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Customers Relationship Management in the Social Media Age: Study of the Bon Bread and Love Dooshima Controversy

Ariwodola, Maryann Abisola; & Prof. Adelabu, Taofeek Omowale

Department of Mass Communication, Redeemer's University
Corresponding Author: ariwodola13849@run.edu.ng
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Abstract

Social media has reinvented Customer Relationship Management (CRM) by allowing people to post their experiences, opinions, and complaints about products and services in an open forum. BON Bread's dispute with social media influencer Love Dooshima offers a compelling example of how businesses can manage customer relationships in the digital landscape. The crisis began when Love Dooshima shared a viral video in which she expressed concern about a loaf of bread that was said to remain fresh for an unusually long time without spoiling. No brand had been mentioned, but BON Bread identified itself as the manufacturer of the bread and filed a defamation action for N50 million. The controversy sparked public debate on consumer rights, food safety, corporate communication and crisis management. Subsequent investigations by regulatory authorities, such as the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), confirmed the safety of BON Bread for consumption and its compliance with food safety standards. This case is a reminder of the value of forward-looking communication, stakeholder engagement, transparency, and complaint handling in keeping customers happy. In the social media era, organisations need to focus on building relationships and engaging in dialogue rather than confrontation with consumers during communication crises, as communication flows between Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and Public Relations (PR) strategies are vital to this process. The role of social media in crises shows that customers' perceptions can significantly impact a company's reputation, and that effective Customer Relationship Management (CRM) practices are vital to the company's sustainability.

Keywords: Customer Relationship Management, Public Relations, Social Media, Crisis Communication, Bon Bread, Love Dooshima, Reputation Management.

Introduction

Digital technologies and social media platforms have revolutionised today's organisations' interactions with their customers. The traditional Customer Relationship Management CRM system was mainly used to handle customer databases, customer service, and enhance customer satisfaction. But now, social media has transformed Customer Relationship Management (CRM) into a process of ongoing engagement, dialogue and relationship building (Ionascu A.E., 2016).

The customer isn't a silent recipient of organisational communication. Rather, they engage in dialogue regarding products, services, and brands (E. Uzunoglu & Sema Misci, 2014). According to Valdimar Sigurdsson et al. (2021), customers can openly voice their satisfaction, dissatisfaction, recommendations and complaints to large audiences via social media. So, customer feedback can help drive social change and consumer behaviour on a large scale.

Today, in the digital era, consumers are empowered to shape their products' image on platforms such as TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and X (formerly Twitter). As per Abu Muna Almaududi Ausat (2023), a single customer grievance can go viral and impact the organisation's reputation. Hence, it is essential to combine CRM with Public Relations (PR) strategies to help organisations handle stakeholder relationships and trust effectively.

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is an approach an organisation takes to developing, sustaining, and enhancing customer relationships. According to Payne and Frow (2005), it is a strategic approach that brings internal processes and customer interactions together to create value for both customers and companies.

According to Cutlip, Centre, and Broom (2013), Public Relations is the management of an organisation's communication with its stakeholders: a management activity that creates and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between a management organisation and its publics. Public Relations (PR) and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) are interrelated, since they share the same focus of maintaining and improving positive relationships with stakeholders, and with the advent of social media, the distinction between PR and CRM is now even more blurred, as information from a customer's complaint can quickly turn into a public problem that can affect an organisation's reputation (Geetha, C.J., 2024).

The BON Bread and Love Dooshima case is an example of how a customer gripe can rapidly turn into a public relations disaster. Dooshima's video sparked a discussion on the preservation of love and food safety, which garnered extensive online discussion. The legal and public issues raised by BON Bread's actions only made the matter worse and prompted a national debate over consumer rights and corporate accountability (Brand Communicator, 2026).

The Bon-Bread controversy began with a viral video from Love Dooshima questioning the shelf life of a loaf. The video came under criticism for the safety of the food and the preservatives used in bread-making. (The Cable, 2026). When Bon Bread retaliated, the conflict went public and reached the media, culminating in litigation.

In the era of social media, it has become increasingly important for organisations to manage their customer relationships and reputations, which has also posed new challenges for them (Mohammed T. et al., 2023). If a customer's complaint is caught at an early stage and addressed accordingly, it could be the difference between life and death, as they can spread widely and be published on public social media.

Regarding Customer Relationship Management and the Bon-Bread Controversy, if certain firms are still implementing traditional customer service in a modern communication era, they will not be prepared to handle customer complaints, which can quickly go viral on social media platforms (Senika Dewnarain et al., 2023).

In the first place, the Love Dooshima TikTok video was a customer grievance about the long shelf life of a loaf of bread. The video was viewed by thousands of people, and it was not until it was published that customers' questions and concerns were heard. Also, there were no customer complaints after the video went public (Luo Chengdan et al., 2025).

This became a public perception issue, prompting PR interventions as consumers began to doubt its safety. Both print and electronic media began reporting on it, public confidence in the brand suffered, stakeholders started asking questions, and this became a CRM issue that escalated into a PR crisis.

The biggest problem faced by PR is the organisation's reputation management. While the conversation was ongoing online, BON Bread was forced to protect its brand, communicate with consumers, build trust with its stakeholders, and stave off consumer mistrust. When a customer complaint is widely shared on social media, it's no longer a customer service problem; it's a public relations problem. Grunig and Hunt's Excellence Theory states that organisations should communicate with stakeholders, rather than persuade (Grunig & Hunt, 1984).

To tackle the controversy, it would need strategies for crisis communication through the PR department, monitoring public responses, crafting key messages, handling media questions, coordinating responses, and protecting the corporate image. This is an example of PR's customer crisis management.

Social listening is a modern PR technique that involves monitoring online conversations about brands, writes Christophe Asselin (2026). In the case of Bon Bread, PR could have tapped into public sentiment, debunked misconceptions, responded immediately to the issue, and communicated information on food preservation and packaging in public spaces, thereby solving the problem.

Similarly, Stakeholder Relationship Management should not be neglected when discussing Customer Relationship Management (CRM), since stakeholders, regulators, employees, distributors, investors, the community, and the media are also part of the customer mix (Vicente Guerola-Navarro et al., 2022).

The controversy led to NAFDAC's involvement, and, upon investigation and a subsequent safe declaration, PR took on the task of building trust and communicating with stakeholders (Brand Communicator, 2026).

Benoit (1997) theorises that when a reputation issue is a problem for an organisation, they can use strategies of explanation, corrective action, mortification, reducing offensiveness, and denial as appropriate to restore their image. Request the restoration of the image; educate the public about the product's safety. Because of the controversy, the restoration of images was requested to reassure the public that the product would be safe.

A good example of a reputational issue for an organisation is when customer complaints become public, as in the Bon Bread and Love Dooshima incident. This incident serves as a good lesson in PR in CRM, the impact of crisis communication plans, and the management of customer complaints in the social media world (K.A. Babatunde, 2022).

The connection between the two functions, CRM and PR, in the context of social media crises, and the lessons that can be learned from this linkage for organisations seeking to maintain positive stakeholder relationships, are explored in this study.

The Controversy

In April 2026, a shop owner and content creator named Love Dooshima shared a TikTok video of a loaf of bread that did not spoil or mould for almost two months. The video raised questions about the safety of a long shelf life, and the public asked about the preservative used to extend bread's shelf life during its manufacture (Nigerian News Today 2026).

In the original video, Dooshima didn't even mention BON Bread, but a company claimed it was the manufacturer and sued Dooshima. The company reportedly filed a ₦50 million defamation suit and submitted complaints to the police and other law enforcement agencies. This subsequently attracted significant discussion across many social media platforms in Nigeria in the near future (Brand Communicator 2026).

NAFDC then proceeded to laboratory investigations and inspections of BON Bread's production facilities. The agency has also determined that the bread is edible, as the preservatives used are within the regulations (Business Post Nigeria 2026).

Customer Relationship Management

Customer Relationship Management, CRM, is a behavioural approach of an organization which is aimed at attracting, retaining and satisfying customers. According to Kotler and Keller (2016), the main objective of CRM is to foster long-term customer loyalty by providing tailored communication and customer service.

In the age of social media, CRM has grown beyond customer service. Today's consumers demand speedy, clear responses from organisations and interaction.

Customer Relationship Management is a business approach which builds, enhances, and maintains customer relationships with profit. CRM is the synthesis of people, processes, and technology that enables an understanding of customers and the creation of value to both customers and the organisation, according to Payne & Frow (2005).

According to Kotler and Keller (2016), CRM is a process of collecting extensive customer information and managing it effectively to achieve maximum customer loyalty. Social Media has changed the way CRM works, from transactional to a process of relationship building with ongoing interaction and engagement.

Communications and Relationship Management.

The key action of PR is relationships. According to Ledingham (2003), the main objective of PR is to foster and maintain mutually beneficial relationships between PR practitioners and stakeholders.

Public Relations is a management tool which establishes and sustains mutually beneficial relationships with stakeholders. Cutlip, Centre and Broom (2013) know very well that the crucial function of PR is to build trust, understanding and cooperation, carried out by practitioners involved in communication activities that aim to engender trust, credibility and understanding amongst stakeholders.

According to Ledingham (2003), the fundamental principles of public relations are the processes of managing relationships. Consequently, PR professionals have an important role in maintaining an organisation's legitimacy and trust with the stakeholders.

Social Media and Corporate Reputation

Social Media has changed the dynamics of reputation management; consumers are now openly rating products and services. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) state that social media is a medium that allows for the quick relaying of information, in which organisational reputation is more susceptible to public scrutiny.

Social media has opened up communication and made it accessible, so people can create and share information without using the media. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), social media enable users to create content and to communicate with each other.

Lots of companies are leveraging social media to see how customers feel about their business, solicit their feedback, and engage with them. There are also reputational issues to consider, as bad news can spread quickly on social media. Organisations need to be aware of what is being said on the Internet and interact with stakeholders as proactive partners.

Crisis Communication

According to Coombs (2007), crisis communication involves gathering, analysing and sharing information necessary to respond to a crisis. Effective crisis communication is clear, understandable and timely.

Crisis communication refers to the collection, analysis, and dissemination of information to address a crisis. Coombs (2007) argues that good crisis communication can help protect an organisation's reputation and minimise uncertainty for stakeholders.

When a crisis strikes, it is important that organisations communicate quickly and accurately, in ways that are transparent and that maintain the public's trust. In the event of an emergency, it is important to communicate to minimise reputational damage and build trust among stakeholders.

The case illustrates the significance of strategic crisis communication. The PR professionals say that the best way to maintain the company's reputation might have been through customer education, dialogue, and explanation, rather than litigation (Brand Communicator 2026).

The controversy is a reminder of why it is crucial to view customer complaints as opportunities to engage rather than threats. Customer service is essential to a good CRM, and businesses should respond to inquiries in a timely and appropriate manner. BON Bread's legal defence was seen as "aggressive", which led to increased media interest in the company and its litigation (Brand Communicator 2026).

Social media has become one of the foremost CRM platforms for satisfying customers' immediate needs and providing transparency. Trust is a crucial part of any customer relationship, and when organisations are not active and engaged in ways that foster trust, they may lose the public's trust and harm their reputation. Sometimes public opinion is more important than evidence: conflict proved that. Even with regulatory clearance, a debate over the company's response to the regulations continued online.

Bon-Bread's response is a textbook case of PR, as it hurt the customer relationship. If a brand doesn't have a PR playbook, it's attempting to block its reputation. Mary Okosi (2026).

When a crisis erupts over a product, a company or organisation should seek to understand why it was complained about by engaging the quality control team and solving the problem by making the critic a collaborator and making transparency visible in the production process behind the scenes (NIPR, 2018).

The controversy reveals that now PR and CRM are not separate, but before the advent of social media, complaints would be dealt with internally by CRM and in the external media by PR; but when the social media era had arrived, all of the complaints were out there in the public domain (Dhayalan Venugopal & Gunashree, 2024). PR was needed to safeguard relationships in the social media era.

Today, digital consumers are the judges of social media platforms, and consumer voices are the most powerful in shaping brands or destroying brand reputation. PR has entered the CRM arena as a strategic tool for managing social media conversations that directly affect customer trust (Achyut Awasthi, 2020). The Bon Bread controversy was not only a PR but also a CRM error, as the company resorted to legal intimidation rather than building relationships, which means customers' perceptions will not change (Payne & Frow, 2005).

Theory of Two-way Symmetrical Communication.

The theory developed by James E. Grunig and Hunt Todd (1984) primarily concerns dialogue and mutual understanding among organisations, stakeholders, and their publics.

The Two-Way Symmetrical Communication Theory was developed by Grunig and Hunt (1984) as one of the four types of public relations. The theory suggests an organisation's communication process is two-way and reciprocal with its stakeholders. The two-way, symmetrical communication model enables information to flow in both directions, fostering dialogue, feedback, negotiation, and mutual understanding.

Grunig and Hunt (1984) found that to be successful in the long term, organisations need to be responsive to their stakeholders' concerns, listen to them, and adjust accordingly. The model emphasises ethical, interactive and relational communication, rather than persuasive communication.

This theory remains very pertinent in the digital age, as social media has enabled organisations to have immediate access to customer communication. Comments, direct messages, online reviews or interactive conversations can all help to build positive relationships by maintaining regular communication and being responsive. Grunig (2006) also asserted that two-way communication establishes trust, credibility and mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and its publics.

The Two-Way Symmetrical Communication Theory is highly applicable to CRM, as long-term relationships between organisations and customers are a key issue. The contemporary definition of CRM is not just about selling merchandise and services, but also about a process of communication, engagement, complaint handling, and relationship management (Payne & Frow, 2005).

The theory is very relevant to the Bon Bread and Love Dooshima incident, it says that it is important to consider the complaints of customers as a chance to have a conversation rather than a confrontation. Love Dooshima shared his concern about the shelf life of a loaf of bread on social media, and Bon Bread had the chance to discuss it with a constructive approach by accepting the concern, giving consumers scientific explanations for the preservation of bread, asking for independent testing of the product, and assuring consumers through transparency, which could have helped build public trust and confidence.

Moreover, social media has revolutionised CRM by enabling customers to interact directly with organisations and publicly leave reviews of the products and services offered. Two-way communication allows organisations to increase customer satisfaction and loyalty, resolve conflict, and promote a positive corporate image (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Therefore, Two-Way Symmetrical Communication Theory can be used to discuss effective communication in successful customer relationship management in the era of social media.

Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT)

Coombs (2007) developed Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) to explain how an organisation should communicate during a crisis to maintain its reputation and the trust of stakeholders. The theory is that organisations' reactions to a crisis must reflect stakeholders' perceptions of their responsibility for it.

As proposed by Coombs (2007), a crisis threatens the organisation's legitimacy, stakeholders' trust, and reputation, and organisations must develop communication strategies to limit reputation damage and alleviate stakeholders' concerns.

Depending on the degree of organisational responsibility, SCCT can respond to four types of crises (denial, diminishment, rebuilding, and bolstering). The theory also emphasises the importance of

information, the need to provide it in a timely, accurate and transparent way, and empathy and concern for the stakeholders involved. Crisis communication is important because it can help organisations minimise uncertainty, maintain credibility and re-establish trust during and after a crisis (Coombs, 2007).

Using the Theories in the Study

Two-Way Symmetrical Communication Theory and the Situational Crisis Communication Theory can complement each other to understand the relationship between Customer Relationship Management and the social media age.

According to the Two-Way Symmetrical Communication Theory, constructive dialogue, active listening, and increased stakeholder participation could have enhanced relationships with customers and defused the conflict over the Bon Bread and Love Dooshima issue.

But there are some useful lessons from Situational Crisis Communication Theory SCCT on the need to be transparent, empathetic, quick to react and correct to minimise damage to the organisation's reputation and rebuild customer trust during the controversy.

These theories can offer a holistic view of the interplay between Customer Relationship Management and Public Relations in the digital era, where customer comments shared online on social media platforms can have a profound impact on stakeholder trust and company image.

Customer Relationship Management plays an important role in Situational Crisis Communication (SCCT), as customer relationships are most likely to be strained during crises. Customer trust in an organisation is of paramount importance; their complaints must be dealt with quickly and effectively; communication is vital for maintaining customer relationships in the long term; and organisations need to build and sustain customer relationships to be successful when implementing a CRM.

The Bon Bread and Love Dooshima controversy is a case in point of how a customer issue can escalate to a PR problem through social media. Once made public, consumers demanded clear information, quick explanations and guarantees on Bon Bread's product safety. In crisis situations, SCCT suggests that communication should be transparent, empathetic, and factual to reduce uncertainty and maintain trust and confidence with the stakeholder audience (Coombs, 2007).

In addition to the product's design and quality, the organisation's communication during a time of uncertainty also affects customer satisfaction, as the controversy shows. A combination of crisis communication and CRM can help foster customer loyalty, manage reputation risks, and communicate more effectively with stakeholders. SCCT, therefore, provides a helpful conceptual model for discussing customer relationship management during the crisis in the age of social media.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Academic studies have repeatedly shown that CRM effectiveness directly affects customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, customer trust, and organisational performance, among other things. With social media's continued growth, these communication channels have emerged as an area of interest in how they affect the customer experience, complaints, and corporate reputation.

Among the most significant studies in the field of CRM, one of the most notable is Payne and Frow's (2005) study on successful CRM as a strategic process that integrates people, technology, and organisational processes to create value for customers and businesses. The study emphasised the positive relationship between a customer-centric approach to communication and customer loyalty, organisational performance and service quality.

Greenberg (2010) coined the term "Social Customer Relationship Management" (Social CRM), suggesting that social media has transformed traditional Customer Relationship Management (CRM), allowing customers to play a greater role in shaping the organisation's reputation, while they are no longer only consumers of information, but also creators, sharers and evaluators of brand-related information online.

In the study, "The influence of social media on the process of organisational communication", authors Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) explored the role of social media in organisational communication. They concluded that Social Media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and X (formerly Twitter) have revolutionised the interaction between organisations and consumers. Based on their research, the authors found that communication in the traditional sense is no longer under an organisation's control, as people are creating their own public narratives and shaping them. They found that communication has become beyond control; those consumers are producing and constructing their own public stories. Organisations should, for this reason, adopt an open, clear, customer-centred communication strategy that will enable them to communicate effectively with others.

A study on crisis communication by Coombs (2007) found that it is more likely to preserve stakeholders' trust and reputation when a crisis is met with a quick, transparent, and empathetic response. The study noted that negative, defensive communication that fails to consider stakeholders' interests may worsen reputational damage. It is important to note that this is relevant to CRM, with the customer's confidence a key factor influenced by the organisation's responses during a time of uncertainty.

Ledingham (2003) examined relationship management as a theory of public relations and concluded that stakeholder relationships with the organisation are key to the organisation's long-term success. The study identified the essential building blocks of a good relationship as trust, openness, commitment, involvement, and communication. The results of the study provide empirical evidence of the importance of applying public relations principles in customer relationship management, as it focuses on the process of building and maintaining customer relationships.

Nwosu (2018) conducted research on the role of public relations in organisational communication and found a relationship between stakeholder relationship management and customer satisfaction/corporate image. It highlighted the importance of dialogue, awareness, and responsiveness in addressing public concerns. These findings support the justification for having public relations strategies in the CRM, particularly for handling customer complaints via social media.

Similarly, Ojebuyi and Salawu (2020) examined the impact of social media on consumers' behaviour in Nigeria. They discovered that consumers in Nigeria are increasingly turning to online reviews, influencers' opinions, and user-generated content, among other things, before making a purchase. The research also showed that negative media coverage can significantly influence people's attitudes and purchasing decisions. The discovery directly impacted the scandal involving Bon Bread and Love Dooshima, as social media went crazy over it and helped shape the brand's public image before the regulatory investigation concluded.

Okoro & Nwafor (2017) also examined the link between social media and crisis communication in Nigerian organisations. Their research found that when stakeholders are engaged in online debates from the beginning, organisations are more likely to bounce back from the crisis than those that take a confrontational or defensive communication stance. The authors recommended that organisations set up social media monitoring teams and formulate proactive crisis communication plans.

In addition, Adeosun and Ganiyu (2019), who reviewed Nigerian consumers' attitudes towards social media engagement and customer satisfaction, revealed that companies that are more active online, respond quickly to customer feedback, and are transparent in their initiatives are more likely to build

trust and loyalty among customers than companies that engage with customers less online. The researchers concluded that today, social media interaction is playing a crucial role in successful CRM in the business world.

The application of the Empirical Review in the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) validates that CRM is not just a part of transactional marketing but rather a strategic process of communication that involves customer engagement, Customer Relationship Management, and Customer Reputation Management. The importance of continuous communication, transparency, responsiveness, and customer participation is highlighted across the literature as the secret to successful CRM.

The reviewed studies are particularly relevant to the Bon Bread and Love Dooshima controversy and highlight the power of social media platforms to enable consumers to voice their comments and experiences regarding the organisation's reputation. The controversy reveals that Greenberg (2010) has asserted that customers are now actively involved in the organisation's image-building process through digital tools.

Overall, the empirical literature in this study has supported the study's primary argument: that in an era of social media, effective customer relationship management should incorporate customer engagement, public relations, social media monitoring, and crisis communication. In the more interactive digital world, these strategies can be used to build trust, enhance customer satisfaction, increase customer loyalty, and maintain the company's credibility.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study suggest that Social Media is creating a major shift in Customer Relationship Management (CRM), as customers are becoming more public, more instant, and more persuasive. Back then, in the days of "the old school" CRM, customer complaints were handled one by one, not published openly for the entire world to see. The story of Bon Bread and Love Dooshima, a single customer grievance that could not have been more prevalent, is an illustration of how it can become a national discussion that affects perceptions and company image.

In fact, the study showed that Social Media has shifted information from the organisation to participatory conversations, where the customer is a key factor in creating brand stories. This is consistent with the concept of Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), who argue that social media enables consumers to create and share UGC that influences the opinions and purchasing behaviour of other consumers. The Bon Bread example was shared on TikTok and other platforms, reaching a broad audience.

It was found that Customer Relationship Management is not only a way to address customer complaints but also to create strategic communication that instils trust and sustains long-term customer relationships. The understanding of CRM as a strategic process that integrates people, technology, and organisational processes to value customers and organisations is consistent with that offered by Payne and Frow (2005). The dialogue highlighted the importance of customer service and clear communication within organisations in maintaining stakeholders' trust.

Public relations was also identified as being an important element of today's CRM, particularly in times of crisis. Following the controversy and public discussions, it was no longer a customer gripe but a public relations issue that required a solution through effective communication with stakeholders. This is similar to Ledingham's (2003) assertion that public relations is a process of managing relationships that requires trust, openness, and understanding from stakeholders.

Furthermore, the findings indicated a need for crisis communication within CRM in the social media era. The study revealed that customers expect the organisation to be prompt, clear and compassionate

when it detects a problem. To support the Situational Crisis Communication Theory proposed by Coombs (2007), during a crisis, the organisation should strive to provide information in a timely and accurate fashion and demonstrate caring for stakeholders. Additional delays or responses perceived as 'too defensive' would further contribute to negative perceptions in the public's eyes and fail to build customer confidence.

The results also confirm the Two-Way Symmetrical Communication Theory of Grunig and Hunt (1984). Theory emphasises the dialogue, feedback and understanding that can be found within organisations and between organisations and stakeholders. During the Bon Bread controversy, the right approach would have been to listen to customers' concerns, communicate openly, and provide evidence-based explanations to ease their doubts in public. The results thus indicate that it would be important for organisations to consider customer complaints as an opportunity to engage customers and develop customer relationships, rather than just as a threat to corporate image.

The findings corroborate previous studies suggesting that social media is a significant source of information for consumers in a Nigerian context. According to Ojebuyi and Salawu (2020), Nigerian customers are paying closer attention to online reviews, influencers' comments, and user-generated content when deciding whether to purchase a product or service.

Similarly, Adeosun and Ganiyu (2019) reported that active customer engagement in the online sphere and timely responses to customer complaints lead to improved customer satisfaction and loyalty within the organisation. The Bon Bread controversy is a good example of how online debates influenced public opinion before regulatory decisions.

The findings indicate that customer service, public relations, and crisis communication must be combined to create effective Customer Relationship Management in the social media world. Businesses that actively listen to and respond to customer feedback, act quickly to fix issues, convey transparency and engage stakeholders respectfully are most likely to keep customers, project a positive brand, and build long-term customer relationships.

CONCLUSION

The BON Bread and Love Dooshima controversy is a good example of how CRM should be done in the social media world. The case highlights consumer-generated content to deepen understanding of its importance to reputation and the proactive/reactive nature of the response, which can either worsen or reduce a crisis.

This study will focus on Customer Relationship Management (CRM) in the social media world, using the examples of Bon Bread and Love Dooshima. The findings reveal that social media has reshaped the customer/organisation relationship, providing customers with an opportunity to share their experiences, opinions and concerns with the world. In an attempt to satisfy customers, organisations can no longer rely on traditional customer service approaches and must develop an integrated communication strategy that includes Customer Relationship Management (CRM), Public Relations (PR), and Crisis Communication (CC).

The study revealed that when customers complain on social media, it can rapidly escalate into a public relations crisis that harms an organisation's reputation and customer trust. The Bon Bread scandal is just one example of the public attention that can be generated by a single tweet, or of public discussion of product safety and corporate responsibility that can lead to regulatory investigations and media coverage. This is a reminder of the role of digital platforms in shaping consumers' perceptions and the legitimacy of organisations.

In addition, we identified that the most important elements for customer success in CRM are responsiveness, transparency, customer listening, and relevant customer interactions. Organisations that identify and address customer concerns, communicate with customers, and keep them informed are more likely to build trust, enhance customer satisfaction, and foster loyalty. However, defensive, late and opaque communication techniques can add to public disapproval and reduce stakeholders' trust.

The Two-Way Symmetrical Communication Theory and the Situational Crisis Communication Theory were beneficial for understanding the relationship between CRM and PR in the Digital Environment. The Two-Way Symmetrical Communication Theory is based on dialogue, mutual understanding and relationship building. The Situational Crisis Communication Theory, on the other hand, emphasises the need to choose communication tactics in crisis situations to safeguard an organisation's image. Both theories have revealed that successful customer relationship management in the social media era is essential for communication.

The study also reveals that CRM has evolved from a mere marketing tool to an organisational process encompassing customer engagement, reputation management, stakeholder communication, and social media monitoring. In the modern business world, it is essential for businesses to recognise that their interactions with customers can affect public opinion and the company's image. Therefore, Customer Relationship Management and Public Relations can be combined to better manage customer complaints, respond to them during emergencies, and maintain strong relationships with different target groups.

Finally, the Bon Bread and Love Dooshima incident teaches organisations in Nigeria and other countries with digital societies valuable lessons. It highlights proactive social listening, open communication, evidence-based engagement and active stakeholder dialogue. Organisations that incorporate these practices will have a greater chance of protecting their brand, earning customer trust, and ensuring long-term organisational success in a hyper-connected, media-driven environment.

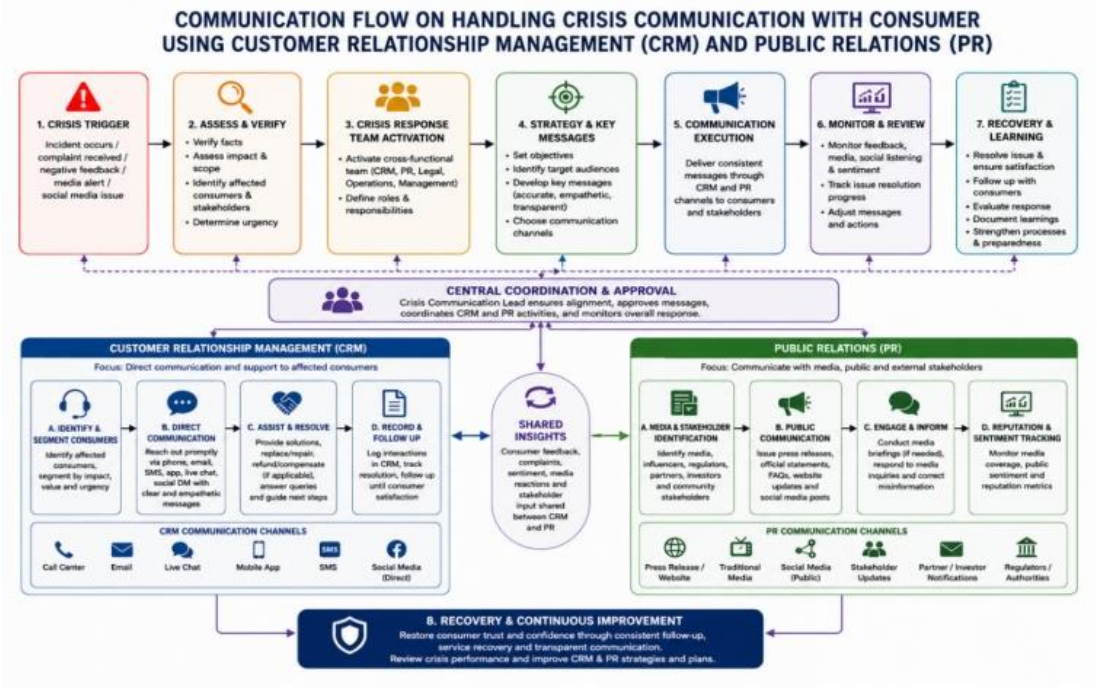
The study has a message for social media organisations: put dialogue and relationship-building first, and avoid confrontation when responding to consumer concerns. From an emergency on social media to a product recall or even a dubious business decision, customer perception can make or break a company's reputation, and a strategy to handle it should be in place, utilising Customer Relationship Management (CRM).

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the above, the researcher proposed an integrated communication model linking Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and Public Relations (PR) to support the effective management of crisis communication for an organisation. The model shows that performing effective communication during a crisis involves coordinating the internal and external communication to protect the customer relationship, the organisation's reputation, and stakeholders' trust. This idea is consistent with crisis communication theory, which dictates which response strategy to use depending on the type of crisis (Situational Crisis Communication Theory [SCCT]; W. Timothy Coombs, 2007).

The communication flow indicates the need to integrate CRM and PR into a centralised coordination system to ensure effective communication during a crisis. Whereas customer relationship management (CRM) maintains customer relationships through personalised engagement and the management of service issues, public relations (PR) does the same through interaction with a broader pool of stakeholders. The ongoing exchange of information between these two functions guarantees that information in the organisation is accurate, timely, and consistent.

Using a designed Communication Flow Model on Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and Public Relations (PR) on handling Crisis Communication for an Organisation.



Ariwodola (2026).

Analysis of the Communication Flow Model

1. Crisis Trigger

Communication starts with an awareness of a crisis or potential threat. Crisis triggers can include product failures, customer complaints, service disruptions, negative media reports, social media controversies or organisational misconduct. Timely identification is crucial, as it helps organisations respond before the situation escalates. As indicated by W. Timothy Coombs (2015), the first step to successful crisis management is to identify and assess issues that emerge quickly and accurately.

2. Assess and Verify

When the organisation detects the crisis, it confirms the information available, defines the problem, assesses its impact on stakeholders, and identifies the causes. This stage reduces misinformation and supports evidence-based decision-making. Accurate information gathering is a fundamental part of crisis communication, as stakeholders demand truthful, transparent information in return (Coombs, 2015; Kathleen Fearn-Banks, 2017).

3. Activation of the Crisis Response Team.

If the facts have been confirmed, a multidisciplinary crisis management team is activated. The team is usually comprised of CRM team members, PR practitioners, Senior management, Lawyers, Customer service and Operational managers. A cross-functional approach allows for a consistent communication and decision-making process across all departments. According to Fearn-Banks (2017), effective crisis management is built on cooperation among organisational units to avoid the creation of conflicting information.

4. Developing strategy and messages.

The crisis team prepares a communication strategy that includes identifying stakeholders, defining communication targets, crafting key messages, and selecting communication channels. Timely, transparent, empathetic and consistent messages. Organisations should communicate rapidly with a feeling of care, responsibility, and dedication to solving the crisis, as per Coombs (2007). Communicating clearly helps to minimise uncertainty and keep people on board.

5. Communication Execution

The key point of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is to focus on the customer relationship during a crisis. The communication flow shows a few CRM activities, including Customer Identification, Direct Communication, Processing Complaints, and Recording Feedback. Communication channels such as telephone, email, SMS, mobile app, live chat, and direct social media messaging are used to provide personal support through CRM.

Buttle F. and Maklan S. (2019) say that CRM can be used to develop long-term customer relationships by providing continual interaction, communication, and service recovery. In times of crisis, CRM can help maintain customer loyalty by quickly addressing customer concerns and offering relevant solutions.

Also, Public Relations is responsible for external communication with the media, government, investors, business partners and the general public. PR activities include press releases and briefings, updating official websites, engaging with social media, and working with regulatory agencies.

James E. Grunig and Todd Hunt (1984) define effective public relations as a two-way symmetrical communication that promotes dialogue between the organisation and its publics. During a crisis, transparent communication minimises speculation, safeguards organisational reputation, and maintains public confidence.

6. Monitoring and Review

The organisation continues to track stakeholder feedback after the message is disseminated through customer feedback, media reports, online discussions, and social media analytics. Monitoring enables organisations to detect misinformation, gauge public opinion, and tweak communication efforts as needed.

Coombs (2015) states that crisis communication is an ongoing process and requires continuous evaluation, as perceptions can shift almost overnight among constituents and stakeholders, particularly in digital communication environments.

7. Central Coordination

The communication flow is at the heart of this Framework, with Central Coordination at its centre. This unit acts as the command centre, where messages are approved, CRM and PR activities are coordinated, messages are consistent, and information is shared between departments.

This centralised approach aligns with the concept of integrated communication, in which organisations have a single organisational voice across all communication channels (Philip J. Kitchen & Patrick De Pelsmacker, 2004).

Shared Insights Between CRM and PR

One of the interesting aspects of the communications is the transfer of information between CRM and PR. CRM provides customer complaints, service experiences, and satisfaction data, while PR provides

media analysis, stakeholder reactions, and public sentiment. Collective awareness fosters better decision-making within the organisation and enables more effective communication strategies.
This integration is indicative of the convergence of two highly valued functions of an organisation in the digital world: customer relationship management and strategic public relations. Customer feedback and public opinion each shape the organisation's reputation (Buttle & Maklan, 2019).

8. Recovery and Learning

The last phase applies to recovery from the crisis within the organisation. Follow up with affected customers, review the effectiveness of communications, review lessons learned, review crisis response procedures, and document crisis management plans for the future.
Fearn-Banks (2017) states that post-crisis evaluation is critical, as it helps organisations improve crisis preparedness, communication systems, and stakeholder relations.
In the digital age, where information travels quickly on social media and the public has high expectations of organisations to respond, this integrated communications framework is highly applicable. Businesses that strike the right balance between CRM and PR are more likely to reduce the impact on their reputation, retain loyal customers, and rebuild relationships more effectively during a crisis.
Based on the above Study, findings and conclusions, the researcher recommends the following:
Organisations need to embrace a proactive approach to social media monitoring. Businesses require a specific social listening approach to listen to what people are saying online, identify potential customer problems, and act on them quickly before they become a PR nightmare. By quickly identifying misinformation, organisations can respond, explain the facts and protect their corporate reputations.
There is a need to integrate Customer Relationship Management with Public Relations. Companies or Organisations need to integrate CRM and PR functions to deliver a unified, consistent message to customers and other stakeholders. This will make it easier for organisations to manage customer complaints, maintain their reputation in the public eye, and withstand public criticism.
Clear and prompt communication should be paramount for organisations. During crises and controversies, organisations should give accurate, factual and timely information appropriately. Transparency helps to create clarity, prevents information from being misinterpreted and increases trust among stakeholders within the organisation.
Customer complaints are an opportunity for improvement. Organisations must be sensitive to the fact that complaints can be used to enhance their products/services and to guide the direction of their communication policies. Properly addressing complaints in a positive and respectful manner can enhance customer satisfaction, loyalty, and relationships.
Organisations should have a detailed crisis communication plan in place. Every company has a crisis communication policy that includes protocols for customer issues, social media problems, and reputation claims. Simulations and staff training should be conducted periodically to enhance preparedness in the event of an emergency.
Regular staff training on digital communication and engaging with customers. Training in digital communication, conflict resolution, stakeholder management and crisis communication for customer service, Public Relations workers and social media managers. They will develop their skills in dealing with customers effectively in the online world through continuous professional development.
There is a need to strengthen partnerships with regulatory bodies. Organisations should fully cooperate with the relevant body in any situation involving controversy, public health issues, product quality, or

consumer safety. The exchange of verified information in a clear and timely manner can help the organisation regain public trust and boost societal confidence.

The organisation should encourage stakeholder engagement in both directions. Businesses must provide ways for customers to submit inquiries, provide feedback, and engage in meaningful conversations. This is one way to close the loop in the Two-Way Symmetrical Communication Theory and to build trust, openness, and long-term relationships.

Digital Customer Relations Management (CRM) technologies are worth investing in for organisations. By using a contemporary CRM program that includes social media analytics, companies can gain insights into customer interactions, measure public sentiment, customise customer interactions, and make strategic decisions.

More studies on CRM and social media in Nigeria should be conducted in the future. Research into other industries, such as banking, telecommunications, healthcare, hospitality, and manufacturing, in the area of customer relationship management is required. Mixed-methods research can also be employed to analyse the linkages among social media engagement, customer satisfaction, and company reputation across different organisational environments.

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