

**DIGITAL DISLOCATION AND CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AMONG SELECT
MULTINATIONAL IN RIVERS STATE: ADAPTATIONS AND GRATIFICATIONS**

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Abstract

The study thrust was anchored on the need to provide a scientific explanation of the adaptations and gratifications among select multinational companies (Renaissances Africa Energy Company Limited and TotalEnergies) in Rivers State in their practice of corporate social responsibility in the era of digital dislocation. The objectives among others bordered on the need to examine the nature and impact of digital dislocations on the operations strategies of select multinational corporations in Rivers State. Above all, the study anchored its theoretical framework on Stakeholder Theory by Freeman (1984) and Uses and Gratifications Theory by Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler and Michael Gurevitch (1974). A mixed methods research design was adopted, combining interview sessions with the senior community relations managers of the select companies and a survey of the stakeholders of the host communities in Rivers State. The study gathered its data for interview sessions using interview guide while a structured questionnaire was administered to elicit responses from the stakeholders of the host communities. The study found that digital dislocation significantly reshaped operational strategies, compelling multinational companies to adopt innovative CSR initiatives such as digital literacy programmes, environmental sustainability projects, and employee welfare schemes. The study recommends among others that multinationals institutionalize adaptive CSR framework that integrates digital inclusion, continuous stakeholder dialogue, and resilience-building strategies.

Keywords: Adaptations, Corporate Social Responsibility, Digital Dislocation, Gratifications and Multinationals.

Introduction

The rapid evolution of digital technologies has transformed the operational landscapes of multinational corporations across the globe. In Nigeria, particularly Rivers State, the intersection of digitalization and corporate social responsibility has become a critical area of inquiry. Digital dislocations defined as disruptions, challenges, and shifts caused by digital technologies in organizational processes have reshaped how corporations interact with stakeholders, manage resources, and fulfill their social obligations (Castells, 2010). These dislocations manifest in diverse forms, including automation-induced workforce displacement, cybersecurity concerns, digital inequality among communities, and the reconfiguration of traditional business models (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014). While digitalization promises efficiency, innovation, and global competitiveness, it simultaneously raises questions about inclusivity, ethical responsibility, and sustainable development (Schwab, 2016).

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has long been recognized as a framework through which corporations contribute to societal well-being beyond profit-making. In the Nigerian context, CSR is particularly significant due to the socio-economic disparities, infrastructural deficits, and

environmental challenges that communities face (Amao, 2011). Rivers State, being a hub for oil and gas multinationals, presents a unique case where corporate activities have profound implications for local communities (Idemudia, 2014). The digital era has introduced new expectations for CSR, compelling corporations to adapt their strategies to address both traditional concerns such as environmental sustainability and community development—and emerging digital challenges, such as data privacy, digital literacy, and equitable access to technology (Okoye, 2012).

The concept of “adaptations and gratifications” provides a useful lens for analyzing how multinationals respond to digital dislocations while pursuing CSR. Adaptations refer to the strategies, policies, and innovations corporations employ to mitigate the negative impacts of digital disruptions. Gratifications, on the other hand, denote the benefits and positive outcomes derived from these adaptations, both for the corporations and the communities they serve (McQuail, 2010). Understanding this dynamic is crucial for evaluating whether digital transformations in multinational corporations align with broader societal goals or exacerbate existing inequalities. Thus, the study of digital dislocations and CSR among select multinationals in Rivers State is timely, as it bridges the gap between technological advancement and social responsibility in a region where corporate-community relations are often contested.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the growing importance of digital technologies in corporate operations, there appears to be limited empirical research on how multinationals in Rivers State navigate the challenges of digital dislocations within the framework of CSR. Many corporations have embraced digital tools to enhance efficiency, yet these transformations often generate unintended consequences for employees, communities, and stakeholders. For instance, automation and digital platforms may reduce employment opportunities, creating tensions in regions already grappling with high unemployment rates. Similarly, the digital divide—where certain communities lack access to or knowledge of digital technologies—raises concerns about inclusivity in corporate initiatives. These issues highlight the need to critically examine whether digitalization strengthens or undermines CSR commitments in practice.

Furthermore, while multinationals in Rivers State frequently publicize their CSR activities, there seems to be little clarity on how these initiatives integrate digital concerns. Questions remain about whether corporations are proactively addressing digital literacy, cybersecurity, and equitable access to technology in their CSR programmes, or whether they focus narrowly on traditional areas such as environmental remediation and community infrastructure. The absence of a coherent framework for incorporating digital dislocations into CSR strategies creates a gap between corporate rhetoric and community realities. This disconnect risks eroding trust between corporations and local stakeholders, particularly in a region where corporate-community relations are historically fraught due to environmental degradation and socio-economic disparities.

Another dimension of the problem lies in the gratification aspect of CSR adaptations. While corporations may benefit from enhanced reputations, improved efficiency, and regulatory compliance through digital CSR initiatives, the extent to which communities derive tangible gratifications remains uncertain. For example, digital CSR programmes may prioritize corporate branding over genuine community empowerment, leaving local populations marginalized in the digital economy. Without systematic evaluation, it is difficult to ascertain whether CSR adaptations to digital dislocations produce mutual benefits or perpetuate asymmetrical power relations between corporations and communities.

In summary, the problem this study seeks to address is the lack of comprehensive understanding of how select multinationals in Rivers State adapt to digital dislocations within their CSR frameworks, and whether these adaptations yield gratifications that are equitable and sustainable. By investigating this intersection, the study aims to illuminate the complexities of corporate

responsibility in the digital era and provide insights into how multinationals can align technological transformations with societal needs.

Objectives of the Study

Generally, this study seeks to investigate the adaptations and gratifications among select multinational companies in Rivers State in their practice of corporate social responsibility in the era of digital dislocation. Specifically, the study sets out to achieve the following objectives:

1. To examine the nature and impact of digital dislocations on the operations strategies of select multinationals corporation in Rivers State.
2. To analyse the corporate social responsibility adaptations adopted by these multinationals in response to digital dislocations, highlighting initiatives aimed at community development, environmental sustainability, and employment welfare.
3. To assess the gratifications and outcomes derived from corporate social responsibility practices in the context of digital disruptions, evaluating both organisational benefits and societal gains.

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on Stakeholders Theory and Uses and Gratification Theory.

Stakeholder Theory

Stakeholder Theory, as proposed by Freeman (1984), is a framework that emphasizes the interconnected relationships between organizations and their various stakeholders. According to Freeman, stakeholders are individuals or groups who can affect or are affected by the achievements of an organization's objectives. This theory goes beyond the traditional focus on shareholders and highlights the importance of considering the interests and expectations of a broader range of stakeholders, including customers, employees, communities, and regulatory bodies. In the context of evaluating the influence of public perceptions and organizational reputation on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Stakeholder Theory provides a relevant lens for understanding the dynamics at play. The theory suggests that the success of CSR initiatives is contingent upon recognizing and responding to the expectations and concerns of diverse stakeholders. For instance, customers may evaluate the company based on its commitment to sustainable and ethical practices, while employees may be influenced by the company's CSR efforts in their decisions to remain with or endorse the organization. Communities surrounding the company's operations may scrutinize CSR initiatives for their impact on local development and environmental sustainability. Regulatory bodies may also shape CSR practices through legal requirements.

Furthermore, the theory is a theory of organizational management and business ethics that accounts for multiple constituencies impacted by business entities like employees, suppliers, local communities, creditors, and others. The stakeholder theory identifies the groups and individuals relative to a corporation. It also describes as well as recommends methods by which the interests of each party can be catered for by the management of the corporation (Freeman & Reed, 1983). The stakeholder theory is one of the classical theories in public relations.

Uses and Gratification Theory

The Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) as propounded by Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler and Michael Gurevitch (1974) emphasize the active role of audiences in selecting media to satisfy specific needs such as information, entertainment, social interaction, and identity (Blumler & Katz, 1974 cited in McQuail, 2010). Unlike earlier media effects theories that portrayed audiences as passive, UGT positions individuals and communities as purposeful consumers of media content, seeking gratifications that align with their social and psychological needs. This framework has been widely applied to traditional media such as radio and newspapers (Herzog, 1942 and Berelson, 1949) and

has expanded to digital platforms, social media, and corporate communication in the 21st century. Okoye (2012) argued that CSR in Nigeria must adapt to digital realities, including addressing inequalities in access to technology. UGT provides a lens for understanding how communities perceive and engage with CSR initiatives, particularly when these are communicated through digital platforms.

Conceptualizing Corporate Social Responsibility and Digital Dislocations

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has evolved into a multidimensional concept that extends beyond philanthropy to encompass ethical, social, and environmental obligations of corporations. In the Nigerian context, particularly in Rivers State, CSR is often associated with multinational corporations in the oil and gas sector, where community expectations are high due to the socio-economic and environmental impacts of corporate activities (Amao, 2011; Idemudia, 2014). Traditionally, CSR initiatives have focused on infrastructure development, environmental remediation, and community welfare. However, the advent of digital technologies has introduced new complexities, leading to what scholars describe as *digital dislocations*—disruptions and shifts in organizational processes, stakeholder relations, and societal expectations caused by digital transformation (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014; Schwab, 2016).

Digital dislocations manifest in multiple ways: automation-induced workforce displacement, cybersecurity risks, digital inequality, and the reconfiguration of corporate-community engagement. These disruptions challenge corporations to rethink their CSR strategies, ensuring that digital transformations do not exacerbate existing inequalities but instead contribute to inclusive development. Conceptualizing CSR in relation to digital dislocations requires a framework that integrates technological change with social responsibility, highlighting both the risks and opportunities of digitalization.

In Rivers State, where multinational corporations dominate the oil and gas sector, CSR has historically been contested due to environmental degradation and socio-economic disparities (Okoye, 2012). Digital dislocations add another layer of complexity, as communities demand not only traditional CSR interventions but also digital empowerment. Corporations are thus compelled to adapt their CSR strategies to address both physical and digital realities, ensuring that technological transformations align with societal needs.

Methodology

This study adopted a mixed methods research design, combining interview sessions with the senior community relations managers of the select companies (Renaissances Africa Energy Company Limited and TotalEnergies) and a survey of the stakeholders of the host communities (Egi Kingdom in Ogba Egbema Ndoni Local Government Area and Rumuobiakani community in Obio Akpor Local Government Area) in Rivers State. The population of the study consists of 4 senior community relations managers each from both companies making it 8 on the one hand, and on the other hand, the 25 stakeholders each making it 50 from the host communities. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select those to be interviewed and administered questionnaire based on their job roles in the company and positions in the community.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Question 1: What is the nature/impact of digital dislocation on the operation strategies of select multinational cooperations in Rivers State?

Table 1: Nature and Impact of Digital Dislocation

S/N	Items	SA	A	SD	D	WMS	Decision
1	Digital inclusion	10	15	10	12	2.34	Rejected
2	Automation induced workforce displacement	12	12	13	13	2.46	Rejected

3	Reconfiguration of traditional business model	17	18	10	15	2.76	Accepted
4	Environmental science/technology advancement	10	13	15	12	2.42	Rejected

Finding in Research Question 1 showed that the most impact of digital dislocation is reconfiguration of traditional business model, this is accepted on a WMS of 2.76.

Question 2: What corporate social responsibility adaptations adopted are aimed at community by these multinationals in response to digital dislocations?

Table 2: CSR Adaptations Adopted

S/N	Items	SA	A	SD	D	WMS	Decision
1	Digital literacy	15	12	11	12	2.62	Accepted
2	Equitable access to technology	10	11	15	14	2.34	Rejected
3	Environmental science/technology advancement	13	14	12	11	2.58	Accepted
4	Automation induced workforce	11	13	14	12	2.52	Accepted

Result from Research Question 2 indicates that digital literacy is the most adopted adaptation aimed at communities by these multinationals in response to digital dislocation. This is accepted on a WMS of 2.62.

Question 3: What are the gratifications and outcomes derived from corporate social responsibility practices in digital disruptions for organisations and communities?

Table 3: Gratification and Outcomes in CSR Practice in Digital Disruption for Organizations and Communities

S/N	Items	SA	A	SD	D	WMS	Decision
1	Digital literacy	15	14	11	10	2.68	Accepted
2	Reconfiguration of traditional business model	17	14	11	11	2.62	Accepted
3	Equitable access to technology	11	12	15	12	2.44	Rejected
4	Real time reporting	15	13	12	10	2.66	Accepted

Finding in Research Question 3 reveals that digital literacy forms the gratification and outcome in CSR practice in digital disruption for organizations and communities. This is accepted in a WMS of 2.68.

Data Presentation for In-depth Interviews Nature and Impact of Digital Dislocation

Interviewees one from Renaissance Africa Energy Company Limited in his response asserts "in our CSR framework, this has shifted priorities from traditional philanthropy to digital inclusion. We now invest more in bridging the digital divide, ensuring underserved communities have access to technology and digital literacy." Furthermore, another respondent in his speech stated thus: "the nature of digital dislocation is most visible in workforce transformation. Automation and AI have displaced certain job roles, creating ethical concerns. As part of CSR, we have introduced reskilling and upskilling programs to support employees and local communities, helping them transition into the digital economy." Also, another respondent affirms thus: "digital dislocation has expanded the scope of CSR. It's no longer just about environmental sustainability but also digital responsibility. Issues like data privacy, cybersecurity, and ethical AI use have become central. Our CSR initiatives now include promoting responsible tech usage and protecting user data." More so, another interviewee opined that "the impact is both positive and challenging. On one hand, digital

technologies improve efficiency and transparency in CSR reporting. On the other hand, they can marginalize communities without access to digital tools. Our response has been to integrate digital accessibility into all CSR projects."

Interviewee one from TotalEnergies in her response affirm "digital dislocation in our sector is driven by automation and digital supply chains. The nature of this disruption affects small suppliers who may lack technological capabilities. As part of CSR, we support these partners through digital training and infrastructure development." More so, another respondent asserts that "the financial implications of digital dislocation are significant. While digital transformation reduces costs, it also requires responsible reinvestment. Our CSR strategy ensures that savings from automation are partly redirected into community development and workforce transition programs." Furthermore, another respondent affirms that "the impact is evident in supply chain transparency. Digital tools allow us to track ethical sourcing more effectively, which strengthens CSR outcomes. However, smaller vendors often struggle to adapt, so we provide digital onboarding support as part of our responsibility initiatives." The last respondent for TotalEnergies stated that "digital dislocation has changed stakeholder expectations. Consumers now demand transparency, ethical practices, and real-time engagement. CSR communication has become more digital, but we must ensure inclusivity so that offline communities are not excluded from our messaging and benefits."

CSR Adaptations Adopted

Interviewee one from Renaissance Africa Energy Company Limited stated "we have adapted our CSR strategy to prioritize digital inclusion and bridge the technology access gap in underserved communities." Furthermore, another respondent asserts "our CSR approach has been adapted to include large-scale reskilling and remote work support programs in response to digital transformation." More so, another senior manager opined "we have adapted our CSR initiatives to incorporate data ethics, cybersecurity awareness, and responsible AI practices." The last respondent from Renaissance Africa affirms "our CSR implementation has been adapted by leveraging digital tools for real-time monitoring, reporting, and stakeholder engagement."

Interviewee one from TotalEnergies in his response stated thus "We have adapted our CSR programs to focus more on community resilience, especially in response to economic and technological disruptions." Another senior manager opined "our CSR spending model has been adapted to align with sustainability goals and long-term social investment priorities." Furthermore, the third respondent from TotalEnergies asserts "we have adapted our CSR practices by integrating digital systems to enhance transparency and support small suppliers in meeting sustainability standards." The fourth respondent opined "our CSR communication strategy has been adapted to ensure inclusivity and transparency across both digital and traditional platforms."

Gratification and Outcomes in CSR Practice in Digital Disruption for Organizations and Communities

Interviewee one from Renaissance Africa Energy Company Limited stated thus "our CSR initiatives in digital disruption have increased stakeholder trust and strengthened our long-term brand reputation globally." Similarly, another respondent asserts "we are gratified that our reskilling CSR programs have improved employee retention and reduced skill gaps across the organization." Furthermore, the third respondent avowed "our CSR efforts in digital ethics and inclusion have resulted in higher social impact and improved community access to technology." The last respondent declared thus "we have experienced greater operational efficiency and transparency as a positive outcome of integrating CSR with digital systems."

Interview one from TotalEnergies in his response stated thus "our CSR engagement has strengthened community relationships and enhanced our social license to operate in key markets." More so, another interviewee affirmed thus "we are gratified that CSR investments during digital disruption have delivered both social returns and long-term financial stability." Furthermore, the

third respondent opined that “their CSR-driven digital supply chain reforms have improved supplier compliance and reduced ethical risks significantly.” The last respondent concluded thus “our CSR communication outcomes have led to increased customer loyalty and stronger brand credibility in a digitally connected market.”

Discussion Findings

Objective 1: What is the nature/impact of digital dislocation on the operation strategies of select multinational cooperations in Rivers State?

In the interview sessions with the CRS managers of Renaissance Africa and TotalEnergies, and stakeholders of Egi Kingdom and Rumuobiakani community, the question of the nature/impact of digital dislocation on the operation strategies of select multinational cooperations in Rivers State is answered. Among many items identified in table 1 above, finding showed that the most impact of digital dislocation is reconfiguration of traditional business model as evident in the accepted WMS of 2.76. Corroboratively, the majority of the respondents during interview sessions affirmed that the nature of digital dislocation is most visible in workforce transformation. Furthermore, findings from both data of host communities and senior manager of the multinational companies confirmed that as part of their CSR strategies, they have introduced reskilling and upskilling programs to support employees and local communities, helping them transition into the digital economy. This finding resonates with the finding of Syed and Syed (2024) “the convergence of digital transformation and CSR presents a unique opportunity for organizations to enhance their social impact while achieving business objectives. As companies adopt digital technologies, they have the potential to improve their CSR initiatives by increasing transparency, enhancing stakeholder engagement, and driving more sustainable practices.”

Again, it was also revealed in the data that digital dislocation has changed stakeholder expectations. Data also asserts that digital dislocation has expanded the scope of CSR. It is no longer just about environmental sustainability but also digital responsibility. Issues like data privacy, cybersecurity, and ethical AI use have become central. This finding is validated in the work of Henry, Mason and Muhammad (2025), “this shift has elevated the importance of CSR from a peripheral activity to a core component of corporate strategy, emphasizing sustainable practices and ethical decision-making in alignment with organizational goals.” This shift though not without enormous challenges, but stage was set at exploring CRS digital drivers. Again, understanding these challenges as occasioned by the impact of digital dislocation is critical for organisations seeking to leverage digital technologies to enhance their social responsibility efforts.

Objective 2: What corporate social responsibility adaptations adopted are aimed at community by these multinationals in response to digital dislocations?

In the interview sessions with the managers of the two select multinational companies and stakeholders from the two communities, the question of what corporate responsibility adaptations adopted are aimed at community by these multinationals in response to digital dislocation is answered. Finding indicates that digital literacy is the most adopted adaptations aimed at communities by these multinationals in response to digital dislocation. This is accepted in a WMS of 2.62. Most importantly, respondents from both sides agreed to the fact that they have adapted a CSR strategy to prioritize digital inclusion and bridge the technology access gap in underserved communities.” This finding is in consonance with the position of Oyewole et al., (2024) cited in Seyd and Seyd (2024) “in today's rapidly evolving business environment, digital transformation has become a cornerstone of organizational strategy, driving significant changes in how companies operate and engage with their stakeholders.” Again, finding also show that environmental science/technology advancement and automation induced workforce has been adopted in the CSR operations of the multinational companies under study. The finding supports the assertion of Vial (2021) “this technological shift is not just about adopting new tools but also about rethinking

business models and processes to enhance efficiency, innovation, and competitiveness." More so, data revealed that new CSR communication strategy has been adapted to ensure inclusivity and transparency across both digital and traditional platforms."

Objective 3: What are the gratifications and outcomes derived from corporate social responsibility practices in digital disruptions for organisations and communities?

In the interview sessions with the senior managers of the two multinational and the stakeholders from the two host communities, the question of what are the gratifications and outcomes derived from corporate social responsibility is answered. Finding revealed that digital literacy forms the gratification and outcome in CSR practice in digital disruption for organizations and communities. This is accepted in a WMS of 2.68. Furthermore, data show that the respondents agree to the fact that their CSR initiatives in digital disruption have increased stakeholder trust and strengthened their long-term brand reputation globally. This finding is in support of the assertion of Carrol (1991) cited in Seyd and Seyd (2024) "this includes initiatives focused on reducing carbon footprints, ensuring fair labor practices, supporting community development, and enhancing transparency and accountability." Similarly, data revealed they are gratified that their reskilling of CSR programs have improved employee retention and reduced skill gaps across the organization. The above finding agrees with the statement of Syed and Syed (2024) who opined thus "corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has emerged as a critical aspect of modern business practices." Again, both the stakeholders of the host communities and senior managers of the multinational are in agreement that CSR efforts in digital ethics and inclusion have resulted in higher social impact and improved community access to technology."

CONCLUSION

Digital dislocation presents a new vista in the practice of corporate social responsibility among multinationals companies in Rivers State and indeed anywhere in the world. The study has highlighted the adaptations and gratifications that this innovative transformation will offer the multinational and the host communities if well harnessed. The initiatives derivable from the digital dislocation is enormous. This will bring about strategic alignment, technological investment, stakeholders' engagement, and innovation in driving effective digital CSR initiatives. Organization that evolves with the new technologies and integrate its CSR practice strategy with it, will be well position to lead in both sustainability and competitiveness.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that multinationals institutionalize adaptive CSR framework that integrates digital inclusion, continuous stakeholder dialogue, and resilience-building strategies.

While digital dislocation could engender digital literacy and other associated benefits, multinationals need increase investment in digital infrastructure and awareness.

It is imperative that multinationals adopt a bottom-top approach in the design and deployment of adaptation adopted models. This will not only encourage the use of digital technology and enhance digital literacy but also enable the multinationals to effectively communicate update of their programme to the communities, thereby bridging the digital gap.

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