11	27
Was there any implementation of the crisis plan when the COVID-19 pandemic happened?		
Yes	25	61
No	3	7
I don't know	13	32
Is there anyone at your company who is mainly responsible for crisis management?		
Yes	18	15
No	78	64
I don't know	26	21
Does your company have a crisis management team?		
Yes	27	22
No	81	66

All of the participants were asked if their organisations have a crisis plan. From Table 4.7, sixty (49%) of the participants said their organisation do not have a crisis management plan, and 41 (34%) said they have a crisis management plan. The remaining 21 participants (17%) did not know. Of those who had a crisis management plan, 5 (12%) had not included social media in it. Though most of those who claimed to have a crisis management plan (61%) had included social media in their plans, the remaining 11 participants (27%) did not know. Furthermore, among those with a crisis management plan, 25 participants (61%) said there was an implementation of the crisis management plan during the COVID-19 pandemic. In comparison, three participants (6%) opined that there was no implementation of the crisis plan during the COVID-19 crisis. 13 participants (32%) said they do not know whether there was an implementation of a crisis management plan during the pandemic.

More than half of the respondents (66%) of the participants said their organisations do not have a crisis management/crisis response team. However, 27 participants (22%) agreed that their companies have a crisis response team. The remaining 14 participants (11%) do not know if a crisis management team exists in their company. Similar results were obtained on the next question. Respondents were asked if anyone was responsible for crisis management in their FMCG Company. Seventy-eight (64%) of the respondents said they do not have anyone directly responsible for crisis management in the company. Eighteen of them (15%) agreed that an employee is saddled with the responsibility of managing a crisis, while the remaining 26 participants (21%) said they do not know whether there is an employee who is responsible for crisis management in the company. Hence, it might be infer that

most of the participants are unaware of the job responsibility of their colleagues as regards to crisis management.

4.1.4 The Use of Social Media Platforms for Crisis Communication during the COVID-19 Pandemic

One of the research questions was, “What is the most efficient social media platform that Nigerian FMCG companies employed in communicating with their targeted consumers during the COVID-19 pandemic?” The researcher sought to know which leading social media platforms Nigerian FMCG companies used for external crisis communication with their consumers during the COVID-19 pandemic. A single-item question, “During the COVID-19 pandemic, which major social media platforms did your company mainly employ for crisis communication with your consumers?” was used for this purpose. The participants were allowed to choose more than one alternative.

Table 4.8: Top Social Media Platforms Used by Surveyed Nigerian FMCG Companies

Answer	Frequency	Percent
Facebook	75	48
Twitter	18	11
Instagram	45	29
WhatsApp	0	0
Tiktok	0	0
Company’s website	8	5
YouTube	11	7
Total	157	100

According to the results (in Table 4.8), the three most important social media platforms these companies used for crisis communication with consumers during the COVID-19 pandemic were Facebook (48%), Instagram (29%) and Twitter (11%). None of the surveyed Nigerian FMCG companies used TikTok and WhatsApp for external crisis communication with their customers during the crisis. The reason while none of the surveyed participants used Tiktok and WhatsApp for external crisis communication is because these platforms are mostly for peer-to-peer messaging. 7% used YouTube, while the remaining 5% used the company’s website to communicate with their targeted consumers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

4.1.5 Pros and Cons of Using Social Media for Crisis Communication during COVID-19 Pandemic

The fourth research question (RQ4) was *“What are the benefits and shortcomings of employing social media platforms as a communication and monitoring tool for Nigerian FMCG companies during the COVID-19 pandemic?”* This research question was addressed using two single-item questions. The first question was, What are the advantages of using social media for crisis communication during the COVID-19 pandemic? The result is given in Table 4.10 below.

Table 4.9: Merits of Social Media Platforms for Crisis Communication during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Answer	Frequency	Percent
Speed of information transmission	66	50
Interactivity	21	16
It is affordable	18	14
It reaches a wide audience	26	20
Others, please specify	6	4

Total	137	100
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According to the results, 50% admitted that one of the merits of social media for crisis communication was the speed of information transmission. 20% chose “It reaches a wide audience”, and 16% chose “interactivity”. In comparison, the remaining participants (14%) opined that social media affordability is one of the advantages of social media for crisis communication. This is shown in Table 4.9. Other advantages stated by the remaining 4% of the participants were “Two-way communication”, “Accuracy of information”, and “Easy accessibility”.

The participants were also asked, “*What are the disadvantages of using social media for crisis communication during the COVID-19 pandemic?*” The findings are shown in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10: Demerits of Social Media Platforms for Crisis Communication

Answer	Frequency	Percent
Lack of control over stakeholders’ messages	74	47
Lack of information credibility	19	12
Limited reach to target audience	10	6
Negative messages travel faster on social media	21	13
It requires more human resources for proper monitoring	35	22
Total	159	100

Results showed that 47% of respondents believe that one of the drawbacks of using social media for crisis communication is the difficulty to monitor what consumers publish on social media platforms. 22% chose “It requires more resources

for proper monitoring”, 13% chose “Negative messages travel faster on social media”, and 12% chose “Lack of information credibility”. The remaining 6% opined that social media is limited to a specific audience.

4.1.6 Crisis Communication on Social Media during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Research question two (RQ2) states, “*How do Nigerian FMCG companies communicate with their consumers (public) on social media platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic?*” Section D of the questionnaire was designed to collect data for this research question. Responses to these questions were within a 5-point Likert-type scale that ranged from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree” to show respondents’ level of agreement or opposition to a question. The findings are shown in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11: The use of social media for crisis communication by surveyed FMCG companies during the COVID-19 pandemic

	Frequency (n	Percentage
	= 122)	(100%)
My company was willing to use social media for crisis communication when the COVID-19 pandemic started.		
Strongly Agree	35	28.7
Agree	30	24.6
Undecided	24	19.7
Disagree	23	18.9
Strongly Disagree	10	8.2
During the COVID-19 pandemic, my company selects social media channels for crisis communication based on the unique features of each platform (e.g. Twitter retweet feature).		

Strongly Agree	14	11.5
Agree	13	10.7
Undecided	60	49.2
Disagree	24	19.7
Strongly Disagree	11	9.0
My organization responds indirectly to consumers during the COVID-19 pandemic (Responding indirectly means your company uses media conferences and media releases to deliver messages to her customers during the start of the COVID-19 pandemic).		
Strongly Agree	9	7.4
Agree	6	4.9
Undecided	20	16.4
Disagree	60	49.2
Strongly Disagree	27	22.1
My company responds directly to consumers about the COVID-19 pandemic on social media channels. (Responding directly means that your organization skips the step of journalistic gatekeeping to deliver personalized messages).		
Strongly Agree	16	13.1
Agree	17	13.9
Undecided	53	43.4
Disagree	16	13.2
Strongly Disagree	20	16.4
During the COVID-19 pandemic, my company believes that social media makes crisis communication with consumers faster.		
Strongly Agree	40	32.8

Agree	36	29.5
Undecided	27	22.1
Disagree	11	9.0
Strongly Disagree	8	6.6
My company used social media to disseminate helpful health nuggets (e.g., handwashing tips) to customers during the COVID-19 pandemic.		
Strongly Agree	8	6.6
Agree	90	73.8
Undecided	10	8.2
Disagree	8	6.6
Strongly Disagree	6	4.9
The company uses social media to eliminate misinformation and fake news relating to the COVID-19 pandemic.		
Strongly Agree	2	1.6
Agree	88	72.1
Undecided	18	14.8
Disagree	4	3.3
Strongly Disagree	10	8.2
My company uses social media to keep consumers informed of production shutdowns (when necessary) during the COVID-19 pandemic.		
Strongly Agree	0	0.0
Agree	0	0.0
Undecided	18	14.8
Disagree	100	82.0
Strongly Disagree	4	3.3

My company uses social media to communicate with consumers on service/product delivery issues caused by the pandemic.

Strongly Agree	9	7.4
Agree	16	13.1
Undecided	16	13.1
Disagree	10	8.2
Strongly Disagree	71	58.2

My company has enough technical infrastructure to integrate social media into its current crisis management for the COVID-19 pandemic.

Strongly Agree	39	32.0
Agree	40	32.8
Undecided	29	23.8
Disagree	7	5.7
Strongly Disagree	7	5.7

My company's Public Relations/Corporate Communications/media & IT department raises the idea of using social media for crisis management during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Strongly Agree	11	9.0
Agree	10	8.2
Undecided	36	29.5
Disagree	21	17.2
Strongly Disagree	44	36.1

Overall, social media positively impacted crisis communication during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Strongly Agree	21	17.2
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Agree	43	35.2
Undecided	24	19.7
Disagree	18	14.8
Strongly Disagree	16	13.1
During the COVID-19 pandemic, my company's image was negatively affected because of inadequate communication on social media (caused by a lack of technological infrastructure in Nigeria).		
Strongly Agree	0	0.0
Agree	0	0.0
Undecided	42	34.4
Disagree	76	62.3
Strongly Disagree	4	3.3
Social media is an effective and relevant tool for crisis communication during the COVID-19 pandemic.		
Strongly Agree	9	7.4
Agree	50	41.0
Undecided	48	39.3
Disagree	5	4.1
Strongly Disagree	10	8.2
Social media provides a convenient means of communicating with customers during the COVID-19 crisis.		
Strongly Agree	21	17.2
Agree	49	40.2
Undecided	43	35.2
Disagree	3	2.5

Strongly Disagree	6	4.9
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To better analyse the results, “strongly agree” and “agree” were merged and interpreted as participants agreeing with the question. "Disagree" and "strongly disagree", on the other hand, were combined to signify that participants were not in agreement. As shown in Table 4.11, 65 participants (53.3%) agreed that when the COVID-19 pandemic began, their firm was ready to employ social media for crisis communications. Thirty-three participants (27%) disagreed with this assertion, while 24 participants (19.7%) were undecided on the question. Furthermore, 60 respondents (49.2%) were undecided when asked if the selection of social media platforms for crisis communication was based on the unique feature of each social media platform. 35 participants (28.7%) disagreed with this assertion, while twenty participants (22.1%) consented to this question.

When the participants were asked if their FMCG Company communicates indirectly with their consumers using media conferences and press releases during the COVID-19 pandemic, 87 respondents (71.3%) disagreed with this question. Fifteen of the participants (12.3%) consented to this question while the remaining 20 participants (16.4%) maintained a neutral stance on the question. Likewise, 53 participants (43.4%) of the participants were undecided if their FMCG Companies used social media to respond directly to consumers during the COVID-19 pandemic. 33 of them (27%) consented to the question, while the remaining 36 participants (29.5 %) disagreed with the question.

In addition, 76 participants (62.3%) believe social media makes crisis communication faster with their consumers during the crisis, 27 (22.1%) were undecided, while 19 (15.6%) disagreed. Interestingly, 98 respondents (80.3%) agreed

that their companies used social media to disseminate helpful health tips to consumers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Only 14 (11.5%) of the participants disagreed with this question. Similarly, the majority of the participants (73.8%) agreed that their organisations used social media to eliminate fake news and misinformation relating to the COVID-19 pandemic. 14 (11.5%) of them disagreed with the question. Besides, 104 participants (85.2%) disagreed that their companies used social media to inform consumers about production shutdowns. The remaining 18 (14.8%) were undecided on the question. Likewise, 25 (66.4%) of the participants disagreed that social media was used to communicate product/service delivery issues during the COVID-19 pandemic. 16 (13.1%) neither agreed nor disagreed, while the remaining 25 (20.5%) agreed with the question.

Remarkably, the survey also showed that 79 (64.8%) of the participants admitted that their organisations have sufficient technical infrastructure to incorporate social media into their crisis management plans. Only 14 participants (11.5%) disagreed with the question, while the remaining 29 (23.8%) neither agreed nor disagreed. Regarding the question that asked who raised the idea of using social media for crisis communication during the COVID-19 pandemic, 65 participants (53.3%) disagreed that it was the IT/Media communication department in the companies that raised the idea. 36 (29.5%) of the participants were undecided who raised such an idea, while the remaining 21 (17.2%) agreed with the question. None (0%) of the participants agreed that their company brand was affected because of inadequate communication on social media during the COVID-19 pandemic. 80 participants (65.6%) disagreed with this assertion while the remaining 42 (34.4%) were undecided.

In addition, the mean is critical in determining the overall opinion of the participants. According to Pimentel (2010), a mean between the range of 4.21 and 5

shows “strongly agree”; A mean between 3.41 and 4.20 represents “Agree”; A mean between 2.61 and 3.40 represents “Undecided”; A mean between the range of 1.81 and 2.60 points to “Disagree” while a mean between 1 and 1.8 represents “strongly disagree” (Pimentel, 2010). Table 4.12 shows the mean values of each statement and their corresponding statement on the Likert-scale.

Table 4.12: Means and Likert-scale Division: The Use of Social Media during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Questions	Mean	Likert scale
My company used social media to disseminate helpful health nuggets (e.g., handwashing tips) to customers during the COVID-19 pandemic.	3.90	Agree
Social media provides a convenient means of communicating with customers during the COVID-19 crisis	3.73	Agree
The company uses social media to eliminate misinformation and fake news relating to the COVID-19 pandemic.	3.69	Agree
My company has enough technical infrastructure to integrate social media into its current crisis management for the COVID-19 pandemic.	3.61	Agree
Social media provides a convenient means of communicating with customers during the COVID-19 crisis	3.58	Agree
During the COVID-19 pandemic, my organisation believes that social media provides a cheaper means	3.54	Agree

for external crisis communication (with consumers) than other forms of media.		
Social media is an effective and relevant tool for crisis communication during the COVID-19 pandemic.	3.45	Agree
During the COVID-19 pandemic, my company believes that social media makes crisis communication with consumers faster.	3.44	Agree
Overall, social media positively impacted crisis communication during the COVID-19 pandemic.	3.28	Undecided
My company was willing to use social media for crisis communication when the COVID-19 pandemic started.	3.17	Undecided
My company responds directly to consumers about the COVID-19 pandemic on social media channels. (Responding directly means that your organisation skips the step of journalistic gatekeeping to deliver personalised messages).	3.12	Undecided
During the COVID-19 pandemic, my company selected social media channels for crisis communication based on the unique features of each platform. (E.g. Twitter retweet feature)	3.07	Undecided
My company's public relations/Corporate Communications/media & IT department raises the idea of using social media for crisis management during the COVID-19 pandemic.	2.62	Undecided

My company uses social media to communicate with consumers on service/product delivery issues caused by the pandemic.	2.07	Disagree
During the COVID-19 pandemic, my company's image was negatively affected due to inadequate communication on social media (caused by a lack of technological infrastructure in Nigeria).	1.92	Disagree
My company uses social media to keep consumers informed of production shutdowns (when necessary) during the COVID-19 pandemic.	1.88	Disagree
My organisation responds indirectly to consumers during the COVID-19 pandemic (Responding indirectly means your company uses media conferences and media releases to deliver messages to its customers during the start of the COVID-19 pandemic).	1.77	Strongly Disagree

As shown in Table 4.12 above, most participants (mean = 3.17) were undecided that their company was willing to use social media for crisis communication when the COVID-19 pandemic started. Furthermore, half of the respondents (mean = 3.07) were undecided on the selection of social media platforms for crisis communication based on the unique feature of each social media platform. When the participants were asked if their FMCG company communicates indirectly with their consumers using media conferences and press releases during the COVID-19 pandemic, a bulk of the respondents (mean = 1.77) strongly disagreed with this question. Likewise, the

participants were undecided (mean = 3.12) if their FMCG companies used social media to respond directly to consumers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Additionally, most of the participants (mean = 3.44) believe social media makes crisis communication faster with their consumers during the crisis. In addition, many of the respondents (mean = 3.9) agreed that their companies used social media to disseminate helpful health tips to consumers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, most of the participants (mean = 3.69) agreed that their organisations used social media to eliminate fake news and misinformation relating to the COVID-19 pandemic. On the contrary, most participants (mean = 1.88) disagreed that their companies used social media to inform consumers about production shutdowns. The Nigerian government permitted FMCG companies to continue with their production during the COVID-19 pandemic. This might be the reason while these FMCG companies did not use social media to communicate production shutdowns.

Likewise, most participants (mean = 2.07) disagreed that social media was used to communicate product/service delivery issues during the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, during the lockdown session in Nigeria, the Federal Government of Nigeria permitted the transportation of essential goods like FMCG products. Likewise, most of the participants (mean = 1.92) disagreed that inadequate communication on social media affected their brand corporate image. This might be due to the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic is not a crisis that directly affects the corporate image of a company.

Interestingly, the survey also showed that most participants (mean = 3.61) admitted that their organisations have enough technical infrastructure to integrate social media into their crisis management plans. When the participants were asked who raised the idea of using social media for crisis communication during the COVID-

19 pandemic, most respondents (mean = 2.62) disagreed that it was the Corporate Communications department in their company that raised the idea.

4.1.7 The Use of Social Media as a Monitoring and Evaluation Tool during the COVID-19 Pandemic

The last research question states, *“Is it important for Nigerian FMCG companies to monitor and evaluate social media during the COVID-19 pandemic?”* The last section (Section E) of the questionnaire was designed to collect data for this research question. Like the previous section, responses to these questions were within a 5-point Likert-type scale that ranged from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree” to show respondents’ level of agreement or opposition to a question. Table 4.14 presents the results.

Table 4.13: Social Media as a Monitoring and Evaluation Tool for Crisis Communication during the COVID-19 Pandemic

	Frequency (n = 122)	Percentage (100%)
Strongly Agree	60	49.2
Agree	33	27.0
Undecided	11	9.0
Disagree	15	12.3
Strongly Disagree	3	2.5
During the COVID-19 crisis, social media is used to learn about customer opinions regarding the crisis.		
Strongly Agree	7	5.7

Agree	14	11.5
Undecided	19	15.6
Disagree	37	30.3
Strongly Disagree	45	36.9
Social media has provided an excellent platform that aided decision-making during the COVID-19 pandemic.		
Strongly Agree	1	0.8
Agree	2	1.7
Undecided	34	27.9
Disagree	33	27.0
Strongly Disagree	52	42.6
During the COVID-19 pandemic, my company monitors its social media accounts to ensure the accurate transmission of information.		
Strongly Agree	37	30.3
Agree	20	16.4
Undecided	26	21.3
Disagree	18	14.8
Strongly Disagree	21	17.2
My company monitors its social media accounts during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure that there are no unofficial posts by employees.		
Strongly Agree	7	5.7
Agree	7	5.7
Undecided	39	32.0
Disagree	39	32.0
Strongly Disagree	30	24.6

During the COVID-19 pandemic, my company monitors social media to assess the effectiveness/success of crisis communication.

Strongly Agree	13	10.7
Agree	14	11.4
Undecided	56	45.9
Disagree	13	10.7
Strongly Disagree	26	21.3

My organisation uses a manual process to manage and monitor social media during the COVID-19 pandemic (Manual process means your company uses an employee to read, measure and record posts' engagements manually).

Strongly Agree	6	4.9
Agree	11	9.0
Undecided	75	61.5
Disagree	14	11.5
Strongly Disagree	16	13.1

My organisation monitors its social media accounts during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure that there are no damaging posts aimed at my organisation.

Strongly Agree	13	10.7
Agree	16	13.1
Undecided	33	27.0
Disagree	24	19.7
Strongly Disagree	36	29.5

My organisation uses specialist tools/software to manage and monitor social media during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Strongly Agree	12	9.8
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Agree	14	11.5
Undecided	7	5.7
Disagree	80	65.6
Strongly Disagree	9	7.4

To better analyse the results, “strongly agree” and “agree” were merged and interpreted as participants agreeing with the question. On the other hand, “strongly disagree” and “disagree” were merged to indicate that the participants did not agree with the question. As shown in Table 4.13, most participants (76.2%) agreed that social media monitoring and evaluation is an absolute necessity in crisis communication during the COVID-19 crisis. Eighteen participants (14.8%) disagreed with this assertion, while 9.0% were undecided on the question. Furthermore, more than half of the respondents (67.2%) disagreed that their company used social media to learn about customers’ opinions during the COVID-19 pandemic. 17.2% agreed with this assertion, while another 15.6% maintained a neutral stance on this question. Likewise, 69.7% of the participants disagreed that social media has provided an excellent platform that aided decision-making during the COVID-19 pandemic. Only 2.5% consented to the question, while 27.9% were undecided on this question.

Additionally, 46.7% of the participants agreed that their FMCG company monitors its social media accounts to make sure there was accurate transmission of information during the COVID-19 pandemic. 26 participants (21.3%) were undecided, while 32.0% disagreed with this assertion. In addition, many of the respondents (56.6%) disagreed that their companies monitored their social media accounts during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure that there were no informal posts by workers. Only 14 (11.5%) of the participants agreed with this question while 32/0% of the participants

were undecided as regards the question. Similarly, most participants (45.9%) were undecided if during the COVID-19 pandemic, their organisations analyse social media to evaluate crisis communication performance. 32% of them disagreed with this question, while the remaining 22.1% agreed with the question.

Most participants (61.5%) were undecided if their companies employed personnel to monitor their social media accounts during the COVID-19 pandemic manually. The remaining 24.6% were in disagreement with the question. Moreover, 49.2% of the participants disagreed that their organisations monitored social media accounts during the COVID-19 pandemic to make sure no negative comments were made about their companies. 27% neither agreed nor disagreed, while 23.8% agreed with the question. Lastly, the survey also showed that 73% of the participants disagreed that their organisations used specialist tools to monitor social media during the COVID-19 pandemic. Only 21.3% agreed with the question, while the remaining 5.7% neither agreed nor disagreed.

The mean is critical in determining the overall opinion of the participants. On a Likert scale with 5 possible responses, the researchers looked at the frequency with which people responded to various assertions. A mean between the range of 4.21 and 5 shows “strongly agree”; A mean between 3.41 and 4.20 represents “Agree”; A mean between 2.61 and 3.40 represents “Undecided”; A mean between the range of 1.81 and 2.60 points to “Disagree” while a mean between 1 and 1.8 represents “strongly disagree” (Pimentel, 2010).

Table 4.14: Means and Likert-scale Division: The Use of Social Media as a Monitoring Tool during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Question	Mean	Likert Scale
It is essential to monitor and evaluate social media as a crisis communication tool during the COVID-19 crisis.	3.84	Agree
During the COVID-19 pandemic, my company monitors its social media accounts to ensure the accurate transmission of information.	3.28	Undecided
During the COVID-19 pandemic, my company monitors social media to assess the effectiveness/success of crisis communication.	2.97	Undecided
My organisation uses a manual process to manage and monitor social media during the COVID-19 pandemic (Manual process means your company uses an employee to read, measure and record posts' engagements manually).	2.80	Undecided
My organisation monitors its social media accounts during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure that there are no damaging posts aimed at my organisation.	2.78	Undecided
My company monitors its social media accounts during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure that there are no unofficial posts by employees.	2.57	Disagree
My organisation uses specialist tools/software to manage and monitor social media during the COVID-19 pandemic.	2.34	Disagree
During the COVID-19 crisis, social media is used to learn about customer opinions regarding the crisis.	2.31	Disagree

Social media has provided an excellent platform that aided decision-making during the COVID-19 pandemic.	2.05	Disagree
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As shown in Table 4.14 above, the participants only agreed (mean = 3.84) that during the COVID-19 crisis, it is crucial to monitor and assess social media as a tool for crisis communications. Most participants (mean = 3.28) were undecided that their companies monitor their social media accounts to ensure accurate transmission of information during the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, half of the respondents (mean = 2.97) were undecided that their company monitors social media to assess the effectiveness/success of crisis communication during the COVID-19 pandemic. Likewise, most participants (mean = 2.8) were undecided if their companies employed personnel to monitor their social media accounts during the COVID-19 pandemic manually. Also, the participants were undecided (mean = 2.78) if their organisations monitored their social media accounts during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure that there were no damaging posts aimed at the organisation.

When the participants were asked if their FMCG Company monitors its social media accounts during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure that there are no unofficial posts by employees, a bulk of the respondents (mean = 2.57) disagreed with this question. The COVID-19 pandemic is not a crisis caused by product defects. Thus, monitoring social media accounts to ensure unofficial posts is not essential. Likewise, the participants disagreed (mean = 2.34) that their FMCG companies used specialist tools/software to manage and monitor social media during the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, most of the participants (mean = 2.31) disagreed that social media helped their companies in learning about customers' opinions during the crisis. Lastly, the

respondents (mean = 2.05) disagreed that their companies used social media as a platform for decision making during the COVID-19 pandemic.

4.2 Presentation and Analysis of Qualitative Findings

As stated in chapter 3, the researcher used purposive sampling to choose the interview candidates. These candidates were Heads of the Department of Corporate Communications/Public Relations/Human Resource Departments. These participants were selected based on their experiences, positions in the firm, possible knowledge of crisis communication practices in their organisations, and opinions on social media use in crisis communication and management during the COVID-19 pandemic.

4.2.1 Availability and Implementation of a Crisis Management Plan

The first three questions of the interview questions were directed at research question one (RQ1) which is “Do Nigerian FMCG companies have crisis management plans?” The questions were to gain clarity and ascertain if the selected FMCG companies had a crisis management plan and if there was an implementation of the plan. The interviewees were asked if their companies were duly prepared for a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic or if they were caught unprepared. All the interviewees answered the first interview question. Interviewees A and C admitted that their organisations were not duly prepared for the COVID-19 pandemic. It might be that both interviewees thought there would not have been a lockdown session in Nigeria and did not foresee all tangible effects on their businesses. Moreover, both interviewees work with the “Food and Beverages” sector of Nigerian FMCG industry. The remaining three interviewees (Interviewees B, D and E) said their company was prepared for a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic.

The interviewees were asked if their FMCG companies have a crisis management plan. Crisis management is essential for organisations. Every

organisation must have a plan in place in the event of an emergency to guarantee the safety of its employees and customers and the continuity of its operations. Two of their interviewees (Interviewees A and C) said their corporations do not have a crisis management plan. The remaining three interviewees (B, D and E) said their FMCG organisations have crisis management plans. The three interviewees who replied yes to the previous question (availability of crisis management plan) also responded to the following sub-question. They were asked if their crisis plan was implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic. Akin to the initial question, they replied, “Yes”. Interviewee E also added, “It is common for crises to strike without warning. As a result, every FMCG company needs to implement a crisis management plan implemented when crisis strikes.” The importance of implementing a crisis management plan cannot be overstressed. The aims of a crisis management plan are to protect the reputation of the organisation, restore order and safety, return the organisation to its normal routines, and secure the safety of its employees and customers, among other things. Thus, the implementation of a crisis management plan means companies can continue with their operations with little or no damages whenever a crisis occurs.

The third question posed to the interviewees was, “Does your company has a crisis management team?” Individuals who work together to address crises are known as a crisis management team. The crisis management team addresses staff well-being, company continuity planning, supply chain challenges, financial analysis, and communication. Employees that are part of a crisis management team often have other roles in the company. Often, team members of a crisis management team include heads of departments, human resources managers, public relations representatives, senior managers, key operational staff, communications and marketing executives and site managers. Similar to the first two questions, only three interviewees (B, D and E) said

that their companies have crisis management/response teams. Interviewees A and C replied in the negative.

“Crises disrupt business plans and forecasts. Were your company’s business strategies changed to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the company?” This question was to examine if there was any change in the business strategies of these FMCG companies during the pandemic. Interviewees A and C said that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a need for their respective companies to rearrange their production calendars. Some workers were made to work remotely while their casual workers were made to work on a newly prepared shift plans. Interviewee B wrote, “Yes, there was a need to change our business plans. In light of the transition to remote working, we evaluated expediting digital transformations as gaps in IT infrastructure, workforce planning, and digital upskilling”. Interviewee D said, “Yes, there was a need for a change in the business plan. In the short and long term, the pandemic required us to take a fresh approach to business operations for the company.” In the words of interviewee E,

“Yes, a change to our business plans was imminent. COVID-19 pandemic ripple effects are difficult to calculate and measure. However, our organisation was able to acceptably limit the consequences of this pandemic. We had to find new local suppliers since the federal government had imposed flight bans that affected our major suppliers. We also have to adjust customer allocations and price strategies as well”.

Hence, it can be inferred that adaptation is one vital crisis management strategy for these FMCG companies during the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 is a systemic risk. These FMCG companies understood the pandemic’s economic and human risks. They reviewed and interrogated management’s strategy for mitigating those risks. Besides, there was a need for these companies to consider changes to the business methods, supply chain, and succession planning. Immediately after the Federal Government lifted flight bans on countries with high COVID-19 cases, there was a

need for FMCG companies to rebuild and re-established broken links and relationships with their leading suppliers.

4.2.2 The Use of Social Media for Crisis Communication and Management during the COVID-19 Pandemic

The second research question (RQ2) was, “How do Nigerian FMCG companies communicate with their consumers (public) on social media platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic?” Firstly, the respondents were asked whether their businesses had contemplated employing social media for crisis communication before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic; all five interviewees replied in the negative. It might be that their organisations have not encountered any major crisis requiring social media use. On the other hand, the interviewees might not have joined the companies when their companies had a crisis that required the use of social media for crisis communication.

The interviewees were asked how social media has affected their company’s corporate crisis communication during the COVID-19 pandemic. Two of the interviewees (A and C) did not reply to this question. According to interviewee E, “Social media has not significantly impacted crisis communication”. According to him, the major change was monitoring and increasing dependence on social media, which are substantial shifts in crisis communications. Both interviewees B and D’s replies are slightly different, but similarities can be drawn. Interviewee B mainly focused on the merits and demerits of social media for crisis communicators during the pandemic. However, interviewee D did not comment on the improvement in openness noted by interviewee B.

The interviewees were also questioned if they considered social media to be a concern or a prospect in crisis communication. All respondents claimed that social

media could be both an advantage and a disadvantage in times of crisis. Three out of the five participants (interviewees B, C and E) who responded wrote that they saw the improvement in the openness of social media generally as a good thing. Crisis communicators can employ social media to engage directly with shareholders without going via the filter of traditional media, as discussed by interviewees A and D. The research of Veil *et al.* (2011) corroborates this submission. The authors believe that social media may be utilised for corporate communications without the need for conventional media. During the COVID-19 pandemic, interviewees A and D said that social media messages from corporations informed customers that their favourite FMCG brand was still in business.

On the other hand, interviewees B, C, and E indicated that social media's openness and participatory character might provide a problem for most businesses. Although the responses given by these respondents differed, there were some common themes. A possible explanation offered by these three participants is that the public's attitude has not evolved sufficiently to use social media yet. Because of this, many are hesitant to take criticism. On many social media platforms, it is unavoidable to get unfavourable feedback. As discussed by participants A and D, the COVID-19 pandemic misinformation is made easier to disseminate through social media channels like Facebook and Twitter. It is essential to keep in mind that journalistic standards like objectivity do not apply to social media users. According to Odyakmaz (2013), utilising social media does not necessitate professionalism. Social media allows anybody to propagate misinformation, fabrications, and fake news whenever there is a crisis.

The interviewees were questioned, "To what extent did your organisation use social media during the COVID-19 crisis?" This question was to examine how

Nigerian FMCG companies used social media for crisis communication during the pandemic (This may include sharing health tips to customers regarding COVID-19 or debunking common myths and misinformation about the crisis). This question focused on RQ2, the extent of social media usage in crisis communication during the COVID-19 pandemic. All the five respondents for the interviews answered this question.

Interviewee A said he is aware that his organisation used social media during the COVID-19 pandemic without pinpointing any specific use of social media during the crisis. Interviewee B stated,

“As a means of keeping the customers and stakeholders informed, my company utilised its official social media profiles. For instance, when our company contributed to the Coalition Against COVID-19 (CACOVID)² project, we made announcements to the public through social media.”

Interviewee C said, “Minimal. My organisation mostly used social media pages to promote our brand. However, there is a need to send health tips during the COVID-19 pandemic”. Interviewee D opined, “My organisation has used social media to interact with our consumers during the lockdown period, especially on information that provided the public with service delivery matters”. In the words of interviewee E, “My Company uses social media for keeping our consumers updated as per health nuggets such as handwashing and social distancing tips”.

From the responses received, it can be inferred that social media was used reasonably for external crisis communication by Nigerian FMCG organisations during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially when the pandemic started. All the respondents categorically stated that their companies had used social media as a communication tool during the COVID-19 crisis. Most of their responses centred on “sharing health

² The Coalition Against COVID-19 (CACOVID) is a Private Sector task force in partnership with the Federal Government, the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) and the World Health Organisation (WHO) with the sole aim of combating Coronavirus (COVID-19) in Nigeria. This task force is tasked with pulling resources across industries to provide technical and operational support while providing funding and building advocacy through aggressive awareness drives.

tips on COVID-19, their companies' contributions for vulnerable citizens affected by the lockdown". When dealing with a crisis, it is critical to have clear communication channels. It can also be shown that most FMCG firms in Nigeria adopted the "compassion crisis response" that Coombs (2009) suggested. As an act of compensation, the management of some of these companies provided its customers with monetary relief or other aid. During a crisis, organisations must ensure that they have a variety of ways to communicate with their consumers and other important stakeholders. Adequate communication with consumers gives the customers a sense of belonging and comfort throughout this challenging period.

The interviewees were asked if their companies' methods for crisis communication on social media were successful. This sub-question was a follow-up inquiry meant to examine the efficiency of social media as a tool for communication during the COVID-19 pandemic. Out of the five respondents for the interview, only three interviewees provided replies to this question. Interviewee B stated,

"Twitter was effective because a single tweet could be shared widely (and retweeted easily). It is also open to negative remarks and comments from the public. WhatsApp, on the other hand, was almost impossible to work with. WhatsApp is a peer-to-peer platform; thus, you may not have access to everyone's mobile phone number."

Interviewee D said, "Instagram was very effective as the picture-sharing feature of this platform made it easy to disseminate health tips to the public".

Interviewee E stated,

"Yes, social media was effective for crisis communication during the pandemic. Our Facebook was used in sharing social distancing tips as offered by Nigerian Center for Disease Control (NCDC). Moreover, it was also an effective tool for communicating transport logistics issues when there was lockdown in certain states. Comforting our clients online is crucial especially in times of crisis, reacting to their comments, mentions, and tweets on corporate profiles in a professional manner. Customer service on social media is measured in real time, so the sooner we respond to customers, the better it is for our company's brand."

The respondents were asked, “What was the effect of social media on the external crisis communication process with the consumers?” This sub-question of the interview questions was designed to measure respondents’ understanding or awareness of how social media affected their overall communications with their customers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Of the five interviewees, three respondents answered this question. Interviewee B stated, “During the COVID-19 pandemic, social media facilitated external crisis communication. However, when communication is made accessible to the public, it becomes “noisy” since anybody may reply, remark, criticise, and publish anything on social media.” Interviewee D stated, “It was vital during the COVID-19 pandemic as it can reach large numbers of people.” Interviewee E stated, “Customers can learn about service delivery concerns through social media, and people can become more informed and prepared as a result.”

Social media has a substantial impact on crisis communication, according to three of the respondents. The concept of “Noise”, a notion that may be seen as an impediment to successful communication, was an exciting discovery in the communications process. According to the research’s results, the key to the success of social media for crisis communication was its “ability to reach a huge audience.” With the proper infrastructure, social media can reach nearly anybody, everywhere. It is possible that the other two responders were unaware of the importance of this question, as they failed to respond.

“What impact did the use of social media have on the information being disseminated?” This sub-question sought to elicit comments from various stakeholders following the dissemination of information via platforms of social media. Two of the five interviewees were able to respond to this question. Interviewee D stated, “It simplified the process of transmitting information compared to other modes of

communication; nevertheless, additional communication channels must be utilised.” Interviewee E indicated, “The response rates on social media are fast and in real-time.” There were no responses from the other three responders to this question, which suggests a lack of basic knowledge or use. The two interviewees who responded to this question gave constructive opinions into the convenience and rapidity of social media. Other means of communication were required, they said. Thus, social media sites have ample space for content. Timely dissemination of concise, reliable information is more important in times of crisis than disseminating massive volumes of data.

Additionally, the interviewees were asked about their companies’ crisis response approaches during the COVID-19 pandemic for crisis management and communication. Crises are well-known for putting personnel under a lot of stress and eliciting strong emotional responses. As a result, some emotions (such as fear, anxiety, and tension) are needed to be addressed by firms during a crisis. All the respondents answered this question, and although their answers varied, some similarities can be drawn from their responses. All of the interviewees said their companies started with an examination of the possible aftermaths that the COVID-19 pandemic could have on their businesses, especially during the lockdown session. All of them also mentioned that when the first case of COVID-19 was detected in Nigeria and the Nigerian government declared a lockdown session in Abuja, Ogun and Lagos States, one of the first things their managements did was to call an emergency meeting for significant stakeholders and have an honest discussion devoid of emotions on the way forward.

Afterwards, the companies began to disseminate information to their stakeholders (consumers inclusive) that they should stay safe as the situation is under control by the concerned authority. It can be inferred that these companies used the

“Rebuilding posture” of the SCCT theory. They used the “compassion crisis response” suggested by Coombs (2009). These companies showed they care about the situation by disseminating valuable information to their stakeholders. Lastly, interviewee E wrote, “When a crisis arises, there is a breach in the trust between the organisation and its consumers. Thus, during the COVID-19 pandemic, our company reassured our consumers that the crisis would pass and we are with them in these turbulent times”. Firms should engage with the essential stakeholders to avoid making hasty judgments driven by their emotions.

4.2.3 Merits and Demerits of Using Social Media as a Crisis Communication Tool during the COVID-19 Pandemic

The third research question posed was, “What are the benefits and shortcomings of employing social media platforms as a communication tool for an organisation during the COVID-19 pandemic?” This research question tried to evaluate what the interviewees thought to be the advantages and disadvantages of using social media platforms as a crisis communication tool during the COVID-19 pandemic.

All five respondents answered this question. Interviewee A stated, “Real-time and affordable means of communication are some of the pros of social media for crisis communication. The drawbacks are the risk to data integrity, the difficulties in controlling how people would respond, and the challenge of controlling and overseeing the enormous volume of communications that social media generates. Twitter, for example, does not provide you with any control over the technology itself.” Interviewee B stated,

“The advantages of using social media as a crisis communication tool include reaching a larger audience and incurring little or no expense in terms of distributing a message. Another advantage is that it offers a quick means to communicate instead of relying on traditional media like radio, print, and

television. It also makes getting in touch with the public easy. People can exchange information when there is a crisis in both directions, allowing more complete and up-to-date information to be shared. Among the difficulties is the possibility that everyone uses social media, which might cause a panic if more information is shared (particularly by individuals) than the government or organisations want to share or disclose, perhaps resulting in a catastrophe”.

Interviewee C stated,

“The benefits include accurate information being conveyed, a short reaction time between communicating crisis information and getting it from workers or the general public and having the crisis information or data enabling the organisation to respond more effectively to the crisis. Moreover, the hurdles of using social media include trust, openness, and technical advancements.”

Interviewee D stated, “Many data sources, real-time communication, and crowd-sourcing are benefits of using social media for crisis communication.” Lastly, interviewee E stated,

“In my opinion, the accessibility and publicity of social media are strong benefits of social media for crisis communication. In a short period, social media can reach a large audience. The spread of false information is one of the drawbacks of social media. In reality, it’s tough to tell what is true and what is not as per the contributions of different persons to the information being disseminated.”

From the five responses to this question, the common benefits stated by the majority of respondents were “social media’s wide reach”, “its ubiquity”, and “timeliness and real-time data and communication”. The respondents perceived challenges were the ability of fake news and rumours to spread quickly on social media platforms, inaccuracy of information, trust and privacy. A sub-question that was further asked was, “Are there any challenges that outweigh the benefits of social media?” This question sought to ascertain if respondents believed the disadvantages of utilising social media as a crisis communication tool during the COVID-19 pandemic outweighed the benefits. Four participants replied to this question. Interviewee A stated,

“It all hinges on what you're trying to accomplish. To what goal is it being used? With no strategy or plan in place, the disadvantages of social media can soon outweigh its benefits (especially in crises that are specific to a company).

The advantages far exceed the challenges in crisis communication during the COVID-19 pandemic.”

Interviewee B stated, “There is much effort involved in social media analysis. For example, imagine a situation when you do not have the resources to sieve through much information. Your chances of gaining anything from such a situation are slim“. Interviewee C stated, “No, benefits surely outweigh the challenges.” Interviewee E stated, “Receiving information via social media might be problematic because of the inaccuracy of some of the stories. This drawback is a major setback that outweighs the pros of social media for crisis communication.” There was a consensus among those interviewed that there was a lack of integrity in the reporting process and concerns about privacy and cost when using social media for crisis communication.

4.2.4 Most Efficient Social Media Platform for Crisis Communication during the COVID-19 Pandemic

The fourth Research Question (RQ4) that the study sought to answer was “What is the most efficient social media platform that FMCG companies in Nigeria employed in communicating with their targeted audience during the COVID-19 pandemic?” The channels majorly mentioned by the interviewees were Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, company blogs, and YouTube. All interviewees mentioned Instagram and Facebook, whereas one or two mentioned the others. Regarding Twitter, interviewee B said, “It is a suitable tool for crisis communication as messages can be retweeted easily”. Facebook was the most preferred platform mentioned by interviewees C, D and E. These participants listed it as the number one crisis communication platform their companies used for crisis communication during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to them, many consumers use Facebook as one of Nigeria’s most popular social media platforms. Thus, they (the companies) have many of their consumers on this platform. Interviewee B also noted that crises spread swiftly

on social media platforms like Twitter. Because of this, increasing focus on Twitter at all times is a necessity.

According to interviewee A, monitoring on Twitter is different from monitoring on Facebook. The most important hashtags for a firm and its sector must be identified. Even though A and B claimed that Twitter is a great tool, respondent C remarked that it is not the ideal medium for reaching large audiences because of the smaller user base relative to Instagram and Facebook. One of the participants in the interview (Interviewee A) defined Facebook as a channel that has established itself as the go-to platform for most people in the world. Because nearly everybody is on that platform, it is a great way to reach a wide range of people.

In addition to Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, interviewees B and E highlighted company blogs as a good channel for crisis communication during the COVID-19 pandemic. They both agreed that the company's websites were a good way to communicate with its stakeholders. Company's blogs made it easier for businesses to interact with their customers than with traditional media. As a result, a corporate representative can benefit from writing a blog post on the company website and sharing it on social media. According to him (interviewee E), a blog article by the head of the company is more helpful than official company announcements in the course of a crisis as the COVID-19 pandemic.

4.2.5 Social Media as a Monitoring Tool for Crisis Communication during the COVID-19 Pandemic

“Do your company monitor and assess its social media platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic?” This question attempted to examine if it is vital to monitor and appraise social media platforms during the COVID-19 crisis. This question was to seek clarification on the last research question (RQ5): “Is it important for Nigerian FMCG

companies to monitor and evaluate social media during the COVID-19 pandemic?” Only three interviewees answered this question, and their responses were quite similar. Interviewee A stated, “I am not aware of any monitoring. However, social media platforms should be monitored in the course of a crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Such monitoring can aid in decision making for the company”. Interviewee D wrote,

“No, but monitoring social platforms is crucial in times of crises. The COVID-19 pandemic is a general crisis that is not specific to our company. Thus, we did not deem it fit to monitor our customers’ engagements on our social media accounts.”

Interviewee E stated, “Yes, my organisation established a monitoring team when the COVID-19 pandemic started. Though, the monitoring team was generally for the COVID-19 pandemic and not specifically for monitoring social media.” Most participants highlighted the need of close monitoring and taking control over corporate social media accounts in order to avoid the problems it might cause. Although most of them did not mention social media continuous monitoring during the COVID-19 pandemic. Two respondents who did not reply to this question showed a probable inadequate knowledge.

4.3 Discussions

The first aim of the study was to ascertain the availability and execution of crisis communication plans by Nigerian FMCG companies during the COVID-19 crisis. The findings of the quantitative study showed that 50% of the surveyed employees of FMCG companies said their organisation do not have a crisis management plan, and 34% said they have a crisis management plan. The interview results with the HODs of the five surveyed Nigerian FMCG companies showed that 40% of the interviewees said their companies do not have a crisis management plan.

Only 60% said their FMCG organisations have crisis management plans. These findings showed that an average number of the surveyed FMCG companies have a crisis management plan, as evident from the interview results. The participants for the quantitative research who said their organisations do not have a crisis management plan (50%) are employees in these FMCG companies. There is a possibility that they are unaware of the availability of a crisis management plan in their company. Companies should endeavour to make their crisis management plans known to their employees, especially those working in important departments like Corporate Communications.

The findings of this research contradict the research conducted by CMC Connect Group in 2021. Their research showed that between the second and third quarters of 2020, 27% of Nigerian companies went through a significant impact from the pandemic, with only 9.9% of businesses having a crisis management plan in place. Some of the differences between these two studies might be explained because the authors of the first study interviewed Nigerian SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises). In contrast, this present research focused on FMCG firms, which tend to be larger and have a larger workforce. Thus, most FMCG companies are expected to have a crisis management plan, as portrayed by the research. Furthermore, 58% of the survey participants said the crisis management plan was implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic. Likewise, two-thirds of the interviewees admitted implementing crisis management plans in their companies during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Another research objective of the study was to determine how these FMCG companies use social media for external crisis communication with their consumers during the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey results showed that FMCG companies used social media for crisis communication with their consumers to a reasonable

extent. Many respondents (mean = 3.9) agreed that their companies used social media to disseminate helpful health tips to consumers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, most participants (mean = 3.69) agreed that their organisations used social media to eliminate fake news and misinformation relating to the COVID-19 pandemic. Likewise, the qualitative research supported the quantitative research. The majority of the interviewees (4) agreed that social was used reasonably for external crisis communication by their FMCG organisations during the COVID-19 pandemic, mainly when the pandemic began.

All the respondents categorically stated that their companies had used social media as a communication tool for news dissemination during the COVID-19 crisis. Most of their responses centred on “sharing health tips on COVID-19, their companies’ contributions for vulnerable citizens affected by the lockdown”. When dealing with a crisis, it is critical to have clear communication channels. According to Coombs (2012), for the sake of crisis response, instructional information and adjusting information are two essential parts of crisis response. Instructional information is devoted to educating the public on how to be safe. Nigerian FMCG companies demonstrated this form of crisis response during the COVID-19 pandemic as shown in this research.

Companies must consider the concerns of stakeholders regarding security when developing instructional messages (Sellnow & Seger, 2021). It is essential to change information to comfort stakeholders that the organisation is actively responding to the issue and to show sympathy for individuals who are directly impacted. It is also evident that most FMCG firms in Nigeria adopted the “compassion crisis response” during the COVID-19 pandemic as suggested by Coombs (2009). As an act of compensation, the management of these companies provided its customers

with monetary relief or other aid. Moreover, these companies employed the “compassion crisis response” Coombs (2009) suggested. These companies showed they care about the situation by disseminating valuable information (such as handwashing tips, social distancing tips) to their stakeholders.

Additionally, as proposed by Social Mediated Crisis Communication (SMCC) theory, these FMCG firms employ social media platforms for external crisis communication as "influencers." Influencers are social media users who develop content that others may access. By establishing themselves as influencers, FMCG companies were able to provide vital information to their consumers during the COVID-19 pandemic. The influencers (FMCG companies) ensured that their messages were communicated to the society's inactive members (consumers).

In addition, the SMCC model recommends that influential social media platforms meet the emotional and factual requirements of their viewers during times of crisis by recommending issue-specific solutions. This assertion is true for this research. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Nigerian FMCG companies used major social media platforms in Nigeria to meet the emotional needs of their consumers by providing timely health tips. When the COVID-19 pandemic started, the research showed that Nigerian FMCG companies proactively and immediately encouraged key publics' participation by disseminating crisis information on their social media platforms. According to SMCC theory, organizations should use information responses that are timely, active, and consistent in responding to the public during a crisis (Huang & Su, 2009).

In addition, this research showed that Nigerian FMCG companies depended on social media platforms when communicating with their consumers during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to media dependency theory, amid catastrophes and crises,

people's reliance on the media seems to grow at a very increased rate (Ball-Rokeach, 1985; Kasirye, 2021). These companies relied on social media platforms to disseminate health tips and eliminate misinformation about the virus during the pandemic. This research shows that social media was a useful dependable resource Nigerian FMCG companies used in disseminating information to the public (consumers) so that their consumers can become aware of the possible strategies and how to control themselves to prevent the spread of the virus.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, Nigerian FMCG firms have had to cope with new challenges in crisis communication, such as providing their consumers with accurate information about the virus so that they may make informed decisions. People's anxiety and confusion may be reduced by distributing accurate information to the public, according to a number of scholars who studied media coverage during the COVID-19 timeframe (Wu et al., 2020; Charoensukmongkol & Phungsoonthorn, 2020). Health-related crises like this pandemic need rapid information from reliable sources concerning the danger of infection.

During a crisis, organisations must ensure that they have a range of techniques to communicate with their consumers and other important stakeholders. Adequate communication with consumers gives the customers a sense of belonging and comfort throughout this challenging time. The results of this study complete the findings of Ramluckan (2016). The author discovered that public and private companies in South Africa used social media for crisis and disaster communication.

The third research goal was to determine the pros and cons of utilising social media as a communication tool for these organisations during the COVID-19 crisis. According to the survey results, 50% admitted that one of the merits of social media for crisis communication was the speed of information transmission. 20% chose "It

reaches a wide audience”, and 16% chose “interactivity”. In comparison, the remaining participants (14%) opined that social media affordability is one of the advantages of social media for crisis communication. From the five responses to this question, the common benefits stated by the majority of respondents were “social media’s wide reach”, “its ubiquity”, “interactivity”, and “timeliness and real-time data and communication”.

The importance of speed in crisis communication is emphasised in literature and practice. According to Schultz *et al.* (2012), when information has to reach stakeholders rapidly, the speediness of communication across social media is undoubtedly a benefit. During a crisis, organisations that fail to give timely information to the media and their consumers often face criticism, speculations, and unsubstantiated claims. As a result, crisis communication necessitates the timely distribution of information to all stakeholders. This might make companies look more trustworthy and devoted amid a crisis if they employ social media for communication (Saroj & Pal, 2020).

Regarding the demerits of using social media for crisis communication during the COVID-19 pandemic, the survey results showed that 47% of the participants opined that one of the demerits of social media for crisis communication was the inability to control what customers post on social media platforms. 22% chose “It requires more resources for proper monitoring”, 13% chose “Negative messages travel faster on social media”, and 12% chose “Lack of information credibility”. The remaining 6% opined that social media is limited to a specific audience. The responses from the interview respondents also supported these claims. The perceived challenges were the ability of fake news and rumours to spread quickly on social media platforms, inaccuracy of information, trust and privacy. Jaques (2014) also noted that utilising

social media to communicate during a crisis intensifies the situation. The author believed that negative news may cause damage to an organisation within minutes due to the rapid dissemination of information on social media.

Regarding crisis communication, social media offers both advantages and disadvantages. Social media can be a powerful tool for crisis communication in times of crisis, and participants emphasised the importance of practising effective communication with customers and within the organisation. Cutting information flow during crises is a real danger that must be avoided. The advantages of these platforms are their transparency, dynamism, and speed which permit companies to interact with customers in a more personal, genuine, and direct manner.

In crisis communication, speed can be an advantage, but it can also be a challenge because negative rumours spread more quickly than good news. According to Coombs (2014), social media platforms include a viral trait that aids the rapid spread of information, allowing users to share it with whomever they want, whenever they want, making it the subject of the day. Other drawbacks include the risk of unintended crisis publicity, a lack of management over participant communications, restricted access to particular groups, and the lack of trustworthiness of some social media information. For Nigerian FMCG companies to make the most of social media's potential and avoid it working against them, they must take a tactical approach to crisis communication and management when using it. This tactical approach means these companies should respond to stakeholders' messages on social media during a crisis and monitor the reactions of their customers to a crisis.

The research also sought to identify the most effective platform of social media that Nigerian FMCG organisations used in reaching their targeted consumers during the COVID-19 crisis. According to the survey results, the three most widely used

social media platforms these companies used for crisis communication with consumers during the COVID-19 pandemic were Facebook (48%), Instagram (29%) and Twitter (11%). 7% used YouTube, while the remaining 5% used the company's website to communicate with their targeted consumers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, the channels majorly mentioned by the interviewees were Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, company blogs, and YouTube. All interviewees mentioned Instagram and Facebook. It is evident that Facebook is the most widely used social media platform that FMCG companies employed for crisis communication during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The reasons for using Facebook as a leading social media platform for crisis communication are not far-fetched. In January, a survey by Stats Counter (2021) showed that Facebook was the most visited social media platform in Nigeria, accounting for 83.41 per cent of total January visits. Likewise, Buzoianu & Bîr (2021) research found that two privately owned hospitals in Romania that faced boycotts used Facebook for crisis communication during the COVID-19 pandemic. British Petroleum also used Facebook for crisis communication during the 2010 BP oil spill crisis (Chewning, 2015). Dabner (2012) also confirmed that Facebook was an essential platform for crisis communication during an earthquake in New Zealand. This research also supports the findings of Subba *et al.* (2017).

The last research objective of the study was to ascertain the importance of using social media as a monitoring tool for a crisis by FMCG companies during the COVID-19 pandemic. From the survey results, a large percentage of the participants (67%) said their companies did not monitor their social media accounts during the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of the interviewees stated that the prevalent reoccurring theme was that there is a need for monitoring and control over the use of social media during

crises. However, most of them did not mention monitoring social media during the COVID-19 pandemic. The reason why FMCG companies in Nigeria did not monitor their social media during the COVID-19 pandemic can be attributed to the following factors. Firstly, the COVID-19 pandemic is not a crisis that is caused directly by a company. The crisis is not company-centric as it belongs to the victim cluster of crisis types proposed by Coombs (2014). The victim cluster of crises bears relatively little responsibility since stakeholders perceive the firm as victim of the crisis. Thus, there were little or no negative comments from social media users towards these companies that required them to monitor their social media accounts. COVID-19 as a crisis does not directly affect a company's brand image. Crises under the "Accidental cluster" of SCCT theory such as workplace violence and product damages would have required FMCG companies to monitor their social media accounts. The reason is that this class of crises comes with a strong level of attribution for companies, and it affects the company's perceived public image. Therefore, the companies must monitor what their customers are saying about them during such crises.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

This chapter provides a summary of the results and draws conclusions in light of the research questions. In the chapter's last section, additional research directions are offered.

5.1 Summary of the Study

Due to the deadly COVID-19 pandemic, there was a significant reduction in social and economic activity on a worldwide. Many organizations faced extreme disturbances and disruptions in their operations due to the pandemic which came with severe economic impacts. In periods of crisis, an organization needs to decipher the best means to communicate with the public to manage the state of affairs. The adoption of social media to manage and tackle crises has become a novel global sensation

This study investigated the use of social media platforms by Nigerian FMCG companies for crisis communication and management during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study focused on how Nigerian FMCG businesses employ social media for external crisis communication with their consumers during the COVID-19 pandemic. This research is anchored on the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), the Social-Mediated Crisis Communication (SMCC) Model and Media Dependency Theory.

The study employed both quantitative and qualitative research approaches. An online questionnaire was used to gather data from 122 employees purposively selected from Corporate Communications, Public Relations, Administrative, and Human

Resource departments of five FMCG companies in Nigeria. Five interviews were conducted with the Heads of Department of the Corporate Communications departments of these companies to gain clarifications on the quantitative research data.

The research findings showed that Nigerian FMCG companies have a crisis management plan, and there was an implementation of the plan when the COVID-19 pandemic started. Furthermore, the results indicated that Nigerian FMCG companies used social media for external crisis communication (with consumers) during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly when the outbreak of the virus started. These companies extensively used social media (mainly Facebook, Instagram and Twitter) to share health tips on COVID-19, eliminating fake news and misinformation about the pandemic and informing the public of their companies' contributions to vulnerable citizens affected by the lockdown during the pandemic. According to the findings of this research, social media platforms are contributing to an increase in the amount of information that is readily available to the public on a variety of topics. Using social media platforms has made it simpler for firms to reach out to their customers and provide information. This study found that firms utilise social media to communicate and manage crises, like the COVID-19 pandemic, in addition to advertising.

5.2 Conclusion

This research provided pertinent and significant findings that can aid in advancing the understanding of crises, crisis communication, external crisis communication, and social media usage in crisis communication among FMCG companies in Nigeria. By assessing the research questions in relation to the study's results, the study examines if the research objectives were met.

RQ1: Do FMCG organisations in Nigeria have crisis management plans?

The first research question was to ascertain the availability and implementation of crisis communication plans by Nigerian FMCG companies during the COVID-19 crisis. The research results indicated that only a fair number (60%) of the surveyed FMCG companies in Nigeria have a crisis management plan. This can be inferred from the findings of the qualitative study. Likewise, most of the participants agreed that there was an implementation of the crisis management plan during the COVID-19 pandemic. Conclusively, it can be inferred that availability of crisis management in the surveyed FMCG companies in Nigeria is average. Moreover, there was also an implementation of the plan during the COVID-19 pandemic for the FMCG companies that had the plan.

RQ2: How do Nigerian FMCG companies communicate with their consumers (public) on social media platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic?

The majority of the surveyed FMCG companies in Nigeria used social media for communicating with their consumers during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Nigerian FMCG companies employed social media appropriately for external crisis communication (with customers), particularly when the pandemic first began, based on the replies obtained. They extensively used social media to share health tips on COVID-19, eliminating fake news and misinformation about the pandemic and informing the public of their companies' contributions to vulnerable citizens affected by the lockdown during the pandemic.

This research shows that most FMCG companies in Nigeria use the "Rebuilding posture" of the SCCT theory. These FMCG companies used the "compassion crisis response" suggested by Coombs (2009). These companies showed they care about the situation by disseminating valuable information to their

stakeholders. They also adopted the “compassion crisis response” that Coombs (2009) suggested. As an act of compensation, the management of some of these companies provided its customers with monetary relief or other aid. This act of compensation was carried out through the contributions these FMCG companies made towards the CACOVID (Coalition Against COVID-19) project. During a crisis, businesses must ensure that they have several communication channels available to them to reach their customers and other essential stakeholders. When businesses communicate effectively with customers, they may help them feel more at home and comfortable as they navigate the difficult period of the COVID-19 pandemic.

RQ3: What are the benefits and shortcomings of employing social media platforms as a communication tool for FMCG organisations during the COVID-19 pandemic?

The common merits of using social media for crisis communication by FMCG companies, as stated by the majority of respondents, were “social media’s wide reach”, “speed”, “interactivity”, “its ubiquity”, and “timeliness and real-time data and communication”. When it comes to crisis communication, speed is both an asset and a drawback. This is because false news and disinformation propagate more quickly via social media than through traditional media. Other disadvantages stated by the participants include possibility of unintentional crisis publicity, an inadequate supervision over consumer messages, limited access to certain target audiences, and the lack of credibility of certain social media material. FMCG firms must adopt a proactive framework to crisis communication and management in order to maximise social media's prospects and prevent it working against them.

RQ4: What is the most efficient platform of social media that organisations employed in communicating with their targeted audience during the COVID-19 pandemic?

According to the findings of the research, the three most widely used social media platforms these companies used for crisis communication with consumers during the COVID-19 pandemic were Facebook (48%), Instagram (29%) and Twitter (11%). Thus, Facebook is the most efficient platform that FMCG companies used for crisis communication during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many Nigerians utilise Facebook as one of the country's most renowned social networking sites. Thus, they (the companies) have many of their consumers on this platform. Thus, it can be concluded that FMCG companies in Nigeria used Facebook as the leading social media platform when communicating with their consumers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

RQ5: Is it essential for Nigerian FMCG companies to monitor and evaluate social media during the COVID-19 pandemic?

The research findings showed that FMCG companies did not monitor their social media accounts during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is evident from the results of the qualitative aspect, where the interviewees all said their company did not monitor social media content during the COVID-19 pandemic. Likewise, a large percentage of the survey participants (67%) said their companies did not monitor their social media accounts during the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic is not a crisis that directly impacts a particular firm. In other words, the crisis is not focused on a single corporation because it belongs to the victim cluster of crisis type suggested by Coombs (2014). Because stakeholders regard the organisation as a victim of the crisis, the victim cluster of crises carries a disproportionately small amount of responsibility.

As a result, few or no critical remarks from social media users towards businesses required these companies to monitor their social media accounts.

5.3 Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

This study has a few drawbacks. First, the sample size in this study is limited. The research was conducted among 122 participants and 5 interviewees of 5 Nigerian FMCG companies operating in the manufacturing sector in Nigeria. Therefore, the findings cannot be applied for further generalizations. For this reason, it is imperative that future studies use larger sample sizes to draw more generalized results. Moreover, a short timeframe was allotted for data collection (March 4th 2022 to April 7th 2022). Possibly, more people would have participated in the survey if the survey had been opened for a more extended period. Future studies should consider a more extended time range for data collection. Moreover, the employees from Administrative, Human Resource departments who participated in the study might have affected the results of the study. Future studies should limit the population of similar studies to employees in Public Relations (PR) and Corporate Communications departments for more detailed results. It is important to note that one of the interviewees was the Head of Department (HOD) for Human Resource (HR) department of one the FMCG companies considered. This is a limitation as this interviewee might have limited knowledge as regards to crisis communication.

Social media usage for crisis communication in other Nigerian industrial sectors such as banking sector, health sector, and oil and gas sector can also be studied and compared in future studies. Furthermore, the study solely looked at social media usage in external crisis communication with customers during a crisis (the COVID-19 pandemic). Researchers should investigate how well companies communicate internally with other stakeholders during a crisis and how well they communicate

externally (with other stakeholders like investors and suppliers). This research only looked at how social media was employed during the COVID-19 pandemic for crisis communication, not how conventional media was employed. Future scholars could examine more closely how conventional media and social media are used to communicate during times of crisis and compare the similarities and differences between the two.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Letter of Consent

Dear Respondent,

I am Osundoja Ebenezer OSUNDARE, a master's candidate at the Communication and Media Studies department, Eastern Mediterranean University Gazimağusa, North Cyprus. I invite you to participate in a research project titled “The Use of Social Media in Crisis Communication and Crisis Management during COVID-19 Pandemic: Insights from Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCGs) Companies in Nigeria”. The research aims to address how selected Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) companies in Nigeria employ social media platforms for crisis management and communication with their consumers during the COVID-19 pandemic. I seek to learn more about how FMCGs employ social media platforms to handle and communicate crises via your contribution. My research and literature research generally will benefit from this survey's findings.

It is entirely up to you whether you want to take part in this research. You have complete discretion over whether or not you engage in the project and will face no repercussions for your decision. Participation in this questionnaire will not earn you any money. In order to protect your privacy, any information you supply will be used only for educational reasons. The identities of the organisations involved will be kept strictly private. Information recognizing you as a participant will be treated confidentially and anonymous by the Institute of Graduate Studies and Research, Eastern Mediterranean University, Gazimagusa, North Cyprus.

Guidelines for Completing the Questionnaire

1. Please answer questions by making a tick (✓) or a cross (X) next to the correct answer.
2. This questionnaire will only take 20 minutes to be completed. Thank you for cooperating.

Please answer all the questions as honestly and accurately as possible — this is very important. Thank you.

Appendix B: Questionnaire

Section A: Socio-Demographic Questions

1) How many employees does your company have?

- a) Less than 100
- b) 100-500
- c) 501-2000
- d) Over 2000

2) Which category of Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCGs) does your company belong to?

- a) Home care
- b) Personal care
- c) Food & beverages
- d) Alcohol & cigarettes
- e) Over the Counter (OTC) drugs
- f) Other, please specify _____

3) What is your job role or responsibility in the company? (You may choose more than one alternative).

- a) Senior Manager
- b) Operations Officer
- c) Corporate Communications Officer
- d) Public Relations Officer

- e) Administrative officer
- f) Human Resources Personnel
- g) Other, please specify _____

4) How many years of working experience do you have in your current position?

- a) Less than 1 year
- b) 1-2 years
- c) 2-4 years
- d) 4-6 years
- e) 6-8 years
- f) 8 years or more

SECTION B: Organizational Use of Social Media

5) Does your company have social media presence on the Internet?

- a) Yes
- b) No

6) If your answer to the above question is yes, how does your company use social media? (You can choose more than one option).

- a) Crisis communication
- b) Customer service
- c) Advertising
- d) Competition analysis of competitors
- e) Other, please specify_____

7) How often does your company use social media?

- a) Several times a day
- b) Once a day
- c) Several times a week
- d) Once a week
- e) Several times every month
- f) Once a month
- g) More seldom

8) Does your company monitor what people say about the company on social media?

- a) Yes
- b) No

9) If your answer to the above question is yes, does your company use any tools for monitoring? (You can choose more than one option)

- a) Yes, in-house with the use of software
- b) Yes, through an external partner
- c) Yes, but I do not know how it is monitored
- d) No, we do it manually, in-house

SECTION C: The Use of Social Media in Crisis Communication and Management

10) Does your company have a crisis management plan? **(N.B: A crisis management plan describes what should be done in a crisis).**

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) I don't know

11) If your answer to the above question is yes, is social media included in your company's crisis plan?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) I don't know

12) If your answer to question 10 is yes, was there any implementation of the crisis plan when the COVID-19 pandemic happened?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) I don't know

13) Is there someone in your company who is primarily in charge of crisis management?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) I don't know

14) Does your company have a crisis management team? **(N.B: A crisis management team is a set of employees that is responsible for handling a crisis)**

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) I don't know

SECTION D: The Use of Social Media during the COVID-19 Pandemic

15) During the COVID-19 pandemic, which major social media platforms did your company mainly employ for crisis communication? (You can choose more than one option)

- a) Facebook
- b) Twitter
- c) Instagram
- d) WhatsApp
- e) TikTok
- f) Company's website
- g) YouTube
- h) Other, please specify_____

16) What are the advantages of using social media for crisis communication during the COVID-19 pandemic? (You can choose more than one option)

- a) Speed of information transmission
- b) Interactivity
- c) It is affordable
- d) It reaches a broad audience

e) Other, please specify_____

17) What are the disadvantages of using social media for crisis communication during the COVID-19 pandemic? (You can choose more than one option)

a) Lack of control over stakeholders’ messages

b) Lack of information credibility

c) Negative messages travel faster on social media

d) It requires more human resources for proper monitoring

e) Other, please specify_____

The following questions seek to understand how the FMCG company that you are working for uses social media for crisis management and communication during the COVID-19 pandemic. Kindly tick as appropriate.

SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, U = Undecided, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree

	Questions	SD	D	U	A	SA
18	My company’s crisis management plan includes social media for crisis communication.					
19	My company was willing to use social media for crisis communication when the COVID-19 pandemic started.					
20	During the COVID-19 pandemic, my company selects social media channels for crisis communication based on the unique features of each platform. (E.g. Twitter retweet feature)					

21	My organization responds indirectly to consumers during the COVID-19 pandemic (Responding indirectly means your company uses media conferences and media releases to deliver messages to her customers during the start of the COVID-19 pandemic).					
22	My company responds directly to consumers about the COVID-19 pandemic on social media channels. (Responding directly means that your organization skips the step of journalistic gatekeeping to deliver personalized messages).					
23	During the COVID-19 pandemic, my company believes that social media makes crisis communication with consumers faster.					
24	My company used social media to disseminate helpful health nuggets (e.g., handwashing tips) to customers during the COVID-19 pandemic.					
25	The company uses social media to eliminate misinformation and fake news relating to the COVID-19 pandemic.					
26	My company uses social media to keep consumers informed of production shutdowns (when necessary) during the COVID-19 pandemic.					
27	My company uses social media to communicate with consumers on service/product delivery issues caused by the pandemic.					

28	My company has enough technical infrastructure to integrate social media into its current crisis management for the COVID-19 pandemic.					
29	My company's public relations/Corporate Communications/media & I.T. department raises the idea of using social media for crisis management during the COVID-19 pandemic.					

SECTION E: THE IMPORTANCE OF USING SOCIAL MEDIA AS A COMMUNICATION AND MONITORING TOOL DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

	Question	SD	D	U	A	SA
30	It is essential to monitor and evaluate social media as a crisis communication tool during the COVID-19 crisis.					
31	During the COVID-19 crisis, social media is used to learn about customer opinions regarding the crisis.					
32	During the COVID-19 pandemic, my organization believes that social media provides a cheaper means for external crisis communication (with consumers) than other forms of media.					
33	Social media provides a convenient means of communicating with customers during the COVID-19 crisis					
34	Overall, social media positively impacted crisis communication during the COVID-19 pandemic.					

35	During the COVID-19 pandemic, my company's image was negatively affected as a result of inadequate communication on social media (caused by lack of technological infrastructure in Nigeria).					
36	Social media has provided an excellent platform that aided decision-making during the COVID-19 pandemic.					
37	During the COVID-19 pandemic, my company monitors its social media accounts to ensure accurate transmission of information.					
38	My company monitors its social media accounts during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure that there are no unofficial posts by employees.					
39	During the COVID-19 pandemic, my company monitors social media to assess the effectiveness/success of crisis communication.					
40	My organization uses a manual process to manage and monitor social media during the COVID-19 pandemic (Manual process means your company uses an employee to manually read, measure and record posts' engagements).					
41	My organization monitors its social media accounts during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure that there are no damaging posts aimed at my organization.					

42	My organization uses specialist tools/software to manage and monitor social media during the COVID-19 pandemic.					
43	Social media is an effective and relevant tool for crisis communication during the COVID-19 pandemic.					

Appendix C: Interview Questions

This interview is meant for Crisis Managers or Senior Managers in Corporate Communication/Human Resources/Public Relations Departments of Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCGs) companies in Nigeria.

Part A: Crisis Management during the COVID-19 Pandemic

1. Uncertainty is a vital characteristic of a crisis. Was your company duly prepared for a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic, or were you caught unprepared?
2. Does your company have a crisis management plan?
 - a. Was there efficient implementation of the crisis plan during the COVID-19 pandemic?
 - b. Did the implemented crisis plan yield results?
3. Does your company have a crisis management team?
4. Crises disrupt business plans and forecasts. Were your company's business strategies changed to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the company?
5. What are the crucial managerial tasks for effective crisis management by FMCG companies during the COVID-19 pandemic?
6. Both successes and failures of crisis management heavily rely on how decisions are made. In your opinion, what are the main barriers to decision-making when a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic happens?
7. People are placed under a lot of stress during a crisis, which may lead to emotional responses. During a crisis, firms must control certain emotions (such as

anxiety, concern, and stress). During the COVID-19 pandemic, how did your firm handle crisis management and communication?

Part B: The Use of Social Media for Crisis Communication during the COVID-19 Pandemic

8. Has your organization considered using social media in crisis communication before the COVID-19 pandemic?

Possible follow-up questions depending on the answer provided in question 8 include:

a. What do you think to be the main factor in adopting or rejecting social media use in crisis communication in your organization? Why?

9. In your opinion, how has social media affected corporate crisis communication during the COVID-19 pandemic?

a. Has the nature of crisis communication changed?

b. Do you perceive this change as a threat or an opportunity? Why?

10. To what extent did your organization use social media during the COVID-19 crisis?

a. In what ways were these methods effective?

b. To what extent did you use social media to disseminate information to your consumers?

c. What was the effect of social media on the external crisis communication process with the consumers?

d. Is the information being communicated better because of social media use?

11. According to a literature review on public relations, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are the widely used social media platforms by organizations in Nigeria. Which of these platforms did your company employ for external crisis communication with consumers during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- Why did your company choose that platform(s) for crisis communication with the consumers?
 - Which social media platform provides the most convenient form of communication with consumers?
12. Do you believe social media can be an advantage or an obstacle when dealing with crises like the COVID-19 pandemic?
- What do you believe is the best way to deal with these challenges?
 - Do the drawbacks of social media outweigh the advantages?
13. Lastly, is it important to monitor social media accounts during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Appendix D: Ethical Clearance

 <p>Doğu Akdeniz Üniversitesi "Erdem, Bilgi, Gelişim"</p>	<p>Eastern Mediterranean University "Virtue, Knowledge, Advancement"</p>	<p>Galleo Galleo Sk. / Str., 99628, Gazimağusa, KUZZEY KIBRIS / Famagusta, NORTH CYPRUS, via Merist 10, TURKEY Tel: (+90) 392 630 1327 bayek@emu.edu.tr</p>
<p>Bilimsel Araştırma ve Yayın Etiği Kurulu (BAYEK) / Board of Scientific Research and Publication Ethics</p>		
<p>Reference No: ETK00-2022-0078</p>		<p>01.03.2022</p>
<p>Subject: Your application for ethical approval.</p>		
<p>Re: Osundoja Ebenezer Osundare and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ülfet Kutoğlu Kuruç</p>		
<p>Faculty of Communication and Media Studies.</p>		
<p>EMU's Scientific Research and Communication Ethics Board (BAYEK) has approved the decision of the Ethics Board of Communication (date: 28.02.2022, issue: 22/115) granting Osundoja Ebenezer Osundare and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ülfet Kutoğlu Kuruç from the Faculty of Communication and Media Studies to pursue their work titled "The Use of Social Media in Crisis Communication and Crisis Management during COVID-19: Insight From Moving Consumer Goods (FMCCGs) Companies in Nigeria".</p>		
<p>Best Regards</p>		
		
<p>Prof. Dr. Yücel Vural</p>		
<p>Chair, Board of Scientific Research and Publication Ethics - EMU</p>		
<p>YV/ek.</p>		
<p>www.emu.edu.tr</p>		