

**PERCEPTIONS OF ONLINE PUBLIC RELATIONS IN NIGERIA:
DOES THE COUNTRY RISK BEING LEFT BEHIND IN THE ONLINE
REVOLUTION?**

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Statement of Originality

I hereby certify that I am the sole author of this thesis. The material in this thesis has not been submitted in any Institution of Learning nor published or submitted for any publication.

Where other materials and publications, including websites are cited in this thesis, due acknowledgements are made in accordance with the standard referencing practice.

Yushau Abdulhameed Shuaib

ABSTRACT

This dissertation attempts to study the perception of Online Public Relations in Nigeria and whether the country risk being left behind in the online revolution. It therefore studies how PR practitioners in Nigeria have responded to the Internet and online technologies.

The study employs some research methods, including interviews with experts and questionnaires to sample the opinions of various stakeholder groups on the use of new media in country.

Apart from providing the Literature Review on traditional PR and latest Online PR practice, the study finds out some factors that affect and inhibit full utilisation of new media tools in Nigeria. The factors can be related to some theories and models raised by some scholars of Mass Communication and PR.

Through the data gathered, the study discovers that while traditional PR is still the best approach by practitioners in connecting with their publics, the Online PR is gradually being recognised as a tool that could improve information dissemination and interactivity.

In realising some of the problems, the research provides major recommendations where various stakeholders have collective roles to play towards best practice and improving online PR activities in Nigeria. The stakeholders include the government, scholars, PR practitioners and professional bodies.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Public relations (PR) practice as a management function in building relationships faces a challenge of adapting to new technology which has been brought about by the Internet. The Internet has influenced new processes of communication, interactions and exchange of information between individuals, groups and societies.

Scholars agree that over the last decade, the Internet has remarkably changed the way companies and institutions communicate and interact with their audience.¹ This is the position of some PR practitioners in Nigeria. For example, Ademolekun and Ekundayo note that one of the greatest developments in the last decade is the Internet through which the world is further compressed to the much talked about global village as it facilitates easy communication across borders.²

The development has influenced new approaches and methods of engaging the publics to achieve the objective of PR campaigns. The traditional media, the major tools of PR practitioners in reaching out to the publics, have also embraced online technologies to shape publics' attitudes and perceptions on information from various sources.

It is therefore not surprising that the Internet and web technologies have changed the way public relations professionals interact amongst themselves and their publics. In fact, according to Marken, the technologies have changed the definition of public relations.³

The dimension is even regarded as a 'revolution' by Professor Anne Gregory who observes that a new age of communication has arrived with a revolution in public relations. He emphasises that "the nature of Internet publics or communities is quite different from those that have been traditionally the domain of the PR practitioners."⁴

¹ Gonzalez-Herrero A. and Miguel R. V. (2006) Trends in Online Media Relations: web-based Corporate Press Rooms in leading International Companies, *Public Relations Review* 32, pp267-275

² Ademolekun W. and Ekundayo T. (2002) *Interactive Public Relations*, Abuja: taymos Communications p32

³ Marken G. A. (2008) Will Public Relations be a Profession by 2010, *Public Relations Quarterly* Vol 52 Number 4, p37

⁴ Gregory Anne in a Foreword in Phillips D. and Young P. (2009) *Online Public Relations: A practical guide to developing an online strategy in the world of social media*, Kogan Page Limited, London p x

The way the Internet and mobile technologies are utilised by professionals to connect with the public efficiently and effectively, is regarded as 'PR 2.0', 'Digital PR' and 'New Media' while some scholars use such terms as 'Net relations', 'webbed public relations' and 'Internet PR'.⁵

As there are many names for these specialised approaches to PR practice online, so also are there emerging tools for effective communication with different audiences. The situation makes every PR practitioner to be on the alert for tips and tricks on online practices as more tools are invented on regular basis.

In developed democracies including the United Kingdom, many developments have taken place in the area of online public relations practice, but that is not the case in other developing nations. As there are mounting pressures on public relations practitioners to adapt to the reality of changes in communications brought about by the technology, the practice is yet to be fully harnessed and embraced by communicators in other climes. Most of the literatures have concentrated on the practice in advanced countries, especially in the United States of America and the United Kingdom.

Nigeria as a Case Study

Many developing nations are coming to terms with the reality of the Internet technology for basic usages: electronic mail and browsing the net. The concept of online PR is yet to receive wider acceptability. While accessibility of the tools is eased by the nature of the Internet, the potentials of Online Public Relations is not being utilised optimally in some countries including Nigeria.

Nigeria is the largest country in Africa with a population of an approximately 150 million people. There are presently 23.9 million Internet users in the country as at December 2009. This figure represents 16.1% of the population, per International Telecommunication Union (ITU).⁶ In addition, there are 67,800 broadband Internet users. This figure does not include a large number of its population that lives outside the country in the Diaspora.

⁵ Gonzalez-Herrero A. and Miguel R.V. (2006) Trends in Online Media Relations: web-based Corporate Press Rooms in leading International Companies, *Public Relations Review* 32, pp267-275

⁶ Internet World Statistics Usage and Population Statistics (Online) Available from <<http://www.internetworldstats.com/africa.htm#ng>> Accessed on 16 June 2010

While PR practice was introduced before the country's Independence in 1960, online PR approach is yet to be fully embraced. The country has one of the oldest and vibrant professional bodies for public relations practitioners formerly known as the Public Relations Association of Nigeria (PRAN) which was founded by Dr. Sam Epelle in 1963, before it was renamed Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) in 1972.⁷

The NIPR became a chartered Institute via Decree No 16 of 1990 which was officially gazetted on June 26, 1990. Under the Decree, the Institute is empowered to regulate the profession of public relations in Nigeria, determine minimum qualification of entry for PR jobs and register and sanction members when and where necessary.⁸ In the area of education, several public and private universities presently run different diploma and degree programmes in PR. The University of Nigeria Nsukka inaugurated the first MSc programme in PR in September 1992. The same university according to Jossy Nkwocha, was to commence a Doctorate Degree (Ph.d) programme in PR in 2006.⁹

Those developments influence the rapid growth of public relations in Nigeria, with practitioners working in the public and private sectors of the economy including those in PR agencies as consultants. One of the glaring problems is that little success has been achieved in the area of research and other literatures on the place of online public relations practice in the country. This development is further compounded by a report in the *PR Week* magazine that: "As Africa's most populous country, one would expect Nigeria to be a natural hotbed of PR innovation. Instead the PR industry has languished behind advertising, hampered by a risky commercial environment and slow strides towards professionalism."¹⁰

In another part of the report, the PR journal admits that Nigeria's digital media are in an early stage of development, although influence is growing. Like many emerging economies, new media is a critically important communications resource. It nevertheless adds that "The

⁷ Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (Online) <http://www.nipr-ng.org/niprhistory.asp> Accessed on 25 June 2010

⁸ Public Relations Nigeria (Online) <http://www.prnigeria.net/i/index.php/pr-in-nigeria/pr-in-nigeria> Accessed on June 25 2010

⁹ Nkwocha J. (2006), *Public Relations Practice in Nigeria* Lagos: Zooms Lens Publishers p9

¹⁰ Arun Sudhaman, Focus on Nigeria, prweek.com, (Online) Available from: <http://www.prweek.com/news/bulletin/globalbulletin/article/995742/?DCMP=EMC-PRWeekGlobalbulletin> Accessed on 09 April 2010

industry has several good PR practitioners, a couple of well established companies, and the tools used are rather limited.”¹¹

What could have been those limitations that hamper the anticipated growth of PR in this digital age when a country has good PR professional?

In the aspect of online activities, this researcher observes that most social public relations activities involved the use of online forums among PR professionals and journalists, as they acquire some basic skills and knowledge from such discussion forums. For instance the online forum patronised by PR and communication practitioners in Nigeria include the PRNigeria Group, has 540 active professional members,¹² where issues on communications and PR practice are discussed, and also a forum for Resident Information Officers and Press Secretaries representing all federal ministries which is also used to circulate press releases among its 119 registered members.¹³ It is noteworthy as well as amazing to realise that politicians and activists are actively involved in social media networks for political campaigns and advocacy respectively. Most PR practitioners are either yet to be engaged or have few friends and followers on the social media sites.

A Nigerian communicator and a Press Secretary, Lasisi Olagunju observes that a check on some social network sites shows that notable politicians with ambitions apparently joined for political leverage. This aims at assessing how popular they are with the people. They appear to be using the Facebook community to sample the electorate. According to him “apart from active politicians, other users of the Facebook who claim to be using it for purely social networking are indeed, engaging in socio- political activities.”¹⁴

It was for the above reasons and others that this researcher chooses to unravel the problems with the topic “Perceptions of Online Public Relations in Nigeria: Does the Country risk being left behind in the online revolution?” The question is therefore: Are the rapid changes in online public relations global? Or it is just a reality or a fad in developed worlds where

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Nigeria PR Practitioners Yahooogroup: <http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/prnigeria/> (Accessed 28 June 2010)

¹³ Online Forum of Resident Information Officers: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/rionigeria/>

¹⁴ Olagunju L. The Politics of New Media- A Look at Internet and Mobile Phone in Nigeria PRNigeria.net (Online) Available from http://www.prnigeria.net/portal/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=428:lasisi-olagunju&catid=24:features&Itemid=7 Accessed on 29 June 2010

various debates and arguments have been raised? Outside developed countries such as United States of America, Britain and other countries in Europe, what is happening in other nations?

Statement of the Problem

As the Internet technology changes and new tools are introduced at an unprecedented rate, they change applications and methods of communication that require more public awareness and how-to-do skills which are usually easily accessible in advanced countries. With this development, yet there is a shortage of scholarly publications on the use of technology for Public Relations practice. Not much has been documented about online public relations in Nigeria as there are not enough, if available, literatures on the use of online technologies with references to Nigeria.

The dearth of documentary evidence makes it imperative to study and determine the level of awareness and perception of online public relations in a developing country in Africa.

While Social Media (SM) is the new global buzz word for communications, the tools surprisingly are not being optimally utilised by the PR practitioners. On the other hand activists and political organisers use them to champion causes by bypassing the image makers. Some of the problems for lacklustre attitudes of PR practitioners towards the Internet, could be borne out of societal frustrations in Nigeria with different facets that include political, socio-cultural, economic and technological factors.

In view of the constraints militating against the spread of knowledge and skills of applying the Internet to public relations activities, practitioners and scholars in Nigeria have a responsibility to rise to the occasion in identifying with other societies that are using the latest tools for effective and efficient communication process.

The practitioners should be empowered with skills and knowledge to gain the benefits of the new ways of doing things, through theory and practice in understanding the phenomena.

The problem this study attempts to unravel, is that there is little or insufficient knowledge of the application of new media in Nigeria which inevitably hampers the PR campaigns.

Objective of the Study

The research objective is to study the impact of online PR trends generally and examine its development in Nigeria by understanding the perception of the major stakeholders in the PR industry. It employs theoretical literatures and an empirical study. The objectives therefore include the followings:

- To describe the practice of online PR and the trends
- To examine any existing research or finding on online PR in Nigeria
- To look at the qualitative and quantitative research methodology to be used in this study
- To explore the perceptions of the various stakeholder groups in Nigeria, on the effectiveness of online Public Relations practice, and where necessary, using some of the theories and models in PR
- To discuss the implications of the findings and the various perceptions on online PR
- To add knowledge that could be beneficial to researchers, PR practitioners and students

QUESTION AND HYPOTHESIS:

The Research Questions will basically try to seek answers to the followings:

- How have PR practitioners in Nigeria responded to the Internet and online technologies?
- Has online PR produced measurable changes in their works?
- How active are they in the use of online technologies?
- Do PR practitioners in Nigeria feel that online PR will become an integral part of the professional skills set and tool box?
- Are they facing constraints and limitation in exploring all the potentials?
- What impacts do practitioners expect online PR to have on the profession?

Hypothesis

In the area of hypothesis, the researcher may likely find the following:

- That Online PR is gradually being recognised in Nigeria as a tool to improve information dissemination and interactivity.

- That some cultural and economic factors affect and restrict full utilization of the potentials of New PR in Nigeria.
- That Practitioners will like Online PR to be an integral part of the professional skill, for wider exposure to larger audience.
- That some social and economic constraints exist in exploring the potentials of new PR in Nigeria.

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The scope of this study on the Perceptions of Online Public Relations is limited to Nigeria where most of the respondents are stakeholders who, as scholars and practitioners in mass communications, have better understanding of public relations practice, and local trends in online technologies for communications.

Offline Respondents

The printed questionnaire was restricted and distributed in Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria during the 23rd African Public Relations Association (APRA) Conference held at the International Conference Centre, Abuja, Nigeria from May 18 – 20, 2010.

Online Respondents

The online version of the questionnaire which was also announced at the APRA Conference could only be promoted on online Forums for PR practitioners and Journalists covering Communications and management in Nigeria. Emails were only sent to selected stakeholders.

Literatures

With dearth of literatures on online PR in Nigeria and other African countries, this study relies on books and journals, mostly from America and European countries, especially those published between 2007 and 2010 except on exceptional basis to draw historical perspectives. Blogs and website resources in Nigeria whose sources could not be verified for authority and authenticities were neither considered nor consulted for this study.

Social media

The maximum word counts of 15,000 words for this research, is not adequate to fully cover other areas that have impacted on Online Public Relations in Nigeria, especially in the area of Social Media and the influence of activists in using the social networking, to promote different advocacies and agenda.

Interviews

Only one interview with a major scholar was conducted face to face while online techniques were adopted for two others to demonstrate the influence of online PR for interviews. The attempt of this researcher to interview Peter Walker, former Chairman of British Institute of Public Relations (IPR) and a non-native PR practitioner, who has knowledge of developments in Nigeria, for comparative analyses, was not possible due to technical hitches.

Questions

The questions merely address the scope of the research which is on perception rather than on practice or the use of online PR in Nigeria.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire targets major players in the PR industry, whose views are important for this research. Therefore not all the respondents are PR practitioners, but include representatives from the media and academia. Due to technological factor, some respondents complained to the researchers that they could not respond online, owing to the poor Internet service in Nigeria and could not have the access to the questionnaire which was only distributed at APRA Conference in Abuja. By restricting the printed questionnaire to APRA Conference in Abuja, while promoting the online version through relevant online forums, the approach is cost effective and targeted at the appropriate respondents.

The essence of Scope and limitation is to allow further studies on some of the highlighted areas.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW:

This Chapter discusses theories, concepts and debates on Public Relations (PR) and recent development on online and new media by exploring contextual research, variables and models that may be applicable to Nigeria.

Models and Theories

This study examines some models and theories that help to sharpen the understanding of public relations from online perspectives. Most studies on PR are based on instrumental and managerial perspectives. Scholars have attempted to broaden the theoretical scope of PR studies by applying the work of writers and theorists. In their book on Public Relations and social Theory, Ihlen, Ruler and Fredrikson admit that PR theory is rooted in a number of disciplinary fields, such as mass communication, interpersonal speech communication, psychology, economics, sociology and in different schools of thoughts such as functionalism, constructivism, feminism, Marxism, or cultural theories.¹⁵ The scholars declare that some may see the approach as a “curse because they believe that it can lead to confusion about the nature of public relations or what it can be.”¹⁶

Nevertheless, Kerlinger gives a clear definition of ‘theory’ as: “a set of interrelated constructs (variables, definitions and prepositions) that present a systematic view of phenomena by specifying relations among variables with the purpose of explaining natural phenomena.”¹⁷

The traditional Public Relations

The term Public Relations means different things to different groups of people. It has positive and negative connotations as well as perceptions on its usage. A Nigerian scholar, Sambe notes that PR as a term has been used and abused to include a wide range of activities from legitimate attempts at persuasive communication to the bribery efforts of unscrupulous lobbyists.¹⁸ Kabir Dangogo, another Nigerian author and PR practitioner stresses that the misconceptions about PR are not only from the cynical public but also from the ill-informed

¹⁵ Ihlen O., Ruler B. V. and Fredrikson M. (2009), *Public Relations and Social Theory- key Figures and Concepts*, Routledge: New York p3

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Kerlinger F. N. (1979) *Behavioural Research: A conceptual Approach*, New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston p64

¹⁸ Sambe, J. A. (2008) *Introduction to Mass Communication Practice in Nigeria*, Spectrum Books Limited. Ibadan, p239

practitioners. Helists some of the misconception to misconstrue ‘PR as spinning from the truth,’ and branding it as propaganda to defend indefensible acts and attempts for cheap publicity.¹⁹

Public relations practice, whether traditional or offline, as well as online, focuses on establishing and sustaining relationships with groups of stakeholders and the publics. Realising different perceptions on PR, the Foundation for Public Relations Research and Education, commissioned a major study to search for a universal definition of PR. The study undertaken by Harlow²⁰ identified nearly 500 different definitions of the discipline, largely emphasising on relationship between two parties: an organisation and its various publics.

Philip Kitchen in his book summarises a number of common themes, distilled from a review of the various definitions of PR that have been offered from the study by Harlow. He points out that:

“Public relations is essentially a communications function, but with the emphasis on the two-way nature of the communications process... it is concerned with establishing and maintaining mutual understanding and goodwill between organisations and particular groups of people... serving as an intelligence function, analysing and interpreting trends and issues in the environment that may have potentials consequences for an organisation and its stakeholders”²¹

PR practitioners play major roles in promoting and enhancing the image of their organisations and clients just as they operate from large industries to small businesses in Nigeria and elsewhere. Moloney identifies some of those activities that include lifestyle, features, ideological messages, staged photos, consumer leaflets, corporate brand, special events, competition, exhibitions, conferences, community supports, issues and crisis management.²²

While most PR activities centre on publicity and media relations, there are other functions that are not necessarily for publicity when lobbying techniques and strategic reputation management are considered towards effective relationship with the publics. Generally, PR

¹⁹ Dangogo K. (2008) Beyond the Banking Hall, Kaduna: Timex Communications Ltd pp36-37

²⁰ Harlow, R. F. (1976) ‘Building a Public Relations Definition,’ Public Relations Review, 2(4): pp34-41

²¹ Kitchen, P. J. (2004) Public Relations Principles and Practice, Thomson Learning, London p8

²² Moloney Kevin (2006) Rethinking Public Relations, Routledge, New York, p1

involves media relations, event management, crisis management, lobbying, in-house publications and corporate social responsibility. PR practitioners in Nigeria observe and engage in all the approaches mentioned.

The Federal Ministry of Information in Nigeria, as the major publicity arm in the country uses traditional PR approaches to proactively inform, enlighten, and educate the citizenry on the activities, actions, policies and programmes of government. It nevertheless states that its vision is “to create a proactive technology driven public information hub, with effective feedback mechanism as well as telecommunications transformation in line with global best practices.”²³

Online Public Relations

While there are many nomenclatures used to refer to the use of digital technology in PR, this study chooses to refer to it as online PR. The choice was necessitated by similar reference made by the authoritative *Encyclopaedia of Public Relations*, edited by Robert L. Health which defines Online Public Relations as the “use of Internet technologies to manage communications and establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationship between an organisation and its key publics.”²⁴

The use of the Internet for PR activities started early enough. Robert L. Dilenschneider, the former President of Hill and Knowlton stresses that “Public Relations was one of the first industries to recognise and harness the power of the Internet.”²⁵ According to him PR, professionals with vision and imagination, jumped on board as soon as they recognised the unparalleled possibilities.

There are those who are still finding it difficult to cope with the changing realities. Some literatures indicate that the online practice is changing and challenging the traditional way of communication. Deirdre Breakenridge points out that the Internet changes everything about how “PR professionals view their roles, delivery of effective communication and the way their brand interacts with their target audience.”²⁶ David and Young echo the same sentiment

²³ Federal Ministry of Information: www.fmico.gov.ng

²⁴ Health R. L (2005) *Encyclopaedia of Public Relations* Sage Publications Inc, California p587

²⁵ Dilenschneider R. (2010) *Public Relations Leveraging PR in the Digital World*, AMACOM Books, New York p1

²⁶ Breakeridge D. (2008) *PR 2.0 New Media, New Tools, New Audiences*, FT Press, New Jersey 2008 p13

when they state that “nothing will ever be the same again; the advent of an online world means that almost every aspect of the PR discipline needs to be rethought.”²⁷

With such favourable fervour on the digital media, others point that it is more of mere fashion with its frenzy. Grunig J. admits that public relations has long been a professional practice where fads are common and conceptualisation of faddish concepts is weak or non-existent. He nevertheless concedes that:

“the attention being paid to the new digital media may be the latest fad in public relations. These new media have the potential to make the profession more global, strategic, two-way and interactive, symmetrical or dialogical, and socially responsible.”²⁸

System Theory of Communication

Public relations practice as communication process goes through what Aubrey Fisher describes as concept of “mechanistic perspective”²⁹ on how information is transported from a sender to a receiver. The perspective demonstrates the role of a gatekeeper who plays intermediary role between the senders and receivers. The traditional PR approach counts largely on media relations to succeed in ensuring the gatekeepers provide adequate coverage for the PR campaigns. But with the new media, where computers, instead of human being, take the central stage, the Internet technology plays the roles of the gatekeeper in an unregulated cyber-sphere. The model of Computer-Mediated-Communication (CMC) demonstrates the loss of control on information once it goes on the Internet. This could be one of the reasons for phobia by PR practitioners who intend to control the messages. It takes few seconds, for instance, for an email to reach an inbox in another continent which goes through a complex process of several interconnectivities beyond imagination

One of the early literatures that attempted to situate the place of Internet in public relations practice, was by Diane F. Witmer. In his handbook on public relations on the Internet, he admits that many PR researchers find system theory helpful in illuminating the practice of PR as it concerns social relationship.³⁰ The system requires the concepts of input, throughout and

²⁷ Phillips D. and Young P. (2009) *Online Public Relations: A practical guide to developing an online strategy in the world of social media*, Kogan Page Limited, London

²⁸ Grunig J, *Paradigms of Global Public Relations in an age of Digitalisation*. Prisms: [online] Available from: <http://praxis.massey.ac.nz/fileadmin/Praxis/Files/globalPR/GRUNIG.pdf> Accessed on 2 July 2010

²⁹ Fisher, B. A. (1978) *Perspectives on Human Communication*. New York: Macmillan

³⁰ Diane F. Witmer D. F. (2000), *Spinning the Web: A Handbook on Public Relations on the Internet*, Longman, New York

output to exist. The system has credence in Grunig and Hunt's four-model overview of PR,³¹ which is rooted in a system perspective of the boundary spanning and feedback roles of PR focusing on one-way and two-way communication. The Press Agency and Publicity Models rely on one-way communication, while the others Two-way asymmetrical and Two-Way Symmetrical models encourage interaction and feedback.

The concept of simultaneous and non-simultaneous communication used by T. Andrew Finn,³² and synchronous and asynchronous communication by Wilmer demonstrate the level of timeliness in information delivery, especially in Computer-Mediated-Communication (CMC). Simultaneous (synchronous) communication, according to Wilmer, occurs when parties involved are engaged at the same moment in the communication process while non-simultaneous (asynchronous) communication, does not require communicators to be engaged in the process at the same time.³³ As at the time of his writing (2000), Wilmer could only make references to face-to-face interactions and telephone conversation for the former, while email and newsgroups exemplified the latter. A decade afterward, new social media tools are redefining those concepts, as communication is becoming synchronously spontaneous.

Global Phenomena

The public relations has got its share of globalization of practice, with scholars providing case studies and models to portray its significance. The studies go beyond traditional PR to the new PR. In the well celebrated book on global public relations Krishnamurthy Sriramesh writes that the relevant publics of PR are increasingly becoming more and more diverse and global, because of rapid globalisation. He wonders whether "one should talk any longer about international public relations or global public relations as being a specialty, because even domestic publics are becoming multinational and multicultural due to globalisation."³⁴

The globalisation of PR is influenced by multinational corporations, democratisation in emerging economies and the advocacy of international bodies, to reach out to their public. Sriramesh believes that globalisation is spurred by the rapid expansion of information and

³¹ Grunig, J. & Hunt, T. (1984). *Managing Public Relations*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston

³² Finn, T. A. (July 1998) A Conceptual Framework for Organising Communication and Information system, Paper Presented to the Annual Conference of the International communication Association, Jerusalem, Israel.

³³ Witmer D. F. (2000), *Spinning the Web: A Handbook on Public Relations on the Internet*, Longman, New York p52

³⁴ Sriramesh K. and Vercic D. (2009) *The Global Public Relations Handbook*, Routledge, New York pxxxv

communication technologies which have revolutionized the dissemination of information about products, services, and life styles around much of the world.³⁵

The book, which provides an extended discussion on the history, development and current status of PR industry from a global perspective, only listed four African countries: Nigeria, Egypt, South Africa and Kenya. In the Chapter that focuses on Nigeria, colonialism and global merchandizing contributed to the introduction of PR in the country. In their contributions Eric, Taye and Julia note that PR practice in Nigeria had statutory endorsement before that of UK's CIPR, by a decade. They disclose that:

“The Nigerian government gave legal backing to public relations practice as a profession and recognised the NIPR as the regulator and only professional body that could admit practitioners into the profession and set standards for its practice in Nigeria.”³⁶

While technology has made the world truly a global village, pulling down the walls of territorial segregation, the book, which was updated in 2009 does not provide enough information on Internet penetration in Nigeria and other African countries where the social media, as an offshoot of the advanced technology, has continued to dominate public discourse on its potentials to eliminate cultural and sociological barriers.

From a global perspective, the effect of technology has irreversibly changed ways of communication, as it has wiped out national boundaries. This fact is echoed by Curtin and Gaither who observed that it is more difficult for any nation to institute laws and policies that insulate its citizens because technological sophistication has also affected society in more profound ways. According to them: “culture is far from monolithic: it is constantly interacting with other cultures at micro and macro levels and is morphing in unpredictable ways.”³⁷

Macroenvironmental Factors

This study examines the relevance of a normative theory to Nigeria's context to determine constraints that might affect the use of the Internet for PR. A framework of

³⁵ Ibid p xxxvi

³⁶ Ibid p292

³⁷ Curtin P. A. , T. Gaither K. (2007), International Public Relations, Negotiating Culture, Identity, and Power, Sage Publication, California pp56-58

macroenvironmental factors has been used in environmental monitoring and boundary spanning to describe the impact of public relations. Scholars like Culberton, Jeffers, Stone and Terrel use an acronym SPE to buttress their argument on the influence of Social, Political and Economic variables as environmental factors in PR programme.³⁸ On the other hand, Vercic and Grunigs identify five variables that could be useful for PR activities in a given country. The variables they suggested are political ideology, economic system, degree of activism, culture and media system in a country.³⁹

Similarly Sriramesh & Verčič classify environmental variables to include country infrastructure (i.e., political system, economic development and activism), media environment, and societal culture.⁴⁰ These are supported by Juan-Carlos Molleda as the right theoretical framework to understand the impact of contextual factors on PR practice in a series of country profiles.⁴¹

The cultural aspect is well documented by Hofstede who proposes five major cultural constructs: Power distances to differentiate how members in an institution accept that power is distributed unequally; Uncertainty avoidance provides understanding of how some cultures resist ambiguous proposition; Individualism measures the degree to which individuals integrate into a group; masculinity is on distribution of roles on the basis of gender; and the long-term orientation measures values such as virtue, thrift and perseverance.⁴² The concept of 'Uncertainty Avoidance', is applicable to Nigeria's situation where people entertain fears of accepting new development like the Internet technology due to cultural nature, laws and religions is considerable on Internet and PR in some societies including Nigeria where there exists cultural phobia on the use of Internet.

These variables are significant when related to factors that play roles on adoption of online PR in certain countries, including Nigeria and the effects of those dimensions on the practice. It could determine whether global practice is uniquely localised in what is termed

³⁸ Culberton, H. M & Jeffers, D. W., Stone, D. B., and Terrell M (1993) *Social, Political and Economic Contexts in Public Relations: Theory and Cases*, New Jersey Lawrence Erlbaum Associates

³⁹ Vercic, D., Grunig L. A., & Grunig, J. E. (1996) *Global and Specific Principles of Public relations: Evidence from Slovenia*. In H. M. Culberton & N. Chen, *International Public relations: a comparative Analysis* New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates(pp31-66)

⁴⁰ Sriramesh K. and Vercic D. (2009) *The Global Public Relations Handbook*, Routledge, New York

⁴¹ Juan-Carlos Molleda, *Global Public Relations*,

http://www.instituteforpr.org/essential_knowledge/detail/global_public_relations/ Accessed 6 July 2010

⁴² Hofstede, G (2001). *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviours, Institutions and Organisations across nations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

‘glocalization’ of PR by Patricia and Gaither who posit that “power is intrinsic in the relationship between headquarters and the host country...power struggles become an external function, produced by the presence of a global public relations agency in a host country.”⁴³

Offline PR Versus Online PR

Most new books on PR have emphasised on what they call paradigm shift from traditional ways to new ways of doing PR. The new ways, according to most of the authors is that every Practitioner should embrace what they variously coin New PR, PR 2.0, Digital PR, Web PR among others. Phillips and Young write that “the New PR demands a dramatically different approach at the level of strategy. It is the need to radically rethink strategy that provides the intellectual justification for using a term like New PR in the first instance.”⁴⁴ They add that the “context in which an organisation can thrive is rapidly moving from ability to create traditional relationship with publics to its ability to do this in the online world, and mostly via third parties that are beyond control.”⁴⁵

Deirdre Breakenridge shared the same sentiments when she explains that PR 2.0 is a new and improved industry where practitioners learn, embrace and engage in the true convergence of the Internet and PR through social media.⁴⁶ In another book she co-authored with Brian Solis ‘*Putting the Public Back in Public Relations,*’ they admit that the traditional PR still matters but practitioners need to embrace social media as the future of PR. They claim that there are “1000 reasons why (traditional) PR doesn’t work.”⁴⁷

An expert in integrated marketing communication, David Scott in his book on the ‘New Rules of Marketing and PR,’ says the old rules of the two professions are ineffective in an online world. Deliberately using a past tense to illustrate traditional PR, he states that “Public Relations was once an exclusive club (before the Internet) PR people used lots of jargon and followed strict rules (for campaigns)... this is not true anymore. The web has changed the rules. Today, organisations are communicating directly.”⁴⁸

⁴³ Curtin P., Gaither T. K., *International Public Relations, Negotiating Culture, Identity, and Power*, Sage Publication, California pp116-118

⁴⁴ Philips D. and Young P. (2009) *Online Public Relations: A practical guide to developing an online strategy in the world of social media*, London, Kogan Page Limited p3

⁴⁵ *Ibid* p62

⁴⁶ Breakenridge D. (2008), *PR 2.0: New Tools, New Audiences*, New Jersey, FT Press pp13-14

⁴⁷ Solis B. and Breakenridge D. (2009) *Putting the Public Back in Public Relations: How Social media is reinventing the Aging business of PR*, New Jersey: FT Press p13

⁴⁸ Scott D. M. (2009), *The New Rules of Marketing & PR*, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc pp3-10

Rob Brown slightly differs from harsh criticisms of traditional PR. In his book on 'PR and Social Web,' he agrees that PR 2.0 signifies the transfer of control of the Internet and ultimately the control platform of communication as the democratisation of information exchange. He believes that "if old brand guardians are no longer in control and the media is becoming disparate and fragmented PR people need to be talking to the public just like they have always done."⁴⁹

In his reaction to critics of traditional PR, Professor Grunig refuses to buy the idea that Internet enabled communication is redefining the roles of PR practitioners. He argued that other PR practitioners use the new media in the same way that they used traditional media. According to him, from a theoretical perspective, digital media does not change the PR theory needed to guide generic principles of the field, as it only facilitates the application.⁵⁰ He describes the argument that PR people lose control of their message through digital media as "illusion of control." He added that a research conducted by him and other scholars "yields a different picture of public relations process and discredits the notion that control ever existed."⁵¹

⁴⁹ Brown R. (2009) *Public Relations and the Social Web: How to Use the Social Media and Web 2.0 in Communications*, London, Kogan Page Limited p19

⁵⁰ Grunig J, *Paradigms of Global Public Relations in an age of Digitalisation*. Prisms: [online] Available from: <<http://praxis.massey.ac.nz/fileadmin/Praxis/Files/globalPR/GRUNIG.pdf>>

⁵¹ Ibid

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

This chapter discusses the research design and the methodology used for this study. It includes the process of data collection, sampling, measurement and analysis. According to Philip Kitchen “methodology serves to provide parameters about which methods are most appropriate to achieve specific objectives.”⁵² Other scholars like Sambe provide guidelines for the methodology. Sambe points out that there are three basic ways of collecting information “by observing people’s behavior, by asking questions or by making use of documents and records.”⁵³

Research designs

A research design proposes a connection between the data to be collected and conclusions to be drawn to the research questions of the study. Nevertheless, Patrick White hints that a research design provides a conceptual framework and an action plan to convert research questions into a research project.⁵⁴ It provides procedures for collecting, analyzing, and reporting data in quantitative and qualitative research. In an effort to focus the research on a specific environment, Nigeria is adopted as the case study where perceptions of the sample population will be measured and analysed on online PR practice. The researcher, who is from Nigeria, has some clear pictures of the terrain for the purpose of the study. As Gary Thomas writes “a case study involves in-depth research into one case or a small set of case... the aim is to gain a rich detailed understanding of the case by examining aspects of it in detail.”⁵⁵

Data Sources and collection

In Chapter 1 of this study, the researcher proposes the research problems and formulates research objectives in attempts to get appropriate answers. It is for this reason that data gathering techniques are essential to get relevant information. In view of the above therefore, this research, apart from providing a literature review, employs two primary data collecting

⁵² Kitchen P. J. (2005) Public Relations Principles and Practice, London, Thomson Learning p275

⁵³ Sambe J. A. (2005), Introduction to Mass Communication Practice in Nigeria, Ibadan, Spectrum Books Limited p277

⁵⁴ White P. (2009) Developing Research Questions, A guide for Social Scientists. Hampshire, Palgrave Macmillan p98

⁵⁵ Thomas G. (2009) How to Do Your Research Project, London, Sage Publications Ltd p115

techniques: Interviews with PR experts and a survey questionnaire to empirically verify the literature.

Data collection in a research project means how the information is gathered for the study. Since the data is a known fact used as a basis for inference, Walliman submits that data is an essential raw material for any research enquiry and on conducting any investigation; the researcher needs to collect data.⁵⁶ Traditionally data collection is largely through personal interviews and surveys. The primary data has direct relationship with the research questions because it is the actual finding of a researcher rather than relying on secondary data. In this dissertation published and online resources are used for secondary data while interviews and self-administered questionnaire are used for primary data.

In this study, the research relies on books on public relations, research, online communication and focus more on literatures on online PR. Selected authoritative websites on public relations were also consulted, especially www.ragan.com, www.PRweek.com and www.PRNigeria.net. They are the industry's authoritative voices.

Mixed Method Research

Instead of either using a qualitative or quantitative research method, this study employs the mixed method to get rich and wider view on the subject of online PR in Nigeria. The approach of Mixed Method for this study enables the researcher to mix and combine quantitative and qualitative research techniques. Cynthia Lassonde and Susan Israel agree that the mixed method “should be used whenever the research questions suggest that, combining the two techniques (quantitative and qualitative) will result in providing more comprehensive and coherent research findings and outcomes.”⁵⁷ The method is imperative to quantify the numerical data of the quantitative approach in line with the research aims and objectives by employing qualitative and quantitative procedures.

⁵⁶ Walliman, N. (2006), **Social Research Methods**. London, SAGE Publications p50

⁵⁷ Lassonde C. A. and Israel S. E. (2007) *Teachers Taking Action: A Comprehensive Guide to Teacher Research*, Newark, International Readers Association Inc,

Research questions

A research question is a straightforward and interrogative statement which attempts to get answers and concepts to the study. A research question plays a vital role in determining the direction of the study including anticipated achievements of proposed aims and objectives of the research. A recent finding by White reveals that research aims and objectives provide more direction than the research topic itself because the topics are still less specific than research questions.⁵⁸

As indicated in Chapter 1, the research questions which form parts of the objective of the study are derived from the research problems in the same chapter. Some of the basic objectives of the research include to describe the practice of online PR and the trends; to examine any existing research or findings on online PR in Nigeria; to explore the perceptions of the various stakeholder groups in Nigeria on the effectiveness of online Public Relations practice, and where necessary, using some of the theories and models in PR; to discuss the implications of the findings and the various perception on online PR and also to add knowledge that could be beneficial to researchers, PR practitioners and students.

It is based on the above stated objectives that this study formulates some of the major questions and hypotheses to be tested. Questions are built based on the reviewed literature and theoretical framework to demonstrate the evidences on the importance of Online Public Relations in Nigeria. The research questions include: how have PR practitioners in Nigeria responded to the Internet and online technologies? Has online PR produced measurable changes in their works? How do they view traditional PR from New Media? Do PR practitioners in Nigeria feel that online PR will become an integral part of the professional skill set and tool box? Are they facing constraints and limitation in exploring all the potentials? And what impacts do practitioners expect online PR to have on the profession?

Research population and sample

A population is a group of individuals that share similar characteristics. In this study the stakeholders that form the population on the perception of online PR in Nigeria, include the PR practitioners who play the roles, the media representatives whose channels are used to execute

⁵⁸ White P. (2009) Developing Research Questions, A guide for Social Scientists. Hampshire, Palgrave Macmillan p34

campaigns and participants from academic environments who study Mass-Communication/PR because of their scopes of knowledge and understanding on the theme of the research. In addition, on most cases those circles of respondents find themselves working in the PR industry in Nigeria, especially journalists and graduates of Mass-communication either on part-time basis or migration to the profession.

Therefore, those who constitute the research population for this study are In-house PR people (information officers, press secretaries, communication advisers etc), PR Agency (communications consultants, brand manager, Social Media Coordinators, Web/Internet programmer for PR activities), Media (journalists that cover PR, communication and crisis management beat) and academics (lecturers and students of Public relations and communications studies).

Sample and sample size

In view of huge cost implication of reaching individual members of the target population that are scattered in different locations and the likely constraints for data collection, it is compelling to make a sample of the population for the survey. Baran & Davis view surveys as similar to public opinions the media uses through sampling techniques and apt questions, “but are much more sophisticated than polls.”⁵⁹

A survey research is useful in a quantitative research method to measure and describe the perception, attitudes, and/or characteristics of the population through sampling a population. By studying a small sample from the large population, it is easier to have a better idea on the entire population by which the study could be generalized through the response of the selected group. The assumption that prompts the use of sampling survey is the fact that it is impossible or impractical to observe all members of a given population that have relation to PR practice in Nigeria.

For the purpose of this study, between 300 to 400 respondents were targeted using the annual conference of All African Public Relations Associations (APRA) to circulate the printed questionnaire and promote the online version of the questionnaire to online forums of Nigeria

⁵⁹ Baran, S. J., & Davis, D. K. (2008). *Mass Communication Theory: foundations, ferment, and future* (5th ed.). Boston, MA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

PR practitioners,⁶⁰ Federal Information Officers,⁶¹ Journalists Against Disaster⁶² and Finance Correspondents.⁶³ The combine number of the members of those forums is approximately 600. The active members of the forums are roughly about 250. The decision to target the questionnaire at the online forums has the advantage of measuring current attitudes or practices. It also provides information in a short amount of time required for administering the survey and collecting the data.

Questionnaire: Instruments for data gathering

A questionnaire is an essential instrument for gathering information for quantitative research purposes. Oppenheim points out notable advantages of a questionnaire which include its affordability and efficiency in administering, capability of collecting large quantity of data, reliability of data collection method and freedom from researcher's personal influence.⁶⁴ It also measures the response level and ratings for the research and questions can be constructed as either closed-ended, open-ended or the combined questionnaire. Catherine Dawson explains that in open questions respondents use their own words to answer a question, whereas in closed questions prewritten response categories are provided.⁶⁵

In view of the advantage of open and closed questions, this survey employs the combined approach to achieve maximum responses. In most cases closed questions have provisions for further comments. The questions are based on theoretical discussions on PR concepts and online communication. The hypotheses guide the contents of the questionnaire.

Print and Online Questionnaires

While a traditional questionnaire is printed and distributed to a sample population through postages service or physical delivery by a researcher, the Internet technology has improved the process of questionnaire designs and distribution. Online questionnaires are becoming more popular way of collecting information. Sandra Cain attests to this fact when she posits that "the main advantages of using online questionnaire is that the researcher has greater flexibility;

⁶⁰ The website of the forum: www.prnigeria.net

⁶¹ (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/rionigeria/>)

⁶² (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/jadnigeria>)

⁶³ (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/fican>)

⁶⁴ Oppenheim A. N. (2001), Questionnaire design, interviewing and attitude measurement. Second Edition London and New York, Continuum International Publishing Group p100

⁶⁵ Dawson C. (2009) Introduction to Research Methods, Oxford: How to Books Ltd p89

questions may be displayed using check boxes, pull down menus, pop-up menus, help screens and graphics.”⁶⁶

While 100 printed copies of the questionnaire were distributed at APRA conference in Abuja, the instrument for data gathering for this study is electronically-administered questionnaires using the SurveyMonkey, a popular web based tool for surveys. The online tool offers a cost-effective, web-based survey solution that enables a researcher to quickly and efficiently gather quality respondents’ insights. The easy-to-use tools of the programme ease the task of gathering a large volume of quantitative data and exploring public opinion to uncover emotions, thoughts and perceptions.⁶⁷

The survey results from the SurveyMonkey’s platform can be downloaded into Excel, exported as a chart or shared as a PDF. In addition it provides easy response collection through custom URL that gives respondents 1-click access to the survey. The url link was pasted on PRNigeria website and was also used in emails to invite respondents for this study.

On the questionnaire collection, the printed copies were retrieved at the end of the conference, while the online version was closed after 40 days. The online tool is so efficient that it confirms what David and Philip recommend that: “All manner of surveys and polling are available online. Many offer real-time results and most have ability to handle both open and closed questions as well as comments.”⁶⁸

Interview

Since the questionnaire technique is concerned about quantitative measurements of data mostly through closed-ended questions, this study nevertheless uses one of the effective instruments for qualitative research finding by conducting interviews with respected personalities in the PR industry. It is an essential tool for collecting primary data in the social research.

⁶⁶ Cain S. (2009) Key Concepts in Public Relations, Hampshire, Palgrave Macmillan p184

⁶⁷ SurveyMonkey: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/examples/market-research-surveys.aspx>

⁶⁸ Philips D. and Young, (2009) Online Public Relations: A practical guide to developing an online strategy in the world of social media, London, Kogan Page Limited

Catherine Dawson lists different types and techniques for conducting an interview for social research. They include unstructured, semi-structured and structured interviews.⁶⁹ A structured interview bears standardized questions read out according to schedule; unstructured interview has a flexible format which is based on question guides, while the semi-structured interview combines the structured and unstructured interviews.

The various instruments used for conducting interview whether face-to-face or on phone include audio recorder, audio-visual recorder, note-taking, box-ticking. This research discovers that an online interview have more varieties to accommodate traditional way in digital sphere that could be in text chat, audio, audio-visual and by emails. In the traditional way a recorded audio interview would be transcript into a data file for analysis, but the same could be done online which would be automatically converted to format the interviewer wants it. This researcher combines these approaches for best results. Apart from face-to-face interviews and emails, phone calls were made for further clarifications.

Data analyses

All data collected for this study are analysed and interpreted for easy comprehension. A statistical presentation is applied using its appropriate analytical tools, especially those that give, at a glance, picture of measurement of data from the responses of participants. Using Creswell's tips on data analyses,⁷⁰ this study reports information about the number of members of the sample who did and did not return the survey, especially the printed questionnaire which was distributed in Abuja and those who returned yet still filled the online version. It also presents the result in tables of figures with explicit interpretations of the findings in descriptive terms relating to research aim and objectives.

Variables

The research questions in this study contain variables which Creswell refers to as a characteristic of an individual or an organization that can be measured or observed.⁷¹ In determining the data to be collected, the research has clearly identified the variables from the research questions and hypotheses in Chapter One.

⁶⁹ Dawson C. (2009) Introduction to Research Methods, Oxford: How to Books Ltd p66

⁷⁰ Creswell J. W. (2009) research Design, Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches London: sage publications inc pp 151-152

⁷¹ Creswell, J. W. (2007) Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

For the purpose of emphasis, apart from measuring the ages and gender of respondents which are basic requirement in a survey template, other variables measured and analyzed in this study are detailed in the table below:

Variables	Research Questions	Items on the Survey
Training exposure	Choose any of these that better describe exposure/training on Internet; and better further training needs	5,13
Online Engagement	the state of your engagement in online activities	6
Perceptions Online PR	Views on Online PR; department suited for it	11, 14
Barrier to utilization	What is a major constraint to maximum utilisation of online technology in PR work? Are PR practitioners in Nigeria are left behind in the online revolution	12, 15
Between Offline and Online	often find more effective in PR campaigns; Wider media outlet	7, 8
PR tools	Valuable in PR works	9, 10
Activists engagement	View on the use of new media by local activists and political organisers	16
The future of Online PR	Better Understanding and to enhance the utilization of online tool for PR practice in Nigeria	13

The table above indicates the major variables, summaries of the questions and their locations in the questionnaire. They include the level of respondents' exposures and training on Internet technology for communications, their perceptions of Online PR, the major factor or barrier to full utilization of online PR in Nigeria, the relationship between offline PR and Online PR, the PR tool that has benefitted considerably from the use of the Internet, the level of engagement of activists and political groups in the use of New Media and the approach that will promote better understanding and use of online PR in Nigeria for the benefit of practitioners.

Reliability and Validity

In social science research which is applicable to PR practice there are some concepts that may not be necessary for experimentation for every study. While this researcher discovers that a lot of research works by PR students make reference to 'Reliability' and 'Validity' to indicate what Dawson states as "researchers endeavor to show that their chosen methods succeed in measuring what they purport to measure."⁷²

The use of concepts may not be required for this study which is in support of Gary Thomas' argument that the ideas of reliability and validity have been imported into applied social science from psychometrics... the science of testing people's individual characteristics. He observes that such concepts have been used unnecessarily by student researchers. According to him they are concepts "imported from psychometrics and from experimental design; it is discussed far too often; it can distract you from the proper purpose of your research."⁷³

This researcher concurs with the above argument. The researcher's background and working experience in PR industry in Nigeria afforded him the opportunity to have easy access to major online forums for the distribution of questionnaire to the respondents as well as interviews with major authorities on the subject of the study. The instruments used to administer the questionnaire as well as conduct the interviews are standard. Since the majority of the data come through a proven and recognized web-based tool for survey (i.e SurveyMonkey), the collection process is transparent because the questions are simple, unambiguous and without sentiments.

⁷² Dawson C. (2009) Introduction to Research Methods, Oxford: How to Books Ltd p114

⁷³ Thomas G. (2009) How to Do Your Research Project, London, Sage Publications Ltd pp105-106

Chapter Four:

Results and Interpretations

The chapter four of this research study focuses on the findings, outcomes and interpretation of the primary data gathered. The empirical data collected is subjected to statistical analysis.

Realisation

The process of data collection went through stages for timeliness and active participation of the respondents. An initial contact was made through emails and phone calls to major respondents, especially for the interviews, likewise to the moderators of some of the online forums of the stakeholders mentioned in the Methodology. The initial communication is to give participants an idea of the research topic and seek cooperation for the posting of links to the online questionnaire in their forums. While APRA Secretariat endorsed the circulation of the printed copies at the Annual PR Conference, approvals were also given by FICAN, RIO, PRNigeria and JAD online forums for the distributions.

The second stage was the actual distributions of questionnaire at the Annual Public Relations Conference in Abuja, which was followed immediately with the online version hosted by SurveyMonkey.com. The link to the online survey was posted to the forums.

The questions in the two versions of the self-administered questionnaire are the same so as to keep the measuring instruments consistent. In the printed copies the web link to the online questionnaire was provided, for those that might wish to fill the online version.

While the filled printed copies of the questionnaire were received within the 3 days of the conference, the online version was open between May 15, 2010 and June 30, 2010 to allow the respondent ample time to respond. Occasional reminders were sent to the forums at reasonable intervals.

It was observed that some respondents filled the printed questionnaire as well as the online survey. Many others returned their unfilled questionnaire preferring to fill the online version. It was easy to locate those respondents through the email addresses they provided which is a

requirement for the receipt of the outcome of the study. The duplicates were removed from the final collation for the analysis.

Planned Versus Realised sample

Table 1

Data Instrument	Planned Sample	Collected Sample	Useable Sample	Response Rate
Print Questionnaire	100	68	50	50%
Online Questionnaire	400	149	132	33%

After screening out the duplicate copies, a total of 50 questionnaires were useable from the 100 questionnaires distributed at APRA Conference while a total of 132 questionnaires were finally obtained from the online survey.

All the tables and open ended questions from the survey are available in the Appendices. Meanwhile, some results do not add up to 100 per cent, as some participants skipped a few questions. In addition some questions that had multiple answer options might add up to more than 100 per cent.

The survey is not strictly targeted at PR practitioners but also other stakeholders in the industry in the media and academic fields who easily move into the PR sector. All respondents were expected to have clear knowledge and understanding of PR practice by their current preoccupations.

Table 2

Demographic Profile:

	Gender	%	Age	%	Sector	%	Country	
Male	131	72.85						
Female	49	27.25						
Less than 21 years			0	0.0				

21-30years			49	27.2%				
31-40years			62	34.4%				
41-50years			58	32.2%				
Above 50years			11	6.1%				
Nigerians							176	
Others							16	
In-house-PR					51	35.4%		
External PR Agency					26	18.1%		
Academic Institution					27	18.8%		
Media					40	27.8%		

Gender and age

The research discovered that unlike the impression that public relations is a feminine profession, majority of the respondents 72.85% were male, while 27.25% were female. The expectation was that it would be an even distribution between both genders.

On the age bracket, about 34.4% are in their active age of 31-40 years followed by those in 41-50 years with 32.2%. There is no single individual under 20 years among the members, likewise only 11% of those over 50 years responded to the questionnaire.

Nationality and Sector of Respondents

Nigerians constitute the majority of the respondents totalling 176 while 16 members, mostly delegates who attended the APRA Conference in Abuja filled other countries. Some of the

countries included South Africa, Ghana, Guinea, United States of America, Kenya and Namibia.

In view of the relevance of other professionals who understand or engage directly or indirectly in PR activities, respondents from academic environment including lecturers and students of Mass Communication/ PR are 18.85% while 27.8% are from the media. The bulk of respondents a total of 58% are PR practitioners who are practicing in-house (35.4%) and PR agencies (27%).

Training Exposure on Online PR

Training is the best approach to garner more knowledge and skills on new ways of doing things. There are various forms one can be trained for specific tasks.

Table 3: Choose any of these that better describe your exposure/training on Internet/online applications for your work?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
a. Formal Training (institutions, seminars, workshop etc)	24.9%	45
b. Informal Training (through friends, on the job, online help etc)	26.0%	47
c. All of the above	45.3%	82
d. None	3.9%	7
<i>answered question</i>		181
<i>skipped question</i>		1

Since the research is specifically to study the perception of Online Public relations, members were asked to choose the best training that exposed them to the use of the Internet and online application for their jobs. Majority of the respondents 45.3% said they had formal and informal training, while 3.9% said they never had any training at all.

Table 4: Which of the following will improve better understanding and enhance the utilisation of online PR tools in Nigeria?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
a. Workshops and Seminars	45.6%	77
b. Further academic studies	4.7%	8
c. Online Self-help, webinar and Forums	14.2%	24
d. Public enlightenment campaign	35.5%	60
Other (please specify)		22
<i>answered question</i>		169
<i>skipped question</i>		13

When a question was asked on which approach will improve better understanding and enhance the utilisation of Online PR tools in Nigeria, the survey finds out that 45.6% would prefer workshops and seminars while 35.55% believe public enlightenment campaign may be relevant. Only 4.7% choose further academic studies like diplomas and degree programmes.

Table 5: How is the state of your engagement in online activities?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
a. Very Actively engaged (in web development, blogging and online forums etc)	10.6%	19
b. Actively engaged (web browsing, posting of comments etc)	55.6%	100
c. Passively engaged (occasional for Email and Short Messages)	30.0%	54
d. Not engaged	3.9%	7
<i>answered question</i>		180
<i>skipped question</i>		2

Meanwhile on the level of engagement in online activities, 55.6% representing 100 respondents indicate that they are actively engaged through web browsing and posting of

comments. This is against 3.9% who are not involved in online activities which is similar the same percentage of those that never had anything training above.

Between Offline and Online PR

One of the most contentious debates in PR is on whether Traditional PR is still relevant in the face of New PR. This study also investigated the method mostly used by practitioners in Nigeria.

Table 6: Which of these do you use more often or find more effective in PR campaigns

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
a. Online PR (New Media)	18.2%	32
b. Offline PR (Traditional PR)	21.6%	38
c. Combination of the above	60.2%	106
Other (please specify)		8
<i>answered question</i>		176
<i>skipped question</i>		6

The survey considers the roles of new media from the traditional media. Majority of the respondent 60.2% stated that they combine Online and traditional approaches in their campaigns. Only 18.2% chose online PR approach, against 21.6% that still believe in the influence of offline PR. One respondent who filled the open-ended option added the use of mobile phone, which could still be under the online because some smart phones have all the features of Internet services.

Table 7: Which media do you believe have wider reach to your publics?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
a. Online: Websites, social network platforms	15.4%	26
b. Electronic: TV and Radio	67.5%	114
c. Print: Newspapers and magazines	17.2%	29
Other (please specify)		19

<i>answered question</i>	169
<i>skipped question</i>	13

The traditional media still exert more influence in the society as the survey discovers that 67.5% of respondents believe that electronic media which comprises TV and Radio have wider reach to the publics than Print Media 17.2% and online channels that include websites and social network platforms is the least with 15.4%.

Table 8: Which of the following statements best represent your view on Online Public Relations?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
a. Online Public Relations is a must for PR practitioners	23.3%	42
b. Online PR is just a fad that will soon fade away	0.6%	1
c. Traditional public relations is still more effective than Online PR	11.7%	21
d. Traditional PR should go hand in hand with Online PR	64.4%	116
<i>answered question</i>		180
<i>skipped question</i>		2

While the traditional media have wider audience than the new media, nevertheless in another question 64.4% constituting 116 respondents agree that traditional PR should go hand in hand with online PR because they don't agree with 0.6% that sees online PR as a fad that may fade away. Only 11.7% still believe that traditional public relations is still more effective than Online PR.

PR Tools

While in the traditional PR there are various methods of executing campaign programmes, the online methods for communications are unique from simple email to sophisticated website and blogs that accommodate social media.

Table 9: Which of these do you find more valuable in your work?

Answer Options	Response	Response
	Percent	Count
a. Email	32.6%	57
b. Social Networking	14.9%	26
e. Blog/Website	1.1%	2
f. All of the above	51.4%	90
Other (please specify)		10
<i>answered question</i>		175
<i>skipped question</i>		7

The survey attempts to gather which Internet channel is more valuable for communication in Nigeria. More than half of the responses 52.4% find more valuable to their work the combination of email, social networking sites, blog and website followed by 32.6% who only use email, 14.9% using social networks while only 1.1% claims they use blog.

Table 10: In what area has online activities become more beneficial for PR Practitioners in Nigeria?

Answer Options	Response	Response
	Percent	Count
a. Media Relations	42.4%	70
b. Event Management	7.3%	12
c. Publicity/Promotion	38.8%	64
d. Issues and Crisis Management	11.5%	19
Other (please specify)		20
<i>answered question</i>		165
<i>skipped question</i>		17

While responding to a question on what area has online activities become more beneficial for PR practitioners in Nigeria, media relations tops the list with 42.4%, Publicity and Promotion 38.8%, Issues and Crisis Management 11.5% and Event Management 7.3%.

Challenges to Online PR in Nigeria

Most sectors in Nigeria are utilising the Internet for transaction and communication, especially the financial and business sector. In the area of mass-mobilisation of the citizens there are also other groups making waves towards societal changes and reorientation, whose roles could be considered as similar to the PR principle in relations building. Similarly while challenges could be pointed out are PR practitioners doing enough compared to happening in other climes?

Table 11: How do you view the use of new media by local activists and political organisers?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
a. Very effective	47.2%	83
b. Ineffective	34.1%	60
c. Nothing has changed	18.8%	33
You are free to also comment here		52
	<i>answered question</i>	176
	<i>skipped question</i>	6

In other countries local activists and political organisers use the new media to influence policies and engage in political process, including electioneering. The situation in Nigeria is weak as the survey discovers that 47.2% agree that the use of new media by local activists and political organisers is very effective against 34.1% who say it is ineffective. Only 18.8% tick: “Nothing has changed.

Table 12: Do you think PR practitioners in Nigeria are left behind in the online revolution?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
a. Strongly agree	30.1%	53
b. Somewhat agree	38.6%	68
c. Neither agree or disagree	17.6%	31

d. Strongly disagree	13.6%	24
<i>answered question</i>		176
<i>skipped question</i>		6

In gauging the perception of online PR in Nigeria, the survey asked if PR practitioners in the country, are left behind in the online revolution. Those that agree with the notion either strongly or somewhat constitute 68.7% of the respondents. Only 13.6% strongly disagree as 17.6% neither agree nor disagree.

Table 13: Which of the following do you think is a major constraint to maximum utilisation of online technology in your work?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
a. Poor Internet Connectivity from service providers (Technological)	49.7%	82
b. High cost of Internet connectivity (Economical)	24.2%	40
c. Privacy and Fear of insecurity (Cultural)	15.2%	25
d. Non-commitment of government or management (political)	10.9%	18
Other (please specify)		26
<i>answered question</i>		165
<i>skipped question</i>		17

The respondents point out some of the constraints to maximum utilisation of online technology to various factors in Nigeria. Almost about half of the respondents, 49.7% attribute the problem to a technological factor, like poor Internet connectivity and in most cases as some of them commented on erratic electricity supply in the country as a major cankerworm. In addition to that 24.2% of the respondents attribute the challenges to Economic variables like high cost of Internet service while 15.2% are concerned about cultural inhibitions like fear of invasion of privacy and insecurity on the Internet. Also 10.9% of respondents point accusing fingers at political factors like the nonchalant attitudes of the government and regulatory bodies to provide the enabling environment for development of the new technology in Nigeria.

Some of those that responded to the open-ended option for comment stated: “All of the above.” Others were more particular on the inadequate electricity in the oil-producing nation while one described “equipment failure (due to) energy challenges,” as a major problem. Some respondents reemphasised Privacy and Fear of insecurity as more serious, while another respondents wrote: “Many people avoid going online because there is so much information on the net that can waste one's time. You eventually spend more time than you have planned to spend doing nothing).”

Table 14: Which department should handle online engagements with the public on behalf of the organisation?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
a. Information and Communication Technology	19.7%	35
b. Human Resources	2.8%	5
c. Public Relations/ Public Affairs	75.8%	135
d. Marketing/ Advert	1.7%	3
Other (please specify)		12
	<i>answered question</i>	178
	<i>skipped question</i>	4

While some organisations use different departments to handle the online engagements with the publics, the survey discovers that 75.8% suggest Public Relations Department should be responsible for that role against 19.7% choosing Information and Communications Technology Department. Only 2.8% and 1.7% choose Human Resources Department and Marketing/Advert Department to respond to online enquiries and engagements.

General Comments

As pointed out in this study, the questionnaire has several open-ended questions which are provided for follow-ups or to provide an alternative answers. The open-ended questions showed a number of unique agreements of respondents through their comments on some variables.

On the option between Online and Offline PR, most of the comments chose 'offline PR' as one respondent justified it by writing: "interpersonal" and another person added for "personal contact."

On the question on which media have wider reach several comments favoured electronic and print media rather than the online. A respondent stated thus: "Both print and electronic media (have better reach). Most people do not use the Internet often despite its popularity (abroad)."

Since there is no option to choose 'all' on the area where online technology has benefitted PR activities, most comments wrote all reemphasising on Media Relations, Event Management, Publicity and Promotion and Issues/crisis management. A respondent just wrote: "All of the above."

CHAPTER FIVE

Suggestions and Recommendations from Interviews

This research consists of six chapters with each focusing on specific perspectives in understanding the aim and objectives of the study on Online Public Relations in Nigeria. In previous chapters, the research provides the introductory background, literature reviews, methodology and data interpretation. This chapter provides some suggestions and recommendation from the opinions of the experts that were interviewed specifically for this study.

As mentioned early the interviewees are respected personalities in the Media/PR industry in Nigeria. Kabir Dangogo is Chief Executive Officer of TIMEX Communication, a PR agency; Dr. Wole Ademolekun is General Manager Public Affairs of Petroleum Products Pricing Regulatory Agency (PPPRA) and Secretary General of Africa Public Relations Association (APRA); and Dr. Bala Muhammad, a Mass Communication lecturer at Bayero University Kano and PR Adviser to the government of Kano State in Nigeria.

Choosing in a Name between Online PR or New PR

There is presently no recognized uniform name to describe the use of digital technology for PR practice. As it was pointed out in the literature review, scholars and practitioners use different names to refer to the application of Internet tools for PR practice. This dilemma was also noticed at the APRA Conference in Abuja, where participants and speakers used different nomenclatures to describe it such as Internet PR, Digital PR, New PR, PR 2.0 and online PR. To guide the local practitioners from confusing this specialized area of public relations, Kabir Dangogo suggested that it should rather be referred to as Online Public Relations because a lot of the activities for PR campaign is done online. Dr Bala Muhammad too suggested the same, adding that he would call it “online because many journalists that find themselves using the new media tools referred to their practice as online journalism. Their views tallied with the reference made by Phillips and Young⁷⁴ and Heath⁷⁵ in their works.

⁷⁴ Phillips D. and Young P. (2009) *Online Public Relations: A practical guide to developing an online strategy in the world of social media*, Kogan Page Limited, London

⁷⁵ Heath R. L. (2005) *Encyclopaedia of Public Relations* Sage Publications Inc, California p587

Infrastructural Barrier

The most painful irony from the comments expressed by respondents in the open-ended questions of this survey, was a general disclosure that the major problem which hinders development in the use of the Internet is insufficient and inadequate supply of electricity in Nigeria. This falls under technological factor. Dr Bala Muhammad was straight forward when he pointed out that development of a country determines the development of the people. According to him: “sometimes you find some people are more advanced than their countries but Nigeria’s development of the Internet is not commensurate with our development as a nation due to inadequate electricity supply and that is why the reach of the Internet does not have wide spread impact as it would have... the intention of the government to subsidize the distribution of \$100 laptops would not work, when there is no electricity to power them.”

All the three interviewees agree that the government has a responsibility to ensure adequate provision of electricity to ensure development in online technology, which by an extent, PR practitioners and other communicators in Nigeria would benefit in honing their skills to reach their wider public.

Capacity Building (Training)

Knowledge is power. Having the knowledge and skill of using the latest technology for communication is more powerful to sustain relationship and persuade the public towards a cause. The interviewees for this survey agree that the time is ripe for PR practitioners and scholars to continue to explore the technology on how to use new tools and development to impact positively in their communications.

Kabir Dangogo said that: “Online communication has already become part of the skills PR People in Nigeria are expected to possess. No PR agency or corporate organization would take IT proficiency for granted when engaging new people to handle the public relations beat. Any PR practitioner that cannot effectively use the Internet in Nigeria today is half-baked and ought to go back to school.”

As an academic Dr. Bala Muhammad advised that when communicators appreciate the effect of online technology in their life, they need to update themselves by attending conferences and seminars in order to share experiences and network with other professionals on latest applications of tools for the practice.

Allaying the Fear (cultural phobia) and Political activists

The phobia of adapting to new changes may have been a result of several factors which has been stated by scholars including Hofstede⁷⁶. An average Nigerian is friendly and value direct physical contacts for interaction and communication rather than from hidden profiles on a digital screen. While Kabir Dangogo disclosed that mistrust of online communication by the Nigerian PR practitioner may have to do with uncertainty that messages sent have been read and acted on owing to the constraints by technological factor, Ademolekun said that digital media in spite of its numerous advantages has some limitations. According to him “Apart from cultural dimension, it tends to make people lazy by being too dependent on digital infrastructure and could also be addictive.” He went further to add that: “In Nigeria not many practitioners know how to use some social media channels like Twitter, Myspace, Delicious, Digg not to talk of ordinary citizens. The channels are not that popular locally.”

Dr. Muhammad on the other hand argued that “Mistrust and cultural dimensions are natural, we (Nigeria) are practical nation, and we are practical people. We are Africans, we are traditional people and in this 21st century when you want to reach the villager with a message, you don’t send it by Internet or you don’t send it by mobile phone. What you do is, for instance, you go to the village chief and you tell him that you want the children his community to go to primary school, then he (the chief) will send the town crier to go round the town and announce. Some people trust that kind of tradition, so even in the 21st century there is room to always be traditional and so there will be mistrust and the mistrust amongst the elites is that somebody is sitting somewhere creating contents for the world to see.” He nevertheless agreed that “after sometime, when everybody is onboard and especially if people attend conferences and they share experiences and network with other professionals, they will get to know that there is nothing hidden and they can prove your content and you can create your content.”

Convergence of Offline and Online (No discrimination)

While all the 3 interviewees agree that they dedicate more times to online activities than before, especially in the areas of pitching, research and monitoring, they believe that offline and traditional methods for PR activities could not be overlooked. Dr Muhammad explained that

⁷⁶ Hofstede, G (2001). *Culture’s Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviours, Institutions and Organisations across nations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

“as adviser to a State Governor on Communications... I receive materials to me online and I reply them online, I read my newspapers on the Internet even when I will still buy the hard copies/ Most days let say... fifty-fifty.”

While responding to a question on what impact practitioners expect the online technology to have on PR practice in Nigeria, Ademolekun pointed out that the effect would be tremendous to the extent that online public relations would only add value not by completely overtaking the traditional PR. This is supported by Kabir who suggests that “even practitioners who are not into online communication have really no choice but to take the route” to perfect in the two approaches.

The Future of PR in Nigeria (And elsewhere)

The future of online PR is very bright once practitioners embrace the new changes that emerge due to the influence of digital technology. There are arguments on whether a change in the use of digital media is likely to be driven from the ‘bottom-up’ rather than the top-down. While Ademolekun believed that it would be driven top-down as the elites presently constitute the bulk of the users, Dangogo shared a different view when he said “any change that may occur in the use of the Internet as a veritable vehicle of communication should begin from down below.” Dangogo defended his preposition by explaining that those at that level (bottom) use the tool more than those at the top who would rather rely on their subordinates to check their mails for them.

Dr. Muhammad was very explicit on the issue when he discloses that “Technology has unfortunately been always top-to-bottom, if you consider Western nations as the top and African, Asia and Latin America nations as the bottom. Now, that type of approach is very difficult in digital media because it requires a lot of capital, capital input and especially in institutions. Now India is doing some revolution in this kind of field. The Indian technological system has made it possible, even Americans are now depending on India for their customer and in many other ways they want to interact and the British are also interacting with India technologically. Other so-called Third-world-countries are working to ensure that there is a bottom-to-top.”

“On a national level, bottom-to-top approach is evident in some countries. In Nigeria we have the talents, but unfortunately as I said much earlier, the lack of electricity, and the singular

problem of Nigeria called “4-1-9” inhibit the bottom-to-top development... If Nigeria was developing Nigerians we can also achieve it. Take for instance, Nigeria is only fifty years (50 years) old, but if you compare the talents of Nigerians you can say we are 200 years old because, whenever you take Nigerians anywhere in the world, pose a technological challenge before them, it may take a little time they will learn everything and excel.”

All the interviewees unanimously agree that if the country has steady supply of electricity and quality Internet services, PR practitioners and other communicators would have benefitted immensely from the new media in connecting with their publics.

CHAPTER SIX: Conclusion

This study contains 6 Chapters, focusing on specific themes on the research scopes and objectives. They are perspectives in addressing the online Public Relations Practice with a reference to Nigeria. After the previous chapters on the introduction to the subject, methodology, literature reviews, data analyses and suggestion and recommendation, which are all based on others' views and perspectives, this chapter on conclusion are the views of the researcher on the findings and the outcomes with few references to some authors.

Observations towards the objectives:

The study has provided definitions and current trends on online PR practice while relating it to the traditional approach. It finds out that while there is no fixed name for the use of digital technology for PR practice, it nevertheless discovered that some authorities in PR practice have constantly use the word "Online Public Relations" to describe the digital trends, which is also supported by top Public Relations practitioners in Nigeria as pointed out in the previous chapter.

The study further explores the level of development of online PR in Nigeria where it discovers that there exist some constraints that hamper full utilization of digital technology by communicators. The major factor militating against harnessing the potential of new media in the country is the technological aspect, especially poor electricity and Internet connectivity to service the digital gadgets. This is followed by economic problems of cost, cultural fear of insecurity and non-commitment of the government to put some structures and regulations in place.

While studying the perceptions of online public relations in Nigeria, the study reveals that PR practitioners are left behind in the online revolution based on the factors mentioned above. Nevertheless, it confirms that majority of practitioners would rather have Traditional PR goes hand-in-hand with the Online PR.

The study could not obtain any existing authoritative literature on the Online PR in Nigeria. Some articles on the Internet and in the print were not thorough enough to give objective perspectives on the reality on the ground. Most literatures that this researcher consulted have foreign perspectives and largely authored by non-native of Nigeria and therefore provide very little, and in some cases no reference to the country. The use of qualitative and quantitative

research methodology in this study, therefore, provide enough materials on global perspectives on online PR as well as developments in Nigeria which show some contradictory perceptions on trends in vogue outside the country which are yet to take footing locally, like the use of Twitter, Myspace, Delicious, Digg among others.

In an effort to provide clear perspectives on PR and digital technology, some theories and models from scholars in PR and communication were advanced in this study. They include models on Online PR, Situational Theory, Global PR, Social System, Four-Model overview, Synchronous and Non-Synchronous communication, Macroenvironmental factors, cultural dimensions and debates on PR 2.0 and Old Media.

Major Recommendations

With the increasing impact of globalization on public relations practice, the spread of the online technology becomes very essential in all nations. It is in view of this that this research makes the following recommendations to encourage and improve the process of online PR in Nigeria.

Government Intervention

The Nigerian government should undertake initiatives to improve electricity supply and ensure that service providers deliver quality Internet connectivity in the country not only for the benefit of professional communicators, but also for the citizens. Through the Ministry of Information, it can also support public awareness programmes on the importance of digital technology for information officers and PR practitioners in the country. In view of the fear that misguided elements use the online technologies for fraudulent activities, the government through its relevant agencies should tackle the menace in ensuring that the environment is conducive for online businesses and interactions. These do not restrict organisations and individuals in acquiring menace detecting software and employing proactive strategies to protect their online presence.

The phobia of some respondents to this study over the Internet technology may not be out of place as Robert Dilenschneider raises similar fears on the “technology that keeps the Internet interconnected making its users vulnerable to terrorism, cyberwar, spying, identity theft,

fraud, fraud destruction, server collapsed, leaking email that can be misinterpreted and lead to litigation, reputation damage, compromised privacy and spam.”⁷⁷

Inputs from Native Scholars

The researcher discovers that sources and contents in the literature reviews, especially the scholars and PR authors cited, use USA, Britain and other European countries in their sampling and generalization on PR issues and trends while ignoring other realities in developing countries, including Nigeria. Most of such publications and other writings by non-natives rarely make reference to Africa and where they do, they largely portray negativities in corporate governance. In view of this, it is necessary that Nigerian PR authors as natives, should intensify efforts in contributing literatures on latest development in the profession, especially on Online PR and Social Media. Native scholars should research and focus more on the new trends in PR practice and contribute to global knowledge as relate to the development in the country through production of well-researched journals and other literatures. Their contribution to the body of knowledge would redress the imbalance and under representation of Nigeria and other African countries in the global scene as regard communication. It may also go a long way, using the new media tools whose output are spontaneous to correct distorted image and erroneous impressions on the PR practice in the country. The effect may require what Juan-Carlos Molleda recommends new ways of thinking or a transnational mentality composed by worldwide learning, multinational flexibility or national responsiveness, and global efficiency.⁷⁸

Higher institutions of learning should also be encouraged to introduce a course on New and Social Media in their curriculums so as to produce a crop of professional communicators in the use of the traditional and online PR for image building, reputation management and publicity campaigns.

Proactive Practitioners

The study realizes that majority of respondents in this study fall within the bracket of those born before the advent of the Internet, usually referred to as Digital Immigrants. They are those Don Tapscott makes a reference to as people who “become defensive when threatened

⁷⁷ Dilenschneider R. (2010) *The AMA Handbook of Public Relations Leveraging PR in the Digital World*, Amacom, New York

⁷⁸ Molleda J. Global Public Relations March 19, 2009 (The Institute of Public Relations Online) <http://www.instituteforpr.org/essential_knowledge/detail/global_public_relations/> Accessed on 13 July 2010

by something new and which they don't understand."⁷⁹ They are averse to digital technology. They share common phobia to technology across nations whether in the USA or Nigeria. The old practitioners must realize that gaining skills on the use digital technology would enhance their job performances more efficiently with attendant speed of delivery. They should face the reality of changes. The technology is more efficient, cheaper and easy to use for various communication tasks. They should be reminded that the traditional way of engaging in PR activities has not been overtaken by the technology. Rather they should integrate the online techniques to traditional PR practices. On the other hands, they also need to encourage digital natives, those born in digital ages on the benefits derivable in PR practices which has potentials to enhance their technological skills for communication. The natural skills of digital natives in social media can enhance their career in PR as professional communicators.

Roles of Professional Bodies

The African Public Relations Association (APRA) and Nigeria Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) as recognized professional bodies should continue to champion best practice and organize trainings and sensitization campaigns on latest thinking and trends in PR especially on how to sustain online relationship and counter Internet threats. The threats, no doubts, are real from the decentralized, free and unregulated Internet media. The professional bodies should ensure they update their members on new skills through knowledge-based training and the circulation of educative resources either online or in print. Such programmes should ensure public relations and communication competencies are enhanced from time to time in line with best practices. This call becomes necessary because other professions may easily encroach into traditional responsibilities of PR in attempts to bridge the gaps. The bodies should collaborate with other similar global bodies like the International Public Relations Association (IPRA) on how to enforce the need for standardization of the emerging trends in Online PR practice. Cyber-world as it seems currently is a lawless platform where miscreants are having the field day without clear sanctions for deterrence. Anything that is too free in total freedom requires caution and regulations because of potential dangers involved. The new paradigm as Wakefield points out "ought to account for a more comprehensive approach that creates thinking and acting at both the local and global levels."⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Tapscott Don (2009) *Grown Up Digital*, McGraw-Hill: New York p7

⁸⁰ Wakefield, R.I. *Effective public relations in the multinational organization*. In R.L. Heath & G. Vasquez (Eds.), *Handbook of Public Relations* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. 2001, pg. 641.

Final words

This study attempts to add to the current body of knowledge on online PR with a specific reference to Nigeria, but has its limitation which may call for further studies. Similar researches could be undertaken on other African countries which share related socio-economic and political features to identify the unique problems. Other areas worthy of further studies may include the perception of the Media on Online PR; the Use of Online Tools for PR Campaign, the impacts of New Media in Relationship Building and studies on PR websites.

Online technology has immense opportunities for communicators to explore and exploit for interactivity with their publics. The Online PR, therefore, has become a major global issue which requires more attention and embracement by communicators. Practitioners should realize that online technology require passion and commitment to grasp the skills because new developments emerge and trends change at incredible speeds. No matter the advancement in technology, the traditional ways would still be relevant. Human interaction is very essential. Even as a renowned vocal advocate for mass movement of PR practitioners to PR 2.0, Breakenridge insists that: “Nothing can ever take the place of human interaction. The web certainly gets us the closest to face-to-face real time communication. But PR is about people and personal relationship. The human voice and meeting in person... still the best way to take a relationship to the next level.”⁸¹

⁸¹ Breakeridge D. (2008) PR 2.0 New Media, New Tools, New Audiences, New Jersey, FT Press, p62

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APPENDIX I

Draft Emailed Questionnaire for the Interviews

As you may be aware, I will soon complete my master programme at the University of Westminster. As part of my programme I am conducting a research on **"Perceptions of Online Public Relations in Nigeria: Does the Country Risk being Left Behind in the Online Revolution?"**

I have chosen top PR practitioners and scholars for the Interview which include you on the basis of the information below:

- Peter Walker, former President CIPR is among few foreign PR practitioners that often visit and attend PR activities in Nigeria. His perspective will shed light on comparison between the trend in Britain and Nigeria.
- Kabir Dangogo a former Council member of IPRA is CEO of one of the largest PR Agency in Nigeria TIMEX. His view will be useful, especially from agency's perspective.
- Wale Ademolekun, Secretary General of African Public Relations Association is also an in-house PR person as General Manager Corporate Affairs of PPPRA in Nigeria. His views will be essential from an in-house perspective and the regional dimension (Africa).
- Dr. Bala Muhammad, Senior Lecturer, Mass Communication Department, Bayero University Kano and Special Adviser to Kano State Government on Communication

I also intend to sample views of a focal group, a semi-structured questionnaire to:

- PR practitioners (in-house and external) on their perception of online PR practice in Nigeria.
- Journalists may also be contacted, preferably those covering media arts and communication.

Interview Questions

In view of the above sir, I wish you could kindly answer the following 10 questions at your early convenient. Your input will assist me in framing my questionnaire further for a focal groups as well as serving as part of my primary data.

1. As a respected PR professional would you prefer to call the use of Internet technology in PR: New PR, Digital PR, PR Online PR, 2.0, Internet. How would you define Oline PR?
2. How have PR practitioners in Nigeria responded to the Internet and online technologies
3. How much of their working hours they dedicated to online than offline functions
4. Has online PR produced measurable changes in their works
5. Do you believe there are barriers to the introduction of New Media in Nigeria and what could that be? In other words: Are they facing constraints and limitation in exploring all the potentials of new technology?
6. Have you notice the mistrust of digital media by some PR practitioners due to cultural dimensions raised by Hofstedes?
7. How do you view local activists and political organisers using new media in Nigeria
8. Do PR practitioners in Nigeria feel that online PR will become an integral part of the professional skill set and tool box?
9. What impacts do practitioners expect online PR to have on the profession?

10. In general what is your view on whether a change in the use of digital media is likely to be driven from the bottom up rather than the top down?

Once again, I thank you for all the support you have rendered to me in my professional career.

Yusha A. Shuaib

Appendix II

Kabir Dangogo Emailed Interview

Dear Yushau,

I am sorry that I couldn't respond to your questionnaire earlier. I have been involved in several things which have kept me busy in the last few weeks. But here are my responses:

As a respected PR professional would you prefer to call the use of Internet technology in PR: New PR, Digital PR, PR Online PR, 2.0, Internet? How would you define Online PR?

I call it what it is: online communication. It is a process of sending messages to a mass audience faster and more efficiently.

How have PR practitioners in Nigeria responded to the Internet and online technologies?

Nigerian Public Relations practitioners have responded to online communication fairly well even if slowly.

How much of their working hours they dedicated to online than offline functions

I have no statistics on how much time Nigerian PR people devote to the Internet. But I know that in this era of Facebook, they devote a lot of time to online communication in the process of carrying out their professional work.

Has online PR produced measurable changes in their works?

Online communication has indeed changed the way the Nigerian PR Practitioner works. With the Internet ruling the world, the Nigerian PR practitioner has no choice but to go online especially while sending communication messages to the media for onward transmission to key audiences. Most professionals if not all depend on online communication to reach out and be reached. So, even practitioners who are not into online communication have really no choice but to take the route.

Do you believe there are barriers to the introduction of New Media in Nigeria and what could that be? In other words: Are they facing constraints and limitation in exploring all the potentials of new technology?

There may be barriers to online communication in our Nigerian environment. Erratic supply of electricity may be one. Availability of the tool in every nook and cranny is another. Inability to reach people instantly on the Internet as many who have email addresses do not check their mails regularly. This results in emails sitting in their boxes for days or weeks without being acted on or replied to. These are constraints that stand in the way of those who stay glued to their electronic note book for the better part of the time they are awake.

Have you notice the mistrust of digital media by some PR practitioners due to cultural dimensions raised by Hofstede's?

I am not sure there is any serious mistrust of online communication by the Nigerian practitioner. If any, it may have to do with the uncertainty that messages sent have been read and acted on owing to the constraints highlighted in the foregoing. Otherwise, anyone who makes a living on communication, online is the surest way to go.

How do you view local activists and political organisers using new media in Nigeria?

Local activists and political organisations have discovered online communication as the most effective way to reach stakeholders, so they leverage on the Internet. In fact, such users seem to have perfected the art of online communication, even if they sometimes appear to engage in propaganda that hardly gives room for feedback.

Do PR practitioners in Nigeria feel that online PR will become an integral part of the professional skill set and tool box?

Online communication has already become part of the skills PR People in Nigeria are expected to possess. No PR agency or corporate organisation would take IT proficiency for granted when engaging new people to handle the public relations beat. Any PR practitioner that cannot effectively use the Internet in Nigeria today is half-baked and ought to go back to school.

What impacts do practitioners expect online PR to have on the profession?

The Internet has greatly impacted on the ability of PR people to communicate online faster and more effectively and receive feedback instantaneously. Public Relations which is all about two-way communication has found an indispensable tool in the Internet. It can only get better.

In general what is your view on whether a change in the use of digital media is likely to be driven from the bottom up rather than the top down?

Any change that may occur in the use of the Internet as a veritable vehicle of communication should begin from down below. It is those at that level that use the tool more than those at the top who would rather rely on their subordinates to check their mails for them.

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Appendix III

Wole Adamolekun's Interview

1. As a respected PR professional would you prefer to call the use of Internet technology in PR: New PR, Digital PR, PR Online PR, 2.0, Internet. How would you define Online PR?

I am not sure which of these names best describes the exponential possibilities the internet is offering professional public relations practitioners but it is obvious that the effects have been very useful. Using internet facilities to deliver improved and skilled public relations services.

2. How have PR practitioners in Nigeria responded to the Internet and online technologies?

Very well. Technology adaptation and adoption in Nigeria is very good. Many people now use internet facilities on a daily basis as it has become part of the requirements for education, financial transactions and the penetration of telecommunications facilities nationwide in such a short while.

3. How much of their working hours they dedicated to online than offline functions.

Much of communication jobs are done online unlike before. Of course infrastructural facility limitations in the area of power are a major challenge.

4. Has online PR produced measurable changes in their works?

I believe so. At least pitching, programme measurement and reporting is supportive of greater productivity. The disadvantage of being offline are becoming glaring by the day that for positive result in PR campaigns, communicators must act now to acquire acknowledge and skills to be in tune with the technology.

5. Do you believe there are barriers to the introduction of New Media in Nigeria and what could that be? In other words: Are PR practitioners facing constraints and limitation in exploring all the potentials of new technology?

There are challenges in embracing the new media as a lot of the people that constitute the object of communication and news are illiterate and also live in the rural areas. There are also other socio political and economic factors which should be tackled by the government as well as proactive engagements of PR people to cross over the barriers through knowledge seeking and acquisition of instruments for efficiency in their jobs. In Nigeria not many practitioners know how to use some social media channels like Twitter, Myspace, Delicious, Diggs not to talk of ordinary citizens. The channels are not that popular locally because of some factors

6. Have you noticed the mistrust of digital media by some PR practitioners due to cultural dimensions raised by Hofstede's?

Digital media in spite of its numerous advantages has some limitations. Apart from the cultural dimension, it tends to make people lazy by being too dependent on digital infrastructures and could also be addictive.

7. How do you view local activists and political organisers using new media in Nigeria?

Occasionally they look amateurish because users hardly distinguish between what is right from what is wrong and what is publishable from what libellous and slanderous. Professional communicators, most especially the PR people should be actively involved to guide the process or assist by providing exemplary conducts in some of the online platforms.

8. Do PR practitioners in Nigeria feel that online PR will become an integral part of the professional skill set and tool box?

Yes of course.

9. What impact do practitioners expect online PR to have on the profession?

Tremendous impact to the extent that online public relations will only add value.

10. In general what is your view on whether a change in the use of digital media is likely to be driven from the bottom up rather than the top down?

It is obvious that it would be driven top down as the elites presently constitute the bulk of the users. Maybe when the current programme of catching the young ones at elementary and secondary levels of education materializes, they there would be a paradigm shift to working from the bottom up.

Dr. Wole Ademolekun (FNIPR)

Secretary General African Public Relations Associations APRA

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Appendix IV

INTERVIEW WITH BALA MOHAMMED, LECTURER MASS COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENT, BAYERO UNIVERSITY KANO, AS WELL AS, ADVISER TO THE GOVERNOR OF KANO STATE ON COMMUNICATION

QUESTION: As a respected PR professional would you prefer to call the use of Internet technology in PR: New PR, Digital PR, PR Online PR, 2.0, Internet? How would you define Online PR?

ANSWER: I will call it online PR because many journalists today and many practitioners in the area of communication are using the internet as a source of information and PR is a very significant part of the communication industry and therefore when everybody is going online, there is the need for us to join them and therefore PR of course should be one of the first to go online. And so should termed appropriately as online PR, I think it is appropriate and actual.

QUESTION: How have PR practitioners in Nigeria responded to the Internet and online technologies?

ANSWER: Well the development of a country determines the development of the people. Of course sometimes you find some people are more advanced than their countries, but Nigeria's development of the internet is not commensurate with our development as a nation, for instance this is a country without adequate power supply and that is why the reach of the internet does not have wide spread impact as it would have been if there was constant and wide spread electricity supply, but when you consider the reach of telecommunications industry, the GSM phones etc, that goes to tell you that we have potentials in this country and PR can use several ways to reach out to the people; online, on-air, whatever ways. Development in Nigeria show that the online technologies are going to converge and when they converge, everything will be online and very much so, it will be handheld because, not very many people have computers; they are expensive. The \$100 laptops are not going to be available; besides you need electricity to power them, hence there is likelihood that we will jump the laptop computers and cling to the handheld devices like the GSM phones hence, instead of laptops, people will be doing their online activities on their mobile phones. I think it is a very good thing because technology is not a closed shop; therefore, people can jump one technology and go to the next so that they can join the world.

QUESTION: How much of your working hours do you dedicated to online than offline functions?

ANSWER: My work is mostly online because I am an adviser to a State governor on communication and I do a lot of PR work and most of my correspondences and work is online. People send materials to me online and I reply them online, I also do some researches on the internet, I read my newspapers on the internet even though I will still buy the hard copies, so most days let's say fifty, fifty, if I am not online on my laptop, I am online on my handheld device or else, I may be online somehow, somewhere at home, because now internet is superlative it goes everywhere, you can turn your television into a laptop, you can turn your GSM phone into a laptop and things like that happens these days. Now we have internet modems from MTN, Starcoms and from all other GSM providers, it tells you that internet has come to stay in every form and mode.

QUESTIONS: Has online PR produced measurable changes in your works?

ANSWER: Like I said early I do a lot of things in the internet, it has made my work very easy and productive.

QUESTION: Do you believe there are barriers to the introduction of New Media in Nigeria and what could that be? In other words: Are they facing constraints and limitation in exploring all the potentials of new technology?

ANSWER: He answered this question; he enumerated a lot of constraints above and even at the bottom, so I did not have to waste time on this question (extract from up and bottom)

QUESTION: Have you notice the mistrust of digital media by some PR practitioners due to cultural dimensions raised by Hofstede's?

ANSWER: Mistrust and cultural dimensions are natural, we are practical nation, and we are practical people. We are Africans, we are traditional people and in this 21st century when you want to reach the villager with a message you don't send it by internet or you don't send it a mobile phone, what you do is, for instance, you go to the village chief and you tell him that you want the children his community to go to primary school, then he (the chief) will send the town crier to go round the town and announce. Some people trust that kind of tradition so even in the 21st century there is room to always be traditional and so there will be mistrust and the mistrust amongst the elites is that somebody is sitting somewhere creating contents for the world to see. But I think after sometime, when everybody is onboard and especially if people attend conferences and they share experiences and network with other professionals, they will get to know that there is nothing hidden and they can prove your content and you can create your content.

QUESTION: How do you view local activists and political organisers using new media in Nigeria?

ANSWER: I am a typical example; most of my activities are done online. Other political organizations have come to embrace the internet as a way of doing their jobs.

QUESTION: Do PR practitioners in Nigeria feel that online PR will become an integral part of the professional skill set and tool box?

ANSWER: I have said before that I cannot do without the internet because most of my work is dependent on the internet. It makes my work faster; its importance cannot be overemphasized. I believe there are other PR practitioners like me who depend heavily on the internet. I believe strongly that the online PR will soon become an integral part of PR professionals' tool box.

QUESTION: What impacts do practitioners expect online PR to have on the profession?

ANSWER: There are a lot of expectations of the online PR. Expectedly; the online PR should help to improve the speed at which information is disseminated around the world. If an event happens here all you need to do is post it online and people around the world will read and know about it. Another expectation is the coverage, online PR does not have geographical boundaries, if you post any information here, people in Asia, Europe, America etc will be able to view. It is also expected to improve the quality of work, because, you have the opportunity to do an online research on whatever topical issue you choose to do. The expectations are enormous and very high.

QUESTION: In general what is your view on whether a change in the use of digital media is likely to be driven from the bottom up rather than the top down?

ANSWER: Technology has unfortunately been always top-to-bottom, if you consider Western nations as the top and African, Asia and Latin America nations as the bottom. Now, that type of approach is very difficult in digital media because it requires a lot of capital, capital input and especially in institutions, now India is doing some revolution in this kind of field, now the India technological system has made it possible, even Americans are now depending on India for their customer and in any other ways they want to interact and the British are also interacting with India technologically. Other so called third world countries are working to ensure that there is a bottom-to-top.

On a national level, bottom-to-top approach is evident in some countries. In Nigeria we have the talents but unfortunately as I said much earlier, the lack of electricity, and the singular problem of Nigeria called "4-1-9" inhibit the bottom-to-top development, because, the international community may not trust us to come and base their infrastructure here, so that we can be the originator of communication, by the way India is developing now, I think there will be some parity in the way technology is utilized and adopted. And I think some developing countries have the hope to achieve that. If Nigeria was developing Nigerians we can also achieve it, take for instance, Nigeria is only fifty years (50 years) old, but if you compare the talents of Nigerians you can say we are 200 years old because, whenever you take Nigerians anywhere in the world, pose a technological challenge before them, it may take a little time they will learn everything and excel. If this country had steady supply of electricity and if this country had no bad image, if this country had good leaders we will excel and this is bottom-to-top approach would have emanated from here, but now what we are seeing is that in Asia it is India, In Africa it is Ghana, in Latin America it is Brazil that is doing this (bottom-to-top approach), but I hope that one day, we will catch up.

Dr. Bala Muhammad

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Appendix V

Emailed Invitations to Stakeholders' Forums

From: Yushau A. Shuaib <yashuaib@yahoo.com>
To: rionigeria@yahoogleroups.com; fican@yahoogleroups.com; jadmigeria@yahoogleroups.com
Sent: Thu, 20 May, 2010 13:20:51
Subject: Online Public Relations Survey in Nigeria

Colleagues,

I am at the final stage of my studies and wish to request you to kindly participate in my survey on the Perception of Online Public Relations in Nigeria. The survey is available online which you could also forward (either this email) for participation of those you know that are in Public Relations, Media and Students of Mass-Communications to participate. They may provide their email at the bottom of the questionnaire

The population of the respondents counts for this survey. The survey may not take you more than 7 minutes. To answer the questionnaire, please click on: ["Questionnaire on Perception of Online Public Relations in Nigeria"](#)

Thanks

YAShuaib

Yushau A. Shuaib

Author: www.yashuaib.com

Appendix VI

Questionnaire and Summary on Perceptions of Online Public Relations in Nigeria

Your Gender		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
a. Male	72.8%	131
b. Female	27.2%	49
<i>answered question</i>		180
<i>skipped question</i>		2

2

Your Age		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
a. Less Than 21 year	0.0%	0
b. 21-30 year	27.2%	49
c. 31-40 year	34.4%	62
d. 41-50	32.2%	58
e. Above 50 year	6.1%	11
<i>answered question</i>		180
<i>skipped question</i>		2

3

Nationality, Please state your country	
Answer Options	Response Count
	173
<i>answered question</i>	173
<i>skipped question</i>	9

4

Which of these best describes your present employer?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
a. In-house-PR	35.4%	51
b. External PR Agency	18.1%	26
c. Academic Institution	18.8%	27
d. Media	27.8%	40
Other (please specify)		43
<i>answered question</i>		144
<i>skipped question</i>		38

5

Choose any of these that better describe your exposure/training on internet/online applications for your work?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count

a. Formal Training (institutions, seminars, workshop etc)	24.9%	45
b. Informal Training (through friends, on the job, online help etc)	26.0%	47
c. All of the above	45.3%	82
d. None	3.9%	7
answered question		181
skipped question		1

6

How is the state of your engagement in online activities?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
a. Very Actively engaged (in web development, blogging and online forums etc)	10.6%	19
b. Actively engaged (web browsing, posting of comments etc)	55.6%	100
c. Passively engaged (occasional for Email and Short Messages)	30.0%	54
d. Not engaged	3.9%	7
answered question		180
skipped question		2

7

Which of these do you use more often and find more effective in your PR campaigns

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
a. Online PR (New Media)	18.2%	32
b. Offline PR (Traditional PR)	21.6%	38
c. Combination of the above	60.2%	106
Other (please specify)		8
answered question		176
skipped question		6

8

Which media do you believe have wider reach to your publics?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
a. Online: Websites, social network platforms	15.4%	26
b. Electronic: TV and Radio	67.5%	114
c. Print: Newspapers and magazines	17.2%	29
Other (please specify)		19
answered question		169
skipped question		13

9

Which of these do you find more valuable in your work?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
a. Email	32.6%	57
b. Social Networking	14.9%	26
e. Blog/Website	1.1%	2
f. All of the above	51.4%	90
Other (please specify)		10

<i>answered question</i>	175
<i>skipped question</i>	7

10

In what area has online activities become more beneficial for PR Practitioners in Nigeria?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
a. Media Relations	42.4%	70
b. Event Management	7.3%	12
c. Publicity/Promotion	38.8%	64
d. Issues and Crisis Management	11.5%	19
Other (please specify)		20
<i>answered question</i>		165
<i>skipped question</i>		17

11

Which of the following statements best represent your view on Online Public Relations?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
a. Online Public Relations is a must for PR practitioners	23.3%	42
b. Online PR is just a fad that will soon fade away	0.6%	1
c. Traditional public relations is still more effective than Online PR	11.7%	21
d. Traditional PR should go hand in hand with Online PR	64.4%	116
<i>answered question</i>		180
<i>skipped question</i>		2

12

Which of the following do you think is a major constraint to maximum utilisation of online technology in your work?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
a. Poor Internet Connectivity from service providers (Technological)	49.7%	82
b. High cost of internet connectivity (Economical)	24.2%	40
c. Privacy and Fear of insecurity (Cultural)	15.2%	25
d. Non-commitment of government or management (political)	10.9%	18
Other (please specify)		26
<i>answered question</i>		165
<i>skipped question</i>		17

13

Which of the following will improve better understanding and enhance the utilisation of online PR tools in Nigeria?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
a. Workshops and Seminars	45.6%	77
b. Further academic studies	4.7%	8
c. Online Self-help, webinar and Forums	14.2%	24
d. Public enlightenment campaign	35.5%	60
Other (please specify)		22
<i>answered question</i>		169

skipped question 13

14

Which department should handle online engagements with the public on behalf of the organisation?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
a. Information and Communication Technology	19.7%	35
b. Human Resources	2.8%	5
c. Public Relations/ Public Affairs	75.8%	135
d. Marketing/ Advert	1.7%	3
Other (please specify)		12
<i>answered question</i>		178
<i>skipped question</i>		4

15

Do you think PR practitioners in Nigeria are left behind in the online revolution?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
a. Strongly agree	30.1%	53
b. Somewhat agree	38.6%	68
c. Neither agree or disagree	17.6%	31
d. Strongly disagree	13.6%	24
<i>answered question</i>		176
<i>skipped question</i>		6

16

How do you view the use of new media by local activists and political organisers?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
a. Very effective	47.2%	83
b. Ineffective	34.1%	60
c. Nothing has changed	18.8%	33
You are free to also comment here		52
<i>answered question</i>		176
<i>skipped question</i>		6

17

Comment: If you have further comments on this research, you may wish to use the space below:

Answer Options	Response Count
	58
<i>answered question</i>	
58	
<i>skipped question</i>	
124	

18

Your Email Address

Answer Options	Response Count
----------------	----------------

	170
<i>answered question</i>	170
<i>skipped question</i>	12

Appendix VII

MAJOR COMMENTS FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRE (UNEDITTED)

Comment on: Which media do you believe have wider reach to your publics?

- a. Online: Websites, social network platforms b. Electronic: TV and Radio
 c. Print: Newspapers and magazines Other (please specify)

Number	Response Date	Other (please specify)
1	May 18, 2010 7:31 PM	Wired like Reuters
2	May 20, 2010 1:07 PM	Even though depend on my target audience local or international
3	May 20, 2010 11:41 PM	b&c
4	May 21, 2010 2:13 PM	All of the above
5	May 24, 2010 6:54 PM	all of the above
6	May 24, 2010 8:44 PM	Including print
7	May 25, 2010 11:46 AM	Both electronic and print
8	Jun 2, 2010 3:26 PM	Both print and electronic media. Most people do not use the internet often despite its popularity.
9	Jun 11, 2010 10:00 AM	Electronics TV and Radio
10	Jun 11, 2010 6:15 PM	electronic tv and radio
11	Jun 11, 2010 6:24 PM	electronic tv and radio
12	Jun 18, 2010 10:02 PM	b and c
13	Jun 19, 2010 9:55 AM	b and c
14	Jun 19, 2010 1:01 PM	b and c
15	Jun 19, 2010 2:49 PM	b and c
16	Jun 19, 2010 3:53 PM	b and c
17	Jun 29, 2010 3:44 PM	Text Messages
18	Jul 1, 2010 8:04 PM	nil
19	Jul 2, 2010 4:28 PM	because even the lame can still watch tv and even listen to radio that speaks thier language

Comment on: Which media do you believe have wider reach to your publics?

- a. Online: Websites, social network platforms b. Electronic: TV and Radio
 c. Print: Newspapers and magazines

Number	Response Date	Other (please specify)
1	May 18, 2010 7:31 PM	Wired like Reuters
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4	May 21, 2010 2:13 PM	All of the above
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7	May 25, 2010 11:46 AM	Both electronic and print
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9	Jun 11, 2010 10:00 AM	Electronics TV and Radio
10	Jun 11, 2010 6:15 PM	electronic tv and radio
11	Jun 11, 2010 6:24 PM	electronic tv and radio
12	Jun 18, 2010 10:02 PM	b and c
13	Jun 19, 2010 9:55 AM	b and c
14	Jun 19, 2010 1:01 PM	b and c
15	Jun 19, 2010 2:49 PM	b and c
16	Jun 19, 2010 3:53 PM	b and c
17	Jun 29, 2010 3:44 PM	Text Messages
18	Jul 1, 2010 8:04 PM	nil

19 Jul 2, 2010 4:28 PM because even yhe lame can still watch tv and even listen to radio that speaks thier language

Which department should handle online engagements with the public on behalf of the organisation?

- a. Information and Communication Technology
- b. Human Resources
- c. Public Relations/ Public Affairs
- d. Marketing/ Advert

Number	Response Date	Other (please specify)
1	May 25, 2010 11:46 AM	Both marketing and PR
2	Jun 11, 2010 9:35 AM	human resources
3	Jun 11, 2010 10:00 AM	Human Resources
4	Jun 11, 2010 6:15 PM	human resources
5	Jun 11, 2010 6:24 PM	human resources
6	Jun 18, 2010 4:00 PM	And PR Agency
7	Jun 19, 2010 10:04 AM	pr/info and comm. technology
8	Jun 19, 2010 3:42 PM	ICT and public relations/public affairs
9	Jun 19, 2010 3:46 PM	a and c
10	Jun 29, 2010 3:44 PM	Information and Communication Technology Department can also be of help
11	Jul 1, 2010 8:04 PM	nil
12	Jul 2, 2010 4:28 PM	they are the one that knows how to relate to public very easy

Comment on: Which of the following do you think is a major constraint to maximum utilisation of online technology in your work?

- a. Poor Internet Connectivity from service providers (Technological)
- b. High cost of internet connectivity (Economical)
- c. Privacy and Fear of insecurity (Cultural)
- d. Non-commitment of government or management (political)

Number	Response Date	Other (please specify)
1	May 20, 2010 1:07 PM	All of the above
2	May 20, 2010 1:11 PM	none
3	May 20, 2010 11:41 PM	C & D
4	May 21, 2010 6:10 PM	inavailability of internet facilities to most target audiences
5	May 24, 2010 4:40 PM	a AND b above
6	May 25, 2010 11:46 AM	Not sure
7	May 25, 2010 11:07 PM	Technological and Economical
8	Jun 2, 2010 3:26 PM	many people avoids going on-line because there is so much information on the net that can waste one's time. You eventually spend more time than you have planned to spend.
9	Jun 10, 2010 6:38 PM	ALL OF THE ABOVE
10	Jun 11, 2010 9:35 AM	privacy and fear of insecurity(cultural)
11	Jun 11, 2010 10:00 AM	Privacy and fear of insecurity (Cultural)
12	Jun 11, 2010 6:15 PM	privacy and fear of insecurity (cultural)
13	Jun 11, 2010 6:24 PM	privacy and fear of insecurity (cultural)
14	Jun 18, 2010 4:00 PM	and Electricity which is the major problem
15	Jun 18, 2010 8:38 PM	lack of steady power supply
16	Jun 18, 2010 9:24 PM	A and B
17	Jun 18, 2010 10:02 PM	education of users
18	Jun 18, 2010 11:38 PM	Ignorance of Government and Management of the immense possibilities in online technology.
19	Jun 19, 2010 10:42 AM	access to internet
20	Jun 19, 2010 12:35 PM	all of the above
21	Jun 19, 2010 3:00 PM	all of tha above
22	Jun 19, 2010 3:36 PM	a and b
23	Jun 19, 2010 3:53 PM	equipment faliture and energy challenges
24	Jun 21, 2010 10:59 AM	poor power supply
25	Jul 1, 2010 8:04 PM	nil
26	Jul 2, 2010 4:28 PM	because when you notice anything around the globe ,you can easily give you own idea without any poor connectivity

Comment on: Which of the following will improve better understanding and enhance the utilisation of online PR tools in Nigeria?

- a. Workshops and Seminars
 b. Further academic studies
 c. Online Self-help, webinar and Forums
 d. Public enlightenment campaign

Number	Response Date	Other (please specify)
1	May 18, 2010 7:31 PM	All of the above
2	May 20, 2010 2:04 PM	I think a combination of all the above four is required
3	May 20, 2010 11:41 PM	Availability to rural areas
4	May 21, 2010 2:13 PM	All of the above
5	May 21, 2010 6:10 PM	Availability of internet facilities everywhere as well as energy (Electricity)
6	May 24, 2010 4:40 PM	d and the treatment of technological and economic problems identified in 12 above
7	Jun 5, 2010 6:51 PM	Strong Commitment from government
8	Jun 5, 2010 8:46 PM	Strong Commitment from government
9	Jun 10, 2010 6:38 PM	ALL OF THE ABOVE
10	Jun 11, 2010 9:35 AM	workshops and seminars
11	Jun 11, 2010 10:00 AM	Workshops and seminars
12	Jun 11, 2010 6:15 PM	workshops and seminars
13	Jun 11, 2010 6:24 PM	workshops and seminars
14	Jun 18, 2010 9:24 PM	A and C
15	Jun 19, 2010 1:04 PM	am not Nigerian
16	Jun 19, 2010 1:07 PM	am not Nigerian
17	Jun 19, 2010 3:11 PM	a and c
18	Jun 19, 2010 3:36 PM	c and d
19	Jun 23, 2010 12:56 AM	a and c
20	Jun 25, 2010 3:09 PM	all of the above
21	Jul 1, 2010 8:04 PM	nil
22	Jul 2, 2010 4:28 PM	because not everybody will like to come ,if there is any semina but public enlightenment helps

How do you view the use of new media by local activists and political organisers?

- a. Very effective b. Ineffective c. Nothing has changed

Number Response Date You are free to also comment here

1	May 18, 2010 7:31 PM	I quite agree that they are doing well
2	May 20, 2010 2:14 PM	The new media has become a vibrant and effective tool for PR practitioners not only in the developed world but the world over as its diffusion amongst practitioners is so fast that none of them would want to be left out
3	May 20, 2010 2:29 PM	Use of new media is becoming a bug among students of higher institutions in Nigeria for research purposes. Enlightened locals are actively involved too but in some cases negatively such online fraud, crimes etc.
4	May 20, 2010 11:41 PM	Most of the PR practitioners are so lazy to go online. This has left so many government's policies unachievable. Online is not only far reaching, it also broadens ones horizons to the best practices that could be put in place for better governance. However the case in Nigeria is so pathetic in the sense that only few have privileged access to the ICT world due to lack of basic infrastructures yet to be put in place by the government.
5	May 21, 2010 8:43 AM	Nigeria is face with the problem of poor network. Also, because of poverty, many people could not afford Laptops or desk top thereby making those who have one business or the other to do with the internet to contend with the poor network in the cybercafes.
6	May 21, 2010 2:13 PM	The low level of awareness and utilisation of the new media by the people makes the usage less effective by the local activists.
7	May 21, 2010 4:13 PM	Another constraint in online PR is the non availability of stable electricity to power the computer.

- 8 May 23, 2010 2:12 AM The local activists have made effective use of the media e.g. face book account to inform and educate people of political, economic, social phenomena which people have largely benefited from. Political organiser also are working through new media to ensure human freedom, and free and fair elections.
- 9 May 23, 2010 9:02 AM They use facebook. myspace and blogger to campaign
- 10 May 24, 2010 11:44 AM Being the "fourth estate of the realm" although the media in Nigeria has performed amazingly yet it lacks absolute credibility in-terms of objectivity in the country's political brouhaha because it is all about "Bread & Butter Journalism" Publicity are given to only those at the helm of power or financially buoyant leaving the opposite in disarray.
- 11 May 24, 2010 3:17 PM The world today is moving towards New Media Platform. For instance you get a wider reach than before with the help of this innovation. For instance, The President of America is in office today, strongly because of the help of New Media, e.g Social Networking groups.
- 12 May 24, 2010 4:17 PM The ineffective use may be due to technological, cultural and economic constraints. But the desire is always to appropriate the benefits of the new media in achieving their goals.
- 13 May 24, 2010 4:40 PM Okay in respect to the level of online usage in Nigeria.
- 14 May 24, 2010 6:50 PM There is a credibility challenge, due to pocket of fraudulent online activities experienced by some stakeholders.
- 15 May 25, 2010 1:40 PM Many seem to be unaware that the future of news/information dissemination (online media) is here. They still stick to the hard copy era.
- 16 May 25, 2010 4:53 PM vERY FEW ARE USING IT
- 17 May 25, 2010 8:36 PM ALTHOUGH OF COURSE, IT COULD BE EASILY ABUSED BY SOME DESPERATE POLITICIANS TO ACHIEVE OBVIOUS OBJECTIVES
- 18 May 25, 2010 8:40 PM It is gaining grounds but the spread is not wide yet. With time, this could be achieved.
- 19 May 26, 2010 6:39 AM ICT has really changed the face of PR in Nigeria. PR is now more effective with internet
- 20 May 26, 2010 12:11 PM Government should be more committed to provide enabling environment for the new media/online communication in the area of technological advancement.
- 21 May 26, 2010 12:21 PM Nigeria needs to provide enabling environment in technological aspect to boost online public relations
- 22 May 26, 2010 1:27 PM Alhaji Shuaib, i wish you the best.
- 23 May 26, 2010 2:44 PM nigerian govt need to provide enabling environment technologically to mwke new media most beneficial for pr practitioners.
- 24 May 26, 2010 8:16 PM it is quite effective i guess but it can still be used more
- 25 Jun 1, 2010 8:47 AM IN Nigeria on line Public Relations is just finding its feet. It was successfully used by Obama, that is why people are eager to try it out. with little time it would be more pronounced in Nigeria, probably as we solve the issue of Electricity/Energy
- 26 Jun 1, 2010 10:12 AM Access to internet facilities and computer literacy among the general populace is very low and these impairs effective use of the new media for mobilization and campaigns.
- 27 Jun 5, 2010 6:51 PM The no of people that has access to internet facilities are very small so only a few can be reached through it.
- 28 Jun 5, 2010 8:46 PM The no of people that has access to internet facilities are very small so only a few can be reached through it.
- 29 Jun 11, 2010 9:35 AM the activists and political organisations are gradually improving on their functions in nigeria throgh mobilasation
- 30 Jun 11, 2010 10:00 AM the use of new media by local activists and political organisations gradually improve PR in Nigeria.
- 31 Jun 11, 2010 11:05 AM Thanks for providing this research
- 32 Jun 11, 2010 6:15 PM the view of new media by local activists and political organisers will be in formed using tv and radio medium to encourage the nation entire.
- 33 Jun 11, 2010 6:24 PM the view of new media by local activists and political organisers will be in formed using tv and radio medium to encourage the nation entire.
- 34 Jun 13, 2010 2:43 PM online media in Nigeria still have a long way to go
- 35 Jun 14, 2010 10:39 AM I believe I didn't disappoint you in my response and hope I'll continue to be a useful participant in your research work.
- 36 Jun 14, 2010 11:48 AM The answered are occasioned having in mind that over 80 per cent of Nigerians have no access to net neither have the knowledge.

- 37 Jun 16, 2010 10:47 AM more awareness should be created on the use of online pr nigeria as its shows that the practice is the new trend .
- 38 Jun 17, 2010 4:51 PM It is true that the level of literacy on Internate is very low in Nigeria, therefor Pr is not very effective through this medium.
- 39 Jun 18, 2010 4:00 PM They are doing better compare to PR people. Dont forget PR will rather have someone doing the talking on their behalf than behaving like marketters
- 40 Jun 18, 2010 5:05 PM It needs some more effort so as to be able to feel the impact.
- 41 Jun 18, 2010 9:31 PM "kindly note: some questions on these questionaries require multiple answers-you would find above
- 2)online PR is a fairly new form of PR in nigeria,widely exploited by marketing section in an organisation (PR includes marketing and advertising)"
- 42 Jun 18, 2010 11:38 PM The target groups of the two are basically illiterate and/or too poor to afford computers, talk less internet connectivity. Besides, there is also the problem of epileptic power supply, among other social ills.
- 43 Jun 25, 2010 10:18 AM Realy, I feel most local activists and political organisers are not exploring and maximising the new media perhaps because they aren't much familiar with the medium or educated in this line. however, I would suggest public awareness campaign at all level in this direction to educate and enlighten the populace about the new media.
- 44 Jun 25, 2010 10:25 AM I feel the new media is not yet well known. Hence, local activist and political organisers are not exploring this opportunity
- 45 Jun 25, 2010 2:32 PM no comment!
- 46 Jun 25, 2010 5:09 PM "the masses are grassroot people that are yet to appreciate online media due to international economic crises"
- 47 Jun 26, 2010 11:30 AM I believe this is going to be the best research work so far on online PR in Nigeria

Comment on: If you have further comments on this research, you may wish to use the space below

- | Number | Response Date | Response Text |
|--------|-----------------------|--|
| 1 | May 19, 2010 12:25 AM | Online pr is confusing in name designation. it need clear definition. Thanks |
| 2 | May 19, 2010 1:49 PM | the questionnaire is straightforward and knowledgeable |
| 3 | May 20, 2010 1:07 PM | Online PR should be added as part of the courses under Mass Communication in Nigerian Varsities.This is connected to the fact that it not only very effective but also indispensable. |
| 4 | May 20, 2010 1:33 PM | The research will add to to informaion information base in the country which is non existent at this time.I appreciate your efforts, please keep it up.Public Relations is a sine qua non for burnshing the image of Nigeria.Does this not remind of the defunct Heart of Africa Project? Iwish you the very best as research and education will be the key to Nigeria's development. Well done my guy! |
| 5 | May 20, 2010 1:49 PM | wish you best study |
| 6 | May 20, 2010 2:14 PM | The questions asked respondents seemed out of sync with the topic since your research is effects and not perception studies. why dont you restructure the topic thus; Internet as a Tool for PR Practice in Nigeria. |
| 7 | May 20, 2010 2:29 PM | We are contrained by technological advancement in Nigeria.Govt should be more committed to improve enebling environment in the areas of regular power supply which plays an inportant role in providing effectiveness in online PR in Nigeria. |
| 8 | May 20, 2010 11:41 PM | This is a very good research areas in this modern time. It will greatly inspire as many PR practitioners as possible. |
| 9 | May 21, 2010 11:13 AM | Thank you very much for researching this topic, it will go along way in enhancing PR profession in Nigeria. |
| 10 | May 21, 2010 6:10 PM | I think you should have asked which sites the respond receive information most. Because one can use the internet without necessarily getting the information the PR practitioner is trying to pass. A major constraint also in Nigeria to PR Practitioner is that most of the Organisations do not appreciate to power of the internet and investment in that area is too minimal. Also, the target audience especially within Nigeria appears to be restricted to the cities where the facilities exist while the majority live in the rural areas. |
| 11 | May 22, 2010 12:33 PM | The online media is still being under-utilized in Nigeria. Many people don't believe in the power of internet. From my experience as an active participant in internet forums, I must say the |

potential opportunity offered by this area is not been harnessed. Few of our political figures are however making use of this. For example, I was on the facebook wall of a top female Senator shortly before I started completing this questionnaire, where I was throwing some challenges to her. I have also been able to contact few political figures on the internet. But generally, online PR is still far having the right perception, even as things are changing, albeit slowly.

- 12 May 23, 2010 2:12 AM I hope this wonderful research would look towards the provision of effective and efficient concrete discovery from which the heterogeneous public irrespective of their various domains will largely benefited from.
- 13 May 23, 2010 9:02 AM Thank you for this question. Very good and straight forward
- 14 May 24, 2010 2:26 PM The inhouse PR people are not doing enough compare to External PR agency
- 15 May 24, 2010 4:17 PM Concerning Q15, no lover of progress in all ramification would wish to be left behind in the online revolution. If there was any indifference, it would be due to those identified challenges, which I believe, concerned authority would also be willing to address
- 16 May 24, 2010 4:40 PM Though the questionnaire is simple and makes the work of the respondents and the researcher simple, however, it is suggested that the researcher should conduct one-on-one interview with selected respondents in order to have a broad perspeyvies and gauge the environment that the users face in this clime.
- 17 May 25, 2010 4:16 PM This is a noble effort and it should be done in such a way that it leads to further research and studies on the prospects and opportunities in Online connectivity via the various channels of communications i.e. PR\Social Networking\Virtual Publishing\Forum.
- 18 May 25, 2010 4:53 PM mOST OF pr practitioners need to be educated on how to deploy the new media to help their causes.
- 19 May 25, 2010 8:36 PM I THINK IT IS A VERY ENRICHINGAND ILLUMINATING RESEARCH WORK BOTH TO THE RESEARCHERS AND THE RESPONDENTS
- 20 May 25, 2010 8:40 PM On-line activites are being hindered in Nigeria by inadequate supply of electricity.
- 21 May 26, 2010 12:11 PM In no distance future online public relations would be a must in Nigeria going by Nigeria's aspirations to be among the top 20 economic nations. With enebling improvement in our ICT policy as in e.governance, online pr would be a stronger means of communication
- 22 May 26, 2010 12:21 PM NV20:2020 aspirations in ICT if fully implemented will take Nigeria high in online communication
- 23 May 26, 2010 2:44 PM NV20:2020 ASPIRATIONS IF FULLY IMPLEMENTED WOULD MAKE NIGERIA ATTAIN ITS HIGHT IN ONLINE MEDIA PRACTICE.
- 24 May 26, 2010 8:16 PM I answered question 12 by referrring to my country, not nigeria. i guess in nigeria it's mostly the bad connectivity and the high costs. that's not the case in austria.
- 25 May 27, 2010 11:49 PM The activists and politicians are very active on Facebook for advocacy and campaigns.More active than PR practitioners
- 26 May 28, 2010 1:15 PM ONLINE PR IN NIGERIA IS GROWWING BY LEAPS AND BOUNDS; AS AN EMERGING ECONOMY, IT IS QUITE RECEPTIVE TO INNOVATIONS, ONE OF WHICH HAS MAJORLY BEEN INTERNET AND SOCIAL MEDIA LARGELY.
- 27 Jun 1, 2010 8:47 AM No comment
- 28 Jun 4, 2010 10:17 PM Nice questionnaire Alhaji. I will see you in Naija in July if you are there
- 29 Jun 5, 2010 4:55 PM Just to say best wishes
- 30 Jun 11, 2010 9:35 AM to build up exclusive knowledge is not common but the idea is beautiful.
- 31 Jun 11, 2010 10:00 AM the research will enhance the practic of PR if is carried out successful.
- 32 Jun 11, 2010 6:15 PM the research will promote online pr in nigeria if is it carried out sucessfully.
- 33 Jun 11, 2010 6:24 PM the research will promote online pr in nigeria if is it carried out sucessfully.
- 34 Jun 12, 2010 1:56 PM Unarguably, Nigeria is a third world country, but graually we are coming up. Example, I had to respond to this assignment via the internet.
- 35 Jun 12, 2010 4:30 PM Very informative and educative. I mean the research its self.
- 36 Jun 13, 2010 2:43 PM Public enlightenment could serve as the only way people could be sensitized on the use of online communication
- 37 Jun 14, 2010 8:02 AM "the research is a good venture. we need to creat awareness on online pr from: ANDREW OBIAGA A."
- 38 Jun 14, 2010 9:06 AM Unargueable, Nigeria is yet to reach the peak in PR. There is still room for improvement.

39 Jun 14, 2010 10:39 AM "what is my stake in participating in the exercise?
what do you to help up coming PR in the field?
more greese to your elbow.Tanx"

40 Jun 18, 2010 4:00 PM I wish I get copy of those report after its conclusion

41 Jun 18, 2010 5:05 PM Our school curricular should embrace practical use of the computer and internet based applications.

42 Jun 18, 2010 9:49 PM This questionnaire might not give you all that you desire. this is because Nigerian is not fully computer based as that of London. most companies, both government and private are still struggling with equipping themselves gradually. we are still operating traditionally rather than the on-line stuff.

43 Jun 18, 2010 11:38 PM Just to wish the researcher success in his academic programme. I believe such researches are needed to chart the nation's socio-economic as well as political directions.

44 Jun 19, 2010 12:35 PM you are free to contact me on further discussions on your research as i have alot to assist you in this regard. i am an active practitioner in the last 20years. 08033110091

45 Jun 19, 2010 12:48 PM it is infutive the pr industry becomes very very active in development of the economy. the pr industry has been undermined compared to others like administration, engineering, accounting, etc. the time is now!

46 Jun 19, 2010 12:52 PM there is a strong empathy to online activities often because of pockets of fraudsters' abuse, it is considered an unsafe channel coupled with the high cost implication

47 Jun 19, 2010 1:01 PM pr is not reactionary but practical of proactive,it must move faster and always be ahead of time. work with 21st century wind people.the use of new media has changed the way will perceive communication and messages

48 Jun 19, 2010 3:23 PM pr is all about reputation management-encompassing the general conduct of both the internal land external public's. it is however desirable to pursue a preventive rather than defensive pr or avoid publishing rejoinders

49 Jun 19, 2010 3:26 PM Goodluck

50 Jun 20, 2010 8:22 PM Effective use of online PR is possible if there is massive liberalization of internet access

51 Jun 21, 2010 1:34 PM Thanks for your efforts and do hope this will contribute to learning.

52 Jun 25, 2010 10:18 AM "I'm a communicator. Read Mass Communication in the Polytechnic of Ibadan - Oyo State. I love Public Relation and Advertising; two of the areas of Mass Communication. I'm of the opinion that Online Public Relations is a great tool needed in this dispensation as the world is turning a global village and everybody need to be educated in this direction especially corporate organisation to ease up expenses on traditional campaign as well as bridge the gap between the organisation and their teeming public. The only constraint is public (people) who are not computer/internet compliant to be educated. hence, been connected."

53 Jun 25, 2010 2:32 PM no thanks!

54 Jun 25, 2010 2:35 PM The research is very important, because with this one is able to achieve more knowledge on public relation.Because it has created more awareness.

55 Jun 25, 2010 5:09 PM "economic inequality among nations of the global village created by pride and prejudice will minimise the impact of online PR in developing countries"

56 Jun 26, 2010 11:30 AM Please ensure you send me the summary of this report

57 Jun 29, 2010 3:44 PM I'm a Communicator by profession. I studied Mass Communication. I dreamt of specialising in PR & Advert in the nearest future. However, for now I feel it is expedient for the teeming populace to be enlightened via campaign on the benefits of Online PR as the world is becoming a global village.

58 Jul 1, 2010 8:04 PM my comment is to complain on your inability respond to my previous submission