

**Public Relations as an Effective Tool in Restoring Consumers Trust  
After Product Recalls: A Case Study of Samsung Note 7 2016 Recall**

**By**

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**This dissertation is in partial fulfilment of the requirements for MA  
in Journalism & Public Relations (QQI)**

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I attest that the content of this dissertation i am submitting for evaluation as part of the study programme leading to the MA in Journalism & Public Relations is entirely original, based on my study and research, and that I have given due credit to all the materials and sources utilized in its creation.

Additionally, I attest that I have never plagiarised or copied someone else's work in whole or in part.

Signed:.....

Date: August 2024

## **Acknowledgments**

I want to express my sincere gratitude to everyone who assisted me in one way or the other to finish my dissertation successfully.

First, I would like to express my profound gratitude to my dissertation supervisor, Alessandra Vecchi, for all the help and support during this research, as well as bringing in perceptive criticism and helpful direction. The creation and completion of this work was greatly aided by her knowledge and support.

My special thanks to the staff and faculty members of the Journalism and Media Communications at Griffith College Dublin, who in their own special way, support students to ensure learning is smooth and hassle free.

And to the most amazing support system anyone can ever ask for, my family! Their love and support got me through all the stressful times.

## **Abstract**

Effective public relations strategies have a tremendous role to play in the event of a product recall. Public relations strategies such as addressing of press conferences, issuing of press statements, social media engagements, recall of the affected product(s) as well as replacement, and apologies, can determine if the confidence of the consumers will be restored or not. The focus of this dissertation was an evaluation of public relations as an effective tool in restoring consumers' trust after product recalls, using the 2016 Samsung Galaxy Note 7 recall incident as a case study. In specific terms, the research objectives were to: determine the extent to which Samsung used public relations strategies in the Note 7 recall in 2016; ascertain the types of public relations strategies used by Samsung in the Note 7 recall in 2016; and to find out the extent of social media engagements which Samsung had with consumers in the Note 7 recall in 2016, amongst others. The research designs were qualitative and quantitative content analyses and in-depth interview.

The instruments for collecting data from the social media were Octoparse and Twython, while a questionnaire was used as an interview guide for the in-depth interview. Both primary and secondary sources of data were used. Among the key findings of the research were that Samsung deployed several public relations strategies such as addressing of press conferences, issuing of press statements, engaging the consumers through the social media, and recalling the affected product and replacing it, amongst others. On the types of public relations strategies used by Samsung, the findings indicated that the company used media relations, crisis management, strategic communication, and consumer relations, among others.

In terms of the sentimental framing of social media comments and posts during the crisis, findings showed that a majority of the consumers' responses were negative. The researcher made the following recommendation for practice, amongst others, that: apart from using in-house public relations personnel, Samsung, just like other conglomerates should have internationally-reputable public relations firms such as Edelman, Hill & Knowlton, Ogilvy & Mather, Brunswick, BCW, and Dentsu, among others, that can dispassionately look at the issues involved and tell the organisation where it went wrong. In-house personnel are usually the staff of an organisation, perhaps, may be a bit bias in their approach. These global PR firms have the capacity to handle global brands like Samsung.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

**PR**- Public Relations

**4G LTE**- 4<sup>th</sup> Generation Long Term Evolution

**USB-C-** Universal Serial Bus, Type C

**App-** Application

**UGCs-** User Generated Contents

**SCCT-** Situational Crisis Communication Theory

**IRT-** Image Restoration Theory

**CSP-** Case Study Protocol

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Overview

In crisis situations, organisations deploy proactive public relations strategies in order to douse tension and ultimately retain the trust and loyalty of consumers. It is indisputable that because most crises are usually unforeseen, the failure of an organisation to nip a crisis in the bud can affect the reputation of such an organisation, the staff, the shareholders, and even the external

publics (Idham, Arumugam, Kaur, and Suppiah, 2020). Organisations deploy various crises response strategies as part of the overarching public relations strategies to address and mitigate risks that may emanate from crises, which could call in to question the corporate responsibility of such organisation, as well as the reputational history of such organisation in crisis management (Lu and Jin, 2020; as well as Marse, 2020). In recent times, product recall has become somewhat prevalent thereby causing public concern about the quality of products. Due to the accelerating speed of globalisation of production, the burgeoning complexity of product quality, the quest for quality and the yearning for the safety of products and the consumers, as well as the regulatory regimes and strict supervision of government agencies, it is expected that product recalls will likely continue. Apart from constituting a challenge for the reputation of an organisation, economically, product recall can make an organisation to incur both direct and indirect costs, including a slice in market share (Liu and Zhao, 2015). For example, early 2024, Tesla, owned by Elon Musk recalled over 2 million vehicles because of small font sizes on warning panels deemed to have the capacity to increase the risk of a crash (Gleeson, 2024).

It therefore requires deft public relations tactics and strategies for an organisation to be able to maneuver the slippery terrain of retaining customer loyalty and trust during and after product recall. One of the most challenging part of product recall is how to carry out effective and efficient communication with the concerned consumers and other stakeholders. This is because the communication strategies used as part of the larger crisis public relations strategies can engender the influence of recall effectiveness, positive reputation of the organisation, the loyalty, satisfaction, and trust of the consumers, and can also mitigate the legal and financial consequences of the recall. Some of the factors to be taken into consideration in managing product recalls are timing, empathy, responsibility, and transparency. According to Lan (2018), in the timing of communication response, the speed and frequency are quite germane for the maintenance of the trust of consumers and the credibility of the organisation. This is because consumers expect them to be informed as soon as possible about any potential harm or risks that the recalled product could pose; concerning empathy, how emotion-laden and compassionate the organisation can be could go a long way in assuaging the feelings of the consumers; and the attitude and tone of communication during the recall process can also contribute to goodwill and trust. Consumers can be empathic when organisations acknowledge their mistakes, render heartfelt apologies, and take full responsibility for their actions/inaction; and for transparency, the

conciseness, accuracy and clarity of communication during recall can also engender consumer confidence.

It is imperative to note that conglomerates, known as “Chaebol” in South Korea such as Samsung are usually prone to crises due to their gigantic nature as well as the diverse publics they have to deal with globally; publics with different demographic and psychographic compositions. And so when crises occur, as they are wont to, these conglomerates must deploy robust strategic crisis public relations mechanisms to deal with such, so as to ensure that their publics, especially external, can still maintain trust in them (Lopez, 2017). One of the factors which are redefining and reshaping the frontiers of crisis response from conglomerates and the reactions of the consumers is the ubiquity, popularity, and pervasiveness of the new media, especially the social media. In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, underpinned by the Fourth Industrial Revolution, the power of mass communication is gradually moving from the source to the receiver (Dominick, 2012); and these new media have emboldened consumers of global organisations to discover, research, and share information about the products and services of brands just with a touch of the finger (Adams, 2019). Langley (2014), and Nielsen (2016), corroborate the above by noting that active users of the social media are quite busy reviewing products and services in the digital media ecology about their own vicarious experiences, sometimes, spreading misinformation and disinformation in the process; and by so doing, these consumers have turned the power structures of conglomerates upside down. Civelek, Cemberci, and Eralp (2016), also lend credence to the above by saying that with the development and deployment of digital technologies, especially the social media, citizens have become immersed in a mediatised world; and that the social media in particular have become the most effective communication channels to reach individuals worldwide, with the capacity and potential to keep users updated on an issue or event in a very short time, more than the traditional media. In a related study, and still on the social media, Alshsaikh (2019), argues that there are certain characteristics of the social media which make them to trump the traditional media when it comes to crisis management. These are: (1) direct impact and direct interaction with the public beyond all censorship blocking; (2) the recipient as a part of the media materials contributes to its production and dissemination, and most of the contents are anonymous and the source of the information may not be verifiable, and subject to distortion, and possibility of bias; (3) social media messages are difficult to control because it is impossible to monitor the deluge of information generated by users at the same time; (4) social media have a vast potential to build relationships and meet new people; and (5)

most of the users are youth. So it is pertinent for global brands like Samsung to guard their online reputation jealously by making strategic communications (both internal and external) tangential to their overall crisis public relations architecture. In essence, the embodiment of crisis public relations tactics and strategies of organisations must be proactive, and not reactive.

Arising from the foregoing, how did Samsung handle its public relations strategies during its recall of Note 7 in 2016; what were its tools of crisis communication; how did Samsung engage the consumers using the social media and other channels of communication; and how effective were the organisation's public relations strategies during this period of crisis. The focus of this study therefore is to evaluate the effectiveness of the public relations strategies of Samsung during its recall of Note 7 in 2016.

### **1.1.1 Background to the Study**

Samsung launched Galaxy Note 7 in 2016, a 4<sup>th</sup> Generation Long-Term Evolution (4G LTE) phone, which featured a better stylus, iris scanning capabilities and waterproof body to compete favourably with Apple. When compared with the previous phones of Galaxy series, Note 7 had many improvements aimed at providing a better user-experience. For example, the phone had a new "Secure Folder" capability, which set up a separate folder with an extra layer of authentication to keep private. It was equipped with a 3,500mAh battery with quick charging and wireless charging capabilities, a USB-C port and an always-on display (Zhang, 2020). All these features made Samsung capture great attention even before releasing the phone, and the company planned to further expand its market share with the Note 7. However, thing did not go as planned. The launch of the Note 7 eventually turned out to be a monumental disaster. On August 19<sup>th</sup>, 2016, Samsung Electronics unveiled its latest flagship device, Galaxy note 7, in 10 countries including America, Australia and Korea, among others. Instantly, the Note 7 became a market sensation. On the first day of sale, the Note 7 sold more than 35000 units which was a promising and good beginning. With favourable publicity, the sales of Note 7 remained strong growth. However, the celebration did not last for long. By August 24<sup>th</sup>, 2016, there was report of the Note 7 catching fire in the home market of South Korea. Suddenly, the pictures of Note 7 burning went viral, causing concerns among the public. Some Korean media even ridiculed the Note 7 as a "bomb" (Shamzi, Ali, and Kazmi, 2017). But Samsung was not discerning enough to this incident at the initial stage; the company only suggested that users should use the original phone charger and stay away from the handset while charging.

Then several explosions took place again at the end of August. Coming under immense pressure of public opinion, Samsung started to take actions in dealing with the exploding issue. On September 2nd, Samsung held a press conference in Seoul, issuing a recall of the Galaxy Note 7 and temporarily halting sales of the phone in 10 countries. The recall process, as part of Samsung's efforts to tame the crisis, required customers to return their Note 7 and then offering a refund or a replacement phone. However, the Chinese market was not included in the first-round of the recall process and Note 7 was still being sold in Chinese market. Samsung claimed that it was the deficiency of the battery that made the phone to overheat or even explode and that the Note 7 sold in China had a different battery supplier and was therefore safe from explosion. Such statement was misconstrued as Samsung's unfair treatment which irritated Chinese customers. Then, on September 18th, the Note 7 phone exploded in China for the first time. Instead of making effective communication immediately with the Chinese users, Samsung still insisted that the Note 7 sold in China was safe and claimed that it was the customer's improper use that caused the explosion; this, consequently generating much negative press about Samsung in china. And on October 5th, even the replacement phone caught fire on the Southwest Airlines flight which made the situation even worse. Due to safety concerns, many airlines banned Note 7 from their flights. As time went on, Samsung's credibility ranking plummeted to an all-time low. In the end, Samsung ceased all sales and issued a second recall on October 10th, asking customers to return both the Note 7 and the replacement phones by offering a refund or another Samsung model (Galaxy S7 or Galaxy S7 Edge) along with some financial compensation for the price difference. On October 11, 2016, Samsung officially ceased the production of Note 7 (Zhang, 2020), and at the end of the crisis, more than US \$14 billion was wiped off the shares of Samsung as well as (Kharpal, 2016).

## **1.2 Research Purpose**

In this era of digital technologies underpinned by connection, collaboration, conversation, and creativity, effective public relations strategies must encompass both the traditional and digital media in reaching consumers because as Sumadevi (2023), notes, the youth are the highest demographics in terms of the utilisation of the social media globally. It follows therefore that effective crisis communication strategies as part of the overall public relations strategies during the Note 7 recall was supposed to show how Samsung leveraged diverse channels and media of communication to address the challenge then. The purpose of this research therefore is to determine in broad sense how effective were the public relations strategies deployed by Samsung

in the Note 7 recall of 2016 in galvanising consumer loyalty and trust, and boosting their confidence and goodwill. According to Zhang (2020), the crisis PR strategies of Samsung during the period, was to hold a press conference, come up with an App update, expand the recall process, cease all the sales of Note 7, and officially revealing the root cause of the explosion. However, if all these strategies were effective and far-reaching enough, this will be unraveled by this research.

### **1.3 Significance of the Study**

This research is significant in the following ways: (1) it will make global organisations or conglomerates engaged in the manufacture of consumer goods like Samsung to put in place proactive crisis communication mechanisms as part of the overall crisis PR strategies so that in the eventuality of any crisis, since crises are inevitable, the response will be swift, decisive, and effective; (2) it will make manufacturers of consumer goods such as Samsung not to take consumers for granted and also endeavour to produce quality goods according to the certification of governments' regulatory agencies; and (3) it will contribute to extant literature on influence of PR strategies in restoring consumer trust after product recall.

### **1.4 Research Objectives**

The aim of the study is to evaluate public relations as an effective tool in restoring consumer trust, using the 2016 Galaxy Note 7 recall as a case study. However, the following specific objectives guided the study:

1. To determine the extent to which Samsung used public relations strategies in the Note 7 recall in 2016.
2. To ascertain the types of public relations strategies used by Samsung in the Note 7 recall in 2016.
3. To find out the extent of social media engagements which Samsung had with consumers in the Note 7 recall in 2016.
4. To find out the reactions of consumers to the recall of Note 7 in 2016.
5. To determine the effectiveness of the public relations strategies adopted by Samsung in the Note 7 recall in 2016.

### **Description of Methodology and Research Design**

This section gave an overview of the entire chapter 3. It discussed the research philosophy and approach of the study, the research strategy, the collection of both primary and secondary data and the sources; access and ethical considerations, as well as the approach to data analysis.

## **1.5 Structure of the Study**

The dissertation has five chapters. The Introduction (which consists of the following: Overview, Background to the Study, Research Purpose, Significance of the Study, and Research Objective); Literature Review (comprising the following: Overview, Conceptual Clarifications of Crisis Communication and Public Relations Strategies, Review of Related Studies, Review of Empirical Studies, and Theoretical Framework); Methodology and Research Design (which consists of the following: Overview, Research Philosophy and Approach, Research Strategy, Collection of Primary Data (Sources, Access and Ethical Issues), Approach to Data Analysis, and Conclusion); Presentation and Discussion of Findings (Overview and Findings, Discussion, and Conclusion); as well as Concluding Thoughts on the Contribution of this Research, its Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research (Implications of Findings for the Research Questions, Contributions and Limitations of the Research, Recommendations for Practice, Recommendations for Future Research, and Final Conclusion and Reflections).

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Overview**

This chapter carried out the clarifications of key concepts such as Crisis Communication, and Public Relations Strategies. These concepts are at the core of the research because the whole Samsung Note recall in 2016 bordered on organisational crisis and how the conglomerate (Samsung) used crisis communication and public relations strategies to address the issue. The chapter also reviewed studies which are in relation to the subject-matter, such as public relations strategies and product recall; it also reviewed empirical studies which were done by other scholars on the subject-matter. The importance of an empirical review is to enable the researcher to identify gaps which exist in extant literature so that such can be filled, and by so doing, the

researcher is contributing to knowledge. And lastly, two key and relevant theories were used as the intellectual anchor of the research. A theory ordinarily, provides the backbone to a research, especially an empirical research like this. So in the discussion of findings the researcher should be able to establish if the theories used were validated or refuted.

## **2.2 Crisis Communication**

Crisis communication is a sub area of specialisation in public relations which involves the strategies designed to proactively mitigate a problematic situation from getting worse. This kind of communication could be for people, organisations or companies having a reputational challenge. According to Bundy, Pfarrer, Short, and Coombs (2017), crisis communication is focused on raising awareness on a particular type of threat, its dimension, consequences, and the pathways to addressing such. Coombs, and Holladay (2020:12), in specific terms dilate on crisis communication as “the perception of an unpredictable event that threatens important expectancies of stakeholders and can seriously impact an organization’s performance and generate negative outcomes”. Further, Coombs (2017:4), identifies three stages of crisis management thus: (a) “Pre-crisis”; (b) “Crisis”; and (c) “Post-crisis”. At the pre-crisis stage, companies or organisations prepare before hand for crisis management in order to stem an impending crisis from occurring. This stage, according to Coombs is also called the “prodromal” crisis stage. The crisis stage refers to the communication tactics and strategies deployed in response to the actual crisis event; while the post-crisis stage occurs after the crisis has been resolved; at this stage, there is usually a post-crisis evaluation by the organisation to find out why the crisis occurred, and the lessons that can be learnt from it.

Coombs (2017) argues further that in crisis communication, the pre-crisis stage involves researching and gathering information/data about the risks which the crisis can pose to the organisation; creating a crisis management pathway which should involve timely decision-making about who will handle specific tasks in the eventuality of the occurrence of a crisis; carrying out a pilot test of the plan occasionally; preparing press release templates for the organisation’s crisis management or public relations team in the event of a crisis; placing Webmasters on the alert to develop a “dark (unpublished) page” on the organisation’s Website which can be activated when needed as an authoritative source of information about the crisis; and putting in place the chain of command that all employees will follow in the dissemination of information to the publics during a crisis situation. Coombs, continues by saying that at the crisis stage, an organisation must use the information/data and the strategies gathered during the pre-

crisis stage to respond proactively to the ensuing crisis; and that this stage involves two key components which are as follow: the initial critical response and the reputation repair. The initial critical response must happen at this stage including the correct and precise information. It follows therefore that if the information/data gathered at the pre-crisis stage is incorrect, the crisis communication strategies can be defective. For the reputation repair component, Coombs argues on, this calls for the company to take responsibility for the crisis and not engage in buck-passing, by proposing robust reimbursement for the damages done to those who are affected by the crisis.

Finally, at the post-crisis stage, Coombs asserts that certain steps are imperative, and these are as follows: the need to review and dissect the successes and failures of the crisis management so as to effect any necessary changes in the team, other employees, practices, or procedures; providing follow-up messages on the crisis on hourly basis; delivering all the necessary information to the various stakeholders as soon as the information is available; giving updates to all stakeholders on the progress of the recovery efforts including the measures being adopted and the progress being made on investigations; analysing the crisis management strategies in order to determine the lessons to be learnt and also how to integrate those lessons into the organisation's crisis management architecture; Scanning the Internet, and social media platforms for reactions to the crisis; and consulting with victims in order to let them know the palliatives or ameliorative measures being put in place. Bernstein (2016), notes that there are 10 steps in crisis communication management, and divides these steps into pre-crisis and post-crisis activities. The pre-crisis activities include expecting the crisis, identifying a crisis communications team. Identifying, and training a spokesperson, establishing notification, and monitoring systems, identifying and knowing organisation's stakeholders and developing preliminary messages. The researcher notes further that effective crisis communication management depends on preparation; and that when a crisis develops, there may be no time to be proactive, hence the inability to carry out all the methodical steps earlier stated.

According to Chan (2020), Crisis management can be categorised into three stages: (1) crisis preparedness; (2) crisis response; and (3) crisis recovery. He argues that during "crisis preparedness" stage, the focus should be on preventive actions that seek to reduce known risks that could snowball into a full-blown crisis; and that in recognising that not all crisis that can be averted, there would an equal focus on the planning for crisis management, and the training of the crisis management team. Concerning the "crisis response" stage, Chan argues on that the

focus here should be on speed, as well as the effectiveness and efficiency of the initial response; that there should be the need for quick situational awareness to help the crisis management team to respond effectively after the crisis has occurred; and that using the social media effectively during this stage to engage the community networks in order to collect, analyse, and disseminate information in a timely manner will be important. For the final stage, Chan notes that the “crisis recovery” stage requires longer-term planning and support so as to return to the *status quo ante bellum* (the state of affairs before the crisis).

Chan (2020), continues by identifying the specific functions of the social media in crisis management to be “information dissemination”, “disaster planning and training”, “collaborative problem-solving and decision-making”, and “information gathering”. On information dissemination, he notes that the social media can be effective tools in providing reliable information in real time and quickly to the public and this will enable them for adequate response to the crisis. He concludes on this note by saying that the effectiveness of the deployment of the social media will depend on the reach and penetration of these platforms across age, level of education, language, culture, and level of technological literacy. Concerning disaster planning and training, Chan argues further that the social media can be leveraged upon by organisations for disaster planning and training in order to promote personnel training on crisis management. Then on collaborative problem-solving and decision-making, Chan notes also that crowd-sourcing, using the social media can facilitate collaborative approach to problem-solving and decision-making by integrating the diverse streams of information from mobile and Web-based technologies to fill the perceived information lacunae and to also aggregate, analyse, and plot data to tackle the crisis. And finally, on information-gathering, Chan notes that citizen journalists using the social media can also be used to get the reactions of the people towards a crisis. In comparison, Chan (2020) and Coombs (2017), have the same three stages in crisis communication, but there is a slight difference. Further, Eriksson (2018), argues that the social media can be used in risk and crisis communication by raising public awareness of the risks and crises, to monitor the situation, and to identify victims. Ngai and Jin (2016), as well as Roh (2017), argue that effective social media crisis management involves using the potential of the platforms for dialogue and also choosing the right message, source, and timing.

They also argue that in crisis communication, sometimes, a denial message strategy like scapegoating, can be the most useful way to reduce criticisms, indignation, and the spreading of misinformation and disinformation online. However, Ott and Theunissen (2015:102), disagree by

stating that “accommodating strategies appear to be more successful than denial or diminishing strategies”, and that blaming others is not an effective crisis response message strategy in the social media ecology. Chung and Lee (2016), note that in crisis communication, informational messages have the capacity to speed up and increase secondary crisis communication on the social media and can at the same time, generate more acceptance of the crisis resolution strategies, thereby shaping more positive attitudes than messages containing emotional apologies. Also, Park and Cameron (2014) as well as (Gerken, van der land, and van der Meer, 2016) , argue that diverse forms of message strategies are imperative on the social media and the Web eco-system, depending on the type of crisis and the emotions of the publics. They cite an example by saying that emotional conversational tactics on Facebook can be more effective than informational messages and tactics during severely emotionally-laden crisis situations.

van Zoonen and van der Meer (2015), argue that the importance of the employees of an organisation in crisis communication cannot be discountenanced. They argue that irrespective of the crisis response messages and strategies, the generation of communications by the employees of an organisation have stronger effects on reputation than on organisational communication; and that using a human face as a source will have greater ramifications or influence in terms of using the social media in crisis communication than using the anonymous social media account of an organisation. They argue further that in the social media eco-system, the public relations team of an organisation, especially its spokesperson (s) can be perceived to be credible and trustworthy during crisis situations; and that the public relations team of an organisation should try and set up hashtags that produce a feeling of unity, or should be early adopters of such symbolic hashtags. This view is also corroborated by Williams, Woods, and Staricek (2017). While up-to-date information is critical to perceived credibility of an organisation in crisis situations, because slow updates can decrease credibility; however, posting social media messages very quickly can also decrease the level of perceived competence of an organisation. Spence, Lachlan, Edwards, and Edwards, 2016:66), corroborate this by saying that “both too fast and too few updates may impact credibility perceptions”. Crook, Glowacki, Suran, Harris, and Berhardt (2016), as well as Wang and Zhang, 2017), state that the timely deployment of the social media in crisis situations can prove effective, and prevent misinformation and disinformation; and that updating information too slowly can lead to loss of existing or potential users. Also, Fowler (2017:726), recommends to organisations in crisis situations to use Twitter (now X) for “stealing thunder” and “filling the silence”. He argues on that crisis managers should not endeavour to look for new

information to tweet for the sake of tweeting; rather they should let the new information emerge from the investigation naturally; and that filling the silence can be as simple as letting the public know that there is no new information to disseminate.

Further, the effective use of the social media in crisis communication is about being prepared, understanding the architecture of the different social media platforms, and making friends before you need them. In this case, Guo (2017), note that if the public and consumers of the products and services of organisations do not even know where to get information, or where and how they make their contribution, in form of User-Generated Contents (UGCs), crisis information will probably not be shared by these social media users. This tend to corroborate Spence, Lachlan, Edwards, and Edwards, (2016). So an organisation, as Getchell and Sellnow (2016), notes, should establish itself on the social media before the risk and/or crisis occurs, because this will show that an organisation is there to disseminate information, communicate, and listen. Guidry, Messner, Jin, and Medina-Messner (2015), admonish organisations to develop social media policies which will include guidelines for employees personal social media use during crises in time, before a crisis occurs. They argue on that preparing for social media crisis communication can even reduce the spread of unbridled misinformation and disinformation during a crisis. This view is also supported by Comunello, Parisi, Lauciani, Magnoni, and Casarotti, (2016); Deranti, and Naidu (2016); as well as Tampere, Tampere, and Luoma-Aho (2016). Other studies have adduced reasons why an organisation should prepare for crises and also see the need to include the social media in the pre-planning. This is because this will lead to the potential of avoiding information lacunae during future crises and emergencies by preparing educational messages and materials already before a crisis occurs (Crooks, *et al*, 2016; and Dalrymple, Young, and Tully, 2016).

Effective social media crisis communication can also be about using the social media for monitoring. In this case, if the social media are used effectively, they can serve as platforms for customer engagements crises as part of risk and crisis mitigation strategies (Howell, 2015). So organisations can scan the social media to monitor the digital media eco-system in order to know what the people are saying about them, emerging issues, and also to be proactive and early in tracking online issues concerning them (Veil, Reno, Freihaut, and Oldham, 2015); as well as Krishna, and Vibber, (2017). Scanning the social media enables organisations not only to monitor what the publics are saying about them, but also to evaluate the emotional character of a crisis, as well as their “faith-holders’ and “hate-holders” (Gerken, *et al*, 2016: as well as

Johansen, Johansen, and Wecksser, 2016). Further, and specifically, some studies recommend and emphasise the use of Twitter (now X) as the most effective tool for social media monitoring or scanning. Lachlan, Spence, and Lan (2014), believe that Twitter (now X) is an important social media platform for evaluating specific audience needs and concerns during crisis situations; and that by monitoring Twitter (now X), they assert, it will be possible to detect or decipher the differences in the perception of risk across various social media users. (Gasper, Gorjao, Seibit, Lima, Barnett, Moss, and Wills, 2014), corroborate the above, by recommending Twitter (now X) also as a suitable platform to detect upcoming issues. Although they admitted that an assessed sample of Twitter feeds from the platform may not be representative enough of all the concerned and engaged users, they however note state that it is possible at an early stage to detect and identify emotional expressions such as anger, trading-blames, and so on during crisis situations.

Also, using the social media effectively in crisis communication does not mean relegating the conventional media or the mass media to the background. Arlikatti, Taibah, and Andrew (2014), as well as Formentin, and Bortree, Fraustino, 2017), argue that crisis managers should take into cognizance the fact that the conventional media are still considered more credible as information sources during crisis periods than the social media. So the social media can only complement the conventional media in crisis situations and should be considered a part of the broader communication strategy (Gurman and Ellenberger, 2015; as well as Brengarth and Mujkic, 2016). In spite of the above position, there are some valid reasons that make the social media an integral part of the media and communication strategy of an organisation during crisis situations. Hussain, Abdullah, Ishak, Kamarudin, Robani, Mohin, and Hassan (2014), as well as Huang, Stairbird, Orand, Stanek, and Pedersen, 2015), argue that the social media, especially Twitter, are quite useful in strategic communication because they create opportunities for immediate dissemination of important crisis information and there can also be instantaneous feedback from the users, the online the conventional media. Secondly, they argue on, the social media have great impact, which make them better choice than the conventional media for preempting the wide dissemination of misinformation and disinformation during crises; and that the architecture of the social media lend itself to wider communication possibilities that engender the key principles of effective and efficient risk communication and crisis management. These principles are concerned with the speed and the possibility of direct communication between

organisations managing crisis and their customers on the social media as well as other stakeholders.

A technology blog ([www.techaffect.com](http://www.techaffect.com)), outlines some guidelines while integrating the social media into crisis communication strategy. The blog identifies four phases (4 Rs) in crisis communication as follows: “Readiness”; “Response”; “Reassurance”; and “Recovery”. At the “Readiness” stage, the blog notes, a good crisis communication and management strategy will start from preparation before the outset of the crisis. This is what other scholars refer to as the “pre-crisis” stage. So while it may be impossible to plan for every future occurrence, the crisis response team of an organisation should examine their organisation, the people, the facilities, and the environment to assess the areas of potential risks and identify the threats that may occur and cause harm. The blog notes further that when a crisis erupts, things will certainly accelerate and the crisis response team need a solid plan to fall back on and react quickly. Concerning the “Response” stage, the blog notes on, crises can happen at any time, sometimes, in spite of the pre-emptive measures put in place; so when crisis erupts, it will demand swift response from the organisation. This means that it may be necessary for the organisation to respond even before they gather their acts together.

The blog notes further that organisation should start by acknowledging the situation and its effects on all the affected parties, in the course of carrying out full investigations. The blog also notes that acknowledging a crisis does not necessarily translate to accepting responsibility; but by responding immediately, the organisation demonstrates to the public, especially the various stakeholders the incident is taken seriously. For the “Reassurance” stage, the blog argues that based on the initial response, effective crisis communication and management require conducting an investigation into the root cause of the crisis, and developing a strategic plan of action that can ameliorate the situation. From the implementation stage to the crisis response plan’s intended results, the organisation should reassure the public that their expectations will be addressed by communicating in full details, all the issues surrounding the crisis. At this stage, the blog argues on, the organisation should demonstrate to transparency and let the public know that it is a responsible organisation. And finally, at the “Recovery” stage, the blog argues further, that an organisation should have both tactical (short-term) and strategic (long-term) plans to restore its reputation and avoid future recurrence. Re-establishing public and consumer

loyalty, the blog argues on requires actions that are taken in the short-term; operational and changes in organisational culture may be pertinent so that another crisis does not happen again in the nearest future; and that continuous communication is expedient in order to demonstrate the responsiveness of the organisation and its commitment to doings things right. The blog concludes by recommending 10 steps which every crisis response team must know in the course of using the social media in crisis management. These steps are as follows: (1) “Implement policies to address potential vulnerabilities”; (2) “Use social media as a tool for crisis monitoring”; (3) “Understand the response-ability of the social media”; (4) “establish a framework for response”; (5) “Build a social media crisis toolkit”; (6) “Know where to respond”; (7) “Prepare your employees in advance”; (8) “Prepare the proper tone”; (9) Hit the automation kill switch; and (10) “Be honest. Be transparent”.

In a research by Eriksson (2018), entitled: “Lessons for Crisis Communication on Social Media: A Systematic Review of What Research Tell the Practice”, the researcher identified five thematic lessons. These are: (1) exploiting the potential of social media to create dialogue and choose the right message, source, and timing; (2) performing pre-crisis work and developing an understanding of the social media logic; (3) using social media monitoring techniques; (4) continuously understanding and prioritising traditional media in crisis situations; and finally, (5) just using the social media in strategic crisis communication. In the last two decades now, there have been other studies done in the area of the social media and crisis communication, especially with implications for public relations practitioners. For example, White and Plotnick (2010), studied social media best practices in the area of informatics; Taylor and Kent (2007), Gonzalez-Herrero, and Smith (2010), Fischer and Kim (2011), as well as Eriksson (2012), studied the application of the social media in marketing, public relations, and strategic communication; Veil, Buehner, and Palenchar (2011), as well as Houston, Hawthorne, Perreault, Park, Goldstein, Halliwell, and Griffith (2015), studied the use of social media in disaster and crisis management.

Further, Jacques (2007), notes that there should be an integration of issue management and crisis management in order to achieve the desired impact. He argues on that both are not mutually-exclusive; and that there should be interdependence between issue management and crisis management both at the pre-crisis and post-crisis stages.

### **2.3 Public Relations Strategies**

Ordinarily, the major goals of public relations is to proactively create and maintain a favourable reputation of an individual or organisation in the eyes of its publics. In the course of doing that, public relations uses certain strategies to cultivate this favourable reputation. According to Oshie and Ushie (2021), public relations strategies refer to the actions that can help an organisation to achieve its goals. They argue further that public relations strategies involve the process by which the management of an organisation deliberately and proactively put in place communication plans and structures that are open, honest, and also consumer-centric. Further, Bhattacharya (2024), outlines certain PR strategies that can contribute to effective reputation management. According to him, organisations should “develop a clear communication strategy”; “create quality press materials”; “build relationships with journalists”; “establish an online presence”; “organise press conferences and events”; “leverage influencers”; “provide expert opinions and research”; “build long-term client and partner relationships”; “create authoritative video content”; “engage with bloggers and online media professionals”; “monitor and respond to feedback”; “use events to capture attention”; and “measure results”.

Glen and Dozier (2009), cited in Oshie and Ushie (2021), sees issue management in public relations as the organisation’s proactive and systematic approaches to “predicting problems”; “anticipating threats”; “minimizing surprises”; “resolving issues”; and “preventing crises”. Similarly, Robert, Heath, and Michael (2009), identify five key steps in using public relations to manage issues. According to them, these are: (1) Issues Identification (the phase where establishing courage is important); (2) Issues Analysis (The phase where the assessment of issues and the potential effects on the organisation is done); (3) Strategic Options (the phase where to consider what is the appropriate way of handling potentially-damaging issues); (4) Action Plan (the stage of communicating a decided policy to all the stakeholders or publics); and (5) Evaluation (the stage of assessing the results or outcomes). One common refrain from the literature under this section is that effective public relations strategies to take place, then there has to be proactive measures put in place from the beginning of the crisis to the end.

### **2.3 Review of Related Studies**

Mohammed (2019) analysed the Samsung Galaxy Note 7 using care ethics. He concluded from his research that Samsung was morally and vicariously responsible for the incidents caused by the Note 7 explosions. He argued further that looking at the incidents through the lens of care ethics, Samsung demonstrated acute lack of “attentiveness”, “competence”, “responsibility”, and

responsiveness”. He asserted also that Samsung’s actions in the recall process of Note 7 demonstrated an abandonment of moral obligations towards its customers. Hanzae and Farsani (2021), in their study note that companies in today’s world must focus on customer retention by leveraging on profitable and long-term relationships with them through customer value and satisfaction. They argue on that loyal customers are more likely to repurchase the same service or brand and also refer their friends or relations. They identified three factors in creating permanent relationships with customers, which are “conversational reciprocity”; “reciprocal empathy”; and “reciprocal vulnerability”; and that these factors are effective through free flow of messages that allow trust to build. They note further that when a brand is favourable, then proactive PR as perceived by the customers will be in consonance with corporate reputation and customers are in a better position to maintain positive attitudes, behaviours, and beliefs; and that a favourable brand image can increase the effects of PR and bolster the loyalty of customers to the organisation. Conversely, they argue on, when consumers commit an unfavourable brand image to memory, the organisation’s aggressive pursuit of PR strategies can be in conflict with consumers’ perception of the organisation’s reputation

Liu and Zhao (2015), argue in their study that products can be recalled by organisations when they feel that such products can pose danger to the consumers; and that it can be a tool for effective quality management. They argue on that product recall is an integral part of corporate governance process. They also note that product recall can affect the stock price and market value of an organisation, and at the same time affect the market value of competitors, if not well-handled. They also note that product recall involves four product defects: (1) it can hurt the consumers; (2) it can contain harmful substances that can affect the consumers; (3) there may be the risk factor of severe injury or death which may be caused by improper use by the consumer; and (4) the violation of product safety standards and regulations. So it goes without saying that once the defects of a recalled products are exposed, it can lead inexorably to complaints from the users, a run on the stock value of the product, reputation damage, and even lawsuits.

Kumar and Schmitz (2021), argue that product recall can have negative impact on an organisation. These impact according to them can be cutting of the organisation’s share of the market; reduction in the demand for the recalled product; effects on the brand image and corporate reputation; causing of serious financial losses for the organisation; and affecting investor confidence and market capitalisation. In terms of cutting of the organisation’s share of the market, Kumar and Schmitz argue that a crisis arises from the recall of the product of a

conglomerate, competitors will cash in on the situation through diverse ways, such as giving discounts on prices, diffusion of products, innovation of products, improving their own product/services, and deploying strategic public relations to penetrate the existing and potential customer base of the organisation in crisis. By so doing, this can weaken the existing market share of the organisation facing challenges as result of product recall. Concerning the reduction in the demand of the recalled product by consumers, Kumar and Schmitz note that this situation can lead to trust deficit between the organisation and the consumers; and that recalling defective products can make consumers to lose confidence in the product of such an organisation and can also engender negative feeling towards not only the product, but also the organisation as brand. They argue further that if the ill-will towards the organisation persists, then this can endanger the survival and development of the organisation. Concerning how product recall affects the brand image and corporate reputation of an organisation, the authors note that this induces a negative perception in the minds of the consumers that the organisation manufactures low-quality products, and it is not transparent in its dealings; and that if the organisation produces other products, the negative perception of the recalled product can also taint these other products as well. Concerning causing serious financial losses for the organisation, the organisation will spend more on human and material resources, research, crisis response strategies and other investments. Finally, on how product recall can affect investor confidence and market capitalisation, Kumar and Schmitz, continues by saying that once complaints over the unmarketability of the product persists, the demand for the product will plummet, the market share will shrink, the confidence of investors will be shaken, and the reputation of the organisation will be dented.

Sinha (2013), identify some issues that are involved in product recall as follows: “effect on market share”; “management’s state of denial”; “financial cost of the recall decision”; “framing a proper recall strategy”; “identifying the safety issue”; “reporting to the administrative agency/governing body”; and legal issues arising out of a product recall”. Concerning the “effect on market share”, Sinha notes that this is usually negative and can also affect the growth of the market share of the organisation, although this may be temporary, depending on the way the organisation handles the crisis. He argues that if the organisation manages the recall process effectively, then it can conduce to strengthening the loyalty of the existing customers and can also add goodwill to the brand of the organisation. On the “management’s state of denial”, he asserts that an organisation facing product recall crisis can mitigate the negative impact of such

by addressing the problems promptly taking measures to forestall its recurrence; and that unremorseful posturing by an organisation during the crisis period may not only hurt its reputation, but could also hamper or stunt the future growth of the organisation in many ways. On the “financial cost of the recall decision”, Sinha states that the negative effects of product recall include direct costs like fixing the problem that occasioned the recall; litigation costs that arise from class-action suits, loss of market capitalisation owing to the decline of the stocks of the organisation, and loss of revenue in the eventuality of the halting of the production and sales of the product until the final resolution of the crisis.

On “framing a proper recall strategy”, the researcher notes that the organisation should bear in mind that it is pertinent for a clear and coherent crisis communication strategy should be prepared in advance in case a recall is imminent; that getting a proper product insurance cover, an effective crisis response team, understanding the media/channels of communication, as well as the customers are all critical so that proper communication strategies can be adopted. He continues by saying that the identification of a suitable person who will interface with the media, setting up of a proper crisis response infrastructure, such as recall portal/Website, support mechanisms for dealers/retailers and customers, outsourcing support and other recall processes if mandatory, disposal of products and parts, remedy for consumers, and preparation for any legal action that may arise are all germane to the recall strategy. On “identifying the safety issue”, the researcher argues that investigating “what went wrong” and finding out the “where” is of paramount importance in order to know if there is a problem with the manufacturing process. He argues that any miscalculation at this stage may be detrimental to the organisation because if large quantities of the product are recalled, it could result in huge financial losses to the organisation. Concerning “reporting to the administrative agency/governing body”, Sinha states that in some countries, failure to report a safety issue to a regulatory authority that has supervisory suzerainty over the organisation can be a costly oversight. Finally, on “legal issues arising from the recall of a product”, the researcher notes that in most cases, recalls are usually followed by litigations, so the issue must be properly addressed with proper documentations to support the organisation’s concerted efforts in addressing the recall imbroglio.

Also, because of the potential and impact of digital technologies, the production of media messages as well as the distribution, has engendered the transformation of communication to be interactive. According to Diehl, Weeks, and Zuniga (2016), the users of the social media engage with each, especially when there is organisational crises, by sharing, endorsing, or opposing

posts/comments based on where they stand. So in the long-run, the sentiments shared on the social media about a crisis can create impact on how the audience perceive the crisis, akin to agenda-setting (Kim, Brossard, Scheufele, and Xenos, 2016); as Diehl, *et al* (2016), note, the increasing influence of social media posts/comments users can result in active “internalising” (viewing), and “externalising” (sharing or retweeting). It is worthy to note that crisis information goes viral faster on the social media than in the conventional media, as a result of users’ direct posts/comments on the platforms, global reach, and other affordances of the social media. This is why some scholars argue that in times of crisis, organisations should immediately monitor the social media for stories that may either be true or not, because as Hajdu, Papay, Szanto, and Toth (2018), argue, how issues, frames, opinions, and sentiments on the social media influence the perception of the public may determine the internationalisation of the crisis.

Dejene (2017), argue that the crisis communication response strategies of Samsung were ineffective because the conglomerate failed to act on time in its communication to its consumers. He argued on that while the incident happened in August 24, 2016, Samsung failed to acknowledge it in a timely manner. Brandao, Yamado, Ponchio, Cordeiro, and Strehlau (2016), in their study on the influence of product recall on consumer loyalty, argue that recall has an impact on brand loyalty; that the seriousness of the recall can have an impact on different levels of loyalty towards strong brands, when compared with weak brands; and that the impact of the recall on brand loyalty could be more negative in products where there is less purchase involvement. Venugopal, Soni, Tiwari, and Gupta (2012), in their study on the effects of product recall on brand perception argue that there are three indices that may affect the perception of consumers concerning organisations in times of product recall. These are: (1) when there is information indicating that there was sufficient evidence to show the company acted in a socially-responsible manner; (2) when a press statement from the company was viewed as more objective and trustworthy than an advertisement from the company on the crisis; and (3) when the reportage about the crisis was viewed as more trustworthy than the reportage in the broadcast media.

Ahmed (2016), while writing on the impact of digital media on brand loyalty and brand positioning argues that the digital media have opened new vistas of opportunities for communication and that organisations can leverage upon these wide opportunities provided by developing relationships between consumers and their brands. He argues on that companies can develop brand loyalty to their products with consumers through the deployment of the digital

media in a variety of ways, but also acknowledges that creating awareness, persuading and building a lasting two-way relationship can also constitute a challenge, which may not only help to feel the pulse of the consumers, but also assist in understanding their preferences. He argues on that building a strong brand is important because of the rivalry of competitions, because the brand with a stronger DNA and personality can last for an indefinite period of time. Astvansh (2018), synthesised marketing findings and research directions in terms of product recall. She argues that an organisation's manufacturing decisions like product variety, and plant variety as well as supply chain choices, like outsourcing, and supplier concentration are the causes of recalls; that an organisation's recall announcements can hurt not only the values of the stocks of the organisation, but also that of its rivals; that the media coverage of an organisation facing product recall crisis, regulatory investigations preceding the recall, and the newness of the product can create impact on the recalling organisation's sales and stock returns, and the possibility of a proactive and reactive recall strategy; and that product recall can affect negatively the attitude and behaviour of the consumers towards the recall.

Zhang (2020), notes that there are characteristics of crisis, especially as it concerns organisations. These are: "Unexpectedness"; "Harmfulness"; "Fast spreading"; and "Constructiveness". Concerning "Unexpectedness", the author notes that crises usually happened suddenly, most times without warnings or signs, and that like a virus, crises may have incubation period, during which subtle signs of the crisis may appear. Zhang notes further that since crises are likely to occur and take an organisation unawares, it may be difficult for the organisation to identify the remote and immediate causes of the crisis at the early stage; that some of the members of the public relations team of an organisation usually lack the scientific clairvoyance to pay attention to the imminence of a crisis, hence the crisis hits the organisation by surprise. Concerning "Harmfulness", Zhang argues that one of the fallouts of a crisis is that it can lead to collateral damage to reputation and finances of the organisation concerned, especially its stocks. The researcher argues on that in 21<sup>st</sup> Century with its attendant complexities and challenges, it is rare for an organisation to face crisis without suffering some form of harm to its reputation and finances. On the "Fast spreading" nature of crisis, the researcher attributes it to a journalistic dictum that bad news spread faster than good news. So news about crisis in an organisation will quickly hit the headlines in the media very fast because news determinants are in favour of bad news. The researcher argues on that this situation has been exacerbated by the potential and impact of the social media, with its affordances such as connection, creation, conversation,

curation, and collaboration, which bad make bad news to go viral in second. Lastly, on “Constructiveness”, the researcher argues that aware of the fact that crises can be harmful to reputation of an organisation, and may even threaten its survival, an organisation can still see the silver lining in the clouds by turning the crisis into an opportunity for growth. So the researcher argues further that crisis may be double-edged sword: danger and opportunity; so those organisation that deal with a crisis in a successful manner can consolidate on their brand and still maintain post-crisis consumer loyalty.

Adams (2019), again, outlines some lessons which organisations facing crises must learn after the crises. He argues that: brands must adopt multifaceted approach to crises; that timing is very important in terms of moving quickly to address the remote and immediate causes of the crisis, because this can restore trust. He argues on that the cost of responding on time rather than the leaving the crisis to continue can save the organisation’s reputation, better than delayed response; that apology must be genuine, and the organisation must be seen to taking responsibility; that social media platforms can be a double-edged sword: it can be used to tackle attacks on the reputation of an organisation, and it can also be used to aggravate the crisis situation; in this case, he observes that Samsung did not adequately and effectively deploy the social media to counter the negative narratives that were tending online about its brand; that the top management of a crisis-prone organisation must continuously communicate, give updates, and instil confidence in consumers that the crisis will be resolved amicably; and that brands must embrace openness and transparency while investigating the root cause (s) of the crisis, share their findings with the public and takes steps to ameliorate the situation, because this will surely reassure and restore confidence and trust in the consumers.

Hassan (2019:88), that an organisation’s reputation is one invaluable asset that it should do everything that is legitimately possible to protect. He notes that there is “corporate scandal” and there is “corporate crisis”, but that while the reasons behind both may be different, the consequences may be the same. He notes further that the consequences of both categories of crises are primarily product recall, loss of consumer trust, negative impact on the brand, and costs of litigation, among others. He differentiates between corporate scandal and corporate crisis by saying that while “corporate scandal refers to the action of committing what is prohibited under the role of good governance”, “corporate crisis is concerned more with the unexpected and the non-routine events that create a level of uncertainty and impact negatively on the organisation’s performance”. He concludes that the consequences of a corporate scandal or

corporate crisis can be deleterious; that the unfortunate events usually may harm the relationship between an organisation on one hand, and both customers and investors on the other hand.

Silver (2023), studied the use of social media in crisis communication, and notes that the proliferation of these digital technologies have occasioned a revolution in the way individuals and the society communicate with each other. He notes further that during crisis period, citizens in a society use the social media to seek, share, and interpret information; that the social media-dependency behaviour of the public can lead to a reduction of anxiety/uncertainty in times of crisis; and that the heterogeneity of the social media also makes the people to use it different ways. He concludes that Facebook and Twitter (now X) are among the most popular social media platforms worldwide. Following this assertion, it is instructive to note that the number of users on Facebook is approximately 2.9 billion; while the number of users on X (formerly Twitter), is approximately 335.7 million ([www.statista.com](http://www.statista.com)).

#### **2.4 Review of Empirical Studies**

Idham, Arumugam, Kaur, and Suppiah (2022), studied “Communication During Crisis: Negotiation Strategies. The authors based their case study on the 2016 Samsung recall of Note 7. Findings from their research indicated that Samsung took a fast and decisive step in response to the crisis. They note further that “integrative bargaining” was used by Samsung to negotiate with the consumers. They also discovered that there was evidence of Samsung’s actions in the three stages of crisis- pre-crisis, crisis, and post-crisis; and that Samsung reacted decisively and quickly to the crisis, by using well-coordinated crisis management strategies, which demonstrated their capacity to handle the crisis properly, and to regain the trust of customers. An important insight from their findings was that the reputation of Samsung was not affected post-crisis. In a study by Shamzi, Ali, and Kazmi (2017), entitled: “Samsung Note 7- An Unprecedented Recall That Created History: Exploding Phones Recovered-Exploded Trust?”, using the case study approach, the authors discovered that initial complaints were ignored by the retailers of Samsung, who rather blamed other factors for the explosion of the mobile phone; when there was a flurry of response on the social media concerning the explosion, Samsung responded by replacing the Galaxy Note 7 with less quality mobile phone, thereby creating a façade of satisfying the customers; the replacement of the Galaxy Note 7 took a while; one of the replacement phones also exploded, thereby causing double image crises for Samsung; and that Samsung kept passing the buck, by blaming the battery manufacturer for the fault, whereas it

was the organisation's responsibility to have accurate checks and balances in place on the quality of their products.

Kang, Shim, and Kim (2019), carried out a research entitled: "Social Media Posts on the Samsung Galaxy Note 7 Explosion: A Comparative Analysis of Crisis Framing and Sentiment in Three Nations". Using the search keyword: "Samsung Galaxy Note 7 for the three countries used in the study- United States, Australia, and South Korea on Twitter (now X), between August 1, 2016, and January 31, 2017, they discovered that the search yielded 549, 424 tweets from the United States; 24, 628 tweets from Australia; and 5, 036 tweets from South Korea, giving a total of 579,088 tweets. Further findings from their research showed that out of a sample size of 600 tweets used in their study, 131 bordered on "attribution"; 106 tweets were on "morality"; 61 tweets on "conflict"; while 60 tweets were on "economic consequences". Concerning "issue-specific frames" posted on Twitter (now X) between the period, findings from their research showed that 406 tweets focused on corporate breakdown; the product quality issue was tweeted 154 times; fire was tweeted 136 times; recall was tweet 117 times; ; tweets on side effects were 103; while tweets on business expert sources were 14. Specifically, the authors' findings in a correlational analysis of generic frames and sentiments showed that tweets on conflict frame that were negative were 26 (42.6%); neutral tweets 23 (37.7%); while positive tweets were 12 (19.7%), giving a total of 61 tweets on conflict frame. Tweets on economic consequences frame that were negative were 26 (43.3%); 22 (36.7%) tweets were neutral; while 12 (20.0%) tweets were positive, giving a total of 60 tweets on the economic consequences frame. For the human impact frame, 6 (46.2%) of the tweets were negative; 3 (23.1%) were neutral; while 4 (30.8%) were positive, giving a total of 13 tweets on human impact tweets. For Morality frame, 70 (66.0%) of the tweets were negative; 28 (26.4%) were neutral; while 8 (7.5%) were positive, giving a total of 106 tweets. And finally, for the tweets on attribution frame, 80 (61.1%) were negative; 43 (32.8%) were neutral; while 8 (7.1%) were positive, giving a total of 131 tweets.

Further, in a study by Nkundukozeza, Mushimiyimana, Nyiringabo, and Mvumvaneza, (2018), they analysed 19, 654 tweets collected after the Samsung Galaxy Note 7 crisis, using the "[GetOldTweets]" software. The author discovered that using a type of sentiment method called "lexicon-based method", 5771 tweets were positive; 4192 tweets were negative; yielding a total of 9963 opinionated tweets on this method. For the "machine learning (additional tweets) method, 4381 tweets were discovered to be positive; 145 tweets were discovered to be negative; giving a total of 4463 tweets on this method. And for the "hybrid method" the authors found out

that 10152 tweets were positive; 4337 tweets were negative; while the total number from this method was 14489. The authors concluded in their findings that apart from the battery of Note 7, there were more positive tweets about other features of the phone than there were negative tweets. Zhang, Veijalainen, and Kotlov (2017), discovered in their study that on September 23, 2016, the number of posts on the Samsung crisis was 113; number of comments was 81614; number of replies was 37430; while the number of replies by Samsung was 1448. Then on November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2016, the number of posts on the issue was 25; the number of comments was 45299; the number of replies was 18931; while the number of replies by Samsung was 983. The authors discovered further in terms of the response time on the Samsung crisis on Facebook that most comments (544) were replied faster in less than four hours; the quickest reply was in 22 seconds after the comment; while the longest reply was in five days. The authors noted that this underscored the fact that Facebook was considered more important as a social media platform on the issue than Twitter (now X) by the stakeholders, where the responses took a long time.

Huisman (2017), in his study sought to find out if the reputation of Samsung had been battered or not in the eyes of its Dutch consumers after the Galaxy Note 7 recall of 2016. Using a quantitative research method and online survey research design if the post-crisis reputation of Samsung can be based on its approach to the crisis, and the negative comments on the social media. The author found out that responsibility and negative emotions did not necessarily affect the post-crisis reputation of Samsung. This could be attributed to the strong reputation of Samsung as a global brand, which the organisation acquired over the years. Ambrose (2018), in his study, evaluated the challenges of communication inherent in supply chain crises, using Samsung's 2016 Galaxy Note 7 recall debacle as a case study. The findings of the research showed that in a supply chain crisis, stakeholders, especially consumers hold the organisation responsible, irrespective of where the supply chain crisis occurred. The study revealed the weak links between Samsung proactive crisis communication skills, and the perception of the public. There was apparently, a disconnect, the study revealed further, between Samsung and its publics, based on media reports.

Byun, Dale, Duhan, and Dass (2020), investigated if customers who were formerly loyal to a brand can stay with or leave during product post-recall, and how long they can stay before resuming their purchase cycle. The study further examined three types of influences on the post-recall behaviour of consumers: (1) the behavioural characteristics of customers in their shopping; (2) the use of post-recall promotions and loyal customers' promotion sensitivity; and (3) the

recall characteristics, including its seriousness and its public announcements. In conclusion, the authors found out that there was the possibility of loyal customers staying with the recalled product, while their patronage of the product; and that those customers with strong shopping habits may leave the product, but may not necessarily delay a repurchase of the product, if they stay.

Choi, and Chung (2017), sought to find out the interactive relationship between apology, as a crisis-response strategy that is used in a product recall crisis and the capacity of that to influence the restoration of the reputation of the crisis-ridden organisation, as well as the customers' future purchase intentions. By measuring the impact of the interaction between participants' perception of an apology and their product-involvement levels, findings showed that an apology was deemed an effective strategy for restoring the reputation of an organisation, but that did not necessarily translate to purchase intentions. Mukherjee and Chauhan (2021), studied the impact of product recall on advertising decisions. The authors found out that the level of advertising at the pre-crisis and post-crisis stages depends on the possibility and influence of a product recall. They also argue that the harm posed by product recall crisis can affect decisions like advertising, timing of the product recall, pricing or quality of investments and can also affect the organisation's reputation and financial performance. Kim, Choi, and Sejung (2017), discovered in their study that it was more effective for an organisation facing crisis to apologise than to trade blames or give excuses, because the consumers usually have a feeling of betrayal. Spoljaric (2021), studied how to manage crisis communication through the social media. In an online survey, the respondents note that organisations should in all situations endeavour to communicate with their customers through the social media; should choose only one social media platform to communicate during a crisis; that crisis communication should be personal; that crisis communication should be corporate; that crisis communication should offer only an apology; and that crisis communication should go beyond offering an apology to include offering a strategy for future prevention of similar situations. The author concludes by noting that in order to minimise risks, crisis communication should be well-managed; that using the social media requires a special approach, which means that there is supposed to be social media crisis communication management; and that if this is done properly, it can lead to an improvement in the reputation of an organisation.

Effiong (2014), studied managing reputation risks and situational crisis, using two higher institutions of learning as a case study. The author discovered that although the institutions did

not fully adopt the strategies of Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), the strategies adopted in each of the two crisis situations were similar to some of the recommendations of the SCCT, but in different ways. The author reveals further that while one of the institutions focused on a strategy that had similarity with some of the recommendations of the SCCT, such as “rebuild crisis response strategy”, with informing and adjusting tactics, the other institution used a victimisation or “victimage” strategy with a corresponding apportioning of blames, and a resort to arm-twisting tactics by reminding the stakeholders of the extent of losses that the institution could incur from the crisis. The researcher concluded that the institution with a high emphasis on rebuilding and information adjustment strategy recorded very little damage to its reputation, during and after the crisis; while the institution which believed in strong arm tactics recorded a significant damage to its reputation, which included withdrawal of key stakeholders, and the loss of recognition of programmes by some regulatory agencies. Salminen (2017), found out that the nature of crisis communication has changed as a result of the emergence of the social media; that crises can develop faster on the social media, the same way it can also move faster. The researcher revealed certain guidelines in using the social media in corporate communication during crises. These are as follows: establishing crisis response plans in advance; planning pre-event logistics; partnering with the public; understanding the audience; communicating with honesty, candour, and openness; collaborating and cooperating with credible sources; meeting the needs of the media and remaining accessible; communicating with passion, concern, and empathy; accepting uncertainty and ambiguity; providing messages of self-efficacy; and acknowledging and recognising cultural differences.

Eilert (2013), found out in her study that product harm and investigation can increase the probability that a safety investigation ends in a recall; that brand diversification is associated with a lower probability that an investigation can end in recall; that the profitability of a firm can have a positive influence on recall; that is, highly-profitable companies are in a better position to respond adequately and swiftly to a safety investigation than those that are financially-constrained; and that investigation ends in recall quickly when the brand involved has a high reputation. Dong, Xu, Song, and Zhou (2022), discovered that usually, product recalls are associated with the failure of quality on the part of the organisation, and this may affect negatively the perception of consumers and the reputation of the organisation; and that product recall may make consumers to re-examine their patronage of the product of the organisation concerned. In a study by Jokinen (2017), discovered that while Samsung took the Galaxy Note 7

crisis seriously and had a huge quantity of messages on the crisis, Nordea, in the wake of the “Panama Papers” had little; that based on the messages, the length of Samsung’s crisis communication was five months, while that of Nordea was four; that crisis communication showed huge gaps in their timeframe, while Nordea’s was more coherent; and that while Nordea used long press statements with complex language, Samsung used a lot of infographics on the social media compared with Nordea.

Ghassabi and Zare-Farashbandi (2015), studied the role of the media in crisis management, and discovered that most of the respondents noted that they were following the news on national television concerning the crisis that happened and they acknowledged that the mass media can play a key role in crisis management. The researchers argue that while the mass media have the potential in letting the public know not what to think, but not what to think about, there are certain specific role the media can play at the different stages of a crisis, especially a disaster. They note that at the pre-crisis stage, the media can disseminate information on disaster education for the public and educate them on how to face disasters; the media can help in creating disaster management plans; and also that the media can identify weak spots during disasters and follow-up on the promises made by the government. Concerning the crisis period, the researchers note that the media can alert the public on the evacuation of the disaster sites, while giving constant updates on the damage done by the disaster; that the media can spread news regarding the availability of alternative, but temporary shelters for victims of disasters and also help in identifying the needs of the victims; and that the media can help by encouraging humanitarian aids for the victims. For the post-crisis stage, the media can encourage the donation of humanitarian aids from public-spirited individuals and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs); identifying the long-term and invisible consequences of the disaster, and also sensitising the public against future recurrence.

Yun, Jeon, Park, and Zhao (2018), found out some implications of the 2016 Galaxy Note 7 recall as follows: (1) the benefits and costs of Samsung Electronics’ closed innovation strategy; (2) the internal effects of the Galaxy Note 7 explosions on Samsung Electronics; and (3) that success in open innovation strategies requires a great investment to produce effects. Elaborating on their studies, the researchers argue that due to the developmental changes that took place in semiconductor technology, Samsung Electronics, followed a spiraling process model of technological innovation, in which four steps were identified: (1) the entrance of foreign companies into the South Korean market and their refusal to transfer their technological know-

how to Samsung, ignited its indigenous technological capabilities; (2) Samsung started technological innovation capabilities by means of reverse engineering of imported foreign technologies and by transfer of technology; (3) Samsung improved technological innovations through an adaptive technological innovations strategy; and, finally, (4) Samsung developed the capability of establishing its own indigenous technological innovation capabilities, thus becoming one of the leading companies in the world and a global competitor to conglomerates in the Europe and North America. The researcher argues further that technological innovations was underpinned by a combination of multiple factors, such as the dynamic relationship between exploitation and exploration; the open relationship between absorption and distribution; the vertical relationship between upstream and downstream; the functional relationship between intensive and extensive; and the multiple relationships between the synergic and sporadic. From the array of empirical studies reviewed so far, none seems to determine if the public relations strategies of Samsung during the crisis were actually effective, and the extent of such. This research will fill in that gap.

## **2.5 Theoretical Framework**

This research is anchored on the Image Restoration Theory (IRT) and the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT). The Image Restoration Theory, also known as the Image Repair Theory was propounded by William Benoit in 1995. The theory explains how public relations strategies can be used to restore the image of an organisation in a situation where such organisation's image has been impaired or damaged (Benoit, 1995; and Masaviru, 2016). As a theory undergirding crisis communication, the theory helps in the understanding of crisis situations. Kessadayurat (2011), and Musaviru (2016), elaborate on this theory that since perception can sometimes be reality, the organisation must own up to the fact it is at fault; then after accepting that, communication strategies can be selected based on credibility, the perception of the public, and the extent of the offence. Kessadayurat (2011), argues that usually, there are five communication strategies used in Image Restoration Theory. These are: denial, evasion of responsibility, reducing the offensiveness of the act, corrective action, and mortification. On denial, the researcher argues that this refers to the way and manner the organisation attempts to eliminate any connection between the organisation and the threat by stating that there is no threat to image and simply gives a denial that the cause of the crisis was not their making and then shifts the blame on another entity; for evasion of responsibility, this is

where the organisation tries to manipulate public perception and shirk its responsibility for their actions.

By so doing, the organisation tries to reduce responsibility for the crisis by claiming that it was led into the crisis by another party, hence its inability to prevent the occurrence of the crisis; the third strategy involves reducing the offensiveness: this is where an organisation attempts to reduce the perceived damage caused by the crisis. An organisation tries to reduce offensiveness through certain strategies like “bolstering” (in this case, an organisation uses its past good deeds in the believe that it will ameliorate the problem); “minimization” (the organisation tries to rationalise that the mistake made is not as serious as perceived by the public); “transcendence” (the organisation justifies the mistake in a larger positive context that the public feels it was justified since it was an usual act); “attacking one’s accuser” (the accused organisation diverts attention by attacking the accuser); and “compensation” (the accused pays the victims in form of money, services or goods in order to restore the battered image). Fourthly, for corrective action, the organisation implements steps to repair its image and also prevent the repeat of same by taking corrective measures; and lastly, the mortification strategy is where the organisation takes full responsibility for the wrongful act, apologises, and asks for forgiveness. Other scholars who have carried out studies on this theory are as follows: Kim III (2006), Roberts (2006), Jung, Graeff, and Shim (2011), as well as Chimbarange, Mukenge, and Kombe (2013). The relevance of this theory to this research is that it will show how Samsung took steps through crisis communication strategies to repair its dented image after the saga of Note 7 recall.

#### **Adapted From Benoit (1995)**

The Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) on the other hand, was propounded by Timothy W. Coombs in 2007. The theory, also grounded in the principles of crisis communication, explains how managers of crisis should match strategic crisis responses to the level of crisis responsibility and the threats posed to organisational reputation by crises (Coombs, 2007). This theory believes that crisis managers should analyse the type of crisis, its history and manifestations in order to know how to tackle it (Coombs, 2016). Supporting this, Yum and Jeong (2015), note that the SCCT has its roots in the Attribution Theory, which is a social-psychological theory that believes that people make sense of issues/events by explaining the cause of such. For instance, when a crisis occurs, people attempt to explain why the crisis occurred. Kyhn (2008), in her contribution argues that SCCT comprises three key elements: the

crisis situation; the crisis response strategies; and a system for matching the crisis situation and crisis response strategies. Other scholars who have used the SCCT in various studies are as follows: Kyrychok (2017), studied the impact of situational crisis communication theory on the efficiency of investigations in the field of crisis communication; while Rensburg, Conradie, and Dondolo (2017), studied the use of the situational crisis communication theory in response strategies at the University of Technology in Pretoria, South Africa. So this theory is relevant to this research in the sense that it will show if the managers of the Samsung Note 7 recall crisis in 2016, were able to respond adequately to the crisis with strategic crisis response mechanisms.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

The literature review covered the clarifications of such concepts as Crisis Communication and Public Relations Strategies. In this case, what other scholars have written on these concepts, its various dimensions, and its pedagogical and epistemological grounding were explored. Then next was the literature review on related studies. The work explored here were those in the area of public relations strategies and product recall; image/brand management and consumer loyalty; as well as other studies on the subject-matter. After this, the next item was empirical review of studies. Since this research is an empirical study, it was pertinent to review the empirical work of other scholars to find similarities and differences with this research, so that this research can contribute significantly to extant literature. Then, lastly, since nothing stands on nothing, two relevant theories were used as theoretical anchor of the research. These were the Image Restoration Theory (IRT), and the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT).

## **3. METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN**

### **3.1 Overview**

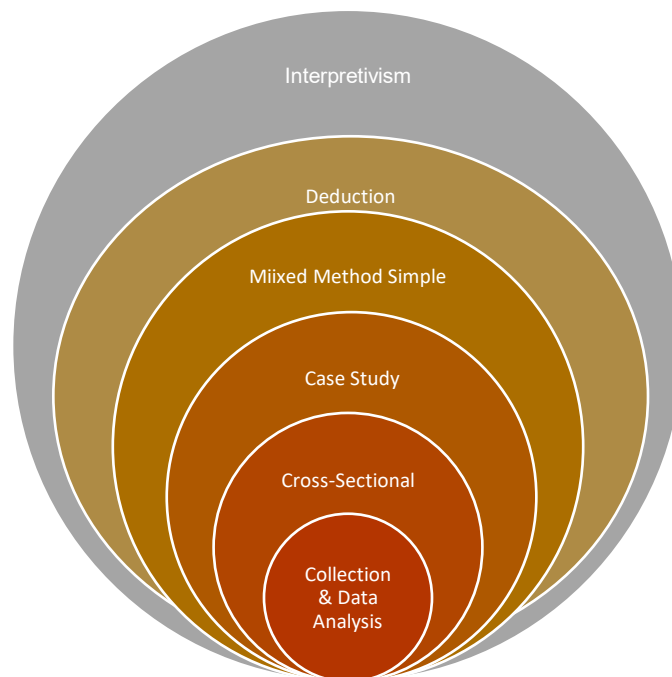
This chapter discussed the methodology and research design that were used for the study. It further discussed the research design and other techniques which were used in gathering and collecting data for this research; the sampling technique, as well as the techniques for data analysis. To this end, this research used the case study research design. A case study, according to Carter (2020), is an in-depth research design that uses qualitative approach mainly, but can also use the quantitative approach to investigate an issue or phenomenon. It is used to answer the “how” and “why” questions of a research. Following this, a Case Study Protocol (CSP) was used. A Case Study Protocol according to Yin (2009) is a set of guidelines that can be used to structure and govern a case research project. Based on this, the Eisenhardt Framework was used. So secondary sources of data such as Samsung’s official statements, press releases and communication materials during and after the recall were gathered and analysed. In addition, media reports, and consumers’ feedback, were used to gain a comprehensive understanding of the PR strategies that were adopted and how impactful they were. Data relating to the PR strategies employed by Samsung post recall, including their channels of communication, key messages, and consumers’ responses were also analysed. Further, data on consumers’ sentiments, perception, reactions on social media and interviews that measured the PR efforts at restoring consumers’ trust were collected and analysed. There was the use of a mixed method of combining both qualitative and quantitative analyses in order to understand comprehensively the effectiveness of the PR strategies. The collected data were examined to detect recurring patterns, prevalent themes, and potential connections between PR approaches, consumer reactions, and the process of rebuilding trust. Findings were interpreted to create understanding of which PR approaches were most effective in rebuilding trust and mitigating negative perception.

### **3.2 Research Philosophy and Approach**

The overarching objective of this research is to evaluate public relations as an effective tool in restoring consumer trust after product recalls, using the Samsung recall of Galaxy Note 7 in 2016 as a case study. Following the above, research philosophy, according to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2019), refers to a system of beliefs and assumptions which underpins the development of knowledge; and that it means what the researcher is doing when embarking on a research. There are five main types of research philosophies. These are: (1) Pragmatism (2) Positivism (3) Realism, (4) Interpretivism, and (5) Postmodernism. So the philosophy which undergirded the qualitative aspect of this research is interpretivism (Park, Konge, and Artino, 2020). To this end, both qualitative and quantitative techniques of data analyses were done to achieve the objectives

of the study. Particularly, because of the influence of the digital media, especially the social media in crisis communication in modern times, due to technological evolution and revolution, social media posts, especially that of Facebook and Twitter (now X) were content-analysed. The essence of this was to determine the sentiments expressed by social media users on the crisis. These sentiments could point to the potential of post-recall consumer loyalty. Also, the press releases of Samsung on the crisis were analysed qualitatively, to determine the tone, level of empathy and responsibility, and even evidence of buck-passing (if any). Further, media reports on the issue were also analysed to ascertain the level of publicity generated by the crisis.

**Figure 1:**



**Adapted From Mark Saunders' Research Methods for Business Students (2009)**

### **3.3 Research Strategy**

From the literature reviewed so far, almost all the studies used either a qualitative research strategy or a quantitative research strategy. However, this research differed by using both qualitative and quantitative research strategies. So as noted earlier, the research used Facebook Scraper, a software, to extract data on the issue from Facebook; while Octoparse and Twython were used to extract data on the issue from X (formerly Twitter). So the data extracted were thus

subjected to both qualitative and quantitative analyses. In addition, the press statements of Samsung were also analysed qualitatively, as noted earlier.

### **3.4 Collection of Primary Data**

In this section, the techniques of the collection of both primary and secondary data and the sources were discussed.

#### ***Sources***

This research used both primary and secondary sources of data. The primary data was an in-depth interview with the Media Advisor to Samsung who spoke on the issue (Appendix D); the secondary data were: press statements by Samsung on the crisis, media reports, posts/comments on Facebook and Twitter (now X) on the crisis, and other relevant materials.

### **3.5 Access and Ethical Considerations**

Researching the role of Public Relations (PR) in restoring consumer trust after the Samsung Note 7 2016 recall involves several ethical considerations. According to Bell, Bryman, and Harley (2022), the amount and volume of information required to fulfil the application for ethical review is determined by the source and nature of the data. Consequently, the ethical considerations in this research included respecting the confidentiality of sensitive information obtained during the research process, including any proprietary or confidential data related to Samsung's crisis management strategies, ensuring that no sensitive information is disclosed without proper authorisation. The researcher maintained the privacy of any proprietary or confidential information pertaining to Samsung's crisis management techniques by closely adhering to any confidentiality agreements or protocols established with Samsung or any other pertinent parties. Guaranteeing accuracy and transparency when presenting results, steering clear of misinterpreting or distorting data, and delivering an inclusive and truthful assessment of the PR strategies devoid of bias.

In order to prevent data from being incorrectly or deliberately misrepresented, the researcher maintained the highest standards of integrity and transparency while presenting the findings. In order to maintain integrity and confidence in the research process, there was consistent assessment and monitoring of the procedures of data extraction. The researcher monitored the procedures closely by ensuring that it adhered to the requirements for promoting integrity and trust in the research process. Accurately crediting sources and acknowledging the contributions of individuals or other scholars while refraining from plagiarism or unauthorised

use of ideas or information was done. Finally, proper attributions/acknowledgements of sources was done.

### **3.6 Approach to Data Analysis**

The data were analysed both qualitatively and quantitatively. The in-depth interview with the Media Advisor to Samsung was analysed qualitatively; the press statements from Samsung and media reports were also analysed qualitatively; while the data extracted from both Facebook and Twitter (now X) were coded first, before being analysed. It is imperative to restate that the software used for extracting old tweets from Twitter were Octoparse and Twython; while the software the software used to extract old comments/posts on Facebook was the Facebook Scraper. Two coders helped the researcher in this regard to achieve inter-coder reliability. The unit of analysis for Twitter was a Twitter post. In this case the researcher sought to determine the kinds of frames that emanated from the Twitter post, whether the frames are generic, or issue-specific. Also, the unit of analysis was also Facebook post or comment. The researcher also sought to find out the kinds of generic and issue-specific frames that emerged from Facebook posts/comments on the issue. In addition, the sentiments expressed in terms of the directions of posts/comments were also analysed. In this case, the researcher sought to ascertain if the posts/comments on both Twitter and Facebook were positive, negative, or neutral. Further, the researcher was able to garner 25, 456 Twitter posts on the issue, and 20, 321 Facebook comments on the issue. This became reduced because it was discovered that Samsung had put in place measures to wipe off most of the social media posts online, especially the ones that were negative. So based on Singh and Masuku (2014) Sample Size Determination Table, at plus or minus 5% precision levels, where confidence level is 95% and  $P= 0.5$ , when a sample size is 20,000 and above, but less than 25,000, then the sample size should be 392; then when the sample size is 25,000 and above, but less than 50,000, the sample size should be 394. It follows therefore that for Twitter, the sample size used for the analysis was 394, while that of Facebook was 392, giving a total sample size of 786.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

This chapter discussed the research methodology and research design used in the study; also discussed was the research strategy; the collection of both primary and secondary data and the sources; access and ethical considerations in data-gathering, as well as the approach to data analysis. In addition, the research philosophy underpinning the qualitative aspect of data analysis was interpretivism- this is usually based on the humanistic and sociological aspects of human

behaviour; while the research philosophy which undergirded the quantitative aspects of this research was positivism – which explains the objective and empirical measurement of values or phenomena.

## **4. Presentation, and Discussion of the Findings**

### **4.1 Overview**

This chapter presented and discussed the findings arising from the research. The first step was the presentation of secondary sources of data based on the research objectives. The analysis of

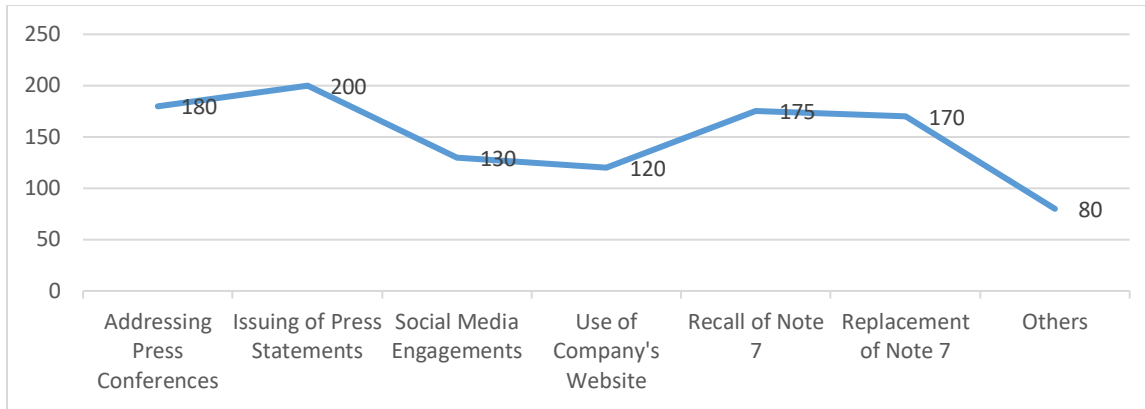
the findings from secondary sources was done using the Eisenhardt Framework in Case Study Protocol (CSP). The next step was to present and analyse the data from the primary source Samsung's Media Advisor (Africa), using the interview guide; the research objectives was turned into research questions for the interviewee Samsung's Media Advisor (Africa), followed by the discussion of findings and then the conclusion. It is important to note that the Eisenhardt Framework involves the following steps: defining the research questions and/or objectives of the study; selecting a case study; collecting data from more than one source; doing analysis of data collected; comparing findings with empirical literature reviewed; and drawing conclusion based on the findings. All these steps are evident in this chapter.

## **4.2 Findings**

### **4.2.1 Research Objective 1: To determine the extent to which Samsung used public relations strategies in the Note 7 recall in 2016.**

The essence of the above research objective was to determine how far Samsung went in using public relations, especially crisis communication strategies in addressing the challenges posed by the Galaxy Note 7 recall in 2016. This became imperative because while some researchers praised Samsung for the swift and decisive manner it responded to the crisis, there are still other scholars who carried out empirical studies and discovered that Samsung shirked its social responsibility, by failing to respond adequately, when it mattered most. The chart below shows the presentation of the data from the findings:

**Chart 1: Extent of Samsung's Use of Public Relations Strategies in the Note 7 Recall in 2016**



From Chart 1 above, Samsung deployed several strategies in dousing the tension that was generated by the crisis. These strategies were as follows: addressing press conferences, issuing press statements, social media engagements, use of company’s Website, recall of Note 7, and replacement of Note 7, among other minor strategies. Considering the how Samsung used more of press statements, it will be pertinent to take a detailed look at the content of the press statements and how the conglomerate use them. In the wake of the crisis, after the initial buck-passing by the Samsung, and with the clear evidence of the poor quality of the battery of Note 7, which caused these explosions, Samsung decided to take responsibility by getting to the roots of the crisis. The organisation also ensure that there was smooth communication between its employees, consumers and other stakeholders. An excerpt from the initial press statement goes thus:

“We acknowledge the inconvenience this may cause in the market, but this is to ensure that Samsung continues to deliver the highest quality products to our customers. We work closely with our partners to ensure the replacement experience is as convenient and efficient as possible”.

As more reports of the explosion of the Note 7 started pouring in from South Korea, China, America, and other parts of the globe, on September 2, 2016, Samsung, in another press release that was more elaborate, while promising that “We take every incident report from our valued customers very seriously”, noted that it was aware of the explosion incidents and was investigating the cause (s). An excerpt from the press statement reads as follows:

“Samsung is committed to producing the highest quality products and we take every incident report from our valued customers very seriously. In response to recently reported cases of the new Galaxy Note7, we conducted a thorough investigation and found a battery cell issue. To date (as of September 1) there have been 35 cases that have been reported globally and we are currently conducting a thorough

inspection with our suppliers to identify possible affected batteries in the market. However, because our customers' safety is an absolute priority at Samsung, we have stopped sales of the Galaxy Note7. For customers who already have Galaxy Note7 devices, we will voluntarily replace their current device with a new one over the coming weeks. We acknowledge the inconvenience this may cause in the market but this is to ensure that Samsung continues to deliver the highest quality products to our customers. We are working closely with our partners to ensure the replacement experience is as convenient and efficient as possible”.

Samsung later announced to the public, especially its consumers that haven't found the root cause of the crisis to be faulty batteries, it issued another statement of the next step in addressing the problem thus:

“Samsung confirmed it has been collaborating with the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) following its announcement of battery cell issues related to the Galaxy Note 7. New Note 7 replacement devices will be issued to exchange program participants upon completion of the CPSC process. In the interim, consumers can return their Note 7 for another device.”

Later, there were another rounds of reports where the replacement phones equally exploded, raising further concerns about the safety of Samsung products. Samsung therefore expressed concerns about this new twist in the saga. It assured its consumers that while considering the option of the replacement programme, it will still continue its investigations and make the findings known to the public. An excerpt of the statement issued goes thus:

"Samsung understands the concern our carriers and consumers must feel after recent reports have raised questions about our newly released replacement Note 7 devices. We continue to move quickly to investigate the reported case to determine the cause and will share findings as soon as possible."

After recovering from what appeared to be a nightmarish crisis by Samsung, the company acknowledged that the wounds would not heal easily because people would still refer to it, the then President of Samsung Electronics, Koh Dong Jin, issued a post-crisis statement as follows:

“For the last several months, together with independent industry expert organizations, we conducted a thorough investigation to find the cause of the Galaxy Note7 incidents. Today, more than ever, we are committed to earning the trust of our customers through innovation that redefines what is possible in safety and as a gateway to unlimited possibilities and incredible new experiences.”

In spite of the face-saving measures put in place by Samsung through its press statements, there is no doubt that the crisis dented the reputation of Samsung to some extent. But for a very conservative Asian company that usually avoids any bad publicity, the constant issuing of press statements showed how seriously the company perceived the crisis.

**Figure 2: A scientific Investigator Addressing the Press on the Root Cause of the Phone Explosion**



(Source: [www.samsung.com](http://www.samsung.com))

**Figure 3: Koh Dong Jin, the President/CEO of Samsung addressing a Press Conference on the Galaxy Note 7 Recall**



(Source: [www.samsung.com](http://www.samsung.com))

**Figure 4: The Recalled Samsung Galaxy Note 7**



. (Source: [www.samsung.com](http://www.samsung.com))

### In-depth Interview

#### **Research Question 1: How did Samsung use public relations strategies to control the damage to its reputation done by the Galaxy Note 7 recall incident of 2016?**

***Alert:** Samsung sent emails and text messages to customers to communicate the recall and ask them to return their phones• **Disabling the phones:** Samsung partnered with telecom companies to send software updates that disabled the phones' charging functions, making them useless• **Providing replacements:** Samsung exchanged the affected phones for new versions with batteries from a different supplier.*

From Samsung's Media Advisor response above, Samsung used some proactive public relations strategies to do some damage control during the Galaxy Note 7 recall crisis in 2016. These measures were aimed at making consumers of the brand across the globe, not to panic. It followed that these steps involved alerting Samsung's consumers across the globe; disabling the Galaxy Note 7 phone; and providing replacements.

#### **4.2.2 Research Objective 2: To ascertain the types of public relations strategies used by Samsung in the Note 7 recall in 2016.**

This research objective sought to find out the types of public relations strategies employed by Samsung after determining the company's extent of the use of public relations strategies. Below is the presentation of the data:

#### **Chart 2: Types of Public Relations Strategies Used by Samsung in the Note 7 Recall in 2016**



In Chart 2 above, Samsung deployed the following public relations strategies in the recall of Note 7 in 2016: Media Relations, Social Media Engagements, Crisis Management, Strategic Communication, Consumer Relations, and Press Statements. The several public relations strategies deployed by Samsung, underscored the seriousness with which it viewed the crisis.

### **In-depth Interview**

#### **Research Question 2: What were the public relations strategies used by Samsung during the crisis?**

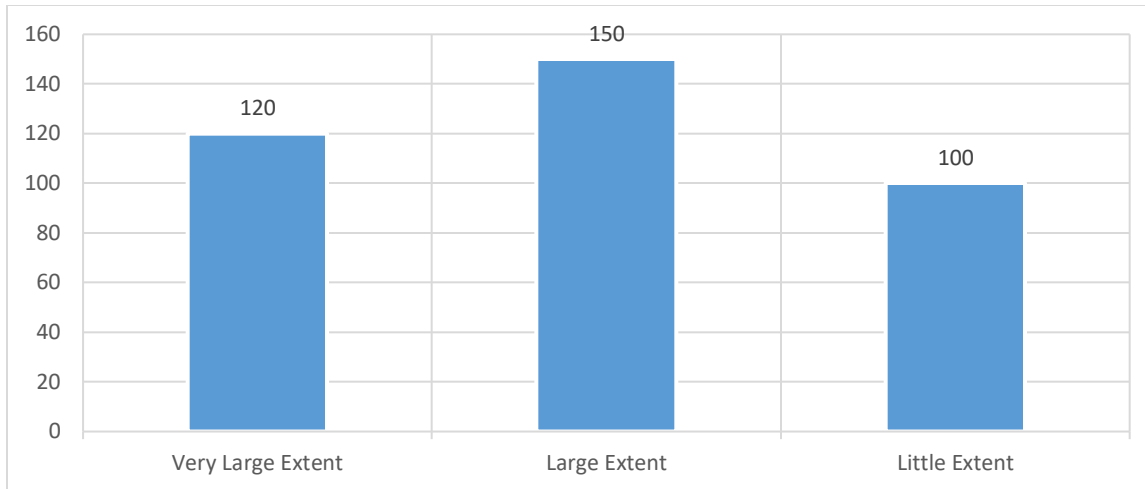
*Samsung shared the results of their investigation with the public and announced a quality assurance program and safety features, including an 8-point battery safety check. However, the company was criticized by many consumers for lack of robust crisis communications strategy.*

From the response above, Samsung came out as a global brand that had nothing to hide. It put in place some safety measures to placate their consumers across the world. However, in spite of this, many of the company's customers were still not impressed by the safety steps taken; the consumers felt that the company's crisis response strategy adopted were quite effete.

#### **4.2.3 Research Objective 3: To find out the extent of social media engagements which Samsung had with consumers in the Note 7 recall in 2016.**

Although Samsung from the use of Octoparse and Twython software for Twitter and Facebook Scraper for Facebook did not engage much with the users, there were still some evidence to show. So the above research objective sought to determine that. The chart below show the presentation of the data:

#### **Chart 3: Samsung's Extent of Social Media Engagement With Consumers**



From Chart 3 above, it was glaring that Samsung used social media engagement with its customers to a “Large Extent”. The company was wary of the potential and detrimental impact of misinformation and disinformation on the social media, and carefully use strategic social media engagements.

**Figure 5: An Excerpt of a Tweet from Samsung on the Crisis**



(Source: [www.samsung.com](http://www.samsung.com))

**Figure 6: Samsung’s Post on Facebook During the Crisis**



**Samsung Mobile**

October 13, 2016 · 🌐

Your safety is what matters the most.

As we continue to investigate the recently reported incidents, we are taking precautionary measures and have stopped all sales, exchanges and production of the Galaxy Note7.

We are committed to getting to the bottom of this issue and to providing you with an alternative solution.

If you have an original or replacement Galaxy Note7, please power down and see the remedies available to you at your place of purchase or local customer center.

To find your local customer center, please visit:

<http://www.samsung.com/global/support/globalcontact.html>

👍 Like

💬 Comment

➦ Share



👍 😊 😄 5.1K

Top Comments ▾

440 shares

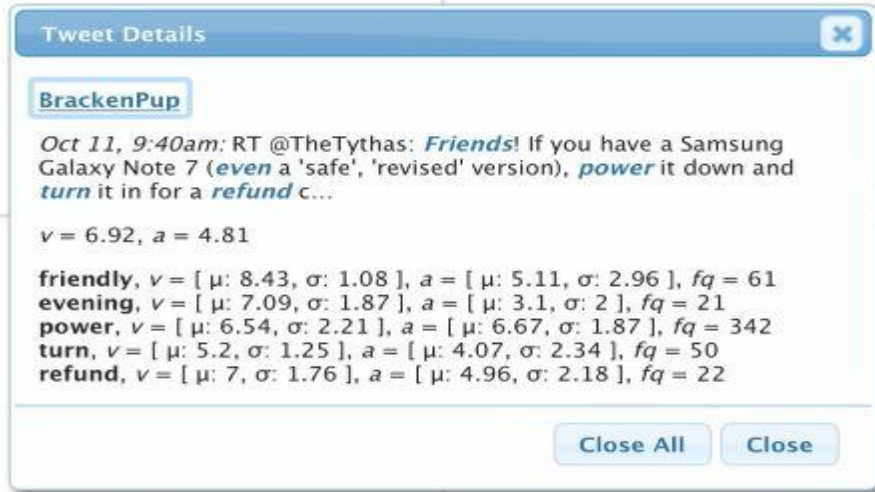
(Source: [www.web.facebook.com](http://www.web.facebook.com))

Figure 7: Samsung’s Post on Twitter During the Crisis q23



(Source: [www.x.com](http://www.x.com))

Figure 8: Derogatory Tweet on the Samsung Crisis



(Source: [www.x.com](http://www.x.com))

**Figure 9: More Tweet on the Samsung Crisis**



(Source: [www.x.com](http://www.x.com))

### In-depth Interview

**Research Question 3: How did Samsung use the social media to engage with consumers across the world during the crisis?**

*Social media is a very significant fragment of Samsung's scheme. During the 2016 crisis they continually made efforts to preserve their prominence and for that they use social media marketing in high zone which helped them in generating good returns and also helped to make a strong influence on users and followers. Although social media where at the infant stage by then, however,*

*Samsung was more engaging with their posts and also commenting and replying back to their customers which creates good relationship with their clients and also creates trust to this brand. Samsung also has different Facebook pages for each country it operates, thereby speaking to people in the local parlance they understand.*

From the response, Samsung’s Media Advisor claimed that the social media engagements with consumers across the globe were robust, even though the social media as platforms were still at a rudimentary stage. Samsung’s Media Advisor argued that the social media engagements led to the creation of good relationship and trust between the brand and the teeming consumers across the globe; and that different countries had different Facebook pages in order to cater to their socio-cultural and linguistic diversities.

**4.2.4 Research Objective 4: To find out the reactions of consumers to the recall of Note 7 in 2016.**

The crisis occasioned by the explosion of the batteries of Note 7 resulted in global uproar, especially in Asia, North America, and even other parts of the globe. To this end, the above research sought to ascertain how the consumers reacted to the crisis especially on the social media. In the first phase of the reactions of Samsung’s customers on the social media, out of a sample size of 786 posts/comments on the social media, such words with the highest frequency were as follows: “corporation”, “customer”, “battery”, “recall”, “new product”, “exchange”, “decision”, and “Samsung”, among others. This is presented in the chart below:

**Chart 4: Frequency of Words in the Social Media Posts/Comments of Samsung Customers**

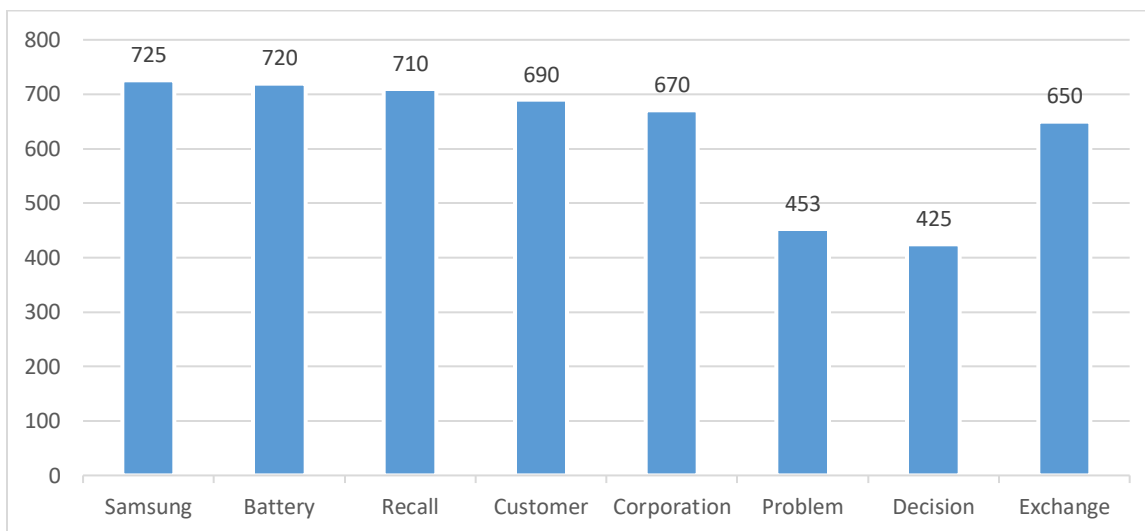


Chart 4 above shows the dominant words in posts/comments of social media users during the Note 7 recall crisis. It is glaring from the Chart that the name of the company- “Samsung” got mentioned the most, followed by “Battery”, and then “Recall”. This really underlined how the customers were sentimentally attached to the crisis. Still on the above research questions, the researcher also sought to find out the way the Twitter users framed (both generic and sentimental) their reactions on the crisis. It is imperative to note that frames in media studies refer to the central idea of organising and providing meaning to a selection of attributes by selection, presentation, and exclusion. That is why, a slanted coverage of issues can affect how the audience will perceive, organise, and interpret events and issues (Entman, 2013; Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley, 2007; as well as Kang, Shim, and Kim, 2019). However, below is the presentation of the data:

**Table 1: Twitter Users’ Reactions to the Note 7 Recall Crisis Based on Generic and Sentimental Frames**

S/N	Frame	Sentiment			Total
		Positive	Negative	Neutral	
1	Irresponsible	89 (22.6%)	170 (43.2%)	135 (34.2%)	394 (100%)
2	Poor Quality	67 (17%)	220 (55.8%)	107 (27.2%)	394 (100%)
3	Trading Blames	69 (17.5%)	222 (56.4%)	103 (26.1%)	394 (100%)
4	Procrastination	58 (14.7%)	175 (44.4%)	161(40.9%)	394 (100%)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>283</b>	<b>787</b>	<b>506</b>	

In Table 1 above, it is clear that most of the posts/comments on the Samsung Note 7 recall had a negative undertone; this no doubts, would have contributed significantly to the damage of Samsung’s reputation. To drive home the point about the sentiments attached to the frames on Twitter by Samsung users, below is the presentation of the data:

**Chart 5: Twitter Users’ Sentiments’ Based on the Frames in Their Reactions to the Samsung Note 7 Recall of 2016**

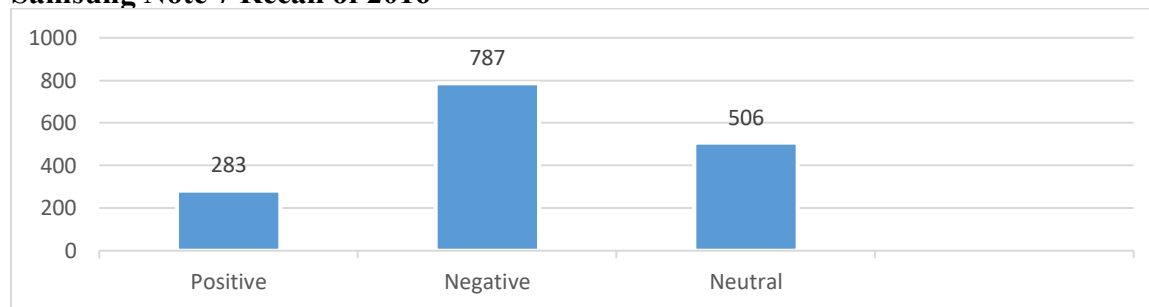


Chart 5 above summarises the sentimental framing of the generic frames presented in Table 1.

### **In-depth Interview**

#### **Research Question 4: What were the reactions of consumers across the world to the crisis?**

*Some consumers were frustrated with the customer service experience, reporting long calls, unnecessary store visits, and requests for original packaging. Samsung's initial response was criticized for using diminish strategies instead of rebuild strategies, and for sharing vague and inconsistent information. However, Samsung was able to regain consumer loyalty within nine months by focusing on innovation and inspiring a bigger purpose.*

From the Response above, Samsung's Media Advisor was quite frank and professional in his approach. There was no attempts to cover-up. That is one of the advantages of using an experienced and qualified Media Advisor. The Media Advisor revealed that the initial response of Samsung to the crisis was criticised by many of the brand's consumers who felt that there was lack of consistency and synergy in the information the company was releasing. However, in spite of this, the brand was able to regain the loyalty of her consumers within nine months by focusing on innovation and other brand-building strategies.

#### **4.2.5 Research Objective 5: To determine the effectiveness of the public relations strategies adopted by Samsung in the Note 7 recall in 2016.**

The above research question was aimed at determining the effectiveness of the public relations strategies deployed by Samsung during the post-crisis stage of the Note 7 recall. From a content analysis of media reports after the crisis of Note 7 recall, it was evident that probably due to the effectiveness of the public relations strategies deployed by Samsung, consumers' loyalty to the Samsung brand was still intact. In a news report by Rachel Brown in *Marketing Dive* on April 21, 2017, she had this to say:

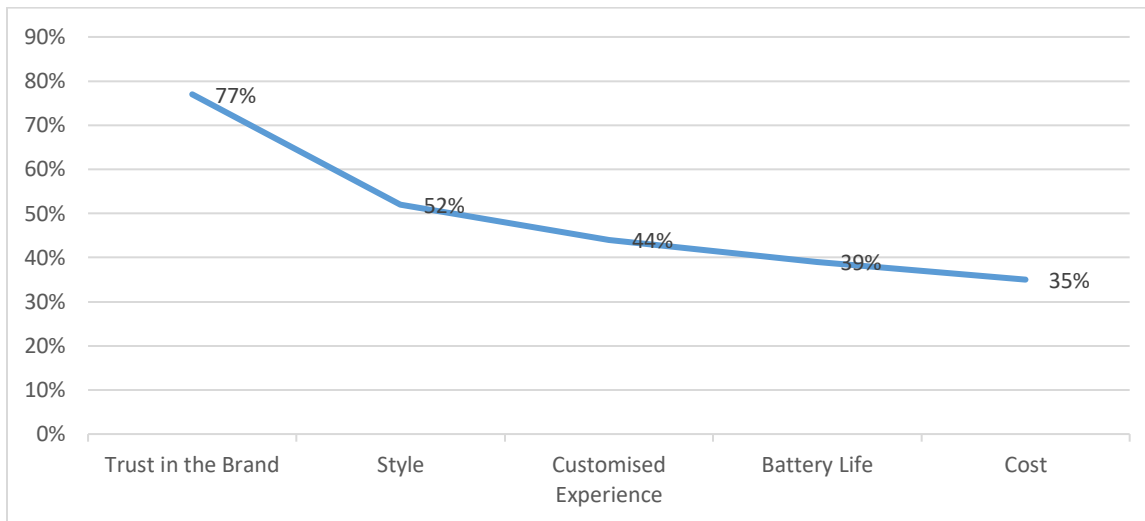
*"Samsung's reputation has improved in time for the release of the Galaxy S8 phone Friday, according to YouGov's BrandIndex brand perception tracking. That's a big turnaround from Samsung's status in the minds of consumers plunging to a 10-year low following the Galaxy Note 7 recall. In the YouGov BrandIndex measurement of brand perception, Samsung currently matches Apple with a 19. Scores span -100 to 100 with zero being a neutral position. A score of 19 means 19% more people reported they were positive than negative about...Samsung".*

Further, in a news report by the Yohnap News Agency of South Korea, published on September 12, 2016, the news agency reported an online survey showing that Samsung’s brand was not affected by the Note 7 recall. The news agency reported as follows:

“The mass recall of the Galaxy Note 7 smartphones over a battery problem has not largely affected foreign consumer loyalty to Samsung Electronics Co.’s brand, separate online surveys by Internet news websites showed Monday. According to an online survey of 11,621 Internet users by a U.S. technology news website, Android Police, 39 percent said the recall "hasn't affected my trust or perception of Samsung's brand." The survey began on Sept. 4. Another 36 percent responded that they are "actually more trusting because of Samsung's speed and effectiveness in addressing the issue."

From the aggregation of the reports from other news outlets, consumers gave their reasons for being loyal to the Samsung brand after the Note 7 recall saga in 2016. Below is the presentation of the data:

**Chart 6: Aggregate Views of Consumers’ Reasons for Samsung Brand Loyalty After the Note 7 Recall Crisis**



In Chart 6 above, from the various reasons adduced by consumers for continuous loyalty to Samsung despite the Note 7 recall crisis, “trust in the brand” got the highest percentage; followed by “style” (52%); “customised experience” (44%); “Battery Life” (39%); and “cost” (35%).

## **In-depth Interview**

### **Research Question 5: How effective were the public relations strategies of Samsung during the crisis?**

*During the 2016 crisis, Samsung's public relations tried to deal with the issues through multiple public relation functions. From an overall review, Samsung's public relations seemed to be poor at working on issues of management and crisis communication.*

From the response above, Samsung's Media Advisor, while acknowledging how the brand deployed several public relations strategies to deal with the 2016 crisis, was also brutally-frank about the poor deployment of public relations, in terms of issues management and crisis communication.

## **4.3 Discussion**

From the research, it is evident that although Samsung used several public relations strategies in trying to address the crisis which culminated in the Note 7 recall of 2016, the company used more of press statements. This justifies the findings of Lim and Kim (2018), who found out in their studies that Samsung used more of press statements as public relations strategy in the crisis. The use of social media engagements by Samsung on the crisis justifies the findings of Yu (2020), who discovered that one of the public relations strategies of Samsung was engaging consumers on the social media to keep them informed on developments, especially steps being taken to ameliorate the crisis. Further, Samsung also addressed a few press conferences. This was done by its President/CEO then, Koh Dong Jin. Another press conference was also addressed by a scientific investigator of the root cause of the crisis. Other strategies were updates on the company's Website, recall of Note 7, and replacement of Note 7 in exchange for another version of its product.

Concerning the specific details of the press statements issued by Samsung, the company tried to show responsibility after it became clear that the public was not interested in any buck-passing. This was especially so when the battery of even the replacements phones also exploded. It was at this stage that the organisation revealed that it was investigating the root cause of the problem and pleaded for understanding from the consumers. This justifies the views of Idham, Arumugam, Kaur, and Suppiah (2022), who also studied the wordings of the press statements issued by Samsung. Also, Samsung used different types of public relations strategies such as media relations, social media engagements, crisis management, strategic communication, consumer relations, and press statements. This justifies the views of Bali (2019), and Zhang

(2020). Samsung's extent of social media engagement with consumers was to a "large extent". This justifies the findings of Nkundukozero, Mushimiyimana, and Nyiringbo (2018) in their study on the Samsung crisis.

Further, in a critical analysis of words which were frequent in the social media (Facebook and Twitter) posts/comments, certain words became a recurring refrain. These words were: "Samsung"; "Battery"; "Recall"; "Customer"; "Corporation"; "Problem"; "Decision"; and "Exchange". This also justifies the findings of Yu (2020) in her research. Concerning specifically Twitter users' reactions to the Samsung crisis, there were certain generic frames and sentimental frames embedded in their tweets. The generic frames were: "irresponsible"; "poor quality"; "trading blames"; and "procrastination"; while the sentimental frames were: "positive"; "negative"; and "neutral". This finding shares similarity with that of Kang, Shim, and Kim (2019). However, a finding of this research showed that the "negative" sentiment was quite dominant, again justifying Kang, Shim, and Kim (2019). On the effectiveness of the public relations strategies of Samsung in the Note 7 recall of 2016, this research objective was actually meant to gauge the views of consumers in the aftermath of the crisis. News reportage of consumers based on online surveys conducted actually showed that most consumers were willing to stick to the Samsung brand, irrespective of the mistrust engendered by the crisis. To this end, an aggregate of the opinions of consumers on their reasons for continuous loyalty to Samsung showed that the consumers were swayed by the following reasons: "trust in the brand"; "style"; "customised experience"; battery life"; and "cost". Finally, the two theories used- Image Restoration Theory and Situational Crisis Communication Theory were validated.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

The findings of this research were based on both primary and secondary sources of data. The primary source of data was an in-depth interview with the Media Advisor to Samsung; while the secondary sources involved Samsung's press statements, social media posts/comments on the issue, and news reports on the issues. The discussion was then based on the findings, and supported by similar studies done by other authors, on the subject-matter and cited in the literature review. While the research objectives were turned to research questions for the in-depth interview guide, all the research objectives were answered one after the other for the secondary sources of data. Apart from the qualitative presentation of data, the research was also embellished with quantitative analyses of data, as well as pictures of Samsung's press conferences/briefings.

## **5 CONCLUDING THOUGHTS ON THE CONTRIBUTION OF THIS RESEARCH, ITS IMPLCATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

### **5.1 IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS FOR THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This chapter concludes the study by outlining the key research findings in relation to the research objectives. The major aim of this research was to evaluate public relations as an effective tool in restoring consumer trust after product recall, using the Samsung' Galaxy Note 7 in 2016, as a case study. By using the specific research objectives, the study was able to provide significant findings of the research. Both the literature and the findings demonstrate the importance of public relations strategies, especially the crisis communication strategies variants as reliable and important tools for addressing the reputation crisis that may emerge from product recall, and also as indispensable tools in restoring the image of an organisation like Samsung at the post-crisis stage. From the array of literature review so far, there is a point of convergence: that organisations should “develop a clear communication strategy”; “create quality press materials”; “build relationships with journalists”; “establish an online presence”; “organise press conferences and events”; “leverage influencers”; “provide expert opinions and research”; “build long-term client and partner relationships”; “create authoritative video content”; “engage with bloggers and online media professionals”; “monitor and respond to feedback”; “use events to capture attention”; and “measure results” (Bhattacharya, 2024).

The results also indicated that during the Note 7 recall crisis, Samsung used several public relations strategies such as addressing of press conferences, issuing of press statements, updating its Website on the crisis, recalling of the controversial Note 7, and replacing the Note 7 for the customers who fell victims. The implications of this is that a crisis can be become multi-dimensional at a stage especially in this era of the ubiquity of the social media, occasioned by the Fourth Industrial Revolution. So if an organisation thinks it can manage a crisis in the conventional sense, then what about what is happening on the social media? There are studies that discovered that the social media engagements of Samsung came rather too late; and by the time the conglomerate realised it, some harm had been done to its reputation, especially when some of its consumers started referring to Note 7 as a “bomb”. It follows therefore that an organisation must always be proactive and understand that there are stages to a crisis: pre-crisis, crisis, and post-crisis. The public relations skills and strategies needed at the pre-crisis stage may differ from the ones needed at the crisis and post-crisis stage.

## **5.2 CONTRIBUTIONS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH**

One of the major contributions of this research is that it shows that for conglomerates like Samsung, their consumers/customers are global; and because of the globalisation of consumerism, what happens in one country, may affect what happens all over the globe because of the impact of the global media as well as the digital media. So the sub-text of this is that consumers can no longer be taken for granted by conglomerates like Samsung that has fierce and equally competent global competitors. Another contribution to research is that fighting crisis like fire-fighters is no solution to the crisis; so in deploying public relations and crisis response strategies, organisations must be tactical, methodical, communicate strategically, know when to keep silent, know when to respond adequately, and also know the media dependency behaviour of their customers. This is because at stated earlier, in times of crisis, the big media sometimes to turn to social media for User-Generated Contents (UGCs) in order to gauge the feelings and the pulse of the public on the issue. Another contribution of the research is that it showed that in times of crisis, the credibility and responsibility of an organisation can be shown by the way the leadership own to its responsibility, and empathise with the victims.

When the then President/CEO of Samsung, Koh Dong Jin personally addressed a press conference and was even looking remorseful, that struck a chord in the global consumers of the brand. May be that was why in the series of online survey conducted post-crisis, a majority of the respondent noted that they still remained loyal to the Samsung brand, irrespective of what

transpired with the Note 7 recall. Another contribution of the research could be seen in the flurry of posts/comments on the social media, especially Facebook and Twitter. The kinds of generic and sentimental frames identified by the findings of the research underscore the fact that in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, as Dominick (2019) notes, the power of information brokerage, dissemination, and mass communication is no longer the exclusive preserve of the conventional media or media conglomerates alone, but in the hands of ordinary members of the public who deploy the social media to make critical comments on issues of common interests. Concerning the limitations of the research, a major limitation is that the research did not make use of primary source sources of data such as getting to interview the consumers of Samsung brand, especially those who were affected by the crisis. The time-lag between the crisis and this research could not have made that possible. Most of the empirical studies on the crisis that used interviews, were done immediately after the crisis, when it was still fresh in the minds. Secondly, the research could not benefit also from the opinions from those who were in charge of Samsung's Corporate Affairs then, so as to know how the organisation weathered the storm using public relations strategies during the era of the crisis.

## **5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE**

Based on the findings of this research, the following are the recommendations for practice:

- (a) Apart from using in-house public relations personnel, Samsung, just like other conglomerates do, should have an internationally-reputable public relations firms such as Edelman, Hill & Knowlton, Ogilvy & Mather, Brunswick, BCW, and Dentsu, among others, that can dispassionately look at the issues involved and tell the organisation where it went wrong. In-house personnel are usually the staff of an organisation, so because of the fear of victimisation, they may not be able to speak the truth. These global PR firms also handle global brands like Samsung.
- (b) Contemporary public relations strategies must right from the beginning of the campaign incorporate the social media; this is because while absolute majority of the people do not have access to the big media, they have a their own "media" in their palms with which they can dent the reputation of an organisation online. So no matter how the organisation addresses press conferences and issue press statements, this may not be enough, if the billions of people on the social media across the globe are not engaged.
- (c) Crisis communication should be seriously and proactively taken seriously by any organisation, especially conglomerates like Samsung; this is because crisis can be inevitable in

both human and organisational affairs. So adequate structure/infrastructure (human/material), should always be put on standby, in the eventuality of any crisis, so that the response will be swift, proactive, and timely.

(d) Organisations should never pass the buck in times of crisis; it should rather offer apologies, whether the root cause of the crisis is from them or not, and while doing that should let the public know that they are investigating the matter and will keep them updated.

#### **5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

Based on the findings of this research, the following are the recommendation for future research:

- (a) Evaluation of Social Media Crisis Response Strategies on Consumer Loyalty After Product Recall.
- (b) Influence of Advertising on Consumer Loyalty After Product Post-Recall Crisis.
- (c) Perception and Use of Crisis Communication Strategies Among the Target Audience of An Organisation During Product Recall
- (d) Role of Influencers in Consumer Loyalty After Product Recall.
- (e) Comparative Study of the Influence of Traditional and Digital Media on Brand Loyalty After Product Recall.

#### **5.5 CONCLUSION AND REFLECTIONS**

Multinational organisations like Samsung should always be anticipating crises because we live in a dynamic world where changes happen everyday; and also because contemporary consumers are becoming discerning and media-literate, hence they tend to question any iota of irresponsibility on the part of conglomerates. It is also worthy no that information travels at the speed of light in this 21<sup>st</sup> Century, especially with the pervasive nature of the media, particularly the social media. Be that as it may, when crises occur, as they are bound to, because of the uncertainty of the global economy, conglomerates should take into consideration the cultural diversity of their consumers and respond to these crises based on these cultural diversities. For example, the cultural sensitivities of the Asian nations, may be different from that the nations in Africa, Europe, and North America, among others. While Samsung was busy trying to contain the crisis from its home country, the crisis also brewed in nearby China; and yet the consumers in the western world were also reacting on the social media. One of the major fallouts of the findings of this research is that conglomerates like Samsung should hire globally-renowned public relations firms on retainership basis so that when crises like the Galaxy Note 7 recall incident happen, external PR firms, who are more professional, can look at the leadership of the company in the

face and tell them the inconvenient truth. This is what the employees of such conglomerates like Samsung may not be able to do.

### **Appendix A: Press Statements by Samsung on the Crisis**

[Statement] Samsung Will Replace Current Note7 with New One

on September 2, 2016

Audio [AUDIO Play/Stop](#)

Share [Share open/close](#) Print

Samsung is committed to producing the highest quality products and we take every incident report from our valued customers very seriously. In response to recently reported cases of the new Galaxy Note7, we conducted a thorough investigation and found a battery cell issue.

To date (as of September 1) there have been 35 cases that have been reported globally and we are currently conducting a thorough inspection with our suppliers to identify possible affected batteries in the market. However, because our customers' safety is an absolute priority at Samsung, we have stopped sales of the Galaxy Note7.

For customers who already have Galaxy Note7 devices, we will voluntarily replace their current device with a new one over the coming weeks.

We acknowledge the inconvenience this may cause in the market but this is to ensure that Samsung continues to deliver the highest quality products to our customers. We are working closely with our partners to ensure the replacement experience is as convenient and efficient as possible.

## **Appendix B: Press Statements by Samsung on the Crisis**

### **Samsung Urges Galaxy Note7 Users to Immediately Participate in The Replacement Program**

on September 10, 2016

Audio [AUDIO Play/Stop](#)

Share [Share open/close](#) Print

Just over a week ago, Samsung Electronics [announced](#) a global replacement program for the Galaxy Note7 as a precautionary measure due to a battery cell issue. Since then, we have been working hard to expedite product shipments in order to fulfill that exchange program and reduce any inconvenience for our customers. During the past week, we understand that there are concerns from our customers and we wish to emphasize the importance of exchanging the product.

“Our number one priority is the safety of our customers. We are asking users to power down their Galaxy Note7s and exchange them as soon as possible,” says DJ Koh, President of Mobile Communications Business, Samsung Electronics. “We are expediting replacement devices so that they can be provided through the exchange program as conveniently as possible and in compliance with related regulations. We sincerely thank our customers for their understanding and patience.”

Although there have been only a small number of reported incidents, Samsung is taking great care to provide customers with necessary support. Samsung has identified the affected inventory and stopped sales and shipments of those devices. We are also collaborating with national regulatory bodies.

Customers who have Galaxy Note7 devices can replace their current device with a new device based on local availability. We encourage Galaxy Note7 customers to contact their place of purchase or call the designated call center locally as soon as possible.

## Appendix C: Derogatory Tweets on Samsung 2016 Galaxy Note 7 Recall

nervous tense

Tweet Details

alyssaxmonique

et Oct 11, 9:14am: RT @Josh\_Sherm: The Samsung Galaxy Note 7 - The only *phone* to *be* recalled twice in *history*.

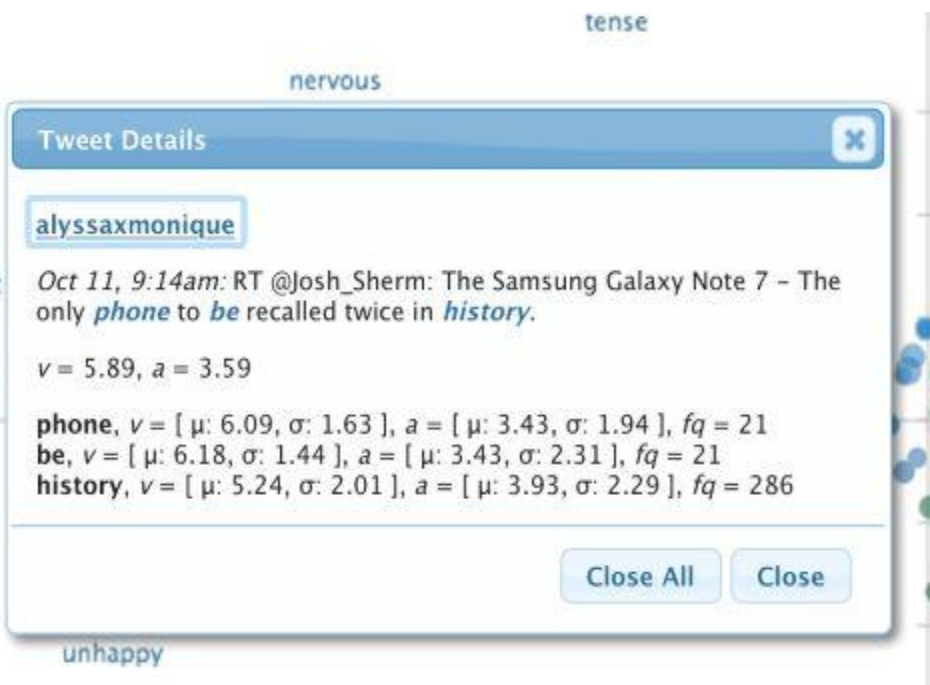
it  $v = 5.89, a = 3.59$

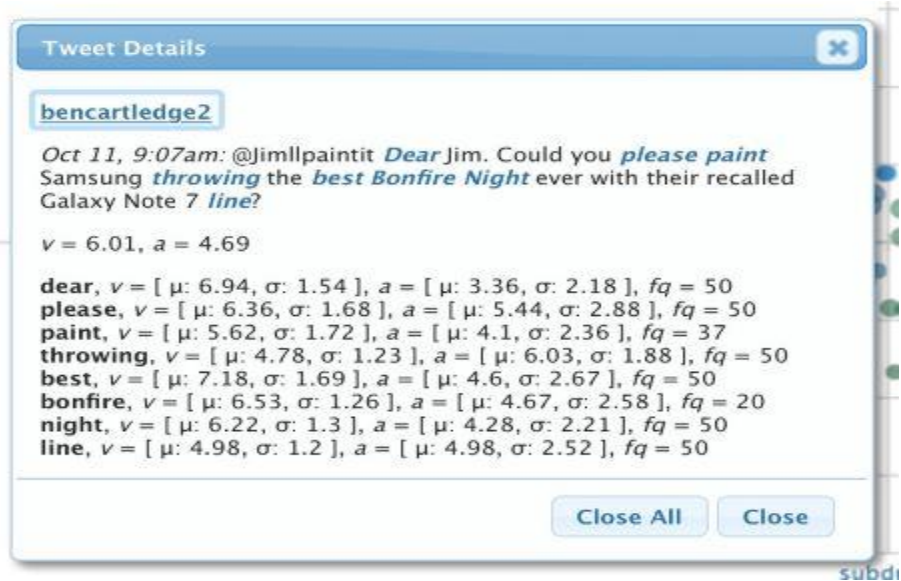
**phone**,  $v = [ \mu: 6.09, \sigma: 1.63 ], a = [ \mu: 3.43, \sigma: 1.94 ], fq = 21$   
**be**,  $v = [ \mu: 6.18, \sigma: 1.44 ], a = [ \mu: 3.43, \sigma: 2.31 ], fq = 21$   
**history**,  $v = [ \mu: 5.24, \sigma: 2.01 ], a = [ \mu: 3.93, \sigma: 2.29 ], fq = 286$

d

Close All Close

unhappy





**Appendix D: Interview guide**

**Subject-Matter: Samsung’s Galaxy Note 7 Recall of 2016**

**Background:** In 2016, Samsung’s Galaxy Note 7 mobile phone exploded in South Korea, China, and other cities in the world. The company, after some initial denial, attributed the problem to the quality of battery produced by the company to which it outsourced the production of battery. This incident affected the reputation of the Samsung brand.

**Declaration:** Please note that your participation in this interview is completely voluntary and your anonymity and the confidentiality of your information are guaranteed.

**SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA**

1. Rank/Designation.....
2. Current place of work and duration.....

**SECTION BS**

1. How did Samsung use public relations strategies to control the damage to its reputation done by the Galaxy Note 7 recall incident of 2016?
2. What were the public relations strategies used by Samsung during the crisis?
3. How did Samsung use the social media to engage with consumers across the world during the crisis?
4. What were the reactions of consumers across the world to the crisis?
5. How effective were the public relations strategies of Samsung during the crisis?

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