



UNIVERSITY OF MEDIA, ARTS AND COMMUNICATION (UniMAC)

INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM

EXPLORING THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN NONPROFIT PUBLIC RELATIONS

**PRACTICE: A CASE STUDY OF THE POS FOUNDATION AND THE
COMMONWEALTH HUMAN RIGHTS INITIATIVE (CHRI) – GHANA**

BY

EVANS APPIAH

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DECLARATION BY STUDENT

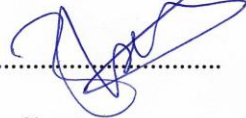
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I hereby declare that this research is a result of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or any other higher education institute. I further declare that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated or acknowledged by means of complete references.

Evans Appiah	MAPRM24065		09/12/2025
Student	Index number	Signature	Date

CERTIFICATION BY SUPERVISOR

This Dissertation has been prepared and presented under my supervision according to the guidelines for supervision and formatting laid down by the University of Media Arts and Communication. (UNIMAC).

Prof. Etse Sikanku		15/12/2025
Supervisor	Signature	Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to My father; Mr. Kofi Amponsem, My mother; Mrs. Vida Amponsem, My friend; Mr. Samuel Owusu Afriyie, My boss; Mr. Jonathan Osei Owusu (POS FOUNDATION) My supervisor; Prof. Etse Sikanku, for inspiring this journey.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined how nonprofit advocacy organisations in Ghana use social media as a strategic public relations tool to advance human-rights and governance-related causes. Focusing on the POS Foundation and the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) – Ghana, the study was anchored in an interpretivist paradigm and guided by Dialogic Communication Theory and Stakeholder Theory. A qualitative, exploratory multiple–case study design was employed. Data were generated through semi-structured interviews with communication managers, programme staff, and partner stakeholders, complemented by document review of social media posts, press releases, newsletters, and campaign materials. Data were analysed thematically using Braun and Clarke’s six-step procedure, with NVivo 14 supporting systematic coding and memoing. The analysis illuminated how both organisations integrate social media into broader advocacy and communication strategies, using platforms primarily for information dissemination, visibility-building, and issue framing, while only partially realising the dialogic and interactive potential of these tools. It also showed how organisational mandate, resource capacity, and external stakeholder expectations shape content choices, tone, and patterns of engagement. Furthermore, the findings highlighted tensions between strategic message control and the openness of digital spaces, especially for organisations working in politically sensitive domains. The study contributes to scholarship on nonprofit communication in the Global South by providing context-rich, empirically grounded insights into digital advocacy practices in Ghana. Practically, it offers guidance for NGOs seeking to move from ad hoc social media use toward more strategic, dialogic, and stakeholder-oriented digital public relations.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Chapter Overview

This chapter introduces the study, which examined how nonprofit advocacy organizations in Ghana use social media as a strategic public relations tool. It begins by situating the research within the broader context of digital communication and human-rights advocacy, highlighting the growing reliance of nonprofits on platforms such as Facebook, X, and Instagram to engage stakeholders, shape public narratives, and influence policy. The chapter then presents the background to the study, outlines the research problem, and articulates the objectives and research questions that guided the inquiry. It also explains the significance of the study for practitioners, scholars, and policymakers interested in nonprofit communication and digital advocacy in Ghana. Finally, the chapter provides an overview of the structure of the entire work, setting the stage for the subsequent review of literature, methodology, findings, and discussion.

1.1 Background of the Study

Social media has transformed the practice of public relations (PR) globally by enabling two-way, participatory, and dialogic communication between organizations and their publics. Traditionally, PR relied on one-way, organization-centered communication through mass media such as newspapers, television, and radio. However, the advent of Web 2.0 technologies has redefined the field, shifting the focus from message control to audience engagement and co-creation (Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Through interactive platforms like Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, and LinkedIn, organizations now build digital communities, manage reputation in real time, and foster trust through continuous dialogue and transparency (Valentini, 2015).

Scholars have provided multiple perspectives on the definition and conceptualization of social media. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define social media as internet-based applications built on Web 2.0 that enable the creation and exchange of user-generated content. Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, and Silvestre (2011) describe it as a set of functional building blocks identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationships, and reputation that shape online interactions and community dynamics. Similarly, Boyd and Ellison (2007) view social networking sites as platforms where users construct public or semi-public profiles and articulate social connections within a bounded system. Mangold and Faulds (2009) conceptualize social media as a hybrid element of the promotion mix that combines traditional marketing with peer-to-peer dialogue, while Breakenridge (2012) interprets it as a strategic tool that integrates analytics and stakeholder intelligence into PR practice. Together, these definitions underscore that social media is not simply a communication channel but a relational infrastructure that allows organizations to listen, respond, and collaborate with their publics.

In the nonprofit sector, social media has become indispensable for advocacy, transparency, and stakeholder engagement. Empirical research demonstrates that nonprofit organizations use digital platforms to raise awareness, mobilize support, and foster trust in ways that conventional media could not achieve (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012; Waters & Jamieson, 2019). According to Holtzhausen and Zerfass (2023), social media enables mission-driven organizations to build legitimacy by creating emotionally resonant narratives and promoting participatory communication. The ability to tell stories, share evidence of impact, and engage with beneficiaries in real time strengthens the moral and symbolic capital on which nonprofit brands depend.

Ghana's communication landscape reflects this global trend. The country's internet penetration reached approximately 72 percent in 2024, with more than 9 million active social-media users

(DataReportal, 2024). Social platforms have become integral to business, governance, and civic advocacy, reshaping how organizations communicate with the public. Studies by Mensah and Osei (2023) reveal that nearly 70 percent of Ghanaian NGOs now employ social media for stakeholder engagement, citing benefits such as cost-effectiveness, immediacy, and interactive reach. Nonetheless, many lack coherent digital strategies, resulting in inconsistent messaging and limited long-term brand engagement. This challenge underscores the need for scholarly inquiry into how Ghanaian nonprofit organizations conceptualize and operationalize social media within their PR functions.

The Perfecter of Sentiment (POS) Foundation offers an illustrative case of digital PR practice within Ghana's nonprofit sector. Established to promote human rights, justice reform, and mental-health advocacy, the Foundation has leveraged social media to amplify its flagship *Justice for All Programme*, educate the public on legal rights, and mobilize citizens for reform initiatives. Its consistent use of visual storytelling, stakeholder testimonials, and campaign hashtags demonstrates how social media can build brand credibility and strengthen advocacy impact (Ayensu, 2023). Similarly, the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) – Ghana represents another model of digital advocacy. Through research dissemination, civic-education campaigns, and real-time updates on freedom-of-information and police-accountability issues, CHRI uses social media to translate complex policy matters into accessible public narratives. Its emphasis on participatory engagement aligns with the dialogic communication approach advanced by Kent and Taylor (2002), where communication serves as mutual exchange rather than one-sided persuasion.

Despite these developments, gaps persist in understanding how nonprofit organizations in Ghana strategically employ social media for brand engagement and stakeholder management. Existing scholarship has largely concentrated on corporate and political communication (Osei-Owusu &

Owusu-Mensah, 2022), with limited attention to mission-driven advocacy groups. Moreover, few studies integrate theoretical perspectives such as Dialogic Communication Theory, Stakeholder Theory, and the Excellence Theory to explain how digital engagement practices contribute to organizational legitimacy, trust, and performance in the nonprofit sphere.

Accordingly, this study investigates the transformative role of social media in redefining public-relations strategies within Ghana's nonprofit sector, focusing on the POS Foundation and drawing contextual insights from CHRI – Ghana. It seeks to explore why and how these organizations use social media to build stakeholder relationships, enhance brand engagement, and sustain public trust. By examining these practices, the study contributes to the emerging scholarship on digital PR in sub-Saharan Africa and provides empirical evidence to guide nonprofit communication strategy in an increasingly networked society.

1.1.1 Social Media in the Global Communication Landscape

Over the past two decades, social media have fundamentally reshaped global communication by enabling interactive, many-to-many exchanges between organizations and their publics. Platforms such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, WhatsApp and YouTube have become central arenas for information dissemination, stakeholder engagement and agenda-setting, particularly for civil society and advocacy organisations (Guo & Saxton, 2018; Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012). Compared to traditional one-way mass media, social media afford greater opportunities for dialogic communication, visibility, and mobilisation, but also expose organisations to heightened public scrutiny in a crowded and “noisy” information environment (Guo & Saxton, 2018; Kim, 2025).

For nonprofit advocacy organisations in particular, social media function as strategic tools for signalling organisational values, framing issues, mobilising supporters and influencing policy debates (Guo & Saxton, 2018; Guo & Saxton, 2020). Empirical work shows that nonprofits use social media not only to broadcast information, but also to foster interaction and co-create meanings with stakeholders, even if the potential for genuine dialogue is not always fully realised (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012; Macnamara, 2015). This broader global trajectory provides the conceptual backdrop for examining how Ghanaian nonprofits deploy social media as part of their public relations and advocacy strategies.

1.1.2 Social Media Usage in Ghana

In Ghana, social media use has expanded rapidly alongside rising internet penetration and smartphone ownership. Recent digital indicators suggest that by early 2025 there were about 7.95–8.59 million social media user identities in the country, representing roughly 23–24% of the total population, with internet penetration approaching 70–75% (DataReportal, 2025; DataReportal, 2026; see also Ministry of Communications and Digitalisation statements). Platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, X, Instagram and TikTok have become integral to everyday communication, especially among urban youth and professional groups, and increasingly shape political discourse, civic engagement and entertainment.

Scholarly work on Ghana points to growing adoption of social media by NGOs and civil-society organisations for stakeholder engagement, fundraising and advocacy (Adjei, Annor-Frempong, & Bosompem, 2016; Kumapley, 2018). More recent studies highlight how youth-focused and SDG-oriented organisations leverage social media to mobilise participation and communicate development issues (Kumapley, 2018; Youth Advocates Ghana case studies). However, the literature also notes constraints such as limited strategic planning, unequal digital skills, and the

dominance of informational rather than dialogic use of platforms (Adjei et al., 2016; Mohammed, 2025). Despite this emerging body of work, systematic qualitative research on how advocacy-oriented nonprofits in Ghana integrate social media into their public relations and communication strategies remains relatively scarce thus underscoring the relevance of the present study.

1.1.3 Profile of the Selected Non-Profit Organisations

This study focuses on two advocacy-oriented nonprofit organisations: the Perfecter of Sentiment (POS) Foundation and the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) – Ghana. The POS Foundation is a Ghanaian NGO established in 2000 that works primarily on human-rights advocacy, justice-sector reform and prisoner reintegration, notably through its collaboration on the “Justice for All” programme in Ghana’s prisons. It uses social media platforms such as Facebook, X and Instagram to publicise cases of legal injustice, document court and prison interventions, and mobilise public and policy support around criminal-justice reforms.

CHRI–Ghana is the Ghana office of the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, an international NGO headquartered in India. The Ghana office focuses on access to information, police reform, accountability and broader human-rights education, often working through research reports, policy briefs, strategic litigation and civic-education campaigns. Its digital communication strategy uses social media to disseminate research findings, promote campaigns on access-to-information and policing, and engage citizens and policymakers on governance issues.

The two organisations were purposefully selected because they embody contrasting yet complementary models of digital advocacy within Ghana’s nonprofit landscape: POS Foundation is domestically founded and strongly grassroots-oriented, while CHRI–Ghana is internationally affiliated and more policy- and research-driven. Examining both cases side by side provides cross-

case insights into how organisational history, mandate and structure shape social-media-based public relations practices in the Ghanaian context.

1.1.4 Communication and the Non-Profit Sector

Communication is widely recognised as central to nonprofit effectiveness, legitimacy and sustainability. Unlike commercial firms, nonprofits depend heavily on intangible resources such as trust, credibility and moral authority to mobilise funding, attract volunteers, and maintain public support (Bennett, 2016; Brown, 2021). Public relations and strategic communication thus play a constitutive role in how nonprofits frame social problems, articulate their mission, demonstrate accountability and negotiate relationships with donors, beneficiaries, state agencies and the wider public.

Contemporary public-relations scholarship emphasises two-way, dialogic and relational approaches in which organisations not only disseminate information but also listen, respond and co-create meaning with stakeholders (Macnamara, 2015; Bellido & Macnamara, 2023). In the nonprofit sector, such dialogic communication is closely tied to the pursuit of organisational legitimacy, as visibility, stakeholder engagement and responsiveness contribute to how organisations are perceived as trustworthy and socially responsible (Fu, Kim, & Park, 2024; Guo & Saxton, 2018). Digital media intensify these dynamics by creating interactive spaces where stakeholders can publicly endorse, question or contest organisational claims in real time (Guo & Saxton, 2018; Kim, 2025).

For advocacy-oriented nonprofits, communication is therefore not simply an operational function but a core part of their mandate to influence policy, shape public discourse and mobilise collective action (Mohammed, 2025). Social media platforms, in particular, have become critical arenas where these organisations cultivate relationships, construct narratives about rights and justice, and

engage diverse publics, including donors, policymakers, journalists and affected communities. It is within this strategic nexus of communication, legitimacy and digital media that the present study explores the social-media-based public relations practices of POS Foundation and CHRI–Ghana.

1.2 Problem Statement

The digital revolution has transformed how organizations communicate, yet many nonprofit institutions especially in developing countries continue to struggle with integrating social media strategically into their public relations (PR) functions. While social media offer opportunities for visibility, stakeholder participation, and reputation management, their adoption among nonprofits is often fragmented, reactive, and under-theorized (Holtzhausen & Zerfass, 2023; Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012). In Ghana, nonprofit organizations increasingly rely on social networking platforms such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), and Instagram to promote advocacy and mobilize public engagement; however, empirical evidence suggests that their use remains largely informal and lacks alignment with broader organizational strategies (Mensah & Osei, 2023).

This gap is particularly significant given that in nonprofit settings, “brand” extends beyond market identity it embodies trust, legitimacy, and moral authority (Laidler-Kylander & Shepard Stenzel, 2014). Without coherent digital-communication frameworks, nonprofits risk projecting inconsistent messages, weakening stakeholder relationships, and diminishing public confidence in their missions. Studies on Ghana’s communication environment reveal that while many NGOs appreciate social media’s reach, few evaluate its impact on stakeholder engagement or brand perception, resulting in superficial digital activity rather than sustained relational communication (Osei-Owusu & Owusu-Mensah, 2022; Dziewornu-Norvor, 2022).

The Perfecter of Sentiment (POS) Foundation, a leading Ghanaian NGO advocating justice reform and human-rights protection, exemplifies both the potential and the challenge of this digital transition. Through initiatives such as the *Justice for All Programme* and mental-health-awareness campaigns, the Foundation has used social media to amplify marginalized voices and mobilize support. Yet, it remains unclear how systematically these digital efforts are integrated into its overall PR strategy, how stakeholders interpret and engage with its online communication, and whether these interactions translate into meaningful advocacy outcomes or enhanced organizational credibility. Similarly, the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) – Ghana, which focuses on access-to-justice and information-rights advocacy, deploys digital channels for campaign updates and policy influence but faces similar questions of consistency, evaluation, and strategic orientation.

Existing literature on social-media use in Ghana's nonprofit communication is limited, with much of the research centering on corporate and political contexts rather than mission-driven advocacy organizations (Mensah & Osei, 2023). The few available studies tend to focus on access and usage rather than on how social-media practices reshape organizational identity, stakeholder relationships, or the theoretical dimensions of PR effectiveness. Moreover, the theoretical linkage between digital engagement and PR outcomes particularly within frameworks such as Dialogic Communication Theory, Stakeholder Theory, and the Excellence Theory remains empirically under-explored in sub-Saharan Africa.

Consequently, there is a pressing need for systematic investigation into how nonprofit organizations in Ghana conceptualize, implement, and evaluate social-media-based PR strategies. This study therefore addresses the central problem of inadequate understanding and application of social-media communication as a strategic PR tool for fostering stakeholder trust, legitimacy, and

brand engagement. By examining the cases of the POS Foundation and CHRI – Ghana, the study seeks to fill this empirical and theoretical void, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of how digital platforms can be leveraged to strengthen advocacy communication within Ghana’s nonprofit sector.

1.3 Aim of the Study

The aim of this study is to explore how and why nonprofit organizations in Ghana use social media as part of their public relations strategies, focusing on the Perfecter of Sentiment (POS) Foundation and the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) Ghana.

1.4 Research Objectives

1. To explore the reasons nonprofit organizations adopt social media for public relations practice.
2. To understand how social media is used to build relationships, enhance brand engagement, and foster stakeholder trust.
3. To identify the contextual challenges that influence the strategic use of social media in nonprofit public relations in Ghana.

1.5 Research Questions

1. Why do nonprofit organizations such as the POS Foundation and CHRI – Ghana use social media in their public relations practice?
2. How do these organizations use social media to build relationships, enhance brand engagement, and foster stakeholder trust?
3. What contextual challenges influence the strategic use of social media for public relations within Ghana’s nonprofit sector?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study is significant for several reasons, spanning theoretical, practical, and policy domains. It contributes to a deeper understanding of how nonprofit organizations in Ghana strategically use social media to advance public relations, advocacy, and stakeholder engagement in the digital era.

This study contributes to the growing body of scholarship on digital communication and public relations in sub-Saharan Africa. While existing research has largely focused on corporate and political communication, limited attention has been given to nonprofit advocacy organizations that depend on credibility, transparency, and community participation. By drawing on Dialogic Communication Theory, Stakeholder Theory, and the Excellence Theory of Public Relations, the study extends theoretical discourse by examining how social media facilitates two-way symmetrical communication and enhances relational trust within mission-driven contexts. It also adds empirical evidence from Ghana, a developing democracy with an expanding digital ecosystem, thereby enriching global perspectives on PR practice in resource-constrained environments.

The findings of this study will provide valuable insights to communication practitioners within nonprofit and civil-society organizations in Ghana and similar contexts. Through the experiences of the Perfecter of Sentiment (POS) Foundation and the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) – Ghana, the study will illustrate effective ways to leverage social media for relationship-building, brand engagement, and advocacy communication. It will help organizations identify best practices for content creation, audience interaction, and ethical storytelling while addressing internal challenges such as limited budgets, staff capacity, and inconsistent messaging. These insights will assist practitioners in designing more coherent, sustainable, and trust-driven digital strategies that align with organizational missions.

The study has implications for governance structures within the nonprofit sector and for institutions that support civic advocacy and digital communication in Ghana. The findings can inform the development of internal communication guidelines, donor-reporting frameworks, and capacity-building programs that emphasize transparency and ethical engagement online. Additionally, the study's outcomes may guide national regulatory bodies, such as the Institute of Public Relations (IPR) Ghana, in designing training and certification standards that integrate digital PR competencies for nonprofit professionals. By bridging the gap between practice and policy, the research promotes a more professional, ethical, and evidence-based approach to digital public relations in Ghana's civil society.

1.7 Organization of the Study

This study is structured into five chapters. Chapter One introduces the study by presenting the background, problem statement, research aim, objectives, questions, and significance. Chapter Two reviews relevant literature, encompassing conceptual, theoretical, and empirical perspectives on social media, public relations, and nonprofit communication, while grounding the discussion in Dialogic Communication Theory, Stakeholder Theory, and the Excellence Theory. Chapter Three outlines the research methodology, detailing the qualitative design, case-study approach, sampling strategy, data-collection procedures, and ethical considerations. Chapter Four presents and interprets the findings from the field, drawing on participants' perspectives to illustrate key themes. Chapter Five concludes the study by summarizing major insights, discussing implications for theory and practice, and offering recommendations for nonprofit communication strategies and future research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 Chapter Overview

This chapter reviews the literature relevant to the study by focusing on three major strands: conceptual, theoretical, and empirical perspectives. It first defines social media and discusses its relevance to public relations (PR) practice, drawing from contemporary and classical definitions. The chapter then examines Ghana's PR landscape and the increasing use of social media in nonprofit advocacy communication. The theoretical framework integrates Dialogic Communication Theory, Stakeholder Theory, and the newly added Excellence Theory of Public Relations, which collectively explain the interactive, relational, and strategic dimensions of digital PR in nonprofit contexts.

2.1 Social Media

Social media, according to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), comprises a broader variety of services, such as blogs, collaborative projects, and collaborative social worlds. Because of their realization of how difficult it is to define a concept that is constantly being modified and improved for the world, Wright and Hinson (2009) stated that "it is still difficult to define exactly what social media are" (p.3). They described it as "social media delivering web-based information created by people with the intention of facilitating communication." Kim et al. (2014), opine that social media are types of electronic communication (such as social networking Web sites and microblogging) in which users build online communities to exchange information, ideas, personal messages, and other content such as videos and music. Social media refers to websites and programs created to make it simple, quick, and immediate for users to exchange material. Any online communication tool that enables users to communicate with the public and distribute material widely is considered

to be this. It is a digital platform or tool that includes a huge variety of websites and applications that enables users to instantly produce and share information with the world (Borgatti, 2014).

Mensah and Nizam (2016) see social media as a type of web-based service that allows users to build profiles within a confined system in order to share a similar viewpoint. It's vital to remember that using social media allows people to produce, collaborate, and update their own material. According to Lusk (2010), social media platforms such as Facebook, blogs, Twitter, MySpace, and LinkedIn are all designed to let people communicate with one another. Blogging, microblogging (such as Twitter), social networking (such as Facebook), collaborative knowledge production and sharing (such as Wikipedia), multimedia sharing (such as YouTube), and sharing reviews and opinions are some of the ways to categorize social media; its typology is often based on the main function and purpose of use (such as social Q & A, user reviews).

Social media is a tool for bringing people together in a variety of ways since users may share their opportunities, experiences, ideas, and thoughts on any platform, including Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, WeChat, and others. Through this channel, business owners may profit by utilizing various social media for commercial objectives, such as advertising and promotions (Seunghyun, Yoon, Jaemin, & Seoki, 2015).

2.2 Methods of Social Media communication

Divya & Bulomine (2014) argue that people engage in social media communication by blogging or posting pictures or data about any product they are selling. When combined with other networking tools, websites and blogs are the most powerful tools for social media communication. A blog is an incredible tool that can be used for much more than just business communication, It also aids communication with other clients in the event of a problem. Displaying articles for sale on social media is an effective way to create awareness of the product. There are numerous article

directories that accept free article submissions (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012). According to Mady (2011), article selling is also the most effective and cost-effective method of social media marketing. It is a type of social media communication trade that involves writing articles and attracting an infinite number of users from all over the world. Today, it has provided free business to many advertisers and publishers, and they have benefited greatly from their articles. Article selling includes written pieces or items for the sale of particular goods and services.

Video marketing, in particular, is very effective on social media communicating tools. Every day, millions of Internet users watch videos. Millions of potential customers can be reached by a short video about the services and products. Several video distribution websites are critical for

Communication and marketing, these websites provide services to people all over the world (Buzzeto-More, 2013). In a similar view Cox & Shirley (2010) asserts that to communicate using video on social media, all that is required is to record a video and upload it to video sharing websites such as YouTube or Instagram. It appears to be the simplest mode of communicating to audience compared to other modes because many people will be more interested in watching videos rather than reading written advertisements. These arguments tell the methods used by businesses to market their product. They argued that businesses use videos and written pieces to reach out to their audience on social media platforms. This study will discover the methods used by some SMEs in Accra in using social media to communicate to audience. This is important because the study intends to find out whether the methods used by businesses outside Ghana are the same because of the different audience segmentation.

2.3 Concept of Public Relations

According to Johnson (1997 as cited in Anani-Bossman, 2022a), public relations is a science in its own right; nonetheless, its distinct contemporary role did not appear in the ‘present moment’ as we know it until the nineteen fifties. Public relations may be described in its most basic form as the process of establishing and maintaining positive relationships between an organization and its target audience to guarantee the audience’s happiness and accomplish mutual understanding and trust.

According to Edward Burney, who is often referred to be the founder of public relations, the definition of public relations that is widely acknowledged is that it is a planned and continuous endeavor to build and maintain mutual understanding between an organization and its public (Theaker and Yaxley (2018)). The practice of public relations, which reflects both the goals of PR and an organization’s guiding principles, is where differences emerge, as opposed to the notion of PR itself, which is universal across all types of businesses. However, the objectives that are established by the department of public relations in an organization that tries to produce a profit are distinct from the goals that are set by the department of public relations in other organizations, particularly those organizations that do not intend to make a profit, even though both types of organizations share certain goals (Butterick, 2011).

Public relations is a management function that builds and maintains two-way, mutual connections and communications between an organization and its publics and stakeholders. These relationships and communications often decide whether or not the organization is successful. Public relations management includes ongoing activities like research, analysis, planning, and evaluation to comprehend, build, and maintain strategic partnerships. Investor Relations, Lobbying, Public Affairs (Government & Community), Publicity & Media/Blogger Relations, Employee Relations,

International Relations, and Crisis Management are all sub-fields that fall under the umbrella of Public Relations (Anani-Bossman, 2021a). Public relations and publicity are often used interchangeably, which may lead to confusion on the nature of public relations (Thelander & Säwe, 2015).

2.4 Importance of Public Relations in Organizations

Despite the disparity of interest between different types of organizations, public relations has taken its place within the organizational structure of departments in many modern organizations because it has been recognized that there is an urgent need for it (Butterick, 2011). That agreement on its activities and programs is not a luxury but a justified goal. The growing significance of public relations is evident in the creation of specialist departments inside organizations and entities to execute public relations responsibilities (Sriramesh, Zerfass & Kim 2013).

Regular and systematic investigation, in the view of experts and practitioners, is the cornerstone of good public relations, and it aims to lower the degree of ambiguity when making judgments. (Valentini, 2021). This is not the first stage in the public relations process. Still, it is the most challenging phase for several reasons, including the range of stakeholders tied to the organization's interest. Furthermore, audience searches are an ongoing activity that is difficult to halt. Furthermore, research goes beyond the study of internal and external audiences to include the surrounding environment (Thelander & Säwe, 2015).

It may be claimed that two-way communication is the foundation of public relations work, with all of its needs intertwined with the necessity for research on all sorts of audiences. The public relations professional's interaction with the media is critical since the media regulates the flow of information to the people in a certain social structure (Sriramesh, et.al., 2013). It is not logical to devote all members of the organization to dealing with the media, but the public relations manager

can manage this relationship by providing all data and necessary information, responding to media criticism and questions, and following up on how published media relates to the organization's performance, particularly if it includes criticism or allegations (Anani-Bossman, 2022). There are two approaches to dealing with media content: first, disregard it, and second, recognize its significance (Young, 2008).

Another element that underscores the necessity for a public relations department is organizational social responsibility. An organization must remember the community in which it lives, and this responsibility must be a function of public relations because it is unavoidable that an organization will develop a social character by taking on a role that benefits the community and providing services and activities that confirm its association with this society and its interaction with its people and organizations (Doh & Guay, 2006)

2.5 Distinguishable Public Relations Roles

According to Ngondo and Klyueva (2020), public relations are planned and ongoing activities to establish and maintain goodwill and understanding between an organization and its target audience. Words like "planning" and "continuous" demonstrate that goodwill and understanding are not readily attained and must, in fact, be "created" and "maintained." These words also establish that actions related to public relations are planned, and that public relations aims to generate goodwill and understanding (Dodd et al., 2015).

When it comes to accomplishing organizational goals and aims, businesses and other organizations all over the globe need to have a better understanding of the importance of public relations. To be more explicit, the overall organizational strategy plan must integrate public relations activities within the short- and long-term planning to prevent communication blunders on the internal and external levels (Public Relations Society of America, 2013).

According to Mahendra (2020), socially responsible investments provide the basis of corporations' role in the social aspect of sustainable development. This refers to "value chain social impacts that are affected by the organization's activities and social dimensions of competitive context that affect the drivers of competitiveness where the organization operates" (Mahendra, 2020). In public relations, stakeholder groups, investment and financial hubs are the primary targets.

According to Kent (2013), public relations are an essential component when it comes to public reporting on matters pertaining to the economy, equality, and the environment. According to Sison (2010), the role of the corporation in the internal environment area is to operate under the auspices of ethics and the law, respect the equity between work and compensation/benefit, implant motivational forces that need to increase human resources work satisfaction, and provide opportunities for growth and development within its structure. Regarding the company's internal environment, public relations are aimed not only at the organization but also toward its many divisions and sections.

Smudde (2021) states, "internal communication and good internal communication channels are paramount in conducting planned changes." Furthermore, overall organizational development placed an emphasis on "the development of employee capital and corresponding competencies and have acknowledged their importance for long-term competitive advantages." It is also crucial to highlight that public relations is the promotion of mutual understanding with audiences and with confidence as well as strong reasoning and logic while simultaneously defending organization interests, protecting from the public interest, governments, and other organizations (Smudde, 2021).

The management and maintenance of connections between a company and its many stakeholders is one of the primary responsibilities of public relations, which plays an important role inside companies. These stakeholders include the general public, the media, workers, consumers, investors, and the community at large. Within organizations, public relations play a number of important roles, including the following:

Management of Reputation: Public relations are in charge of sculpting and maintaining the organization's reputation in the public eye (Anani-Bossman, 2022). This includes controlling public perception, resolving unfavorable publicity or crises, and building a good brand image via strategic communication. Controlling public perception also includes handling any crises.

Media Relations: Professionals in the public relations industry maintain tight relationships with members of the media to produce favorable media coverage for the organization. They cultivate connections with media members, provide story suggestions, organize interviews, and respond to questions from the press, all to ensure that correct and positive information is communicated (Mahendra, 2020).

Crisis Management: Public relations plays an essential part in managing and reducing the effects of crises that may affect the company's reputation. During difficult times, public relations specialists devise plans for handling a crisis's communication, field questions from the media, and give stakeholders with information that is both timely and transparent (Anani-Bossman, 2021b).

Engagement with Stakeholders: Public relations specialists participate in dialogue with a wide variety of stakeholders, including as workers, consumers, investors, and members of the community. They disseminate the company's objectives, values, and initiatives to cultivate trust, loyalty, and support. Public relations also makes two-way communication easier by allowing for

the collection of input and addressing problems from various stakeholders (Atta-Obeng & Dadzie, 2020).

Internal Communication: Public relations manages internal communication inside the company. This includes ensuring that workers get consistent message, cultivating a healthy company culture, communicating critical updates and announcements, and increasing employee engagement and morale (Samuel & Samuel, 2018).

Publicity and Promotions: Public relations experts develop and put into action plans to increase the organization's exposure in the public eye and produce favorable publicity. This involves coordinating events, obtaining speaking engagements for executives, handling sponsorships, and capitalizing on chances presented by the media in order to heighten consumers' knowledge of the brand (A. Anani-Bossman & Mudzanani, 2020).

Communication Via social media and Digital Platforms: Public relations uses social media and digital platforms to communicate with and interact with target audiences. Public relations experts build up a brand's presence in the market, manage the brand's reputation, and promote direct engagement with stakeholders through managing social media accounts, creating content, and monitoring online dialogues (Anani-Bossman, 2022b).

Public relations play an important role in shaping the organization's brand identity as well as its communications. Public relations specialists generate important statements aligned with the firm's aims and values, providing consistency across all communication platforms due to their work. In addition to this, they market the organization's brand through participating in events, receiving media attention, and forming strategic alliances. Public relations often promote and disseminate a firm's corporate social responsibility efforts. They contribute to developing and implementing

corporate social responsibility plans, guaranteeing transparency and alignment with the expectations of various stakeholders while simultaneously boosting the organization's image as a socially responsible company. Public relations, in general, play an important function in enterprises, and this job encompasses a wide range of responsibilities, including reputation management, strategic communication, stakeholder engagement, crisis management, and brand promotion (Atibil, 2012). Public relations experts operate as a bridge between the company and its many stakeholders, assisting in developing and upkeep mutually beneficial connections while also managing the business's image and reputation efficiently.

It is essential to recognize, in light of what has been discussed above, that the function of public relations in corporations plays an extremely vital part in accomplishing organizational goals and objectives. As a result, businesses need to seriously consider the function of public relations as an essential component of the firm in various fields, most notably the efforts relating to corporate social responsibility that the enterprises undertake. The participation of public relations professionals in corporate social responsibility will improve the image and reputation of enterprises in the eyes of the general public while also maximizing the wealth of stakeholders.

2.6 Organization and Public Relations Communications Strategies with Stakeholders

The connection between an organization and its public relations communications strategies is closely tied to how it engages with its stakeholders. Effective public relation strategies aim to build and maintain positive relationships with stakeholders by ensuring transparent, timely, and meaningful communication (Jiwani, 2021). Public relations practitioners work closely with the organization to identify its key stakeholders. These may include customers, employees, investors, partners, regulators, the media, local communities, and other groups or individuals who have an

interest or influence over the organization's activities. Understanding stakeholders' concerns is crucial for developing targeted communication strategies (Thaib, 2020).

Public relations practitioners develop communication strategies and plans that align with the organization's goals and objectives while addressing the needs and expectations of its stakeholders. Public relations practitioners identify the most effective communication channels, messages, and tactics to reach and engage with each stakeholder group. Public relations practitioners craft messages that resonate with specific stakeholder groups. When developing communication materials, they consider the stakeholders' interests, values, and concerns. Organizations can effectively convey relevant information and build stronger connections by tailoring messages to different stakeholder segments (Styszyński, 2016).

Public relations strategies facilitate ongoing engagement with stakeholders. Public relations practitioners seek stakeholder input, feedback, and insights through surveys, focus groups, meetings, and other communication methods. This engagement helps organizations understand stakeholder perspectives, address concerns, and maintain open lines of communication. Effective public relations strategies prioritize two-way communication, allowing stakeholders to express their views, ask questions, and provide feedback (Dzisah, 2019). This can be achieved through multiple channels, including social media platforms, online forums, customer service hotlines, or dedicated feedback mechanisms. Organizations respond to stakeholder inquiries promptly, transparently, and in a manner that reflects their commitment to meaningful dialogue. Public relations is critical in managing crises and addressing issues that may impact stakeholders. In times of crisis or reputational challenges, organizations rely on effective communication to provide accurate information, demonstrate accountability, and alleviate stakeholder concerns. Public

relations develop crisis plans and strategies to ensure timely and transparent communication during challenging situations (Demuyakor, 2021).

Public relations communications strategies focus on building and nurturing long-term stakeholder relationships (Mensah & Amenuvor, 2022). Organizations share updates, milestones, and success stories to demonstrate their commitment to stakeholders' interests. Public relations practitioners facilitate community engagement programs, partnerships with NGOs, or CSR initiatives to strengthen relationships further. Public relations practitioners measure and evaluate the impact of communication strategies on stakeholder perceptions and relationships. Public relations practitioners use various metrics, such as media coverage, social media engagement, surveys, and feedback analysis, to assess the effectiveness of communication efforts (Mwaawaru, 2009). This feedback loop helps organizations refine their strategies and better meet stakeholder needs. The connection between an organization and its public relations communications strategies lies in effectively managing stakeholder relationships. Organizations can build trust, enhance reputation, and maintain strong connections with their stakeholders by understanding stakeholder expectations, engaging in two-way communication, and addressing concerns transparent.

2.7 Concept of Social Media and Its Relevance to Public Relations

The conceptualization of social media has evolved alongside the digital transformation of communication, producing competing definitions that reflect different scholarly paradigms. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define social media as a group of internet-based applications built on Web 2.0 technologies that enable the creation and exchange of user-generated content. This technological emphasis has been widely adopted but also criticized for downplaying the socio-cultural and relational dimensions of online interaction. Kietzmann et al. (2011) move beyond technology to identify seven building blocks identity, conversations, sharing, presence,

relationships, reputation, and groups that explain why social media operates as a social system rather than merely a digital tool. Yet, even this framework assumes a universalized logic of participation, often ignoring contextual inequalities in digital literacy, infrastructural access, and political freedom that shape social-media use in the Global South (Bosch, 2022).

From a public-relations perspective, social media has unsettled the long-standing dominance of one-way, organization-centred communication. Mangold and Faulds (2009) describe it as a “hybrid element” of promotion that merges organizational control with peer-to-peer dialogue, while Valentini (2015) argues that it redefines PR as a participatory and contested public sphere. This contestation is particularly relevant to nonprofit communication, where credibility and legitimacy depend on public trust rather than market competition. Scholars such as Holtzhausen and Zerfass (2023) contend that social media democratizes the communication process by allowing publics to shape organizational narratives, thereby eroding traditional message authority. However, others like Kent and Taylor (2016) warn that such democratization remains rhetorical unless organizations commit to dialogic principles mutuality, empathy, and risk rather than using digital platforms for monologic publicity.

In practice, the relationship between social media and PR is dialectical rather than linear: while digital tools enhance reach and immediacy, they also expose organizations to scrutiny, misinformation, and reputational vulnerability. For nonprofits such as the Perfecter of Sentiment (POS) Foundation and the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) – Ghana, this tension is central. Their social-media advocacy simultaneously empowers and constrains them empowers, because platforms amplify visibility and engagement; constrains, because constant transparency demands institutional consistency and ethical rigor. Hence, the relevance of social media to PR in contemporary nonprofits lies not merely in dissemination but in the struggle to sustain authenticity,

responsiveness, and trust amid algorithmic visibility pressures. This study therefore treats social media as both an opportunity structure and a communicative dilemma a space where advocacy legitimacy is negotiated rather than guaranteed.

2.8 The Public Relations Landscape in Ghana

Public relations (PR) practice in Ghana reflects a complex interplay between inherited colonial communication structures, professional institutionalization, and contemporary digital transformation. Historically, PR evolved from government information services during the post-independence era, functioning primarily as a propaganda tool for nation-building (Anani-Bossman, 2022). Over time, however, the field has transitioned toward professionalism, evidenced by the establishment of the Institute of Public Relations (IPR) Ghana in 1972, which sought to standardize ethics, competencies, and corporate communication practices. Yet, despite these institutional advances, Ghanaian PR remains characterized by a tension between normative aspirations two-way, strategic, and research-driven communication and the persistence of one-way, publicity-oriented approaches in both public and private sectors.

Empirical research reveals that PR in Ghana has been slow to align with contemporary global paradigms that emphasize relationship management and symmetrical dialogue. Dziejornu-Norvor (2022) found that many PR practitioners still equate success with media visibility rather than stakeholder trust, demonstrating a continuity of press agency rooted in historical models. Similarly, Mensah and Osei (2023) observe that while organizations increasingly use social media, their engagement often remains reactive and unstructured, lacking the analytical rigor needed to evaluate stakeholder sentiment. This gap between practice and theory exposes a broader issue: the localization of PR models developed in Western contexts without sufficient adaptation to Ghana's socio-cultural realities.

The emergence of digital communication has both challenged and revitalized PR practice in Ghana. The proliferation of mobile internet over 70 percent penetration as of 2024 (DataReportal, 2024) has democratized access to audiences, compelling organizations to engage with publics on social platforms that privilege immediacy, participation, and transparency. For nonprofits, this shift represents both an opportunity and a burden. Organizations such as the Perfecter of Sentiment (POS) Foundation and the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) – Ghana operate within this fluid environment, using social media to advocate for justice and accountability while negotiating resource constraints and reputational risks.

The Ghanaian PR landscape reveals a professional paradox: while digital technologies promise dialogic engagement, many organizations still practice instrumental communication posting updates without fostering dialogue or feedback loops. This discrepancy exposes the gap between technological adoption and communicative ethics. The challenge, therefore, is not merely to “use” social media but to embed it within a broader philosophy of relational communication rooted in transparency, inclusivity, and mutual understanding. This study interrogates how nonprofit organizations in Ghana navigate that paradox to align digital engagement with strategic public-relations effectiveness.

2.9 Social Media Usage in Ghana

The diffusion of social media in Ghana represents one of the most transformative developments in the country’s communication ecosystem, yet its integration into organizational strategy remains uneven and contested. DataReportal (2024) estimates that over 9.6 million Ghanaians roughly 71 percent of the population actively use social media, with Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter) dominating usage. On the surface, these statistics suggest a maturing digital public sphere; however, the mere growth in users does not necessarily translate into meaningful

digital participation or strategic communication. Scholars such as Mensah and Osei (2023) argue that Ghana's social media landscape is characterized by "adoption without adaptation," where organizations embrace digital tools without embedding them within coherent communication frameworks.

Social media use in Ghana exhibits a paradox between visibility and engagement. While many individuals and institutions have become prolific content producers, genuine dialogue and interactivity remain limited. Dziewornu-Norvor (2022) observes that PR practitioners often equate digital success with follower counts or post frequency rather than quality of stakeholder interaction. This reflects a lingering dependency on publicity models inherited from traditional media, where the goal is exposure rather than mutual understanding. Consequently, social media's relational potential its ability to facilitate conversation, empathy, and feedback is frequently underutilized.

In the nonprofit sector, this paradox becomes more pronounced. Organizations such as the Perfecter of Sentiment (POS) Foundation and the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) Ghana operate within a communication terrain where advocacy and accountability must coexist with donor expectations and public scrutiny. Their use of social media for justice reform, policy education, and public mobilization illustrates the potential of digital advocacy to humanize complex legal or rights-based issues. Yet, the sustainability of such engagement is undermined by structural constraints, including inconsistent internet connectivity, staff capacity gaps, and limited analytical tools for measuring online impact. These limitations resonate with studies by Holtzhausen and Zerfass (2023), who warn that without institutionalized digital strategies, social media can amplify noise rather than meaningful influence.

Furthermore, Ghana's digital sphere mirrors global concerns about misinformation, polarization, and algorithmic bias. As seen during civic campaigns such as #FixTheCountry and #OccupyJulorbiHouse, social media can simultaneously empower citizens and intensify political tension. For nonprofits engaged in advocacy, this duality requires cautious navigation between activism and professionalism. Thus, social media usage in Ghana is not simply a story of progress but of negotiation a continuous balancing act between access and ethics, participation and control, immediacy and credibility. For PR scholars and practitioners alike, the question is no longer whether to use social media but how to engage with publics in ways that are dialogic, transparent, and socially responsible.

2.10 Advocacy communication: Conceptual foundations

Advocacy communication sits at the intersection of strategic communication, public relations, and social change. Drawing on rhetorical and public-communication traditions, Heath (2006, 2018) conceptualises advocacy communications as the submission of well-reasoned arguments that undergo public scrutiny to inform collective decisions. In this view, advocacy communication is not simply about promotion but about shaping how issues are defined, whose voices are heard, and what solutions are considered legitimate in the public sphere. Recent work on NGOs' advocacy communication stresses that it is typically developed by activist groups, social movements and charities to bring marginalised concerns into public debate and policy arenas.

Development and health-communication scholars similarly describe advocacy as a communication process through which individuals and groups influence their social and policy environments at local, national or global level. Servaes and Malikhao (2010) argue that advocacy combines social networking and mobilisation, interpersonal negotiation, and strategic use of mass and digital media to generate public pressure and support for policy change, underscoring its hybrid character as

both relational and media-driven communication. Across these perspectives, advocacy communication is inherently normative: it is oriented toward contesting injustice, redistributing voice and influencing structures of power, rather than merely supporting organisational image or market share.

2.10.1 Advocacy communication, strategic communication and public relations

Within public relations scholarship, advocacy has long been treated as a core function through issue management, public affairs and campaigning. Early work on issues communication and advocacy highlighted the centrality of framing, evidence and narrative in efforts to influence public opinion and policy agendas (Nelson, 1994). More recent critical and cultural perspectives argue that advocacy communication should move beyond narrow client-centred lobbying toward ethical, dialogic engagement that recognises the rights and agency of affected publics (Heath, 2006; Waymer, 2007).

This shift aligns with broader critiques of one-way, message-centric models of strategic communication. Macnamara (2016, 2022) shows that organisations, including NGOs and public institutions, often prioritise speaking over listening, resulting in advocacy that is broadcast-driven rather than participatory. His work on organisational listening calls for advocacy communication that systematically hears, interprets and integrates stakeholder voices, particularly those most affected by the issues at stake. In this sense, advocacy communication is increasingly conceptualised not only as persuasive messaging but as part of a broader ecology of listening, deliberation and co-creation of meaning.

2.10.2 Advocacy communication in NGOs and nonprofit organisations

For NGOs and nonprofits, communication is integral to mission delivery, not a peripheral activity. Organisational guides and handbooks emphasise that advocacy cannot succeed without effective

communication, because influencing decision-makers and mobilising constituencies depends on how clearly issues are articulated, how compellingly evidence is presented, and how strategically messages are targeted to key audiences. Typical advocacy communication tools include policy briefs, research reports, press statements, stakeholder meetings, community forums, and coalition-building activities, supported by tailored messaging for policymakers, media, donors and affected communities.

NGO-focused literature also stresses the need for integrated advocacy and communication strategies that define objectives, audiences, channels, narratives and responsibilities. Such strategies are expected to move beyond ad hoc publicity and align communication with clear change goals, theory of change and evidence bases. At the same time, capacity constraints, donor-driven agendas and political sensitivities often limit the ability of NGOs especially in the Global South to invest in sustained professional communication infrastructures.

2.10.3 Digital and social-media-based advocacy communication

Digital media have significantly altered the practice of advocacy communication. Guo and Saxton's (2014) landmark study of 188 US nonprofit advocacy organisations shows that social media have become central tools for advocacy, enabling outreach, relationship maintenance and mobilisation around public issues. They identify a three-stage "pyramid" of social media use informational, community-building, and action-oriented messages but find that informational content still dominates, with calls to action and dialogic engagement less frequent.

Subsequent work confirms that social media can expand networks, visibility and opportunities for engagement, yet nonprofits often underutilise interactive features and struggle to convert online attention into offline change (An, 2017; Ihm, 2022). Kim (2025) further points to ethical and strategic tensions in NGO advocacy communication online, including pressures to appear

“innovative” or “cool” on social platforms and the risk that performative visibility can overshadow deeper, community-anchored engagement. Critical debates around “slacktivism” highlight similar concerns that low-cost digital gestures likes, shares, hashtags may substitute for more demanding forms of participation, even as they help keep issues on the public agenda.

In African and West African contexts, grey literature and regional reports underscore both the promise and challenges of social-media-based advocacy. For instance, a West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI) report on strengthening advocacy, communication and brand recognition via social media argues that social platforms can help CSOs broaden reach, engage youth and shape development narratives, but also notes gaps in digital skills, resources and strategic planning. Such work suggests that while social media expand the communicative repertoire of NGOs, they do not automatically yield dialogic, accountable or inclusive advocacy.

2.11 Theoretical Framework

Understanding the strategic use of social media in nonprofit public relations requires theoretical grounding that transcends mere description of tools or technologies. This study draws upon three complementary frameworks Dialogic Communication Theory, Stakeholder Theory, and the Excellence Theory of Public Relations each of which illuminates a distinct but interconnected dimension of communication practice: dialogue, accountability, and strategic management. Their synthesis provides a critical lens through which to examine how nonprofit organizations in Ghana negotiate meaning, legitimacy, and effectiveness through digital engagement.

Dialogic Communication Theory, introduced by Kent and Taylor (2002), challenges instrumental models of communication that prioritize message control. It emphasizes communication as a co-created process sustained through openness, empathy, and risk. In social media contexts, dialogic features such as responsiveness, transparency, and mutuality manifest through interactive posts,

feedback loops, and participatory storytelling. However, critics such as Theunissen and Wan Noordin (2012) caution that dialogic ideals often remain aspirational, as many organizations adopt digital tools without relinquishing control over narrative and voice. This critique is particularly salient in Ghana, where nonprofits like the POS Foundation and CHRI–Ghana operate within hierarchically structured communication environments shaped by donor relations and regulatory oversight. For these organizations, dialogic engagement is not automatic but must be intentionally cultivated within ethical and cultural constraints.

Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 1984) extends the analysis by framing organizations as networks of interdependent relationships. Public relations, within this view, is an ethical process of balancing the expectations of diverse stakeholders donors, government agencies, beneficiaries, and digital publics. Yet, stakeholder engagement in the Global South raises critical questions about power asymmetry: who defines legitimacy, whose voices are amplified online, and how do resource inequalities influence participation? Scholars such as Coombs and Holladay (2012) argue that stakeholder dialogue must go beyond rhetorical inclusion to actual accountability. In the Ghanaian nonprofit sector, this requires continuous negotiation between advocacy imperatives and institutional survival.

Finally, the Excellence Theory (Grunig & Grunig, 1992) situates public relations as a strategic management function essential to organizational effectiveness. It advocates for two-way symmetrical communication, research-based decision-making, and integration of PR at the policy level. While this theory offers normative clarity, critics argue it assumes organizational contexts characterized by stability and resource sufficiency conditions rarely present in African nonprofits. Nonetheless, its emphasis on ethics, inclusion, and strategic alignment remains relevant for

organizations such as POS and CHRI, which must reconcile advocacy goals with professional standards.

Together, these theories provide not merely explanatory tools but critical frameworks for evaluating how nonprofits in Ghana conceptualize social media as a space of negotiation between participation and control, idealism and pragmatism, visibility and legitimacy.

2.12 Theoretical Relevance to the Study

The choice of Dialogic Communication Theory, Stakeholder Theory, and the Excellence Theory of Public Relations as the guiding framework for this study is not incidental but conceptually strategic. Each theory captures a vital dimension of how nonprofit organizations use social media to manage relationships, communicate legitimacy, and navigate accountability. More importantly, their integration allows for a contextually grounded interpretation of digital public relations within Ghana's nonprofit advocacy environment, where communication is simultaneously a technical act, a moral responsibility, and a political negotiation.

Dialogic Communication Theory is especially relevant because it illuminates how communication in nonprofit organizations extends beyond persuasion to mutual understanding and engagement. For advocacy-based institutions such as the Perfecter of Sentiment (POS) Foundation and the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) – Ghana, the dialogic approach underscores the value of listening to publics, especially marginalized communities affected by justice-sector policies. However, the application of dialogic principles in Ghana's nonprofit communication is not without tension. As Kent and Taylor (2016) observe, digital dialogue often becomes instrumentalized organizations use social media to appear transparent while maintaining message control. For Ghanaian NGOs, this selective dialogue is influenced by donor expectations, limited resources, and a risk-averse communication culture. Thus, dialogic theory provides a normative

ideal that this study interrogates empirically: whether social media actually fosters reciprocal communication or merely extends institutional reach.

Stakeholder Theory contributes relevance by framing public relations as a relational and ethical practice rather than a transactional one. In nonprofit settings, stakeholders include not only donors and beneficiaries but also volunteers, government partners, and digital publics whose perceptions shape organizational credibility. This theory is particularly useful in explaining why nonprofits must balance competing expectations between advocacy and diplomacy, activism and institutional conformity. Yet, the stakeholder model assumes that all voices can be heard, which may not hold in digital spaces shaped by algorithmic bias and structural inequalities. Hence, this study applies Stakeholder Theory critically, probing how Ghanaian nonprofits manage asymmetrical power relations in digital discourse.

The Excellence Theory, though originally developed in Western corporate contexts, remains theoretically relevant for its emphasis on ethical, research-based, two-way symmetrical communication. In adapting it to Ghana's nonprofit sector, this study interrogates how concepts of "excellence" translate into contexts marked by financial precarity and political sensitivity. For organizations like POS and CHRI, excellence may not mean public relations sophistication but resilience maintaining trust and consistency under constraints. The integration of these three frameworks thus allows for a richer, multi-dimensional understanding of digital PR as both a strategic function and a moral practice.

2.13 Empirical Insights and Identified Gaps

Empirical research on social media and public relations (PR) has grown considerably over the past decade, yet the nonprofit sector in sub-Saharan Africa particularly Ghana remains underexplored. Much of the existing literature concentrates on corporate and political communication, leaving

advocacy-based organizations at the margins of scholarly inquiry (Mensah & Osei, 2023). Where nonprofit communication has been examined, the focus tends to be descriptive, emphasizing platform adoption rates rather than analyzing how digital engagement shapes relationships, trust, and legitimacy (Waters & Jamieson, 2019). This limitation is evident in Ghana, where studies have established that many organizations use social media for visibility but lack strategic integration or dialogic engagement (Dziewornu-Norvor, 2022). Consequently, PR practice within nonprofits remains trapped between rhetoric and reality a digital presence that signals modernization but rarely transforms communication philosophy.

International research presents similar tensions. Lovejoy and Saxton (2012) found that U.S. nonprofits typically use social media for information dissemination rather than dialogue, reflecting a transactional rather than relational orientation. In South Africa, Bosch (2022) observed that digital platforms foster activism but also amplify polarization and organizational risk. Adebajo (2023) extended this critique to West Africa, arguing that the allure of digital visibility often overshadows deeper commitments to participatory communication. These studies converge on one insight: technology alone does not democratize communication organizational culture, resources, and ethics determine whether social media enables dialogue or replicates old hierarchies.

In Ghana, the situation is particularly complex. Nonprofits operate in a constrained environment marked by funding dependency, political sensitivities, and public mistrust of advocacy groups. While organizations like the Perfecter of Sentiment (POS) Foundation and the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) – Ghana use social media to promote justice-sector reforms and human rights awareness, there is little empirical evidence on the motivations guiding such usage, the nature of engagement with stakeholders, or the contextual barriers shaping digital PR practices.

Most Ghanaian studies focus on surface-level metrics followers, likes, and reach without analyzing qualitative dimensions such as authenticity, narrative coherence, or dialogic reciprocity.

This gap is both conceptual and methodological. Conceptually, there is limited theoretical integration linking digital communication to PR effectiveness within African nonprofit contexts. Methodologically, the dominance of quantitative surveys neglects the interpretive nuances of how practitioners and stakeholders experience digital engagement. Hence, this study adopts a qualitative, case-based approach to explore why and how nonprofits in Ghana use social media for PR, and what contextual factors influence these practices. By examining the POS Foundation and CHRI–Ghana, the study not only fills an empirical void but also challenges the assumption that digital presence equates to communicative excellence, offering a nuanced understanding of advocacy, dialogue, and legitimacy in the digital age.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological approach that will guide the study. It explains the philosophical orientation, research design, study setting, population and sampling strategy, data collection method, data analysis approach, and ethical considerations. Each methodological decision is aligned with the study's overall aim to explore how and why nonprofit organizations in Ghana use social media as part of their public relations (PR) strategies, with a focus on the Perfecter of Sentiment (POS) Foundation and the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) – Ghana. The methodology reflects an interpretivist philosophical orientation, emphasizing meaning-making and contextual understanding rather than measurement or generalization.

3.2 Research Philosophy

This study was guided by the interpretivist paradigm, which assumes that reality is socially constructed and best understood through the subjective experiences of individuals. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), interpretivism prioritizes understanding how people make sense of their social world rather than identifying universal laws. Given that social-media engagement and public relations are dynamic, context-dependent, and influenced by organizational culture, the interpretivist lens enabled the researcher to capture participants' perceptions, intentions, and practices.

In interpretivist research, meaning is co-created between the researcher and participants through dialogue (Schwandt, 2014). This aligned closely with Dialogic Communication Theory, one of the theoretical frameworks that underpinned this study, which values reciprocal understanding over persuasion. Moreover, because public relations within nonprofits in Ghana involved negotiation among diverse stakeholders donors, government actors, beneficiaries, and online publics an

interpretive approach was appropriate for revealing how these actors perceived and enacted communication within digital spaces.

3.3 Research Design

The study adopted a qualitative, exploratory case-study design. Qualitative research was suitable because the goal was to explore a phenomenon in depth, capturing participants' lived experiences and the meanings they attached to their actions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). An exploratory case study was particularly relevant for an emerging field of inquiry where theoretical and empirical evidence remained limited (Yin, 2018).

The case-study design enabled a holistic understanding of complex social phenomena within real-life contexts. In this study, the two selected cases POS Foundation and CHRI–Ghana provided fertile ground for exploring how nonprofit organizations conceptualized, implemented, and experienced social-media-based PR strategies. The comparative element allowed the researcher to identify both shared and divergent practices between organizations with similar advocacy mandates but potentially different operational models. The design was not aimed at statistical generalization but at analytical generalization, producing insights that can inform theory and practice in comparable nonprofit settings.

3.4 Study Setting

The research was conducted in Accra, Ghana, where both the POS Foundation and CHRI–Ghana maintained their headquarters. Accra served as the country's communication hub and hosted several national and international NGOs, PR firms, and government agencies. This setting was particularly suitable for exploring the intersection between digital communication and advocacy, since it embodied Ghana's hybrid communication environment, combining traditional media influence with growing digital penetration. Both organizations operated nationally but engaged

diverse publics through social media, making them ideal contexts for studying nonprofit PR dynamics.

3.5 Population of the Study

The population of this study comprised individuals directly involved in communication, advocacy, or stakeholder engagement within the selected organizations. This included communication managers, public relations officers, project coordinators, social media officers, program managers, and executive directors who played active roles in shaping digital strategies and external communication. Additionally, selected external stakeholders such as donors, media partners, and online advocates were included to provide perspectives on audience engagement and message perception.

This population was deliberately defined to include both organizational actors (who design and manage communication) and public actors (who receive or interpret it). This dual focus reflected Stakeholder Theory's central argument that public relations involves interaction between multiple interdependent groups whose perceptions jointly influence legitimacy and reputation.

3.6 Sampling Technique and Sample Size

The study employed purposive sampling, a non-probability method that allowed the researcher to select participants who possessed rich, relevant knowledge of the research problem (Etikan & Bala, 2017). This approach aligned with qualitative inquiry, which seeks information depth rather than numerical representativeness.

A total of approximately 12 participants were selected across the two organizations six to eight from the POS Foundation and four to six from CHRI–Ghana. The exact number was determined by data saturation, which was reached when new interviews yielded no substantially novel insights (Guest, Namey, & Chen, 2020). Purposive selection ensured the inclusion of communication

managers, social media officers, program leads, and representatives from partner institutions. The sampling logic was theoretically driven: each participant was expected to provide distinct yet complementary insights into how social media is used to shape stakeholder relationships, advocacy narratives, and public legitimacy.

3.7 Research Subject

The research subjects were two nonprofit organizations: the Perfecter of Sentiment (POS) Foundation and the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) – Ghana.

The POS Foundation, established in 2000, focused on human-rights advocacy, justice-sector reform, and prisoner reintegration through initiatives like the Justice for All Programme. It used social media platforms such as Facebook, X, and Instagram to highlight legal injustices, engage the public, and influence policy discussions. CHRI–Ghana, part of an international network headquartered in India, worked on access to information, police reform, and human-rights education. Its digital strategy emphasized research dissemination, policy advocacy, and public sensitization on civic rights. These two organizations were purposefully selected because they represented exemplary yet contrasting models of digital advocacy within Ghana’s nonprofit ecosystem one domestically founded and grassroots-oriented (POS), the other internationally affiliated and policy-driven (CHRI). Studying both allowed for cross-case insight into how institutional context shaped social-media-based PR practices.

3.8 Data Collection Method

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and document review. Semi-structured interviews served as the primary method because they combined flexibility with depth. This approach allowed the researcher to guide discussion through predesigned themes while permitting participants to elaborate freely (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). The method was consistent with the

interpretivist orientation, emphasizing meaning rather than measurement. Secondary data complemented the interviews through analysis of organizational communication materials such as press releases, social media posts, newsletters, and campaign reports. This triangulation ensured validity by enabling cross-verification of perspectives and actions.

3.9 Sub-section: Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews will explore themes related to:

1. Motivations for adopting social media in PR practice;
2. Communication strategies and engagement approaches;
3. Stakeholder perceptions and feedback mechanisms; and
4. Institutional challenges in managing digital communication.

Each interview lasted approximately 15 minutes and was conducted either in person or virtually (via Zoom or Google Meet). With participants' consent, interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed verbatim. Notes were taken to capture non-verbal cues and contextual observations. The interview process was iterative: emerging themes from early interviews informed subsequent ones, allowing deeper probing and theoretical refinement (Charmaz, 2014).

3.10 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed thematically using the approach outlined by Braun and Clarke (2019). Thematic analysis involved identifying, organizing, and interpreting patterns of meaning across qualitative data. The process included six phases: (1) familiarization with data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report. NVivo software (version 14) was used to organize and code transcripts systematically. Coding combined inductive (data-driven) and deductive (theory-driven) strategies,

ensuring that emerging themes were grounded in participants' narratives while linked to theoretical constructs such as dialogue, stakeholder accountability, and strategic excellence. Analytical memos were maintained to document interpretive decisions and enhance transparency.

3.11 Trustworthiness of the Study

To ensure rigor, the study employed Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was achieved through prolonged engagement with participants, member checking, and triangulation of interview and document data. Transferability was enhanced by providing thick descriptions of the research context, enabling readers to assess the applicability of the findings to other nonprofit settings. Dependability was established through detailed documentation of research procedures and peer debriefing. Confirmability was ensured by maintaining an audit trail of data sources, coding decisions, and analytical memos, thereby minimizing researcher bias and reinforcing the transparency of the analytical process.

3.12 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the Ethical Review Board of the University of Media Arts and Communication Studies before data collection commenced. The study adhered to the principles of informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and non-maleficence (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2001). Participants were informed of the study's purpose, their right to withdraw at any time, and the measures taken to protect their identities. Consent was obtained through signed forms or verbal agreement (in recorded sessions). Data were stored securely on password-protected devices and were accessible only to the researcher. Pseudonyms were used in transcripts and reporting to ensure anonymity. Given that the study dealt with sensitive advocacy organizations, care was taken not to disclose information that could compromise institutional reputation or

stakeholder relationships. The researcher also exercised reflexivity, acknowledging personal biases and ensuring that interpretation remained faithful to participants' intent.

3.13 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented the methodological framework underpinning the study. It justified the interpretivist philosophical orientation and the qualitative exploratory case-study design as appropriate for exploring how and why nonprofit organizations in Ghana use social media in public relations practice. The chapter outlined the study population, sampling strategy, data collection methods, analytical techniques, and ethical safeguards. By combining semi-structured interviews with document review, the study will generate in-depth, context-sensitive insights that align with the theories of Dialogic Communication, Stakeholder, and Excellence in Public Relations. The next chapter will present the findings and thematic analysis emerging from the fieldwork.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents and analyses the findings of the study on how nonprofit organisations in Ghana use social media as part of their public relations (PR) strategies, with a focus on the Perfecter of Sentiment (POS) Foundation and the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) Ghana. The chapter is organised around the three research objectives: (1) to explore the reasons nonprofit organisations adopt social media for public relations practice; (2) to understand how social media is used to build relationships, enhance brand engagement, and foster stakeholder trust; and (3) to identify the contextual challenges that influence the strategic use of social media in nonprofit public relations in Ghana. Data were generated through semi-structured interviews with staff directly involved in communication, advocacy, and stakeholder engagement within the two organisations, complemented by documentary evidence from their social media pages, reports, and campaign materials. Thematic analysis was used to identify key patterns of meaning across the interviews, and the themes are presented here with illustrative quotes from participants. Pseudonyms are used to protect the anonymity of respondents.

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Participants

A total of twelve participants were interviewed across the two case organisations: seven from POS Foundation and five from CHRI–Ghana. Participants occupied roles such as Executive Director, Communications/PR Officer, Programme Manager, Social Media Officer, Advocacy Officer, and Project Coordinator. This mix ensured that both strategic-level decision makers and operational staff responsible for day-to-day digital communication were represented.

In terms of gender, there was a relatively balanced distribution, with six male and six female participants. The age range of respondents was between 28 and 52 years, reflecting both younger

digital natives and more senior managers who have witnessed the transition from traditional to digital communication. Most participants had at least a bachelor's degree, and several held postgraduate qualifications in communication, development studies, law, or public administration.

Work experience in the nonprofit sector ranged from three to over fifteen years. A number of participants had been with their organisation long enough to observe the evolution from reliance on traditional media such as radio, television, and newspapers to the current emphasis on social media platforms. This diversity of positions, gender, and experience contributed to a rich understanding of how and why social media has become embedded in nonprofit public relations practice.

4.2 Reasons Nonprofit Organisations Adopt Social Media for Public Relations Practice

Understanding why nonprofit organisations adopt social media for public relations requires an appreciation of how civil society actors navigate Ghana's contemporary governance context. For organisations such as the POS Foundation and CHRI–Ghana, social media is not embraced for superficial visibility but for its structural importance in shaping public discourse, influencing reform, and negotiating legitimacy within a competitive advocacy environment. The analysis shows that social media adoption emerges from a convergence of organisational mission, political realities, resource constraints, donor expectations, and shifting civic behaviour, making it a strategic necessity rather than a technological preference.

Both organisations ground their adoption of social media in their core mandates. The POS Foundation, whose work focuses on justice reform, prison decongestion, and human-rights protection, views digital communication as indispensable for engaging constituencies who historically lacked representation in public debates. One officer captured this motivation, noting that

“when your work deals with marginalised groups, you cannot rely on traditional channels alone because the people whose stories matter most are already engaging online where they feel more empowered.”

CHRI–Ghana articulated a similar position shaped by its broader governance and rule-of-law agenda. As one senior staff member argued,

“advocacy today happens in digital public spaces and if we remain absent from those spaces, we lose our capacity to shape norms, influence policy, and challenge state behaviour in real time.”

These reflections illustrate that social media is perceived as an extension of democratic participation, enabling both organisations to advance their mandates more effectively. Resource considerations further strengthen the rationale for digital adoption. Both organisations operate within funding ecosystems that prioritise programme delivery over communication budgets. Traditional media television coverage, radio advertisements, and newspaper placements requires financial commitments that civil society organisations cannot sustain consistently. A CHRI–Ghana respondent explained,

“the economics of advocacy make traditional media unsustainable for us; social media allows us to keep communicating without diverting scarce funds away from core justice and governance programmes.”

Similarly, the POS Foundation emphasised that digital platforms shorten the distance between the organisation and its audiences, with one officer stating,

“we can disseminate information nationwide immediately without paying gatekeepers or waiting for newsrooms to decide if our issues deserve space.”

These accounts demonstrate how digital PR becomes a cost-efficient method for continual public engagement in a resource-constrained advocacy system. A further driver of social media adoption lies in the need to manage political sensitivities and narrative control. Advocacy communication in Ghana frequently operates within partisan interpretations, exposing organisations to misrepresentation or political tagging. Both POS Foundation and CHRI–Ghana thus rely on digital platforms to present their messages in unedited form, maintaining fidelity to their advocacy goals. A CHRI–Ghana communications officer argued that

“when the political climate is polarised, publishing your own content online ensures that your narrative remains unaltered, traceable, and protected from partisan distortions that often accompany civic activism.”

The POS Foundation made a related observation, explaining that

“we have had instances where our messages were reframed by external actors, so digital communication allows us to timestamp our own accounts and defend our credibility.”

These reflections highlight how social media functions not only as a communication tool but as a shield against political manipulation. Donor visibility and accountability also play a critical role in digital adoption. Contemporary development partners increasingly demand real-time evidence of programme activity and measurable engagement. CHRI–Ghana noted that donors now monitor organisational digital footprints as part of project validation, with a staff member stating,

“most funders now follow our online activities to verify our field work and stakeholder engagements because it offers immediate, transparent proof of what we are doing on the ground.”

The POS Foundation echoed this by emphasising that online visibility boosts donor trust, as one officer remarked,

“when we post live court monitoring updates or community interventions, it reassures our partners that the interventions they fund are actually taking place and producing results.”

These insights reveal how social media has become integrated into upward accountability mechanisms that shape funding continuity and organisational credibility. Audience behaviour shifts represent another major influence. The rise of digital citizenship particularly among younger Ghanaians means that public conversations about governance and rights increasingly occur online. CHRI–Ghana highlighted that younger citizens prefer digital discussions to formal forums, with one staff member observing,

“if we rely on traditional stakeholder meetings alone, we miss the demographic that shapes public opinion because youth advocacy now takes place in comment sections, live streams, and interactive threads.”

The POS Foundation expressed similar concerns within its justice-reform outreach, explaining that *“our physical forums used to attract large numbers, but today the most meaningful public engagement happens when we run livestreams and digital dialogues where people can speak freely without physical barriers.”*

These remarks affirm that digital platforms are no longer optional they are where civic engagement is now produced and interpreted. Social media is embraced for its potential to expand influence beyond national borders. Both organisations work within transnational networks focused on human rights, governance reforms, and justice sector transformation. Maintaining an active digital presence ensures that their work is visible to regional partners, international human-rights bodies, and potential collaborators. Summarising this motivation, a CHRI–Ghana senior officer stated,

“we operate in global advocacy ecosystems and if our activities are not captured digitally, we become invisible to the very partners and coalitions that shape continental human-rights agendas.”

The POS Foundation expressed an aligned viewpoint, noting that

“our digital visibility positions us as credible voices in regional justice reform discussions because partners can easily track our interventions and results online.”

This demonstrates how social media becomes a tool for scaling influence and reinforcing institutional legitimacy within broader governance networks. The analysis reveals that the POS Foundation and CHRI–Ghana adopt social media because it directly strengthens their strategic position within Ghana’s advocacy landscape. Their motivations are rooted in mission fulfilment, cost efficiency, audience alignment, donor accountability, political protection, and global relevance. For both organisations, social media has evolved into an indispensable component of modern nonprofit public relations a space where legitimacy is negotiated, narratives are defended, public engagement is mobilised, and influence is sustained. It is not simply a communication channel but the architecture through which contemporary advocacy is performed.

4.3 How Nonprofit Organisations Use Social Media to Build and Maintain Relationships with Stakeholders

The analysis of Objective Two reveals that both the POS Foundation and CHRI–Ghana use social media as relational infrastructures that support constant connection, mutual influence, credibility-building, and stakeholder responsiveness. Far from treating social media as a peripheral channel for information dissemination, both organisations deploy it as a deliberate relational strategy embedded in their public relations practice. This approach reflects the broader shift in contemporary advocacy, where legitimacy and impact increasingly depend on the capacity of civil

society organisations to nurture sustained engagement across diverse stakeholder groups. The data illustrates that these organisations consciously cultivate relationships with citizens, beneficiaries, donors, government institutions, journalists, and allied advocacy networks through digital platforms, transforming social media into a space where advocacy becomes relational rather than transactional. Both organisations highlight citizens as their primary relational constituency. CHRI–Ghana positions social media as an inclusive civic environment where citizens contribute to justice and governance discourse. One officer explained that

“our platforms operate as open discussion spaces where citizens express concerns, share personal experiences, and participate in governance conversations that have long been closed off to ordinary people.”

This indicates that social media is conceptualised as a participatory digital public sphere that strengthens relational legitimacy. The POS Foundation adopts a similarly citizen-centred approach, particularly in relation to justice reform beneficiaries who depend on timely information.

A staff member noted that

“many people follow our online updates to stay informed about prison reforms, court proceedings, and human-rights education, and that consistent digital presence keeps our relationship with the public rooted in trust.”

These reflections show that transparency and reliability form the backbone of citizen- organisation relationships. Donor relationships constitute another central dimension of relational maintenance. CHRI–Ghana uses social media to provide real-time evidence of fieldwork, stakeholder engagements, and project achievements. A senior staff member emphasised that

“donors increasingly rely on our social media activity to verify that programme interventions are actually happening, because it offers immediate, timestamped proof of results that formal reports alone cannot convey.”

This demonstrates that social media serves as a relational accountability mechanism that deepens trust. The POS Foundation expressed parallel motivations, noting that donors now track online visibility as an indicator of credibility. As one respondent stated,

“when we post legal aid sessions or community outreach activities, donors gain confidence because they can observe, comment, and even share our work across their networks without relying solely on written updates.”

These insights make clear that social media extends the relational chain beyond the organization donor dyad into broader transnational advocacy communities. Strategic partnerships with media actors, government agencies, and allied civil society groups are also cultivated through deliberate digital engagement. CHRI–Ghana views journalists as crucial amplifiers of governance and rule-of-law messaging. A communications officer observed that

“consistent tagging, coordinated campaigns, and collaborative posts have helped us develop strong ties with journalists who now contact us directly for expert commentary or advocacy-related insights.”

This reflects how strategic visibility fosters reciprocity and strengthens cross-sector collaboration. The POS Foundation benefits from similar relational dynamics, particularly with justice sector institutions and state agencies. One participant explained that

“government institutions tend to respond more quickly when they see our credible online presence and the public interest that our posts generate, which opens doors for dialogue and joint interventions.”

This suggests that social media visibility operates as a subtle form of soft power, enhancing organisational bargaining strength. Dialogic communication plays a critical role in sustaining digital relationships. Both organisations stress that relational value is created not through posting alone but through responsiveness, interaction, and the facilitation of two-way communication flows. CHRI–Ghana employs active listening practices on its platforms, responding to questions, clarifying legal information, and encouraging public debate. A staff member stated that

“our goal is to treat every comment or message as an opportunity to strengthen a relationship, because people feel valued when their voices are acknowledged directly and respectfully.”

This reflects dialogic principles where engagement is relational rather than extractive. The POS Foundation uses similar strategies, especially through interactive live sessions. One officer explained that

“our Facebook Live discussions and X Spaces have become digital town halls where citizens, journalists, and policymakers interact openly with us, creating the type of participatory environment that traditional forums struggle to sustain.”

This demonstrates how nonprofits simulate inclusive governance spaces through digital architecture. Trust-building emerges as another foundational relational strategy. For CHRI–Ghana, trust is maintained through factual consistency and communicative discipline. A respondent observed that

“people trust our platforms because our posts are evidence-based, measured, and never sensational, which signals to stakeholders that we are committed to accuracy over popularity.”

The POS Foundation echoes this approach and links trust directly to transparency. As one staff member explained,

“we deliberately share verified information and avoid inflammatory language, because stakeholders need to believe that our motives are genuine before they feel comfortable engaging with us online.”

These practices show that credibility is constructed through predictable, honest, and emotionally safe communication. Emotional connection is another important relational dimension that both organisations cultivate, primarily through storytelling. CHRI–Ghana uses human-centred narratives to illustrate the significance of its legal and governance interventions. A communications officer noted that

“our storytelling approach puts real people at the centre of our advocacy, which creates emotional bonds that make audiences more invested in our work and more willing to engage over time.”

The POS Foundation applies storytelling in its justice reform campaigns as well, especially when highlighting prison experiences, reintegration struggles, and legal aid success stories. One participant explained that

“showing the personal journeys of people affected by the justice system helps our audience understand the human impact of reforms and builds long-term emotional commitment to our cause.” Such narratives embed relational intimacy within advocacy communications. The findings illustrate that the POS Foundation and CHRI–Ghana build and maintain relationships online through a combination of transparency, responsiveness, emotional storytelling, donor

accountability, and participatory communication. These organisations demonstrate an advanced understanding of relational public relations, where social media becomes a dynamic ecosystem that sustains continuous interaction, reinforces legitimacy, and deepens stakeholder engagement. Rather than treating digital platforms as supplementary tools, they integrate them into the core of their stakeholder management strategies, ensuring that advocacy becomes an ongoing relational process rather than an episodic activity.

Social media enables the POS Foundation and CHRI–Ghana to cultivate durable, trust-based relationships with diverse stakeholders. Through interactive communication, credible storytelling, donor-focused transparency, and digital community-building, the organisations transform their platforms into relational spaces that anchor their advocacy and enhance their influence in Ghana’s civic landscape. This analysis shows that contemporary nonprofit public relations is inseparable from digital relationship management, making social media central to how nonprofits negotiate their legitimacy, expand their networks, and sustain their mission impact.

4.4 Challenges Influencing the Strategic Use of Social Media in Nonprofit Public Relations Practice

The findings under Objective Three reveal that although the POS Foundation and CHRI–Ghana rely heavily on social media to support their public relations and advocacy work, their strategic use of digital platforms is significantly shaped and often constrained by structural, organisational, technological, and political challenges. These challenges are not minor obstacles that can be easily resolved; they fundamentally affect how nonprofit organisations produce content, engage with stakeholders, shape narratives, and protect their credibility in Ghana’s highly volatile digital communication ecosystem. The analysis shows that even though social media offers new

possibilities for participation and visibility, its effective use demands resources, skills, and strategic capacity that many nonprofits struggle to sustain.

A major challenge for both organisations is the persistent resource deficit that limits their capacity to maintain consistent, multimedia-rich, and responsive digital engagement. CHRI–Ghana indicated that donor-funded project budgets rarely include sufficient resources for professional content production or digital staffing. One staff member explained that

“high-quality digital communication requires trained personnel, equipment, and time, but our funding structure prioritises programme delivery over communication, so our digital output suffers when budgets are tight.”

This underscores that digital presence is not simply a matter of willingness; it is contingent on organisational capacity. The POS Foundation faces similar constraints. A programme officer stated that

“we run a small communications team that is constantly overstretched because our core work legal aid, court monitoring, community sensitization takes priority, leaving little time or funding for deliberate digital engagement.”

This reveals that mission-driven obligations frequently overshadow communication needs, creating discontinuities in digital visibility. Another substantial challenge lies in how social media algorithms systematically disadvantage nonprofit advocacy content. Educational, rights-based, or governance messages often receive lower engagement, which in turn suppresses visibility due to algorithmic ranking. CHRI–Ghana’s communications team noted that

“the platforms reward sensationalism and entertainment, so when we post detailed governance analysis or policy explanations, the algorithm shows them to very few people unless we pay to boost them.”

This indicates that algorithmic bias creates an uneven communication landscape where nonprofits must compete with commercial or entertainment-driven content. The POS Foundation faces the same struggle, particularly when addressing justice reforms or prison conditions. One officer remarked that

“even when the information is urgent, the algorithm buries it under political drama or celebrity news, so our stakeholders sometimes miss updates unless they actively search for them.”

This highlights how platform logics undermine the reach of public-interest communication. Political polarisation also poses a significant communicative risk for both organisations. CHRI–Ghana emphasised that any criticism of governance processes is often interpreted through partisan lenses, regardless of factual grounding. As one respondent explained,

“the moment we question a policy or highlight a rights violation, some users immediately tag us as aligned with one political party, even though our work is strictly nonpartisan.”

Such misinterpretations discourage honest dialogue and expose organisations to online hostility. The POS Foundation similarly experiences politicisation, particularly when its posts address sensitive justice sector issues. A staff member noted that

“when we highlight human-rights abuses, people interpret the message according to their party identity rather than the evidence, and that creates unnecessary backlash that distracts from the advocacy.”

These dynamics create a climate of communicative caution where organisations must carefully craft messages to minimise political distortion. Misinformation and public mistrust further complicate digital advocacy efforts. CHRI–Ghana described how disinformation spreads rapidly on social media, undermining the credibility of verified posts. One officer explained that

“a single misleading comment can derail an entire advocacy conversation because people share false information faster than the corrections, forcing us to spend time countering distortions instead of advancing the issue.”

This illustrates the fragility of digital truth-making. The POS Foundation faces parallel challenges, especially during election cycles when misinformation spikes. A respondent stated that

“during politically charged periods, some users twist our posts to support their personal narratives, making it difficult to maintain message integrity even when the facts are clear.”

This indicates that disinformation not only threatens credibility but also drains organisational resources that could be used for strategic engagement. Audience expectations present another layer of difficulty. Digital publics increasingly expect instant responses, constant updates, and 24/7 availability demands that exceed the capacity of small nonprofit teams. CHRI–Ghana reported that

“audiences expect immediate replies to comments or direct messages, but we simply cannot offer round-the-clock digital monitoring because our staff balance multiple programme responsibilities.”

The POS Foundation encounters similar pressures, particularly when its field activities affect online responsiveness. As one staff member explained,

“if we are in court or working in communities, we cannot respond quickly online, but some users read that delay as disinterest or neglect, which strains relationships.” These reflections highlight how audience expectations deepen the labour burden of digital public relations. Technological limitations add further complexity to digital engagement efforts. Both organisations operate in contexts where internet access is uneven and often unreliable, especially during fieldwork. CHRI–Ghana noted that

“when we work in rural or peri-urban communities, the unstable internet makes it impossible to livestream or post real-time updates, even when such visibility is crucial for accountability.”

The POS Foundation expressed similar frustrations. One officer stated that

“our legal aid work often takes us to underserved areas where connectivity is poor, so immediate documentation or online engagement becomes unrealistic.”

These challenges reflect structural digital inequalities that disadvantage advocacy organisations operating outside major urban centres. Audience fragmentation compounds these limitations. Different stakeholder groups prefer different platforms, requiring tailored content strategies that small teams struggle to maintain. CHRI–Ghana highlighted that

“young people are active on X and Instagram, professionals engage more on LinkedIn, and community groups prefer WhatsApp, so we must constantly adapt content formats across multiple platforms.”

The POS Foundation faces the same challenge, noting that multi-platform engagement strains capacity. A staff member explained that

“we try to maintain consistent messaging, but limited personnel means some platforms get more attention than others, creating uneven engagement and communication gaps.”

This demonstrates how platform diversity increases the labour intensity of digital advocacy. The findings reveal that the strategic use of social media in nonprofit public relations is shaped by a complex blend of organisational capacity limitations, platform-level biases, political contestation, misinformation, audience dynamics, and infrastructural constraints. The POS Foundation and CHRI–Ghana do not simply face communication difficulties; they operate in a challenging digital ecosystem that requires constant adaptation, negotiation, and defensive communication strategies. Their struggles demonstrate that nonprofit digital advocacy is not frictionless it demands significant skill, vigilance, and resource investment.

Despite these constraints, both organisations continue to engage strategically with social media because digital platforms remain essential to their advocacy visibility, stakeholder engagement, and public legitimacy. Yet the challenges illustrate that digital public relations in the nonprofit sector is far from effortless; it is a contested terrain where influence must be actively constructed and defended.

4.5 Discussion of the Study

The findings of this study reveal that the strategic use of social media by the POS Foundation and CHRI–Ghana reflects a complex interplay between mission-driven advocacy, relationship-building dynamics, and contextual challenges that shape nonprofit communication in Ghana. When interpreted through existing scholarly literature and theoretical frameworks, the results demonstrate both strong alignment with previous works and important divergences that extend how digital public relations in African nonprofit contexts should be understood. The study

ultimately shows that social media is not a peripheral tool but an advocacy infrastructure through which legitimacy, influence, and public engagement are negotiated.

The first major insight that nonprofits adopt social media as an extension of their advocacy mandates corroborates earlier scholarship emphasising the mission-centric nature of nonprofit communication. Lovejoy and Saxton (2012) argue that nonprofits embrace digital platforms primarily to advance public-interest missions rather than for commercial visibility, and the findings strongly support this. Both the POS Foundation and CHRI–Ghana position social media as integral to democratic participation, reflecting Waters and Jamal’s (2011) assertion that digital communication expands civic dialogue by removing access barriers. This study deepens that argument by showing that in Ghana’s governance environment, social media is not merely enabling participation but redefining where and how policy conversations occur, effectively turning digital platforms into alternative governance arenas.

The study’s findings also support the claim made by Eimhjellen et al. (2014) that shifting audience behaviour especially among younger citizens compels nonprofits to adopt interactive digital tools. The organisations’ emphasis on youth-dominated digital spaces confirms that advocacy actors now operate within a digital-first public sphere where credibility depends on continuous online presence. At the same time, the finding that social media adoption is influenced by cost efficiency mirrors McNutt’s (2018) argument that resource scarcity pushes nonprofits toward digital tools that offer broad reach at minimal financial cost. This is particularly salient in developing democracies, where organisational budgets are tightly structured and communication funding is rarely prioritised by donors.

The results further demonstrate that donor visibility significantly shapes the communication strategies of both organisations, reinforcing Guo and Saxton’s (2014) view that social media

functions as an upward accountability mechanism. However, the findings extend this notion by illustrating that in Ghana, donor monitoring is not merely observational it directly influences organisational survival, credibility, and the legitimacy of advocacy claims. Digital transparency has become a prerequisite for donor trust, making social media not just an accountability instrument but a form of institutional insurance.

The second major insight that both organisations use social media to cultivate trust-based and dialogic relationships aligns closely with Kent and Taylor's Dialogic Communication Theory (2002), which emphasises dialogue, mutuality, and responsiveness as foundational for effective public relations. This study confirms that meaningful engagement on digital platforms through live sessions, comment responses, clarifications, storytelling, and transparency strengthens organisational relationships with citizens, media actors, donors, and policymakers. At the same time, the findings reinforce Ledingham and Bruning's (1998) Relationship Management Theory, which argues that organisational success is closely tied to the quality of stakeholder relationships. The organisations' emphasis on emotional resonance, factual consistency, and accessibility demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of relational communication that goes beyond simple message dissemination.

However, the findings also extend relational communication theory by revealing that in contexts marked by political suspicion and information disorder, maintaining relationships online requires not only dialogue but defensive communication strategies. This nuance is largely absent in Western-based relational theory but emerges clearly in the Ghanaian context where nonprofits must constantly guard against partisan misinterpretation, misinformation, and deliberate distortion of advocacy messages. The study therefore contributes to the literature by demonstrating that

relationship-building in polarised digital environments involves both connection and protection, adding new depth to relational PR theory in African settings.

The third major finding that the strategic use of social media is constrained by significant structural, technological, organisational, and political challenges further enriches existing scholarship. While prior studies (e.g., Olanrewaju, 2020) acknowledge resource constraints in African nonprofits, this study provides more granular evidence showing how these constraints shape message visibility, consistency, and engagement. The findings also support Bimber's (2017) argument that algorithmic architectures privilege entertainment and controversy over evidence-based advocacy, undermining the visibility of nonprofit content. For the POS Foundation and CHRI-Ghana, algorithmic bias does not merely lower engagement; it structurally disadvantages rights-based communication, which requires clarity and depth rather than sensationalism.

The pervasive influence of political polarisation observed in this study confirms Barnett and Maher's (2021) claim that digital communication in emerging democracies is often filtered through partisan identities, complicating nonprofit efforts to remain neutral. Yet, the findings extend this scholarly discussion by showing that political misinterpretation is not only a contextual risk but a daily operational constraint that shapes how nonprofits frame messages, choose words, and manage backlash. Similarly, the challenge of misinformation reflects global concerns raised by Vosoughi et al. (2018), but the study adds a new insight: in nonprofit advocacy, misinformation not only misleads audiences but actively drains organisational capacity by forcing constant narrative correction.

Technological limitations including unstable internet access and infrastructure gaps support the observations of Gillwald (2022) on Africa's digital divide. However, in this study, poor connectivity has practical implications for justice reform and governance advocacy, as

organisations cannot livestream court monitoring, community events, or rights violations in real time. This demonstrates that technological constraints undermine not just communication efficiency but advocacy accountability.

Audience fragmentation and high public expectations further complicate the strategic use of digital platforms. Research by Men and Tsai (2015) emphasises the importance of responsiveness in digital PR, but this study reveals that responsiveness becomes burdensome when small nonprofit teams are expected to respond continuously across multiple platforms. This insight extends existing scholarship by demonstrating that in resource-limited nonprofit contexts, perpetual responsiveness is neither feasible nor sustainable, yet audiences interpret delays as disengagement, threatening relational trust.

The findings confirm several established theoretical claims while extending others based on the realities of Ghana's digital advocacy landscape. The study shows that although social media provides unprecedented opportunities for advocacy visibility, donor accountability, and stakeholder engagement, its effective use in nonprofit public relations is constrained by structural inequalities, political contestation, technological limitations, and platform-level biases. The analysis clarifies that digital advocacy in Ghana is neither frictionless nor automatic; it is a deeply strategic endeavour requiring constant adaptation, intentional relational work, and resilience in the face of systemic constraints. The study contributes to public relations scholarship by demonstrating that the strategic use of social media in nonprofit advocacy is both a relational and defensive practice shaped by contextual complexities unique to the Global South. It enriches existing theories by highlighting the centrality of political risk management, misinformation correction, capacity limitations, and infrastructural disparities factors that demand deeper theoretical attention in future research on digital nonprofit communication.

4.6 Chapter Four Summary

This chapter analysed the findings of the study across three key objectives and demonstrated how the POS Foundation and CHRI–Ghana strategically employ social media within their public relations practice. The results showed that social media adoption is largely mission-driven, shaped by the need for visibility, donor accountability, political neutrality, and direct citizen engagement. Both organisations use digital platforms not as peripheral tools but as integral advocacy infrastructures that expand their reach, democratise participation, and support real-time communication within Ghana’s evolving governance landscape.

The findings also revealed that social media functions as a critical relationship-building mechanism. The organisations cultivate meaningful connections with citizens, media actors, donors, and government agencies through dialogue, transparency, emotional storytelling, and responsiveness. These relational practices align with dialogic communication principles and demonstrate that effective nonprofit public relations now depends on sustained digital engagement rather than episodic outreach.

At the same time, the chapter highlighted significant structural, technological, and political challenges that shape the strategic use of digital platforms. Resource constraints, algorithmic disadvantages, political polarisation, misinformation, audience expectations, and infrastructural limitations all restrict how effectively nonprofits can maintain visibility and credibility online. These constraints show that digital advocacy in Ghana operates within a complex environment where influence must be actively constructed and protected.

The findings demonstrate that social media has become central to nonprofit advocacy practice, yet its strategic use is mediated by both opportunities and constraints. Understanding this dynamic provides the foundation for the interpretations, conclusions, and implications discussed in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

Chapter Five presents the concluding elements of the study by synthesising the empirical findings, drawing key conclusions, and outlining the implications for nonprofit public relations practice, policy, and scholarship in Ghana. While Chapter Four provided a detailed analysis of how the POS Foundation and CHRI–Ghana adopt, use, and navigate challenges associated with social media, this chapter interprets those findings within the broader context of digital advocacy and public communication. It highlights the practical significance of the study’s results, identifies areas where nonprofit organisations can strengthen their digital strategies, and suggests how social media can be leveraged more effectively to enhance stakeholder engagement and influence governance outcomes. The chapter also provides recommendations for practitioners, policymakers, and future researchers, offering guidance on how to address structural, political, and technological barriers that constrain digital advocacy in the nonprofit sector. Together, these insights conclude the study and point to opportunities for further inquiry.

5.1 Summary of Key Findings

This study examined how the POS Foundation and CHRI–Ghana strategically use social media to support nonprofit public relations practice. Three core findings emerged. First, both organisations adopt social media as a mission-driven advocacy infrastructure rather than a promotional accessory. Social media strengthens their visibility, enhances donor accountability, expands civic participation, and enables them to communicate with diverse audiences in real time. Adoption is therefore shaped by organisational purpose, resource efficiency, and the changing nature of governance discourse.

Second, the study found that social media is central to relationship-building. Through dialogic communication, transparency, emotional storytelling, and responsiveness, the organisations cultivate trust-based relationships with citizens, media actors, policymakers, and donors. Social media enables two-way engagement, allowing stakeholders to participate actively in governance and justice reform conversations.

Third, the findings revealed that social media use is constrained by significant challenges that shape strategic communication choices. Resource limitations, algorithmic suppression, political polarisation, misinformation, audience fragmentation, and technological barriers limit visibility and engagement. These constraints illustrate that digital advocacy in Ghana is not frictionless; it requires continuous negotiation of structural and contextual barriers. The findings show that social media is simultaneously an opportunity and a contested space for nonprofit public relations.

5.2 Conclusion

The study concludes that social media has become indispensable to nonprofit public relations practice in Ghana, functioning as both an advocacy platform and a relationship-building ecosystem. For the POS Foundation and CHRI–Ghana, digital tools enable mission advancement by broadening civic participation, enhancing transparency, strengthening donor credibility, and mobilising public attention around governance and justice issues. Their use of social media demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of how digital communication can amplify influence within a rapidly evolving governance landscape.

However, the study also establishes that the strategic value of social media is significantly moderated by contextual limitations. Nonprofits must operate within algorithmically biased platforms, politically polarised environments, limited budgets, and technological inequalities that undermine message visibility and engagement stability. As a result, digital advocacy requires not

only technical proficiency but also strategic resilience, communicative caution, and continuous adaptation.

Social media offers nonprofit organisations a powerful yet challenging means of shaping public discourse and maintaining stakeholder relationships. Its effectiveness depends on the organisation's ability to navigate structural barriers, sustain credible engagement, and harness digital spaces for collective advocacy. These insights highlight the need for capacity strengthening, supportive policy environments, and further research into digital nonprofit communication in African contexts.

5.3 Implications of the Study

The findings suggest that nonprofit organisations must invest in dedicated digital communication capacity to sustain credible online engagement. Skilled social media staff, content planning systems, and media literacy training are essential for navigating algorithmic constraints, combating misinformation, and maintaining donor visibility. The results also imply that nonprofits should adopt more structured dialogic strategies such as scheduled live sessions, interactive campaigns, and cross-platform storytelling to strengthen stakeholder relationships. Additionally, organisations must develop risk management frameworks to navigate politically sensitive discourse while maintaining neutrality.

The study highlights the need for supportive regulatory and infrastructural environments that reduce political hostility and misinformation. Policymakers should strengthen digital rights protections, promote media literacy, and ensure fair access to digital infrastructure, especially in underserved areas. The findings also demonstrate that donors should incorporate communication budgets into project funding to enhance nonprofit visibility and accountability, recognising that digital presence is essential to contemporary advocacy.

The study expands theoretical debates by showing that nonprofit digital public relations in developing democracies involves both relational engagement and defensive communication strategies. Future research should therefore examine how political polarisation, algorithmic bias, and infrastructural inequalities reshape relational public relations theory within Global South contexts. Comparative studies across African countries could deepen understanding of how contextual differences shape digital advocacy outcomes.

5.4 Recommendations

Strengthen Digital Communication Capacity: Nonprofits should prioritise hiring or training specialised digital communication officers who can produce high-quality content, monitor engagement, and respond promptly to public concerns. This enhances consistency, visibility, and professional credibility.

Allocate Dedicated Budgets for Digital Advocacy: Donors and nonprofits should integrate communication costs including paid promotions, multimedia content production, and digital tools into programme budgets to counter algorithmic suppression and increase reach.

Develop Clear Digital Risk Management Frameworks: Organisations should adopt guidelines for handling politically sensitive issues, misinformation, and online backlash. This includes verification protocols, crisis communication strategies, and content moderation procedures.

Use Multi-Platform Strategies More Deliberately: Given audience fragmentation, nonprofits should create differentiated communication plans for X, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and WhatsApp, ensuring message consistency across platforms without overburdening staff.

Strengthen Partnerships with Media and Civic-Tech Actors: Collaborative campaigns, joint livestreams, and co-created content can increase visibility, enhance credibility, and help counter misinformation by leveraging networked influence.

Advocate for Supportive Digital Policy Environments: Nonprofits should engage regulators and parliamentary committees to promote stronger digital rights protections, reduce online harassment, and ensure equitable access to internet infrastructure.

Invest in Storytelling-Based Advocacy: Human-centred stories should form a core part of communication strategies to deepen emotional engagement and enhance message resonance.

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