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REPUTATION MANAGEMENT IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

Challenges and Prospects

Presented to the FCT Chapter | Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR)
June 2026

HISTORY | CHALLENGES | PROSPECTS | NCC CASE STUDY | RECOMMENDATIONS

AGENDA

What we will cover

01 Historical Perspectives in Nigeria

02 Understanding Reputation

03 Why Reputation Matters

04 The Eight Pillars

05 Measurement Framework

06 Challenges in Nigeria

07 Prospects and Opportunities

08 Recommended Approaches

09 NCC Case Study

10 International Best Practices

11 Scorecard and Recommendations

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES ON REPUTATION MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIA

Section 2 | From Colonial Authority to the Digital Age | Nwosu (1996); Ekpu (2000); Amnesty International (2020)

1 PRE-1960 — Colonial Era

- Authority derived from imposition, not earned trust
- Communication instructional: downward, never dialogic
- No accountability to Nigerian citizens whatsoever
- Template set: institutions need not earn public trust
- Reputation managed through information control alone

Nwosu (1996)

2 1960–1966 — Independence Era

- Reputation of promise: hope invested in new institutions
- First explicit experiments with public affairs communication
- Federal and regional information ministries established
- Reputation built on expectation, not demonstrated outcomes
- Military coup of January 1966 ends this era abruptly

Ekpu (2000)

3 1966–1999 — Military Decades

- NTA and FRCN become state image-projection tools
- Corruption institutionalised — credibility gap entrenched
- NNPC: vast PR machinery, catastrophic performance record
- Abacha era: Nigeria designated a global pariah state
- War Against Indiscipline: short-term gains, no reform

Ekpu (2000)

4 1999–2015 — Democratic Transition

- Private press deregulated — genuine fourth estate born
- NCC, NAFDAC, EFCC and ICPC establish new credibility models
- EFCC under Ribadu: reputation built through enforcement
- Internet begins to introduce new reputational accountability
- Electoral accountability reshapes institutional incentives

NCC Annual Report (2017)

5 2015–NOW

- 33M+ social media users — reputation scrutinised in real time
- #EndSARS (2020): Twitter mobilisation became national crisis
- No institution immune from digital accountability
- NCC, NAFDAC, CBN invest in proactive digital reputation
- Youth demand global governance standards without exception

Amnesty International (2020)

THE COLONIAL AND MILITARY LEGACY

How Nigeria's reputational culture was shaped before democracy

Colonial Era (Pre-1960)

- Reputation derived from imposed authority, not earned trust
- Communication was instructional — downward, never dialogic
- No accountability to Nigerian citizens whatsoever
- Template established: institutions need not earn public trust
- Legacy: closed institutions managing perception through information control (Nwosu, 1996)

Military Decades (1966–1999)

- NTA and FRCN became state image-projection tools, not public services
- Corruption institutionalised — systemic credibility gap created
- NNPC: vast PR machinery; catastrophic performance record
- Abacha era: Nigeria designated a global pariah state
- War Against Indiscipline: short-term gains, no structural reform
- Performance-communication gap entrenched as normal (Ekpu, 2000)

FROM DEMOCRACY TO DIGITAL: 1999 TO THE PRESENT

Media Liberation

- ✓ Private press deregulated — genuine fourth estate created
- ✓ Investigative journalism exposes institutional failures
- ✓ Reputation incentives for better governance emerge

Regulatory Revolution

- ✓ NCC, NAFDAC, EFCC, ICPC establish new credibility models
- ✓ EFCC under Ribadu: reputation built through visible enforcement
- ✓ Technical credibility as reputational foundation

Digital Disruption

- ✓ 33M+ social media users by 2024
- ✓ #EndSARS (2020): Twitter mobilisation to national crisis
- ✓ Real-time accountability — no institution immune (Amnesty International, 2020)

Emerging Leaders

- ✓ NCC, NAFDAC, CBN investing in digital reputation
- ✓ Proactive communication culture developing
- ✓ Youth demanding global governance standards

Amnesty International (2020); NCC Annual Report (2017)

UNDERSTANDING REPUTATION

Section 3 | Conceptual Framework

Reputation is the collective perception stakeholders hold about an organisation based on its **actions, behaviour, performance, values, and communication over time.** It is not what an institution says about itself. It is what stakeholders believe.



NOT claimed

Earned through consistent action over time



NOT short-term

Built across years; lost in days



NOT PR alone

A governance and performance outcome



IS strategic

The most durable institutional asset available

"The credibility gap — the structured divergence between what institutions say and what citizens experience — is the defining reputational condition of Nigeria's public sector." (Fombrun & Van Riel, 2004)

Fombrun & Van Riel (2004); Walker (2010); Weigelt & Camerer (1988)

WHY REPUTATION MATTERS

Section 4 | The institutional case for reputation investment



63%

of institutional value

attributable to reputation — Fombrun (1996)



#1

global institutional risk

WEF ranks reputation risk in top five for seven consecutive years



10×

cost to recover

Reputational damage costs ten times more to recover than to prevent



145th

Nigeria's CPI ranking

Out of 180 nations — a direct, measurable economic cost

WEF (2023); Fombrun (1996); Roberts & Dowling (2002); Transparency International (2023)

THE EIGHT PILLARS OF REPUTATION MANAGEMENT

Section 6 | Doorley & Garcia (2015)

1. Character & Integrity

Ethics · Transparency · Accountability



2. Performance & Competence

Delivery · Excellence · Results



3. Leadership Credibility

Vision · Competence · Accountability



4. Strategic Communication

Media · Digital · Crisis Comms



5. Stakeholder Relationships

Citizens · Partners · Community



6. Social Impact

Sustainability · CSR · Public Value



7. Crisis Preparedness

Risk · Warning · Recovery



8. Consistency & Authenticity

Aligned · Reliable · Trustworthy

Doorley & Garcia (2015); Covey (2006)

CHALLENGES OF REPUTATION MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIA

Section 8 | Six structural and cultural challenges confronting public institutions

Corruption & Accountability Deficit

Nigeria ranked 145th of 180 on CPI 2023. Systemic impunity contaminates even clean institutions (Transparency International, 2023).

Leadership Instability

Political appointments disrupt reputational continuity. New leaders dismantle predecessor programmes (Oluwole, 2019).

Performance-Communication Gap

Achieving institutions fail to communicate. PR without performance eventually collapses. Both directions damage reputation.

Weak Comms Infrastructure

Fewer than 30% of MDAs have qualified corporate comms departments. Crisis plans absent. Stakeholder mapping non-existent (NIPR, 2019).

Digital Reputation Deficit

33M+ social media users. Institutions structurally unprepared. #EndSARS exposed the depth of unpreparedness (Amnesty International, 2020).

Citizen Expectations Gap

70% of Nigerians under 30. They know global governance standards. They are unwilling to accept institutional mediocrity.

Transparency International (2023); NIPR (2019); Oluwole (2019); Amnesty International (2020)

CHALLENGE 1: THE CORRUPTION-REPUTATION NEXUS

145th

of 180 nations

Corruption Perceptions Index 2023

Transparency International (2023)

Five Dimensions of the Challenge

1. Procurement corruption undermines service delivery — the foundation of performance reputation
2. Revenue leakages reduce institutional capacity, creating a self-reinforcing cycle of decline
3. Nepotism in appointments destroys leadership credibility — Pillar 3 of reputation management
4. Impunity signals to citizens that accountability is performative rather than genuine
5. Systemic corruption contaminates even clean institutions through sector-wide association

Transparency International (2023); Fombrun & Van Riel (2004)

PROSPECTS FOR REPUTATION MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIA

Section 9 | Six transformative opportunities for proactive institutions



Digital Technology

Social media and e-gov tools democratise reputation-building at scale and low cost (Mergel et al., 2019)



Civil Society Scrutiny

Fact-checkers and investigative journalism reward genuine performance with credible endorsement



Anti-Corruption Reform

Demonstrable integrity creates powerful reputational differentiation in a corrupt environment



AfCFTA Opportunity

Credible Nigerian institutions shape continental standards and attract AfCFTA investment flows



Youth Engagement

70% of Nigerians under 30 are responsive to genuine performance and authentic leadership



Peer Learning

NCC, NAFDAC and CBN models are transferable. Institutions need not learn every lesson from scratch

Mergel, Edelmann & Haug (2019); NCC Annual Report (2017)

RECOMMENDED APPROACHES TO OVERCOME THE CHALLENGES

Section 10 | Six evidence-based approaches linked directly to identified challenges



Corruption Deficit

Integrity Architecture

Open procurement · Independent audits · Whistle-blower protection · Community monitoring (Covey, 2006)



Leadership Instability

Reputation-Conscious Succession

Civil service comms units · Institutionalised frameworks · Board-level oversight (Oluwole, 2019)



Perf-Comms Gap

Integrated Perf-Comms Strategy

Aligned KPIs · Performance storytelling · Independent verification · Staff comms training



Weak Infrastructure

Comms Professionalisation

NIPR-certified staff · 2-3% budget allocation · Crisis plans tested annually (NIPR, 2019)



Digital Deficit

Digital Reputation Systems

Social listening · 24-hr response protocols · Content capacity · Influencer engagement (Dijkmans et al., 2015)



Legitimacy Gap

Citizen-Centred Co-Creation

Satisfaction surveys published · Citizen advisory panels · Digital service delivery · Service charters

DIGITAL ERA AND CRISIS COMMUNICATION FRAMEWORK

Sections 11 & 12 | Coombs (2007); Dijkmans, Kerkhof & Beukeboom (2015)

5 DIGITAL SHIFTS

01 Real-Time Scrutiny
Every institutional action instantly analysed

02 Citizen Journalism
Anyone with a smartphone can broadcast reputation narratives

03 Viral Communication
Negative stories spread within hours — often before institutions know

04 24-Hour News Cycles
Silence is no longer a viable response strategy

05 The #EndSARS Effect
Social media mobilisation can precipitate institutional crisis in days (Amnesty International, 2020)

CRISIS COMMUNICATION SCCT — Coombs (2007)

1 RESPOND QUICKLY
First 24 hours are critical — delay fuels speculation

2 COMMUNICATE FACTS
Accuracy is non-negotiable — errors are permanent

3 DEMONSTRATE EMPATHY
Stakeholders remember how institutions respond emotionally

4 TAKE RESPONSIBILITY
Denial amplifies damage — the cover-up harms more than the act

5 MAINTAIN VISIBILITY
Leaders must remain visible and accessible throughout

Coombs (2007, 2015); Dijkmans, Kerkhof & Beukeboom (2015); Amnesty International (2020)

CASE STUDY

The Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC)

Reputation Management Lessons from Nigeria's Premier Regulatory Authority

400K

GSM subscribers in 2001

220M+

subscribers by 2023

#1

African telecom market by size

NCC: CHALLENGES CONFRONTED AND STRATEGIES DEPLOYED

Section 13 | NCC Annual Report (2017); The Authority (2016)

REPUTATION CHALLENGES

Consumer Credibility

Perceived as captured by operators; consumer advocates argued NCC's enforcement was insufficient

Technical Complexity

Technically sophisticated regulatory work was invisible to citizens lacking accessible communication

Crisis Scenarios

SIM registration, number portability, data privacy controversies required active crisis response in open media

STRATEGIES DEPLOYED

✓ One Spokesperson Policy

Consistent, factual, unambiguous messaging approved by EVC Danbatta. Mixed messages avoided absolutely.

✓ Consumer Rights Repositioning

Consumer Affairs Bureau · Toll-Free Complaints Line · Consumer Code. Enforcement actions publicised, not hidden.

✓ Transparent Crisis Communication

Frank and regular communications during QoS crises. No cover-ups. Empathy, acceptance, remedial action.

✓ Digital Platform Architecture

Online media unit established 2012. Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, Instagram opened. Live streaming began.

NCC: SEVEN TRANSFERABLE LESSONS FOR NIGERIA'S PUBLIC SECTOR

Section 13.5 | Lessons from 18 years of regulatory communication practice

1. Professionalise the communication function — qualified staff, adequate resources, institutional authority
2. Reposition around the stakeholder whose confidence is most essential to your institutional legitimacy
3. Make enforcement visible — regulatory credibility derives from publicising accountability actions, not concealing them
4. Build multi-stakeholder engagement platforms that demonstrate inclusive governance
5. Pursue international recognition deliberately — third-party validation provides credibility that self-promotion cannot replicate
6. Translate technical achievements into citizen-accessible narratives that stakeholders can understand and engage with
7. Integrate reputation management into institutional strategy with its own KPIs, budget allocation, and board-level oversight

INTERNATIONAL BEST PRACTICES

Section 14 | Five cases with direct applicability to the Nigerian context

EE Estonia

Top 3 E-Gov Index

Digital governance and radical transparency built a global reputation that directly attracted foreign investment. Nigeria can make the same strategic choice (Lips, 2020).

SG Singapore

#1 Least Corrupt, Asia

Meritocracy and zero tolerance for corruption created a civil service that consistently ranks among the world's most trusted. The model is a governance choice, not a geographic privilege (OECD, 2021).

NZ New Zealand

Top 2 Global Trust Index

Christchurch crisis response (2019) became the global benchmark: speed, empathy, transparency, and visible leadership (Heath & O'Hair, 2020).

RW Rwanda

#1 Africa Governance Index

From post-genocide dysfunction to continental governance benchmark in two decades. If Rwanda could rebuild from that starting point, the trajectory available to Nigeria is significant (Mo Ibrahim Foundation, 2022).

GB United Kingdom

Top 10 Rule of Law Index

National Audit Office transparency frameworks anchor institutional trust even during political turbulence — demonstrating the value of independent accountability infrastructure (OECD, 2017).

NIGERIA'S OPPORTUNITY: Follow Rwanda's trajectory — from reputational deficit to continental governance benchmark

Lips (2020); Heath & O'Hair (2020); Mo Ibrahim Foundation (2022); OECD (2021)

PUBLIC SECTOR REPUTATION MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

Section 15 | The PSRMF Formula | Fombrun, Ponzi & Newburry (2015); OECD (2017)

REPUTATION = TRUST + PERFORMANCE + COMMUNICATION + GOVERNANCE + PUBLIC VALUE



TRUST

Integrity and transparency as the foundation of institutional authority



PERFORMANCE

Service delivery effectiveness, innovation, and measurable excellence



COMMUNICATION

Stakeholder engagement, media relations, digital presence



GOVERNANCE

Accountability, compliance, and ethical conduct



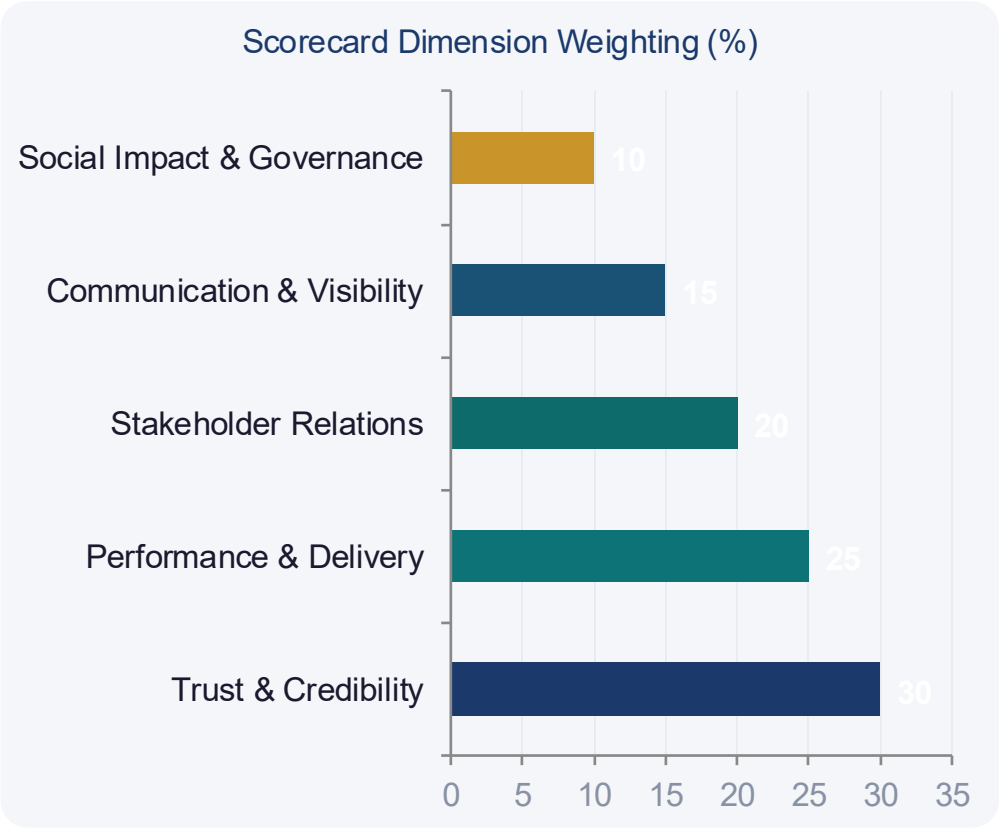
PUBLIC VALUE

Societal impact, citizen benefit, and national development contribution

Fombrun, Ponzi & Newburry (2015); OECD (2017)

REPUTATION SCORECARD

Section 16 | Fombrun, Ponzi & Newburry (2015) — RepTrak® Model



KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- ✓ Trust Index
- ✓ Reputation Index
- ✓ Media Sentiment Score
- ✓ Digital Sentiment Score
- ✓ Stakeholder Satisfaction Score
- ✓ Employee Advocacy Score
- ✓ Leadership Credibility Index
- ✓ Governance Compliance Score
- ✓ Community Impact Rating
- ✓ Crisis Response Effectiveness Index

Fombrun, Ponzi & Newburry (2015)

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Section 17 | Ten imperatives for Nigerian public institutions

01 Establish Reputation Management Units

NIPR-certified staff; direct reporting to institutional leadership

02 Conduct Annual Reputation Audits

Independent measurement across all 10 indicator categories; results published

03 Develop Real-Time Dashboards

Social listening + media monitoring + citizen satisfaction tracking

04 Align Communication with Performance

Integrated KPIs; performance storytelling; independent verification

05 Build Crisis Communication Capacity

Tested protocols; designated spokespersons; 24-hour response systems (Coombs, 2015)

06 Invest in Stakeholder Engagement

Multi-stakeholder forums modelled on the NCC Stakeholders Forum

07 Train Leaders in Reputation Science

NIPR + Institute of Directors + Civil Service Institute delivery

08 Integrate into Strategic Planning

Dedicated budget; measurable KPIs; board-level oversight

09 Pursue International Benchmarking

ITU, Commonwealth, UN endorsements as domestic credibility multipliers

10 Champion Radical Transparency

Open data + open procurement as the most durable reputation strategy (Covey, 2006)

CONCLUSION

Reputation management is not a communications function. It is a leadership responsibility, a governance commitment, and in Nigeria, a national development imperative.

The historical arc is clear: from the colonial template of authority without accountability, through the military decades of information control without performance, to today's era of real-time citizen scrutiny. Nigeria's public institutions have arrived at a defining moment.

The NCC demonstrates what is possible: an institution that built genuine credibility through professional communication, consumer advocacy, and transparent governance — generating reputational capital that attracted investment, earned international recognition, and withstood crisis.

"The institutions that will define Nigeria's future are not the largest or most powerful. They are the institutions that are most TRUSTED."

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THANK YOU

Questions and Discussion Welcome

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"In the public sector, trust is the currency of legitimacy."