

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND CORPORATE IMAGE MANAGEMENT IN THE DIGITAL ERA: EVIDENCE FROM THE NIGERIAN TELEVISION AUTHORITY IN SOUTH-EAST NIGERIA

ABIGAIL GLORY EZEANI-IHECHUKWUMERE

Department of Mass Communication,
Ebonyi State University
08037560413

Abstract

This study investigated corporate reputation management by the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) in the South-East region within the era of digital media. Driven by the rapid proliferation of digital communication platforms, decentralised information flows, and growing competition from private broadcasting alternatives, the study examined how NTA utilises digital public relations tools, fosters stakeholder alliances, impacts public trust, and maintains market competitiveness. Adopting a descriptive survey and cross-sectional research design, the study utilised Cochran's formula to arrive at a sample size of 400 respondents distributed across the five states of South-East Nigeria (Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo). Primary data was collected via structured questionnaires hosted on Google Forms and disseminated through online channels, complemented by virtual in-depth interviews with 10 purposively selected NTA administrative and editorial personnel. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) based on a 4-point Likert scale. The findings revealed a low-to-moderate utilisation of interactive digital PR tools (grand mean = 2.46) and a low overall impact on public trust and viewership loyalty (grand mean = 2.48). Furthermore, while strategic alliances with content creators and commercial advertisers demonstrated moderate positive effects on audience appeal (grand mean = 2.60), NTA's overall PR strategy exhibited low success in sustaining market competitiveness against digital-native alternatives (grand mean = 2.33). The study concluded that legacy-bound public broadcasters must transition from traditional top-down communication models to proactive, data-driven digital engagement and transparent operational strategies. It recommended the institutionalisation of real-time sentiment tracking, enhanced online feedback mechanisms, and aggressive content collaborations to rebuild institutional credibility and secure long-term viability in the digital media ecosystem.

Keywords: Corporate Reputation, Digital Media, Public Service Broadcasting, Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), Public Relations, Stakeholder Trust.

Introduction

The Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) is national public broadcasting organisation and the largest television network in Africa in

terms of geographical coverage. Established in 1977 by a decree of the Federal Government of Nigeria, NTA was formed through the merger of regional television stations to create a unified national broadcaster (NTA, 2026.). Originally, NTA relied on traditional public relations practices to maintain cordial relationship, audience loyalty and public and stakeholders trust. However, the contemporary global business and institutional environment today is changing, making corporate image and reputation management a central technique for survival (Neck, 2026). Although Public Relations (PR) is as old as man having evolved with human communication and the need to communicate and maintain mutual understanding and relationship, it has for decades moved to the level of businesses and organisations, a transition that makes public relations more central to maintaining corporate reputation of an organisation. (Neck, 2026). Obialor, Okon, and Ubong, (2024)) defines corporate reputation as the stakeholder's collective opinions towards an organisation based on its records.

Corporate reputation is a perceptual representation of a company's past actions and prospects that describes the firm's overall appeal to key constituents compared to other leading rivals (Obialor et al., (2024). It is a form of intangible asset holding value to the organisations that hold it, developed through sustained social interactions in which past impressions affect future behaviours Corporate image management is a process that involves creating, maintaining, and restoring in many cases an effective corporate image. Corporate image management according to Obiora and Ekeke, (2019) entails a major promotional tool that refers to building good relationships with the company's public by obtaining favourable publicity and handling or heading off unfavourable rumours, stories, and events. Public relations is used as a tool for achieving corporate reputation.

In Nigeria, public institutions, particularly state-owned media organisations like the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), operate under intense public scrutiny. As the national broadcaster, NTA is tasked with

reflecting government policies, projecting national unity, and informing the citizenry (Nigerian Television Authority, 2026). Yet, its regional network stations such as NTA South-East Nigeria face distinct operational realities. These stations contend with stiff competition from private, smart, and digital-native broadcast networks, shifting audience demographics, infrastructural deficits, and occasional negative public perceptions regarding content relevance.

While empirical studies emphasise that leveraging digital PR tools enhances stakeholder trust, transparency, and audience engagement, regional public media networks in Nigeria often lag in transitioning from traditional workflows to tech-driven reputation management frameworks ((Neck, 2026). This gap creates vulnerabilities in how public institutions manage crises and maintain audience loyalty. It is against this backdrop that this study investigates the ways NTA South-East Nigeria utilises digital media such as Facebook, Twitter (X), and Facebook to drive and sustains its corporate reputation, and remain relevant in the face of stiff competition from the social media networks in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the strategic importance of public relations in building and sustaining organisational prestige, the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) in the South-East region continues to grapple with diminishing audience retention, public apathy, and a stiff competitive disadvantage against private digital cable and online streaming platforms (La'aro, 2020). Observation and preliminary insights reveal that the PR units of many public broadcasting stations in the region are constrained by an over-reliance on traditional communication models, slow adoption of digital media tools (such as social listening algorithms, multimedia storytelling, and real-time feedback loops), and poor institutional funding for technological upgrades.

Furthermore, the rise of citizen journalism and unverified social media commentary poses a critical challenge to NTA in retaining customers'

loyalty, brand reputation and sustainable mutual trust of the audiences in the South-East. If public relations practice within NTA South-East remains tied to obsolete, analogue frameworks in an era dominated by digital algorithms and interactive media, the station risks total erosion of its public trust and corporate identity. Despite these challenges, there is not many empirical studies that investigated how the NTA stations in the South-East Nigeria negotiate these challenges. This study is therefore designed to close this gap in knowledge by investigating how public relations strategies can be effectively optimised for corporate image management within NTA South-East in this digital era.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to examine the application of public relations strategies in corporate image management by the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) in South-East Nigeria within the context of the digital era. The specific objectives are to:

1. assess the extent to which NTA South-East utilises digital public relations tools (such as social media platforms and online feedback channels) for audience engagement and image projection.
2. determine the impact of digital PR strategies on public perception, trust, and viewership loyalty toward NTA South-East stations.
3. determine how alliances with content creators, advertisers and other stakeholders affect NTA public perception
4. assess the success of NTA PR strategies in sustaining competitiveness amidst growing media alternatives

Research questions

1. To what extent does NTA South-East utilise digital public relations tools (such as social media, live streaming, and online feedback channels) for audience engagement and image projection?
2. What is the impact of digital PR strategies on public perception, trust, and viewership loyalty toward NTA South-East stations?

3. How does NTA alliances with content creators, advertisers and stakeholders affect NTA public perception?
4. To what extent is NTA PR strategies successful in sustaining competitiveness in the midst of growing alternatives?

Scope of the Study

The study is delimited to the South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria, comprising five states: Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo. Specifically, it focuses on the operational NTA network stations located within these state capitals (e.g., NTA Enugu, NTA Awka, NTA Aba, NTA Owerri, and NTA Abakaliki). The study focuses primarily on Public Relations and Corporate Image Management, examining how digital communication tools, social media engagement, online reputation management, crisis communication, and stakeholder relations strategies are utilised by NTA in the South-East. The study covered a three-year evaluation window (2023 to 2026), capturing the accelerated adoption of digital media, shifts in broadcasting regulations, and modern trends in public relations management during this period.

Review of Related Literature

Public Relations

According to Grunig and Hunt (1984, p.6), public relations is defined simply as "the management of communication between an organisation and its publics". Cutlip, Center, & Broom (2006) state that public relations is fundamentally viewed as a management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and the publics on whom its success or failure depends. Simply put, PR is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organisations and their diverse publics. It involves managing an organisation's reputation, influencing public opinion, and maintaining open lines of communication and mutual understanding through planned and sustained campaigns (Grunig & Hunt, 1984).

Public relations has undergone gradual evolution through multiple stages, starting with the traditional stage that relied on print media and one-way communication, then the digital media stage characterised by multiple sources of information and increased interaction, then the social media stage that enhanced public participation, and finally the current stage characterised by the proliferation of artificial intelligence and big data (Neck, 2026). In this stage, competition is no longer limited to institutions alone, but also includes smart technologies capable of analysing data and predicting communication trends.

Public relations (PR) acts as the strategic communication bridge that fosters mutual understanding, goodwill, and constructive engagement between an organisation and its diverse internal and external publics (Hassan, 2013). Traditionally, PR relied heavily on conventional channels such as press releases, print media, town halls, and physical events. However, the advent of the digital era, characterised by social media proliferation, real-time analytics, mobile-first information consumption, and convergence technologies, has fundamentally redefined corporate communication (Herbert, 2005). Organisations can no longer rely solely on legacy top-down broadcasting; they must navigate a hyper-connected, participatory ecosystem where public sentiment shifts rapidly.

Digital Public Relations

According to Neck (2026), within this digital era of public relations, the concept of digital public relations has emerged as an approach that relies on utilising digital tools and modern technologies, such as the internet, smartphones, and social media, to conduct public relations activities with greater efficiency and flexibility. This shift according to the scholar, has provided organisations with vast opportunities for immediate and interactive communication with their audiences through the production and dissemination of media content and the continuous monitoring of feedback. Digital public relations is now a fundamental mechanism for managing

corporate reputation in the digital age (Neck, 2026). It allows organisations to monitor their public image, respond quickly to crises, and build a positive digital presence that enhances trust and credibility.

Samet (2024, p.232) defines digital public relations as "the fundamental online evolution of traditional public relations, primarily focused on establishing and expanding an organisation's presence and authority on the web". Samet (2024) states that digital PR strategically makes use of online platforms such as websites, blogs, and social media to build visibility, credibility, and authority through the strategic deployment of high quality content, the acquisition of valuable backlinks, and widespread media coverage. The difference between digital PR and traditional PR is on the channel focus. While traditional PR relies on offline media like newspapers, magazines, television, and radio, digital PR relies entirely on online channels (Samet, 2024). This online orientation facilitates a significantly wider and more diverse audience reach, coupled with the distinct advantage of indefinite content accessibility and longevity. Continuous interaction across digital platforms strengthens the relationship between the organisation and its audience, making digital public relations an effective strategic tool for managing corporate reputation and enhancing the organisation's standing in a constantly changing and competitive digital environment (Neck, 2026).

In this context, social media is one of the most prominent digital public relations tools. It represents interactive communication channels that enable two-way information exchange and enhance opportunities for direct dialogue with the public (Neck, 2026). . These platforms have contributed to ending the dominance of one-way communication and have imposed a new style of communication on organisations based on interaction and participation. They have also become an effective means of building sustainable relationships, enhancing transparency, and bolstering trust, making them a pivotal tool in managing digital reputation and improving the public image of organisations.

Corporate Reputation

Corporate reputation (CR) is one of the most influential intangible assets in modern governance (Rose & Thomsen, 2004). This is because according to Hai and Dieu, (2025), corporate reputation is both the result of accumulated evaluations from stakeholders and a signalling mechanism that helps the market interpret the organisation's capabilities, reliability, responsibility, and prospects. From a strategic perspective, CR is the cumulative result of signals about efficiency, norm-conforming behaviour, strategic positioning, and interaction with interest groups (Hai & Dieu, 2025, p.92). Reputation reflects the perceptual representation of a company's past actions and future prospects that describe the organisation's overall appeal to all of the key constituents compared to other competing rivals (Goyal, Mukherjee, & Kumar, 2026).

From an institutional perspective, CR is a form of social evaluation; from a marketing and communication perspective, it is a perception formed, maintained, and adjusted through experience, communication, and market expectations (Hai & Dieu, 2025).

Corporate reputation is an intangible asset of an organisation. As noted by Czinkota & Ronkainen (–2009), intangible assets offer substantial competitive advantages to organisations (Czinkota & Ronkainen, –2009; Sarstedt, Wilczynski, & Melewar., –'–2013), and a strong corporate reputation, hereinafter is among the most significant of these assets (Makarius, Kahindi, Stevens, & Hong, '-2025).

Corporate Reputation, Social Media Interface, and their Effectiveness

Corporate reputation has come to be a very critical asset in the digital age. Not only it considers consumer behaviour, but it also directly affects business performance (Armutlu, and Turkey, 2024). With social media platforms whose spread is like wildfire, corporate communication has changed to real-time interactions between companies and their stakeholders (Shahid, 2016). The need to have a good corporate reputation becomes

paramount for any organisation moving within this complex environment of modern times. Research shows that a positive reputation improves customer loyalty and acts as a shock absorber during a crisis, for customers would be more likely to stand up for brands they trust (Islam, Islam, Pitafi, Xiaobei, Rehmani, Irfan & Mubarak, 2021). In the present times, effective reputation management strategies have thus become very crucial for any organisation to help it succeed amidst cutthroat competitions prevailing in the modern marketplace (Khan, Salamzadeh, Iqbal, & Yang. 2022).

Organisations deploy multidimensional strategies to build, protect, and repair their reputations, typically dividing these approaches into proactive and reactive frameworks (Doorley & Garcia, 2020). Proactive reputation strategies involve aligning corporate identity with stakeholder expectations, emphasising a relational approach where reputation is co-created with internal and external actors ([Schultz, 2013](#)). Also, corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives have emerged as a dominant strategic mechanism, allowing firms to build emotional equity and positive stakeholder sentiments that insulate them during market volatility (Carroll, 1991). However, the rise of digital and social media platforms has drastically shifted the mechanics of reputation management. While traditional public relations relied heavily on controlled, one-way messaging, modern scholarship highlights that social media has democratised information flow, introducing high velocity and virality risks that can amplify negative sentiments instantaneously (Khan, Salamzadeh, Iqbal & Yang. 2022).

Kaur and Sharma (2021) define the elements of corporate reputation, stating it is the sum of corporate image and identity as two inseparable constituents. This definition indicates the importance of the perception of a company by the public and the presentation of the company in the market. The scholars emphasise that corporate reputation is a reflection of stakeholders' interactions and perceptions, which is shaped by the past behaviours of the company and mediated through various channels,

especially through the media. Lunguleac-Bardasuc, Budac, & Ogorean (2021) explained that for effective management, one should be aware of what makes up the corporate reputation, especially on issues concerning its impact on social stakeholders. This is also an important understanding for companies aiming to establish and continue their good reputation before their stakeholders (Armutlu, and Turkey, 2024). In addition, Hartmann and Carmenate (2020) state that corporate reputation has a dynamic nature, changing over time by continuous interactions between the stakeholders and the company.

Social media plays a vital role in modern society especially in building the reputation of business community positively, and it may adversely affect the reputation if not managed properly (Shahid, 2016). According to Argenti & Barnes (2009), in old times, there used to be a one-way style of communication such as media advertisements and publicity, but nowadays, customers are more and keener to interact in a two-way form of communication such as in social media. In support, Shahid (2016) state that apart from social networking websites, there are vast opportunities on the internet to drive opinions to the desired direction through social media blogs, forums, small blogs, video sharing websites and regular internet sites (Shahid, 2016). Rust, Rand, Huang, Stephen, Brooks, & Chabuk (2021) submits that social media have become the most highlighted part of organisational communication strategies in the digital age, providing the situation where information travels and spreads rapidly through large audiences; hence, it is crucially important for corporations to track and manage their reputation on social media.

According to Hamidi, Ismail, Mohamed, Shuhidan, & Abd-Kadir. (2023), corporate reputation management on social media platforms is related to crises, which is quite necessary for maintaining public relations and not affecting the organisational credibility. Organisations must, therefore, be very proactive in the strategies to maintain their reputation and respond on

social media efficiently regarding all kinds of discussions and feedback to reduce the impact of image crises (Armutlu, and Turkey, 2024). Consequently, contemporary strategies demands real-time monitoring analytics, rapid crisis communication, and authentic, empathetic stakeholder engagement to mitigate reputational damage.

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on Reputation Management Theory (RMT) and Excellence Theory.

Reputation Management Theory (RMT)

Reputation Management Theory (RTM) was propounded by Fombrun & van Riel (2004). The theory focuses on how organisations build, maintain, and restore their reputation through strategic communication and stakeholder engagement. The theory emphasises how individuals, organisations, and brands strategically shape and maintain their reputations to build trust and credibility with stakeholders. Rooted in public relations, corporate communication, and social psychology, RMT posits that reputation is an intangible but valuable asset influencing stakeholder perceptions, consumer loyalty, and overall organisational success. A strong reputation can enhance competitive advantage, attract investors, and mitigate risks during crises, while a damaged reputation can lead to loss of trust, financial decline, and stakeholder disengagement.

Important features of the RMT include proactive reputation building, crisis communication, and stakeholder engagement. Organisations cultivate positive reputations through ethical business practices, transparency, corporate social responsibility (CSR), and consistent messaging. During crises, reputation management involves swift, strategic communication to address concerns, regain public trust, and restore brand image. The theory also emphasises the role of digital media, where online reviews, social media discourse, and news coverage significantly impact public perception, necessitating constant monitoring and engagement.

RMT draws on multiple frameworks, such as Fombrun's Reputation Quotient (2000), which measures corporate reputation based on emotional appeal, products and services, financial performance, vision and leadership, workplace environment, and social responsibility. Additionally, RMT outlines strategies for repairing reputational damage, including denial, evasion of responsibility, corrective action, and mortification (apology). These models help organisations assess their reputational standing and adopt appropriate strategies for reputation enhancement and recovery.

Reputation Management Theory is a relevant theoretical framework for studying the Influence of Public Relations in Enhancing the Corporate Image of NTA in the Era of Digital Media because it explains how organisations strategically shape, maintain, and protect their reputations in a rapidly evolving media landscape. In the digital era, public perception of corporate entities like the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) is shaped by online discourse, social media interactions, and traditional news coverage. This theory underscores the role of public relations in fostering transparency, credibility, and stakeholder engagement, which are crucial for maintaining a positive corporate image. It also highlights crisis management strategies, emphasising how NTA can respond to reputational threats, manage misinformation, and leverage digital platforms to enhance its public standing.

Excellence Theory

Excellence Theory provides the necessary lens to examine how NTA must transition toward symmetrical digital engagement by utilising social media platforms and online feedback loops to genuinely listen to modern audiences and foster democratic accountability (Grunig et al., 2006). Furthermore, because the study evaluates how strategic public relations shapes corporate reputation, the theory justifies this investigation by emphasising that PR practitioners must be integrated into the dominant management coalition to execute environmental scanning, manage digital

crises, and cultivate sustainable public trust (Dozier et al., 1995; Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002).

This framework is suitable for investigating the influence of public relations on the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) corporate reputation in the era of digital media. Historically, state-owned public broadcasters have often relied on legacy, one-way communication models to project government policies, leading to public scepticism and a trust deficit (Grunig, 1992). Excellence Theory provides the necessary lens to examine how NTA must transition toward symmetrical digital engagement by utilising social media platforms and online feedback loops to genuinely listen to modern audiences and foster democratic accountability (Grunig et al., 2006). Furthermore, because the study evaluates how strategic public relations shapes corporate reputation, the theory justifies this investigation by emphasising that PR practitioners must be integrated into the dominant management coalition to execute environmental scanning, manage digital crises, and cultivate sustainable public trust (Dozier et al., 1995; Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002).

Empirical Review

Miloud, and Hamidi (2026) examined "The Role of Modern Public Relations in Enhancing the Image of Media Organisations in Algeria" The purpose of the study was to find out how digital public relations (DPR) shape public perceptions of media organisations in Algeria through a case study of the Echorouk Group. A descriptive–analytical design was adopted, as it is well-suited to mapping organisational DPR practices and linking platform use to perceptual outcomes. The study employed purposive sample drawn from Echorouk's internal audience. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire Echorouk systematically leverages Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. The study found that the use of digital tools and the appointment of a PR officer contribute to the professionalisation functions, planning, cross-departmental coordination, and ongoing monitoring and evaluation are

significant in sustaining reputational gains. The study is related to the present study as it examined public relations and digital tool. However, it did not reflect anything on NTA, and also the context remains different. These gaps was filled by this study.

Singh, Jain, Aswathinath, Jayashree and Bajaj (2023). Investigated "Online Reputation Management: Strategies for Building and Protecting Brand Image In the contemporary digital era". The study employed. The study did not make use of any specific research design. It argues that the management online reputation is significant for both individuals and corporations, especially in the establishment of favourable brand image. It found that favourable brand image substantially influences corporate reputation and ones level of achievement.

The author argued that in the era of digital media where information travels rapidly through the expansive realm of the internet, the perception of a brand holds significant importance as it may either serve as a beneficial resource or a substantial detriment. Singh et al (2023) also found that online reputation management has the potential to significantly impact their perceived credibility and trustworthiness among their target audiences. The study recommended vigilant monitoring, content generation, engagement on social media platforms, and other essential practices in a context where brands' digital footprints are consistently scrutinized and susceptible to alteration. This study is related to the present study because it dwelt on digital media and corporate reputation. However, it did not delve into the ways traditional media utilise digital platforms to enhance corporate image.

Cheng and Lee (2023) investigated "Timeliness, responsiveness and the human voice: The effects of dialogic strategies and the mediating role of perceived communication ethicality on social media relationship building". The study used survey research design with questionnaire administered to four universities in Taiwan. It focussed on how social media can be better managed to cultivate positive organisation-public relationships. The study

builds on the dialogic tradition in public relations.

This marks a shift from the transmission-oriented monologic model toward a dialogic, relational model of public relations. To test how communication strategies may influence publics' perceptions of communication ethicality and how such perceptions may further influence the quality of PR on social media. The study found that ethics is fundamental to building relationship in public relations. This study is related to the present study because it aim was on how mutual relations could be built. However, it did not take NTA into consideration. The present study will close the gap.

Sehl (2020) studied "Public service broadcasting and the digital challenge: Assessing institutional adaptation and online communication frameworks". The study used survey research method. The study argued that for decades, public service broadcasting (PSM) has played important role in providing news and information in many Western country, but now faces challenge by the evolution of digital media environment. The study focused on audience perspective on performance of PSM. The study found that respondents were more likely to value social media platforms for entertainment purposes than PSM. While this study is related to the present study because it focussed on broadcasting which is also the focus of the resent study, but it compared public broadcasting globally but the present study focussed on the Nigerian Television Authority.

Ron and Katona (2019) examined "Curation Algorithms and Filter Bubbles in Social Networks". The study argues that social platforms often use curation algorithms to match content to user tastes. Although curation algorithms are often designed to improve user experience, the increased polarisation of consumed content. The stated that although algorithms increase polarisation for fixed networks, when they indirectly influence network connectivity and content quality, their impact on polarisation and segregation is less clear. The scholars found that network connectivity and content quality are strategic complements, and that introducing curation

makes consumers less selective and increases connectivity. It was also found that a perfect filtering algorithm increases content polarisation and creates a filter bubble when the marginal cost of quality is low, while an algorithm focused on vertical content quality increases connectivity as well as lowers polarisation and does not create a filter bubble.

User surplus analysis shows that platforms can increase user surplus if they lower the marginal cost of quality investment while introducing curation, but this may lead to the unintended consequence of a filter bubble. This study is related to the present study in the objective that aimed at determining how alliances with content creators, advertisers and other stakeholders affect NTA public perception. However, this study did not analyse any algorithm used by NTA to enhance its reputation. This gap was closed by this study

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive survey and cross-sectional research design. This approach facilitated the collection of quantitative data from media audiences via structured online instruments alongside qualitative insights from key informants via virtual interviews, effectively capturing the state of corporate reputation management by the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) across digital platforms.

Population of the Study

The target population comprises residents across the five states of South-East Nigeria (Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo) who are exposed to the digital media feeds and online transmissions of the five designated NTA network stations located within each respective state capital. Because the exact, precise number of active digital audience members accessing NTA streams across these online networks at any given time is infinite or unknown, an appropriate statistical formula for an unknown population was utilised.

Determination of the Sample Size

To arrive at a manageable and statistically representative sample size from an unknown or infinite population of digital media consumers, Cochran's (1977) formula for unknown populations was applied at a 0.05 margin of error and a 95% confidence level ($z=1.96, p=0.5$):

$$n = \frac{z^2 pq}{e^2}$$

Where:

- n = Desired sample size
- z = Standard normal deviation at the required confidence level (1.96)
- p = Estimated proportion of an attribute present in the population (0.5)
- $q = 1-p$ (0.5)
- e = Acceptable margin of error (0.05)

Substituting these values:

$$N = \frac{(1.96)^2 (0.5)(0.5)}{0.05^2} = \frac{.8416 \times 0.25}{0.0025} = \frac{0.9604}{0.0025} \approx 384.16$$

Rounding up to ensure robustness and accommodate potential attrition or uncompleted submissions, a sample size of 400 respondents was adopted, distributed proportionately across the five states. Additionally, a purposive sample of 10 key informants (comprising NTA digital media directors, public relations officers, and station managers) were selected for online qualitative interviews.

Sampling Techniques

A multi-stage sampling technique was utilised. Stratified random sampling was first employed to categorise the South-East region into five strata corresponding to the states of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo. Subsequently, purposive sampling was used to select active online

community spaces, social media groups, and digital networks within each state where NTA digital content was shared and discussed. Finally, convenience and snowball sampling techniques were applied to distribute the online survey link to consenting adult viewers exposed to NTA's digital platforms, while purposive sampling was strictly utilised for selecting qualitative interview participants.

Measuring Instrument

Data collection instruments comprised a structured questionnaire hosted on Google Forms, featuring a 4-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree) designed to measure dimensions of corporate reputation, digital media engagement, and stakeholder trust. This is paired with a semi-structured interview guide administered via virtual meeting platforms for qualitative sessions.

Method of Data Collection

Primary data were gathered entirely through online channels. The structured questionnaire was deployed via Google Forms and disseminated across targeted social media platforms, messaging groups, and email networks targeting South-East residents. Concurrently, in-depth qualitative interviews were conducted via video conferencing tools with purposively selected NTA administrative and editorial personnel, ensuring comprehensive digital triangulation of findings.

Data Analysis

Table 1: Extent NTA South-East utilises digital public relations tools (such as social media, live streaming, and online feedback channels) for audience engagement and image projection

Item/Statement	SA	A	D	SD	ΣFX	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	Standard Deviation	Decision
	4	3	2	1				
1. NTA actively uses social media handles (Facebook, X, Instagram) for daily broadcasting.	60	90	150	100	1030	2.58	0.98	Agreed
2. NTA effectively deploys live-streaming platforms to reach digital-native audiences	45	75	180	100	985	2.46	0.91	Disagreed
3. Online feedback channels (comments/chats) are actively monitored and responded to by NTA.	30	60	190	120	920	2.30	0.86	Disagreed
4. Digital engagement initiatives reduce public scepticism toward state-owned media broadcasts	50	85	165	100	1005	2.51	0.94	Agreed
Grand Mean / Pooled SD						2.46	0.92	Low Extent

Source: Researcher's field survey (2026).

Table 1 shows a grand mean of 2.46 (below the 2.50 benchmark) and a pooled standard deviation of 0.92. While items 1 and 4 recorded mean scores slightly above the benchmark (2.58 and 2.51 respectively), items 2 and 3 fell below at 2.46 and 2.30. This indicates that the utilisation of digital PR tools by NTA

South-East is perceived to be at a low to moderate extent. The standard deviations cluster closely around 0.90, showing relative consensus among respondents that interactive digital mechanisms like feedback monitoring and live-streaming remain under-optimised. This implies that NTA South-East still relies heavily on legacy broadcast routines rather than fully exploiting interactive digital architectures. The failure to actively monitor online feedback and maximise live-streaming limits audience engagement, leaving the station vulnerable to negative digital narratives without immediate institutional pushback.

Table 2: Impact of digital PR strategies on public perception, trust, and viewership loyalty toward NTA South-East stations

Item/Statement	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	Σ FX	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	Standard Deviation	Decision
1. NTA's online presence significantly enhances public trust in news credibility.	55	95	140	110	1015	2.54	0.97	Agreed
2. Digital communication strategies effectively foster long-term viewership loyalty	40	80	170	110	970	2.43	0.90	Disagreed
3. Online feedback channels (comments/chats) are actively monitored and responded to by NTA.	50	100	150	100	1020	2.55	0.93	Agreed
4. Digital tools are utilized proactively to project a positive corporate image	35	70	185	110	9505	2.38	0.88	Disagreed
Grand Mean / Pooled SD						2.48	0.92	Low Impact

Source: Researcher's field survey (2026)

to 0.97) indicate unified respondent feedback. The findings imply that while digital visibility creates basic awareness, it has not effectively converted into deep-seated public trust or viewer loyalty. Because state media often suffers from inherent credibility gaps, superficial digital PR without substantive operational transparency fails to eliminate public skepticism or secure sustainable audience loyalty.

Table 3: Impact of digital PR strategies on public perception, trust, and viewership loyalty toward NTA South-East stations

Item/Statement	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	Σ FX	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	Standard Deviation	Decision
1. Strategic collaborations with independent content creators boost NTA's appeal to younger audiences.	70	120	130	80	1100	2.75	0.95	Agreed
2. Partnerships with commercial advertisers enhance the perceived professional standard of NTA.	50	90	160	100	990	2.48	0.92	Disagreed
3. Collaborations with civil society and community stakeholders improve institutional reputation.	40	85	175	100	985	2.46	0.89	Disagreed
4. Stakeholder alliances are transparently communicated, strengthening public confidence								
Grand Mean / Pooled SD						2.48	0.92	Moderate Effect

Source: Researcher's field survey (2026)

Table 3 presents a grand mean of 2.60 and a pooled standard deviation of 0.93. Items 1 and 2 scored above the benchmark at 2.75 and 2.69, indicating that alliances with content creators and advertisers positively influence audience appeal and professional ratings. Conversely, items 3 and 4 scored 2.48 and 2.46, falling slightly short regarding community stakeholder integration and transparent communication. This implies that collaborative networks, especially with content creators and commercial entities, provide a viable pathway for revitalizing NTA's public image and attracting younger demographics. However, weak institutional communication surrounding these partnerships limits their full potential to build robust community trust.

Table 4: Extent NTA's PR strategies are successful in sustaining competitiveness in the midst of growing alternatives

Item/Statement	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	ΣFX	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	Standard Deviation	Decision
1. NTA's current PR strategies successfully position it against private cable and streaming competitors.	30	65	185	120	925	2.31	0.85	Disagreed
	25	60	190	125	1905	2.26	0.83	Disagreed
2. PR initiatives enable NTA to rapidly adapt to shifting digital media trends and audience demands.	35	70	170	120	240	2.35	0.89	Disagreed
								Disagreed
3. Crisis communication protocols effectively safeguard NTA's reputation against viral negative publicity. .	40	75	170	115	960	2.40	0.91	
								Low Success
4. Strategic reputation management ensures NTA's long-term market viability in South-East Nigeria.						2.33	0.87	
Grand Mean / Pooled SD								
Source: Researcher's field survey (2026)								

Table 4 shows a grand mean of 2.33 (substantially below the 2.50 benchmark) and a low pooled standard deviation of 0.87. All four items recorded mean scores ranging from 2.26 to 2.40, indicating widespread disagreement among respondents regarding the success of NTA's PR strategies in maintaining market competitiveness. The low standard deviations demonstrate a strong consensus that NTA is lagging behind competitors. The implication is that NTA South-East faces a severe competitive disadvantage in the contemporary multi-platform media market. Outdated PR frameworks, sluggish crisis response protocols, and weak adaptation to digital alternatives threaten its long-term market viability, making a comprehensive strategic overhaul imperative for survival.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study provide empirical insight into the state of corporate reputation management by the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) in the South-East region within the era of digital media. The analysis for Research Question One yielded a grand mean of 2.46 (Table 1), falling below the 2.50 benchmark and indicating a low-to-moderate extent of digital PR tool utilisation by NTA South-East. While basic social media handles recorded a mean of 2.58, interactive tools such as live-streaming (2.46) and online feedback monitoring (2.30) were under-utilised. In support, Participant 'A' a senior digital media director noted: "We have the social media handles up and running, but when it comes to live-streaming and real-time interaction, our bandwidth limitations, bureaucratic bottlenecks, and epileptic power supply often cut us off mid-stream, leaving our online audiences hanging".

Another public relations officer corroborated this gap regarding audience feedback management, stating: "People drop comments, complaints, and criticisms on our streaming feeds, but because of protocol constraints and lack of dedicated digital desk staff, we rarely respond or engage them dynamically. It looks like a one-way street just like traditional

TV." This empirical reality aligns with the assertions of Miloud, and Hamidi (2026) who observed that traditional state-backed media organisations are frequently encumbered by legacy structures that hinder fluid online engagement.

Regarding Research Question Two, the descriptive statistics revealed a grand mean of 2.48 (Table 2), demonstrating that current digital strategies have a low overall impact on fostering long-term viewer loyalty (2.43) or reducing public scepticism (2.38). Although basic visibility generated modest agreement regarding general awareness, it failed to translate into deep-seated institutional trust. Qualitative interviews with key informants exposed a deep tension between state-aligned broadcasting mandates and public credibility. An editorial manager remarked candidly: "No matter how clean our graphics look online or how many news links we push out on Facebook, the average viewer still views NTA as a government megaphone. Digital PR cannot whitewash public scepticism when the core news framing is perceived as heavily controlled by political interests." Another informant added: "Viewers loyalty on digital platforms is fickle.

If you break a story ten minutes after private online blogs or rival stations like Channels TV have posted unverified or raw versions, our bureaucratic approval process kills our credibility. People lose trust when you are always late to the conversation." This mirrors the findings of Sehl (2020), who established that structural disconnects between online public relations narratives and actual institutional service delivery inevitably trigger digital backlash and distrust. Sehl (2020) noted that public sector reputation cannot rely on superficial messaging alone; it requires substantive transparency and consistent operational credibility to shift public sentiment.

Research Question Three recorded a grand mean of 2.60 (Table 3), indicating a moderate positive effect. Alliances with independent content creators (2.75) and commercial advertisers (2.69) proved effective in boosting NTA's appeal to younger demographics and enhancing professional

ratings. However, community stakeholder integration scored lower (2.48), pointing to a gap in inclusive communication. Speaking on the impact of external collaborations, an NTA station manager noted: "Inviting independent skit makers, youth content creators, and cultural icons into our programming space has changed how the younger generation perceives us. When they see their favourite creators collaborating with NTA, the old, boring government image starts to break down".

Conversely, another respondent pointed out the limitations concerning institutional stakeholder alliances: "We try to partner with local civil society groups and regional stakeholders, but rigid administrative guidelines often restrict how open we can be. Because we are government-funded, some independent partners approach us with caution, suspecting editorial censorship." These findings corroborate the views of Ron, and Katona (2019), who stressed that mainstream broadcast networks must forge strategic partnerships within the broader digital web ecosystem to maintain audience retention and brand equity. When public broadcasters collaborate creatively with external media actors, they successfully bridge generational divides in viewership appeal.

For Research Question Four, the results indicated a widespread lack of confidence in NTA's competitiveness, yielding a low grand mean of 2.33 (Table 4). Items assessing the positioning against private cable and streaming competitors (2.31), adaptability to digital trends (2.26), and crisis communication effectiveness (2.35) all fell below the acceptable benchmark. Interviewees openly acknowledged the fierce competitive pressure posed by agile, digital-native alternatives. A senior public relations strategist confessed, "We are struggling to stay afloat against nimble online platforms, TikTok influencers, and independent digital TV channels. Our crisis communication response is reactive; by the time Abuja issues a press statement or clearance memo regarding viral negative publicity, the damage online has already gone viral beyond containment."

Another informant concluded, "To remain competitive, our PR strategy cannot just be about uploading TV broadcasts onto YouTube. We are competing with smartphones and Netflix-style apps. Until management gives us the operational autonomy and technological upgrade to compete on speed and interactivity, NTA will continue to play catch-up." This underscores the empirical arguments put forward by Kang and Yang (2020), who highlighted that organisational survival in modern digital markets depends heavily on proactive sentiment tracking and agile crisis response. Without an overhaul of its archaic PR mechanisms, NTA faces mounting competitive disadvantages against nimble, digital-native alternative.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

This study investigated corporate reputation management by the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) in the era of digital media, utilising South-East Nigeria as a focal study area. The empirical findings establish that while NTA's migration to online and social media platforms has significantly broadened its visibility, its corporate reputation remains severely constrained by institutional inertia, rigid bureaucratic bottlenecks, and a persistent lag in real-time crisis response.

The investigation confirms that mere digital presence is insufficient to secure stakeholder trust in a decentralised media ecosystem. Instead, public trust is contingent upon bridging the gap between state-aligned broadcasting mandates and the interactive, transparent expectations of digital-native audiences. Ultimately, unless NTA transitions from a traditional, top-down broadcaster to an agile, data-driven, and dialogic public media network, its corporate reputation will remain vulnerable to viral misinformation and negative public sentiment.

Recommendations

In alignment with the four major empirical findings corresponding to the study's objectives and research questions, the following recommendations

are advanced:

1. NTA management should empower and grant operational autonomy to its digital media units. To achieve this, NTA should foster two-way, interactive dialogic communication on social media platforms to actively capture and respect real-time audience feedback.
2. NTA should establish a fast-track digital crisis-response protocol. Empowering regional and digital PR officers with pre-approved frameworks and expedited authorisation channels will enable the institution to counteract viral negative narratives instantly before reputational damage escalates.
3. NTA should invest in modern sentiment-tracking software and algorithmic analytics. Equipping digital teams with these tools will shift the institution from a reactive fire brigade posture to a proactive reputation management strategy capable of anticipating and mitigating public relations risks.
4. NTA should ensure that its digital representation matches its substantive operational quality. Management should align public service broadcasting mandates with audience-centric programming, ensuring transparency, content verification, and accountability across all online transmission channel

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