

Analysis Of Interactive Stakeholder Interaction By GSM Companies In Nigeria

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Abstract

Building relationships with stakeholders through interactive communication on social media is imperative in corporate communication practice. The study set out to examine interactive communication on social media between GSM companies in Nigeria and stakeholders. Specific objectives sought to identify social media platforms deployed by GSM companies in Nigeria for corporate communication and also identify corporate communication themes which formed the basis for interaction with stakeholders. Anchored on actor-network and system theories, the research design was content analysis. The sample size of 376 was determined using Cochran's statistical formula. The instrument for data collection was the coding sheet. A coefficient of 0.69 derived using Cohen's Kappa ascertained the reliability of the instrument. Findings showed Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube were visible social media tools deployed for corporate communication by GSM companies in Nigeria. Significantly, blogs were absent with Airtel Nigeria the only GSM company to have a corporate blog for stakeholder communication. There was a preponderance of one-way communication in social media use archetypical of web 1.0. This was interspersed with a fair bit of transactional interactivity while interactive communication was absent. The study recommended that GSM companies initiate conversations and interact with stakeholders on social media platforms on programmes, policies, and issues through extensive information exchange.

Key words: Corporate communication, social media, stakeholder interaction, Twitter, Interactivity, corporate reputation.

1.1 Introduction

Contemporary practice of corporate communication has placed maximum emphasis on interactive stakeholder communication. Explicably, the stakeholder has to be accorded an important status in view of the centrality of his role in the modern corporation. This resonates acutely with the proposition by Cornelissen (2017) that in the management world, the future of any company critically depends on key stakeholders. This necessitates building relationships with stakeholders through interactive communication.

Interactive stakeholder communication is essential because it affords an organisation the opportunity to listen to its stakeholders. Through bi-directional communication, there is propensity for better understanding between stakeholder groups and the organisation. From the perspective of Liu (2003), interactivity is understood to be the sort of communication which offers individuals active control to contribute both reciprocally and synchronously. This captures disseminating information to stakeholders and responding to feedback which follows from that information. Be that as it may, the rationale for interactive stakeholder communication has been enunciated in the corporate communication literature. On one hand, stakeholders have become much more vocal by consistently voicing their expectations and have expected more interactive and dialogue-based communication. On the other hand, interactive, conversational forms of corporate communication have engendered partnerships, engagements, collaborations, consultations, which are the hallmarks of strategic stakeholder management. Constantly listening to stakeholders enables the organisation to have on offer products and services tailored to suit customers. Not just product and services but also aligning policies and programmes to match the expectations of stakeholders. Undeniably, it can be surmised that boardroom decisions at certain times probably emanated from formal and informal conversations with stakeholders.

Interactive stakeholder communication is situated in corporate communication. Corporate communication has become an increasingly powerful strategic tool for connecting with a company's stakeholders. It involves consumers, the media, investors, communities, and employees with strategic messaging aimed at reinforcing the mission and vision of the company. The emphasis of corporate communication is on how organisations handle their internal and external communications amid the complexities and competitions of the modern business climate.

Social media have become an integral part of life online as social websites and applications are on the increase daily. People from all walks of life and from all over the globe have embraced social media by creating their profiles on them. Traditional online platforms may include social components, such as comment fields for users, but the term "social media" has been used to denote specific kinds of online websites that are used for several social purposes. In more concrete terms, social media refer to Internet technologies that allow users to generate their own content and share that content through various connections. Social media are commonly associated with Web 2.0 technology that focuses on integration, collaboration, and interaction. There are numerous social media tools available, with different characteristics, user demographics, and functionalities. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) formally define social media as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content" (p.61). Web 2.0 is described as a platform whereby content and applications are no longer created and published by individuals, but instead are continuously modified by all users in a participatory

and collaborative fashion, so Web 2.0 is seen as the ideological and technological foundation of social media.

Social media basically affords organisations the opportunity for image formation, building and development. The elements necessary for such image building and development can be transmitted using social media. Identity is a key ingredient for image formation, therefore, through social media; an organisation can afford to express its ethos, values, norms and standards. A strong brand presence through content communities such as YouTube and Instagram will go a long way in building the image of an organisation.

The widespread use of social media has fundamentally changed how people communicate and share information. There has been an exponential growth of social media leading to an impact in virtually every industry as companies seek to create strategies to engage on the social web. Through social media, an organisation is given the power to learn about its audiences and what they think about the company. Communicating corporate messages and issues through social media has increasingly become necessary in order to improve and promote conversations between companies and stakeholders. Emphasis has been laid on interactivity as an important characteristic of online social media. Interaction on social media allows organisations to develop relationships between them and stakeholders through dialogue. It is no longer a one-way communication where companies make announcements to the audiences. It is dialogic as the audience can react and share their opinion with the company. Conversations have in some instances, been initiated by stakeholders mainly on critical issues.

The salience of stakeholder interaction is rooted in corporate reputation. Corporate reputation in this age is a product of stakeholder perceptions from multidimensional facets of an

organisation's activities. An organisation's range of activities on social platforms constitutes an index in measuring corporate reputation. As posited by Kaul and Chauldhri (2015), social media provides evolving patterns of communication, collaboration, consumption and has created new domains for interactivity for companies and stakeholders. The question of adoption of social media by companies has significantly faded. The focus has shifted to how and what organisations are deploying social media for. The exponential growth and usage of social media for stakeholder interaction is assumed to have massive impact on corporate reputation. Companies are knowledgeable on how to connect with people, project leadership, share information about policies, products and services, and provide immediate response, harness favourable public sentiment, and build relationships (Kelleher and Miller 2006). Additionally, as Labrecque (2014) posits, companies can create a sense of para-social interactions through messages that include elements indicating that the company shows human-like behaviour by listening and responding to consumers. Behaviour, an intrinsic part of the corporate identity mix, is also reflected in the social media activities of companies. While there are no laid down rules of behaviour for companies on social platforms, it is plausible that good behaviour will likely entail prompt responses to inquiries and requests, transparent and open conversations, respectful and professional approach to conversations. With this in mind, stakeholder interaction adds its bit to enhancing corporate reputation.

The astronomical growth in the GSM service industry in the country has led to intense competition amongst companies. The advantage of this, obviously, is bequeathed to subscribers/stakeholders. The competitiveness in the industry inevitably leads to companies aiming to outdo each other in terms of tariff, customer care, social responsibility etc. It is for this

reason that many GSM companies in Nigeria have dedicated and committed communication teams saddled with the responsibility of managing their array of stakeholders. Mobile Telecommunications Network (MTN), Airtel Nigeria and Emerging Markets Nigeria (9Mobile) have their stakeholder engagements and communication managed by a corporate communication department while at Globacom Nigeria, the Public Relations department manages stakeholder engagements and communication.

The telecommunications industry in Nigeria has diverse stakeholders. The government, responsible for the legal and regulatory framework for the industry is a principal stakeholder. Others are subscribers, strategic partners, media, trade partners/vendors, communities, non-governmental organisations and civil society groups. With this array of stakeholder groups, it is only rational to undertake an inquiry to ascertain if these GSM companies interact with stakeholders through social channels from the perspective of corporate communication.

It is on the basis of this that this research seeks to establish the nature of stakeholder interaction done by select GSM companies in Nigeria. Given how vibrant the GSM service industry is and the wide range of stakeholders the industry has, it is only rationale to attempt an investigation of the use of social media for stakeholder interaction.

1.2 Statement of the problem

At the heart of corporate communication practice is the stakeholder. This has led organisations to prioritise stakeholder communication. However, emphasis has been placed on stakeholder engagement which transcends communication to stakeholders and embraces communication with stakeholders. Put differently, stakeholder engagement has become intrinsic to corporate communication practice as there is a shift from stakeholders being managed to the

idea of developing mutually supportive and lasting relationships through engagement. This entails two-way interactive communication aimed at building relationships, partnerships and collaborations. This has led to brands adopting the use of micro-blogging sites, blogs, and social networking sites with a view to having personal and direct interactive stakeholder communication on these social media platforms (Cornelissen 2017). Features available to social media users have also empowered stakeholders who can now rattle corporations in the online space.

It can be surmised from cursory observation that GSM companies in Nigeria have their profiles on social media platforms. However, it cannot be ascertained if these platforms reflect a strongly sender-oriented pattern and follow a one-way transmission model of communication or whether there is two-way interactive communication as advocated by the intersection of theory and practice of corporate communication. Studies in this clime, such as that by Inya (2017), have however only focused on whether Nigerian firms have adopted social media as a platform for communication. This has made it impossible to ascertain the veracity of claims by GSM companies in Nigeria such as that by MTN Nigeria in December 2016 in its Stakeholder Engagement Report of its successful interactions with its stakeholders. The aforementioned, therefore, rationalises undertaking an inquiry to ascertain if GSM companies under study engage stakeholders through interactive communication using social media platforms.

1.3 Aim and objectives of the study

The study is undertaken with the aim of analysing stakeholder interaction through social media platforms by some GSM companies in Nigeria. Specific objectives were crafted to align with this aim as follows. To:

- i. identify all social media platforms utilised for corporate communication practice by GSM companies in Nigeria,
- ii. examine the nature of interactive stakeholder communication through social media platforms by GSM companies in Nigeria,
- iii. find out the social medium which records the highest frequency of interactive stakeholder communication by the GSM companies in Nigeria,

1.4 Research questions

In line with the objectives of the study as outlined, the following research questions will be addressed by the study.

- i. What are the social media platforms utilised for corporate communication practice by the select GSM companies in Nigeria?
- ii. What is the nature of interactive stakeholder communication identifiable on social media by the GSM companies in Nigeria?
- iii. Which social medium has the highest frequency of interactive stakeholder communication by the GSM companies in Nigeria?

1.5 Theoretical framework

Actor-network theory

The actor network theory was developed in the mid1980s primarily with the work of Bruno Latour, Michael Callon and John Law. The theory strives to account for the hybrid or plural nature of scientific work. Sommerville (1999) observes that the actor-network theory

proposes a thematic shift in emphasis away from the centrality of the human subject and simply regards the human subject as another actor in a network. Essentially, what the actor-network theory proposes is that everything that surrounds humans in the natural and social world are in existence in a network of relationships. In this network, humans and non-humans alike are accorded the same or equal statuses as actors. The proponents of this theory have reemphasised the importance or inevitability of non-humans in a network. The place of non-humans especially technology is unquestionable in shaping social processes.

Social media platforms as put to use by organisations are interactive in nature and can translate stakeholders. Thus, non-humans are granted agency with which they can translate stakeholders. This is where the relationship between actor-network theory and social media is established and in the context of corporate communication practice.

System theory

System theory draws from biological sciences to lucidly make valid comparisons between an organisation and the interdependent human society. the system theory owes its theoretical grounding to German Biologist Ludwig Bertalanffy. Bertalanffy, in the 1930s, began the system theory in life sciences which developed into the modern field of ecology. The core theme of Bertalanffy's proposition was that "nothing could be understood by isolating one part of what plays a significant role in a system" (Heil 2009, p.2). Friedman and Allen (2014) corroborate this by noting that "system theory is likened to a science of wholeness" (p.4). This resonates with the thoughts of Mele, Pels and Polese (2010) that

A fundamental notion of general systems theory is its focus on interactions. The centre in relationships lead to sustain that the behaviour of a single autonomous element is different from its behaviour when the element interacts with other elements. Another

core tenet is the distinction between open, closed and isolated systems. In open systems there are exchanges of energy, matter, people, and information with the external environment (p.127).

Organisations are directly dependent on the environment for manpower and human resources, patronage, resources and therefore must interact with the environment. The onus, however, lies on organisational leadership to set this interaction in motion. Ramosaj and Berisha (2014) aver that the systems theory and its approaches help organisational leaders to translate the awareness of the complexity of the organisation and intensity of its interaction with the environment into a guide for successful leadership in terms of permanent requirements for change versus resistance to them and trying to influence the environment which exercises influence on the organisation itself.

In all, the task of corporate communication is building relationships especially with external audiences. System theory demonstrates the importance of interacting with other components in a system in order to achieve homeostasis. This summarises the relationship between system theory and corporate communication and in essence the suitability of system theory as a framework for this paper.

1.6 Corporate communication, social media and interactive stakeholder communication

Interactive stakeholder communication presupposes having posts which stakeholders are drawn to. Van Noort and Willemsen (2012) suggest that companies have to put up content that is relevant in the sense that it offers useful information, entertains, solves problems, offers customer service, or engages consumers with attractive content and conversations. On this basis, Glover (2013) mentions that organisations must share content that is relevant to stakeholders.

Based on stakeholder mapping, relevant content is posted to attract specific stakeholder groups. For instance, if tenders and bids are publicised through social media platforms, it is bound to attract investors and in turn interaction occurs. When posts relevant to government regulatory bodies are published, it obviously engenders interaction with that stakeholder group.

One way to engender interactive stakeholder communication is through polls. Polls on social media are a direct way to initiate stakeholder interaction. Lozano (2017) avers that polls are a great way to gather opinions on specific issues and to get stakeholders to interact with the organisation. Questions raised in social media polls must relate to the organisation and must be tied to stakeholder interest.

Social media has afforded stakeholder groups the potential to provide instant feedback and create avenues for interaction with organisations. In other words, while social media has afforded organisations the platform to communicate with critical stakeholders, it has on the other hand provided stakeholders a similar opportunity to reach out to organisations as well. As noted earlier, organisations were in absolute control of the communication apparatus as they determined what messages to direct at stakeholders and the channels to deploy. In this social media era, this has drastically changed. As clearly pointed out by Booth and Matic (2011)

Global enterprises are struggling today to understand how social media impacts their brands. Corporate management is witnessing a new level of activism from an influential constituency, rarely heard from in the past-ordinary consumers. Many of these new consumer influencers are gaining a large share of the voice in the market thanks to the power of Internet and to technologies that bring together people who share common interests (p.184)

In effect, corporations are not in charge of conversations at all times. Stakeholders nowadays possess such powers to drive conversations. Cornelissen (2007) adds that "individual

stakeholders may also use social media to organise themselves for action and take concerted steps in favour of, or in some instances against the organisation" (p.50). Kazaka (2011, p.246) in this regard affirms that "if an organisation does not provide its opinion, individual stakeholder groups can quickly achieve domination in a certain communication environment creating a united front against a certain expression of the organisation's activity. Thanks to social media, this process becomes even simpler and with a potential to expand on a global scale". It is based on this sort of scenario that Morsing and Schultz (2006) strongly affirm that the relationship with stakeholders must be based on interactivity, dialogue and mutual commitment so as to set up a framework of transparency and responsibility in a new market for doing business. The use of social media for corporate communication undoubtedly holds the key to stakeholder interactivity.

Social media offers corporations the platform for interacting with stakeholders. It is first and foremost important to note that "the notion of information is closely related to the notion of interactivity, as interactivity is all about the transmission of information in a process of communication" (Ariel and Avidar 2015, p.21). Information essentially is the basic unit in any discourse about the communication process. As pointed out by Rafaeli and Ariel (2007), in conceptualising the notion of interactivity, it is inevitable that constructs such as synchronicity, control, rapidity, participation, connectedness and responsiveness are usually brought to the fore. Kiousis (2002) defined interactivity as "the degree to which a communication technology can create a mediated environment in which participants can communicate (one-to-one, one-to-many and many-to-many) both synchronously and asynchronously and participate in reciprocal message exchanges (third party dependency)" (p.372).

From Rafaeli's (1988) point of view, interactivity increases when the third messages exchanged between parties refer back to their previous messages. Anderson, Swesnon and Gillkerson (2016) add that interactivity should include three related exchanges between parties. As described by Rafaeli (1988), interactivity attempts to describe an expression of the extent that in a given series of communication exchange, any third (or later) transmission (or message) is related to the degree to which previous messages referred to earlier exchanges. Ariel and Avidar (2015) aver that "interactivity is an important element of the communication process and serves as a relational maintenance strategy that contributes to relational outcomes" (p.21). Interactivity using social media has thus been seen to have a strong relationship-building potential if organisations effectively leverage interactive tools to build relationships.

In the context of this study, interactivity will be approached from the point of view of a process-related variable. Using Rafaeli (1998)'s interactivity model, there are three possible types of messages in a communication process namely non-interactive, reactive and interactive response. Ariel and Avidar (2015) provide further understanding of his model by noting that the first type of message produces declarative communication which is essentially one way message between a sender and receiver(s). The second type of message produces responsive (reactive) communication. In this scenario, the messages are two-way directional and the receiver becomes a sender and reacts to previous message. The message here focuses only on the requested information and hardly beyond it. The third type of message produces interactive communication. In this scenario, there is a two-way flow of messages between sender and receiver taking turns. The messages here refer not only to the last turn but also to previous turns and encourage the continuation of an interaction.

This incontrovertibly, is the level of interactivity which has been espoused to be critical to corporate communication practice where it is imperative to build relationships with stakeholders through interactive communication. Cho, Furey and Mohr (2017) have outlined that social media have opened up new doors for businesses to reach stakeholders. Through these platforms, relationships are built with stakeholders. Interactivity as a process related variable invariably fits in here as an avenue for bi-directional communication.

1.7 METHODOLOGY

The study adopted content analysis as research design. The choice of content analysis was on the basis of the objectives of the study and also the essence of the technique which is to systematically and objectively examine all forms of communication content.

The universe of this study comprised non-human subjects. These subjects were Facebook posts, Instagram posts and Tweets from the corporate profiles of 9Mobile Nigeria, Airtel Nigeria, Globacom Nigeria and MTN Nigeria.

The sample size for this study was derived using Cochran's (1977) sample size determination formula.

The formula is:

$$n_o = \frac{Z^2 Pq}{e^2}$$

Where:

n_o = Sample size

e = Desired level of precision

z = Selected critical value of desired confidence level

p = the estimated proportion of an attribute that is present in the population,

$q = 1-p$

The sample size was 376.

The sampling techniques adopted by the study were quota sampling technique and simple random sampling technique. Quota sampling divides the population into relevant strata called quota controls. Thus, the population was first divided into four strata representing four GSM companies under study. The simple random sampling technique was then used to draw out the sample from each stratum. In doing this, the sample frame was defined, and then a table of random numbers was created and used to generate the sample. The sample was drawn without replacement.

The instrument for data collection was the coding sheet. The coding sheet was prepared using content categories.

The units of analysis for the study was homepages of GSM companies, Facebook Posts, Facebook comments and replies, Tweets and Twitter replies, Instagram posts and replies.

Going by the objectives of this study, the content categories were derived a priori. Parameters were sourced taking into consideration interactivity as a process-related variable and corporate communication themes.

Category (A): To determine interactive communication

- i. **Non-interactive** This was captured through messages that produced declarative communication, essentially one way messages between GSM companies and stakeholders. Likes, shares, views are deemed non-interactive.
- ii. **Transactional/reactive.** This considered messages which produced responsive (reactive) communication. The messages were two-way directional and the receiver becomes a

sender and reacts to previous message. The message here focused only on the requested information and not beyond it.

iii. **Conversationality/interactivity**

This covered posts that produced interactive communication. This is a two-way flow of messages between GSM companies and stakeholders with both taking turns to be sender and receiver. The messages here refer not only to the last thread but also to previous comments and encouraged the continuation of an interaction and are not in reference to any requested information.

Inter-coder reliability

In calculating inter-coder reliability, Cohen's (1960) Kappa was used. The formula, which has the advantage of accounting for chance agreement between coders, is stated thus:

$$K = \frac{P_o - P_e}{1 - P_e} = 1 - \frac{1 - P_o}{1 - P_e}$$

Where:

P_o = The relative observed agreement between coders

P_e = The hypothetical probability of chance agreement

The reliability co-efficient was 0.69

Data were analysed using quantitative methods of analysis. The frequency and percentages of data generated were presented in charts.

1.8 Results

Presentation of data is done on the basis of specific objectives of this study.

Objective 1: Identify all social media platforms utilised for corporate communication practice by GSM companies in Nigeria.

Social media

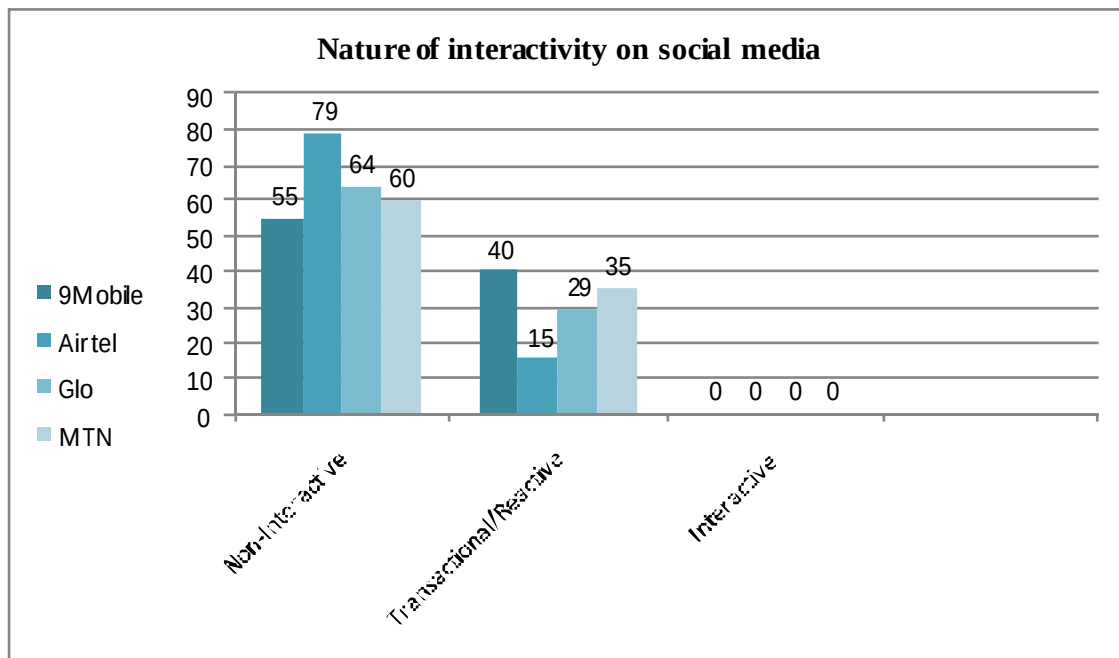
GSM

Companies

p latforms				
—				
	9Mobile	Airtel	Globacom	MTN
Facebook	Present	Present	Present	Present
LinkedIn	Present	Present	Present	Present
Twitter	Present	Present	Present	Present
Instagram	Present	Present	Present	Present
YouTube	Present	Present	Present	Present
Blog	Absent	Present	Absent	Absent

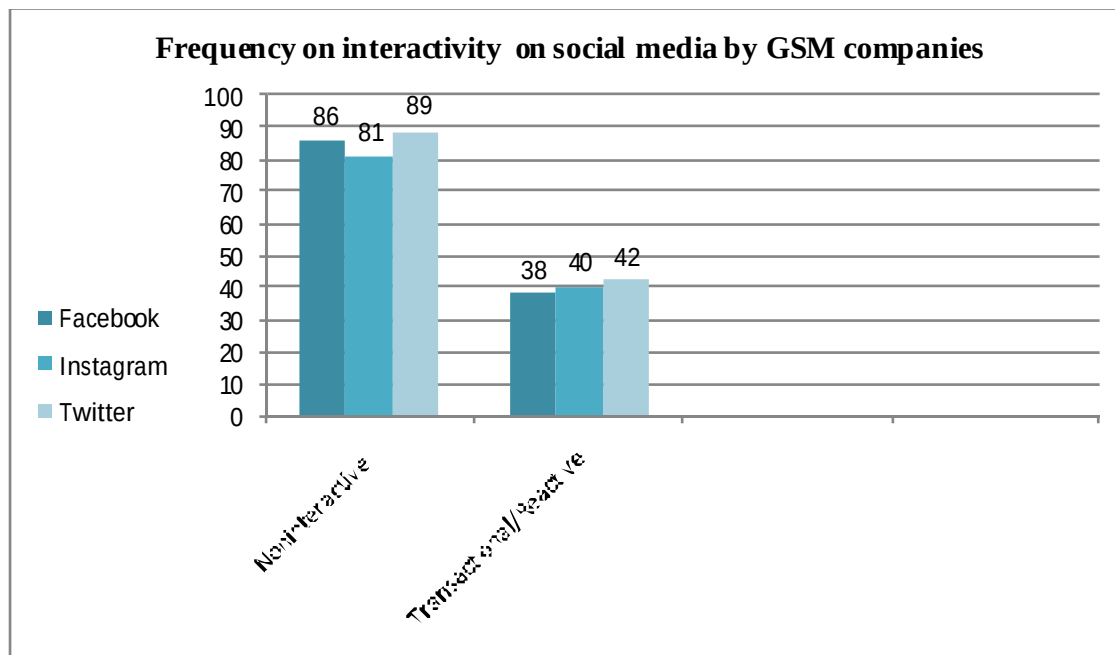
Using the homepages of GSM companies as unit of analysis, data gathered to meet this objective highlights the social media platforms used for corporate communication practice by GSM companies in Nigeria. It was observed that all GSM companies under study had corporate profiles on Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube. Significantly, only Airtel Nigeria has a corporate blog while 9Mobile, Globacom Nigeria and MTN Nigeria have none.

Objective 2: Examine the nature of interactive stakeholder communication through social media platforms by GSM companies in Nigeria.



Data contained in fig. 1 describes the nature of interactive communication undertaken by GSM companies using social media. Data presented shows a preponderance of one-way communication over two-way communication by all the companies. Data also points to evidence of transactional interactivity though not in very significant proportion. In transactional interaction, messages are exchanged but not beyond questions raised by stakeholders. There is a complete absence of interactive communication which is often equated with stakeholder engagement. The nature of interactive communication entails exchange of messages between two parties with both taking turns and exceeding the transactional or reactive level. In summary, data presented in fig. 1 above points to the dominance of one-way communication using social media interspersed with a fair bit of transactional interactivity.

Objective 3: Find out the social medium which records the highest frequency of interactive stakeholder communication by GSM companies in Nigeria.



Data in fig2 suggests that the three social media platforms considered were very similar in terms of how much interaction they generated. None of the social media channels investigated (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) recorded a significantly higher frequency of interactivity than the others.

1.9 Discussion of Findings

Research question 1: What are the social media platforms utilised for corporate communication practice by the select GSM companies in Nigeria?

Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube were visible social media tools deployed for corporate communication by GSM companies in Nigeria. Significantly, blogs were absent with Airtel Nigeria the only GSM company to use a corporate blog for stakeholder communication.

Expectedly, GSM companies have jumped on the bandwagon by using social media tools for communication with stakeholders. As the name ‘social’ denotes, these platforms came to be used mainly for interaction with friends and family before organisations tapped into it as a platform for establishing and maintaining contact with those who care about their products and services and beyond.

It would have been surprising if any of the four GSM companies studied had failed to have a profile on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube and Instagram because these are the most popular social media platforms from a global perspective. Additionally, these platforms have peculiarities on the basis of how they are characterized. In other words, Facebook and LinkedIn represent social networking sites. While LinkedIn does more of professional networking, Facebook is less formal, thus accommodating people of all walks of life. Same could be applicable to having a profile on Twitter. It is expedient to tie this finding to the theories upon which this research was anchored. The actor-network theory is explicit when it suggests that nonhumans can be granted agency to translate. The actor-network theory strives to account for the hybrid or plural nature of scientific work. Rather than explaining the production of scientific knowledge from the perspective of nature and technology, proponents of the actor-network theory developed what they referred to as a performative view of the production of science which takes into account not only what scientists accomplish in their labs but also what non-humans such as machines, texts or objects do as well (Cooren 2009). Sommerville (1999) observes that the actor-network theory proposes a thematic shift in emphasis away from the centrality of the human subject and simply regards the human subject as another actor in a

network. GSM companies in Nigeria, as the finding suggests, GSM companies have used social media to translate stakeholders.

Research question 2: What is the nature of interactive stakeholder communication identifiable on social media by the GSM companies under study?

In addressing this research question, the contents of social media platforms were analyzed. Data contained in table fig. 4.1 describes the nature of interactive communication undertaken by GSM companies using social media. Interactivity as a process-related variable was either non-interactive or transactional/reactive and hardly interactive. Data presented in fig. 4.1 revealed a preponderance of one-way communication over two-way communication. The implication of this is that social media platforms, as used by GSM companies, mostly serve as tools for sending information. Data also points to evidence of transactional interactivity albeit not in very significant proportion. In transactional interaction, messages are exchanged but not beyond questions raised by stakeholders.

There is a complete absence of interactive communication which is often equated with stakeholder engagement. The nature of interactive communication entails exchange of messages between two parties with both taking turns and exceeding the transactional or reactive level. In synopsis, data in fig.4.1 revealed a dominance of one-way communication using social media interspersed with a fair bit of transactional interactivity. Transactional interactivity has implication for corporate identity. Interactive communication was significantly non-existent.

It is unfathomable that GSM companies did not have an extensive exchange of information on policies, programmes, and issues.

There is clear relationship between this finding and system theory used as a framework for this thesis. System theory demonstrates the importance of interacting with other components in a system in order to achieve homeostasis. Social media affords GSM companies the platform for interaction to take place. In a system, different variables relate with one another. There is a level of dependence on one variable by another. It is almost impossible for organisms to be self-sufficient in a system. Ramosaj and Berisha (2014) aver that a phenomenon for almost universal significance in the systems theory discourse is that of the interaction of the individual with its environment. Littlejohn (2009) also adds that an internal relationship among objects in a system is a crucial defining quality of systems. GSM companies have exhibited a fair degree of dependence on the system by the interaction with stakeholders through social media platforms.

Research question 3: Which social medium has the highest frequency of interactive stakeholder communication by the GSM companies under study?

This research question sought to investigate if there's a propensity for one social medium to generate more interactive communication than others on the basis of its features or characteristics. Data in table 4.3 suggests that the three social platforms considered were very similar in terms of how they engendered interactivity. The figures found in the table 4.3 and illustrated in the accompanied chart reveal a fair degree of uniformity in terms of interactivity. In other words, none of the social platforms investigated recorded a significantly higher frequency of interactivity than the others. Facebook, Twitter or Instagram as used by GSM companies had no significantly higher propensity to engender interactivity.

From the concepts reviewed, evidence abound on the capacity of social media platforms to allow users view and traverse connections. It is also expedient to point out that the classification of social media is done on the basis of features and characteristics inherent in those

platforms. For instance, social networking sites are designed to allow users traverse their own connections. Users are able to share contents easily and are also allowed to see their relationships with others quite easily. Users can reconnect with old friends and acquaintances and to traverse through the network in a way that enhances social interactions (Ellison and Boyd 2013). Conversely, the primary function of social networking sites from the features described is to build connections, maintain offline relationships and also establish new relationships. Bryant, Mamo and Ramirez (2011) posit that although people primarily use social networking sites to maintain or deepen existing relationships, a secondary function of social networking sites is to initiate new relationships.

1.10 Conclusion

Social media has been revolutionary in the last decade. The various functionalities of Web 2.0 unquestionably have changed the practice of corporate communication. The dynamic nature of organisations and inevitable necessity to engage stakeholders has seen various organisations adopt social media as a tool for information dissemination and stakeholder interaction.

The study concludes that GSM companies in Nigeria, as is with other contemporary organisations, have long jumped on the bandwagon by having their corporate profiles on social media platforms. Social networking sites, which are apparently the most popular of social media platforms, have Facebook and LinkedIn as the leading sites which all GSM companies have their profiles on. Twitter, a micro-blogging site was seen to be visibly used by all GSM companies. Content communities featured prominently as well with YouTube and Instagram as leading platforms for sharing videos, photos and other forms of content. It may sometimes be impossible for organisations to adopt all social media platforms for communication. Evidence of this was

illustrated in the absence of corporate blogs as tools for corporate communication by GSM companies in Nigeria. Blogs offer a different dimension in comparison to other tools.

The use of social media platforms for corporate communication practice is hinged on the idea that it is in the overall interest of the organisation to find itself in spaces where it can be heard and its product, services and what it represents is projected. The presence of stakeholders in the social media space makes it a necessity for organisations to be ever present in the social media space. However, interaction with stakeholders on social media platforms has generated feelings of mutual trust and understanding between organisations and stakeholders. What has however been noticed in the use of social media is that organisations tend to adopt a one-way transmission model of communication. This one-way model of communication as epitomized by the era dominated by mainstream channels of communication namely print, radio, television, and Internet (Web 1.0) meant organisations simply crafted messages and deployed communication channels to transmit these messages to their various constituencies. The absence of instant feedback and interaction characterized this one-way transmission model of communication. Unfortunately, organisations have transferred this model of communication to social media which is designed to be interactive, promoting instant exchange of information. The inference from here is that GSM companies in Nigeria displayed this communication pattern using social media mostly as a tool for transmitting messages depicting customer relations, social responsibility etc. to their constituencies on these platforms. Evidently, transactional communication on these platforms was noticed. The implication of this, basically, is that behaviour (important for corporate identity), is entrenched.

Organisations determine the content of messages on their social media platforms on the basis of what they give priority to. Put differently, the posts found on social media platforms can be on their corporate social responsibility programmes, sales of product and services, issues management, investor information etc. as deemed necessary by the organisation. Owing to the diverse nature of stakeholders, and the kind of information these crave, the content of social media platforms may be one-dimensional. This is clearly what the findings of this study revealed. GSM companies in Nigeria are mainly product service oriented. Inferentially, the dominant content of their social media platforms bordered on customer relations. This also goes to explain why the nature of communication on these platforms was largely one-way. The strategy appears to be that of just pushing out information on products and services into the waiting timelines of followers.

1.11 Recommendations

Taking into consideration the findings of this study, the following recommendations have been advanced:

1. GSM companies in Nigeria should endeavour to maximally explore all available social media platforms. Specifically, the blogosphere, which is practically untapped by GSM companies need to be given a look in as it offers a practically different dimension to information dissemination and exchange.
2. It is also recommended that GSM companies initiate conversations and interact with stakeholders on social media platforms. The sort of interaction recommended here is that beyond transactional where programmes, policies, and issues are deliberated through extensive information exchanges.

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