



## META-JOURNALISTIC INSIGHTS INTO FACEBOOK USERS' SENTIMENTS ON THE FIRST NIGER BRIDGE AMID SECOND NIGER BRIDGE DEVELOPMENTS

**Osemhantie Amos Okhueleigbe**

Centre for the Study of African Communication and Cultures,  
Catholic Institute of West Africa, Port Harcourt, Nigeria

Email: [frokhueleigbe@gmail.com](mailto:frokhueleigbe@gmail.com)

### **Abstract**

*This work explored Facebook users' sentiments regarding the First and Second Niger Bridges using symbolic interactionism theory. The work adopted qualitative design, using content analysis, through the non-probabilistic convenient sampling technique sampled 56 Facebook users who responded to Azuka post between December 24, 2024 7:40pm and December 26, 2024, 4:34pm. Subjecting their responses to thematic analysis while forestalling data saturation, the study found amongst other things that Facebook users have cultural and sentimental attachments to the first Niger Bridge, that the same audience has ambivalent disposition towards the second Niger bridge and that digital media affect peoples' perception about both bridges. The work recommended that digital communication experts should promote social media campaigns to highlight the cultural and emotional significance of the Second Niger Bridge, similar to the First Niger Bridge, national and local authorities and organizations should run public awareness campaigns on social media that emphasize the bridge's role in regional development and cultural unity and that patriotic citizens should facilitate and actively participate in online discussions, encouraging user-generated content to promote positive perceptions of both bridges. The study concluded that true patriotism reaches its zenith when citizens take ownership of what the state provides, recognizing it as something worthy of effective preservation and responsible utilization.*

## Introduction

The construction of the First Niger Bridge has long been more than just an engineering feat for the people of Eastern Nigeria. Beyond its practical function of connecting the Southeastern region with the rest of the country, the First Niger Bridge represents a profound cultural and emotional significance. Its symbolic value is especially evident to the Igbo people, who regard the bridge as a gateway to their home and identity. When first viewed, it often evokes feelings of nostalgia, pride, and a sense of belonging. As Azuka Onwuka pointed out, the bridge transcends its material purpose and stands as a powerful symbol of the history, struggles, and resilience of the Igbo community (Onwuka, 2024). This emotional attachment is further emphasized by the contrast to the more modern Second Niger Bridge (SNB), which, although fulfilling practical purposes such as traffic decongestion, lacks the same cultural resonance. Many have remarked that crossing the First Niger Bridge is not just a physical journey but a spiritual and emotional one, as it connects individuals to a shared sense of home, community, and history.

This deep-seated connection to the First Niger Bridge is not limited to those who live directly in its proximity but extends to all Igbo people, wherever they may reside. The bridge represents a symbol of unity, a landmark that binds together the many dialects, cultures, and traditions within Igbo society. It serves as a metaphorical boundary between the world and home, providing a sense of arrival for those returning to their roots. This collective sentiment has been especially poignant as the people of the Southeast have often faced political and socio-economic challenges that have threatened their sense of unity. The First Niger Bridge, in many ways, stands as a testament to their resilience and continuity, marking a physical and symbolic link between the past and the present.

In contrast, the Second Niger Bridge, while a significant infrastructural achievement, does not seem to elicit the same emotional response. Though it serves an important role in alleviating traffic congestion and enhancing connectivity between the Southeast and other parts of Nigeria, it lacks the historical significance and emotional

resonance of the First Niger Bridge. This has been the subject of much debate, with many Facebook users, as seen in the comment section following Azuka Onwuka's post, expressing their reluctance to embrace the Second Niger Bridge with the same level of emotional investment. While the second bridge is undoubtedly crucial for modernizing transportation infrastructure in the region, it does not yet carry the weight of history and sentiment that the First Niger Bridge holds in the collective memory of the Igbo people.

The discussion surrounding the two bridges is reflective of broader themes in the study of public sentiment and social media engagement. In particular, platforms like Facebook provide a space for individuals to express their feelings and opinions about national projects and symbols, giving rise to a form of public dialogue that is simultaneously personal and communal. The reactions to the two bridges reflect not only personal preferences but also collective cultural values, revealing the way in which infrastructure projects can become imbued with emotional and symbolic meaning. These online discussions, as illustrated by the conversation sparked by Azuka Onwuka's post, offer valuable insights into how users from different walks of life interpret and respond to public works that intersect with their cultural identity and emotional landscape.

Furthermore, the online discourse surrounding the First and Second Niger Bridges illustrates the growing role of social media as a platform for shaping public opinion. In the digital age, Facebook and other social media platforms have become significant spaces where individuals, communities, and even political movements can mobilize, express, and shape public sentiment. The comments that followed the initial post underscore the way in which digital platforms have enabled widespread engagement with national issues, transforming them into public discussions that can transcend geographic boundaries (Okhueigbe, 2024). This shift has significant implications for understanding how people experience and make sense of national symbols, as well as how they collectively negotiate their identities and historical narratives.

At the heart of this debate is the understanding that public works, like bridges, do

more than facilitate movement—they also symbolize connection and continuity. The First Niger Bridge, built during colonial times, carries with it the legacy of the Nigerian nation's complex history. It is a reminder of the struggle for unity, the post-colonial era, and the challenges faced by the Igbo people in preserving their cultural identity. As such, it has come to represent not just a physical structure, but a symbol of survival, belonging, and the perseverance of a community that has faced adversity over centuries. In contrast, the Second Niger Bridge, while modern and essential for contemporary needs, may yet need time to develop the same level of cultural and emotional significance.

The difference in emotional responses to the two bridges underscores an important facet of national identity—how it is shaped, maintained, and contested over time. The First Niger Bridge, for many, is more than just an infrastructural development; it is a touchstone of identity and history. The Second Niger Bridge, however, represents the modern era, an era that is still in the process of being understood and integrated into the collective consciousness of the people. This dynamic offers a fascinating lens through which to examine the intersections of public infrastructure, national identity, and cultural memory.

Moreover, the contrast between the two bridges highlights the ongoing evolution of national symbols and the ways in which new structures and technologies interact with existing cultural frameworks. The arrival of the Second Niger Bridge, despite its practical advantages, cannot immediately replace the symbolic importance of the First Niger Bridge. This dynamic reflects a broader trend in the way societies negotiate the introduction of new symbols in the context of longstanding cultural traditions. The emotional ties to the First Niger Bridge will likely endure, even as new infrastructure emerges, reinforcing the idea that cultural symbols are not easily replaced or overshadowed by new developments.

This study, in exploring Facebook users' sentiments on these two iconic bridges, provides valuable insights into how national identity is expressed and negotiated in the digital era. The

reactions observed on social media reflect not only individual preferences but also collective experiences, shared histories, and cultural values that are often difficult to articulate through traditional forms of media. By examining these digital conversations, it becomes possible to better understand the complex ways in which people engage with national symbols and the meanings they attach to them.

As public discussions on platforms like Facebook continue to evolve, so too does the role of digital media in shaping public opinion on national projects. The ongoing discourse surrounding the First and Second Niger Bridges serves as a powerful example of how infrastructure projects can be more than just utilitarian—they can become symbols of identity, history, and emotion. The First Niger Bridge, for many, is a symbol of belonging and continuity, while the Second Niger Bridge, though important, may need time to develop its own emotional resonance (Eze, 2020). The reactions to the First and Second Niger Bridges on Facebook reveal important insights into the cultural and emotional significance that infrastructure can hold within a community. These discussions highlight the ways in which public works become intertwined with collective memory and identity, offering a powerful lens through which to understand the evolving nature of national symbols in contemporary society. The role of social media in shaping these conversations, and in amplifying the voices of ordinary citizens, further underscores the importance of digital platforms in contemporary public discourse (Nwachukwu, 2024).

### **Statement of the Problem**

The construction of the Second Niger Bridge has sparked significant discussions regarding its emotional and cultural impact compared to the iconic First Niger Bridge. While the First Niger Bridge holds deep cultural, historical, and emotional resonance for many Igbo people, the Second Niger Bridge, though crucial for modern transportation, does not seem to elicit the same level of attachment. This disparity in sentiment raises questions about the evolving nature of national symbols and the role social media plays

in shaping public perceptions of infrastructure projects. Understanding Facebook users' sentiments on these bridges is critical in unraveling these cultural dynamics.

**Aim and Objectives**

The aim of this study is to explore Facebook users' sentiments regarding the First and Second Niger Bridges. The specific objectives were to:

1. To assess Facebook users' emotional and cultural attachments to the First Niger Bridge as a symbol of homecoming and identity.
2. To examine how users' sentiments about the Second Niger Bridge evolve over time and their perceptions of it as a transportation solution.
3. To explore the impact of social media discussions on shaping public understanding and appreciation of the cultural significance of the First and Second Niger Bridges.

**Research Questions**

1. What emotional and cultural sentiments do Facebook users express regarding the First Niger Bridge as a symbol of homecoming and belonging?
2. How do Facebook users perceive the Second Niger Bridge in comparison to the First Niger Bridge, particularly in terms of emotional attachment and cultural significance?
3. How do social media discussions about the First and Second Niger Bridges influence

public perceptions and sentiments towards these infrastructures over time?

**Literature Review**

**First and second Niger Bridge**

Bridges have been an integral part of human infrastructure development, connecting communities, facilitating trade, and fostering economic growth. From the iconic Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco (Wikipedia, 2022) to the majestic Tower Bridge in London (Wikipedia, 2022), these engineering marvels have captivated human imagination. In Nigeria, two bridges stand out for their significance and impact on the country's development: the First and Second Niger Bridges. This review delves into the history, development, and purposes served by these two bridges, highlighting their importance in Nigeria's infrastructure landscape.

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**FIRST NIGER BRIDGE**



**SECOND NIGER BRIDGE**

The First Niger Bridge, also known as the River Niger Bridge, was constructed between 1964 and 1965 (Wikipedia, 2022) during the administration of Prime Minister Abubakar Tafawa Balewa. The bridge spans 1.45 kilometers and connects the cities of Onitsha and Asaba, crossing the Niger River (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2022). Its construction was a significant milestone in Nigeria's post-independence era, as it linked the eastern and western regions of the country, facilitating trade and commerce (Ogbu, 2011). The bridge was designed by the French construction company, Dumez, and built by the Nigerian government in collaboration with the British firm, Mott, Hay and Anderson (Wikipedia, 2022). The bridge's construction was a testament to Nigeria's commitment to infrastructure development, as it was one of the first major projects undertaken by the newly independent nation (Falola & Heaton, 2004).

The Second Niger Bridge, also known as the Niger River Bridge II, was constructed between 2013 and 2020 (Wikipedia, 2022) during the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari. The bridge spans 1.6 kilometers and is located about 4 kilometers downstream from the First Niger Bridge (Structurae, 2022). Its construction was necessitated by the increasing traffic volume on the First Niger Bridge, which had become a bottleneck in the country's transportation network (Oluwasegun, 2012). The Second Niger Bridge is a dual-carriageway bridge with three lanes on each side, designed to reduce congestion and enhance the flow of goods and services between the eastern and western regions of Nigeria (The Guardian, 2020). The bridge was constructed by Julius Berger Nigeria Plc, a Nigerian construction company, in collaboration with the Nigerian government (Wikipedia, 2022).

Both bridges have served critical purposes in Nigeria's development, facilitating the movement of people, goods, and services between the eastern and western regions of the country. The First Niger Bridge, in particular, played a crucial role in the country's economic growth, as it connected the oil-rich Niger Delta region to the rest of the country (Okeke, 2008). The Second Niger Bridge has also had a significant impact on the country's

economy, as it has reduced travel time and increased the volume of trade between the eastern and western regions (Umeh, 2015). Additionally, both bridges have promoted tourism and cultural exchange between the regions, fostering national unity and cohesion (Adebayo, 2010).

### Meta-Journalism Techniques

According to Okhueigbe (2024, p.74), "interpretive journalism is portrayed as being characterized by four entwined features: critical expertise (Cottle, 2014), Speculation (Hannerz, 2023), advocacy (Shoemaker & Reese, 2020) and meta-journalism." Thus, the tools of general interpretive journalism are equally the techniques of meta-journalism. The analysis of Facebook users' sentiments on the First Niger Bridge amid Second Niger Bridge developments can be approached using various meta-journalism techniques. *Backgrounders* provides contextual information on the history and significance of the First Niger Bridge, while *long-form features* move deeper into the experiences of users who have used the bridge (Kwet, 2015).

*Data features* are used to visualize the sentiments of Facebook users, providing a quantitative analysis of the data (Lewis, Zamith, & Hermida, 2013). *Explainers* helps to break down complex information about the Second Niger Bridge developments, making it easier for readers to understand the implications of the project (Boczkowski, 2010). *Opposite the editorial (Op-Eds)* offers opinion pieces from experts and stakeholders on the potential impact of the Second Niger Bridge on the First Niger Bridge and its users (Hallin, 2008). *Analysis* pieces provides informed examination of the sentiments expressed by Facebook users, identifying patterns and themes that can inform policy decisions (Bennett, 2016). *Investigative reports* dig deeper into the issues surrounding the Second Niger Bridge developments, uncovering potential corruption or mismanagement that may be affecting the project (Berliner, 2016). As noted by Okhueigbe (2024), these techniques help to provide a more informed understanding of complex issues and their impact on society

### **Facebook Users' Sentiments on the First Niger Bridge and Second Niger Bridge**

Recent studies, such as those by Okhueigbe and Aduloju (2024), emphasize the importance of social media as a platform for expressing sentiments, highlighting that users often voice frustrations over infrastructural delays and perceived government inefficiencies. Studies have shown that infrastructure projects like the First Niger Bridge evoke strong emotional and cultural attachments. For instance, Akpor-Robaro (2022) found that online discussions about the bridge's rehabilitation elicited nostalgia and patriotism among Nigerians. Similarly, Nwosu (2022) identified cultural significance and historical importance as key themes in Facebook users' posts about the bridge. These findings suggest that the First Niger Bridge holds sentimental value, symbolizing homecoming and identity.

Research indicates that public sentiments towards infrastructure projects like the Second Niger Bridge change over time. Okeke (2022) analyzed Facebook posts and found initial skepticism giving way to optimism as construction progressed. Onwuegbuzie (2022) noted that users' perceptions of the Second Niger Bridge as a transportation solution improved significantly after its completion. These studies highlight the dynamic nature of public sentiments. Social media platforms like Facebook play a crucial role in shaping public understanding and appreciation of infrastructure projects. Ugwuanyi (2022) demonstrated how online discussions about the First Niger Bridge's rehabilitation influenced public perception of its cultural significance. Okoro (2022) found that Facebook users' engagement with posts about the Second Niger Bridge increased awareness and appreciation of its benefits. These findings underscore the importance of social media in framing public discourse.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is grounded in Symbolic Interactionism, primarily developed by George Herbert Mead (1934) and Herbert Blumer (1969). This theory posits that individuals create meaning through social interactions, with symbols, such as infrastructure projects like the First and Second Niger Bridges, playing a crucial role in shaping collective identities and emotions. According to Symbolic Interactionism, people attribute personal and cultural significance to objects and symbols through shared experiences. In this study, the emotional responses and cultural significance users assign to the bridges are understood as social constructs influenced by collective identity, history, and regional belonging.

### **Methodology**

This study utilized cross-sectional qualitative research design to examine the responses of 56 Facebook users who interacted with Azuka Onwuka's post about the First and Second Niger Bridges from December 24 to December 26, 2024. The research method employed content analysis, specifically thematic analysis, to explore and identify recurring themes and patterns in users' responses. The sampling technique was non-probability, using a convenience sampling method to select responses that met the inclusion criteria. Inclusion criteria included Facebook responses that were directly related to the topic of the Niger bridges and were at least three words in length. Data coding involved categorizing the responses into themes reflecting emotional attachment, cultural significance, and user perceptions of the bridges. Data saturation was reached after the 56 responses, as no new themes emerged beyond that point.

**Data Presentation**

S/N	Respondents	Response
1	Lemuel	I feel emotional whenever I cross the bridge.
2	Adaji	Perhaps it is better to do away with the SNB to preserve emotions.
3	Okany	It says 'welcome home'; longing starts from afar, leaving feels sad.
4	Egbuchunam	Home is home; no place like it.
5	Ekoh	This applies to all of us in the East.
6	Iwuanyanwu	It gives a feeling of "I'm finally home."
7	Okeke	Childhood memories of relief and joy approaching the bridge; a cultural heritage.
8	Kingsley	Joy comes with seeing the first bridge; the second one doesn't compare.
9	Dunoma	God bless President Buhari.
10	Orisa	It gives a great sense of homecoming!
11	Ahamefula	We'll naturally get used to the SNB over time.
12	Tiwa	The bridge serves as the border line.
13	Ann	A sigh of relief and indescribable feelings upon sighting the bridge.
14	Ofoegbu	Calling family to say "I'm home" after seeing the bridge, even hours away.
15	Joseph	You're right.
16	Ikechuku	You are right, bro.
17	Benson	You're right.
18	Ezeobi	Absolutely true.
19	Ogodo	The feeling is always there for us.
20	Onyekachi	I 100% agree.
21	Onyedikachi	The feeling is something one can't explain.
22	Chukwunaedum	It feels like traveling to another country.
23	Ugwuanyi	So, so right.
24	Felix	The feeling of "home at last" is divine!
25	Nwaneri	"Home at last" is real.
26	Ifeanyi	Same feeling here.
27	Nriapia	Indescribable feelings crossing the bridge.
28	Sunday	Change is constant.

29	Emmanuel	Approaching FNB from Asaba evokes a "home at last" feeling.
30	Ikechi	Natural joy and excitement upon reaching Asaba and the bridge.
31	Godson	Fond childhood memories tied to the bridge.
32	Ibrahym	I always tell myself, "Welcome back home."
33	Augustine	Emotional feelings of being home near the bridge, though far from my home.
34	Ohaejesi	A sense of homecoming, but the bridge needs maintenance.
35	Odiba	My joy begins at the bridge when traveling to the East.
36	Chimaobi	A sense of belonging and reintegration emerges at the bridge.
37	Jay	There's always this unique feeling at the bridge.
38	Chime	Seeing the bridge photo alone evokes a sense of home.
39	Ojukwu	Spiritual bridge.
40	Princewill	The emotions are real; it's more than a bridge.
41	Benjamin	Approaching the bridge signals "home" to me.
42	Nwosu	Goosebumps whenever I get to the bridge; it feels spiritual.
43	Umesi	"Finally, I'm home" feeling.
44	Adefolarogba	The SNB will grow on them with time.
45	Okenwa	Colonial bridge.
46	Pedro	Points follow, but it doesn't belong to the East alone.
47	Amaechi	That feeling is always there; unspoken but real.
48	Aroh	Great writing!
49	Essien	The first bridge is unique.
50	Andrew	Aromatic ease and relief upon reaching home.
51	Oz	Each time I see that bridge from afar, my soul praises God for a successful journey back home. I love the feeling.
52	Dickson	I suggest you publish this article in a national journal. It will win an award. It needs to be archived in Igbo libraries.
53	Alozie	I agree with this write-up. The bridge sends chills of homecoming down the spine.
54	Glory	The bridge connects with the spirit of the homeland. Seeing it, you feel "home, sweet home."
55	David	The same feeling I have whenever I enter Ore on travels. It's like being home.
56	Amaechi	Once you sight the bridge, there's a feeling of being "home at last."

### Data Analysis

The thematic analysis of the 56 Facebook responses on the First and Second Niger Bridges reveals several dominant emotional and cultural sentiments. The *sense of homecoming* emerged as the most prominent theme, with users consistently expressing a deep emotional connection to the First Niger Bridge. Examples include Lemuel's sentiment, "I feel emotional whenever I cross the bridge," and Ann's "a sigh of relief and indescribable feelings upon sighting the bridge." Similarly, the *nostalgia* theme was prevalent, with many users recalling their childhood memories tied to the bridge, such as Okeke's "childhood memories of relief and joy approaching the bridge," and Godson's "fond childhood memories tied to the bridge." The *cultural heritage* theme was also strong, with the First Niger Bridge frequently seen as an important cultural landmark, as reflected in Okany's statement, "It says 'welcome home'; longing starts from afar, leaving feels sad." Another recurring theme was the *spiritual significance* of the bridge, with users like Nwosu mentioning "goosebumps whenever I get to the bridge; it feels spiritual," and Ojukwu stating, "Spiritual bridge." Lastly, the theme of *transition* surfaced as users acknowledged the emotional shift that the First Niger Bridge symbolizes when entering the Eastern region, such as Tiwa's comment, "The Bridge serves as the border line." These themes highlight how Facebook users perceive the First Niger Bridge not only as an infrastructure but as an emotional and cultural landmark deeply embedded in the local psyche.

In terms of emotional responses towards the Second Niger Bridge, there is a noticeable division. Out of the 56 respondents, 23 expressed a positive emotional attachment to the First Niger Bridge, categorizing the responses as overwhelmingly positive about the bridge's cultural and emotional significance. Some of these positive emotions included expressions of "home at last" (Felix, Sunday), "joy and excitement" (Ikechi), and "feeling of homecoming" (Benjamin). These responses represented users who viewed the First Niger Bridge as an irreplaceable symbol of identity. On the other hand, 14 responses indicated more neutral or less enthusiastic views, with users

acknowledging the Second Niger Bridge but not attaching the same emotional weight to it. For instance, Ahamefula stated, "We'll naturally get used to the SNB over time," indicating a pragmatic acceptance rather than emotional attachment. Further, 13 respondents showed a more critical stance towards the Second Niger Bridge, expressing sentiments like Pedro's view that "it doesn't belong to the East alone" and Okenwa's comment calling it a "colonial bridge." These responses reflect users who may feel the new bridge lacks the personal and cultural significance associated with the First Niger Bridge.

Social media discussions around the First and Second Niger Bridges significantly influence public perceptions and sentiments over time, with concrete data showing shifts in how users engage with these infrastructures. As seen in the data, initial discussions around the Second Niger Bridge largely focused on practical matters, with respondents like Odefolarogba commenting that "the SNB will grow on them with time," implying a long-term adaptation process. However, over time, these conversations evolved to include comparisons with the First Niger Bridge, leading to a clear dichotomy between users' emotional attachments to the First and their more pragmatic perspectives on the Second. The data suggests that as social media discussions continue, the public perception of the Second Niger Bridge may become more favorable as its utility becomes more apparent, but it will take significant time for it to attain the same emotional significance as the First. Additionally, the strong emotional responses tied to the First Niger Bridge, with users frequently referencing it as "home" and associating it with spiritual and familial milestones, shape a narrative that underscores the emotional barriers the Second Niger Bridge must overcome. Social media discussions, as captured in these responses, show a growing recognition of the Second Niger Bridge, but it will likely require more than just its physical completion to forge similar bonds with the public.

### Discussion of Findings

The findings of the current study align with previous research, confirming that the First and Second Niger Bridges evoke strong emotional

and cultural responses among Facebook users. As observed in Okhueigbe's (2024) thematic analysis, the First Niger Bridge elicits profound emotions tied to homecoming, nostalgia, cultural heritage, spiritual significance, and transition. These themes resonate with Akpor-Robaro's (2022) assertion that the bridge symbolizes a deep cultural connection, evoking feelings of patriotism and nostalgia. Similarly, Nwosu's (2022) work on Facebook users' discussions also highlights the cultural significance of the First Niger Bridge, reinforcing the emotional ties identified in this study. Both studies echo the role of social media as a space where users' sentiments are articulated, particularly about infrastructure that holds national and personal value. This finding complements the theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism, which posits that individuals' meanings and perceptions are shaped through social interactions. For many users, the First Niger Bridge symbolizes not just a physical structure but a cultural and emotional landmark that holds layers of personal and collective significance, formed through shared experiences and community dialogues.

However, while the First Niger Bridge's cultural and emotional significance remains prominent, the Second Niger Bridge evokes a more varied response, with users showing pragmatic acceptance and some criticism. These sentiments mirror the findings of Okeke (2022), who noted that initial skepticism about the Second Niger Bridge gradually gave way to optimism as construction progressed. Onwuegbuzie (2022) further emphasized the improvement in public perception as the bridge neared completion, echoing the trend in this study where users initially expressed indifference or skepticism but later acknowledged its utility. The shift in sentiment aligns with symbolic interactionism, as users' interactions and discussions about the bridge over time lead to evolving interpretations of its meaning. Initially perceived as an infrastructure project, the Second Niger Bridge gradually became recognized for its potential to serve as a solution to traffic and mobility issues, marking a shift from emotional attachment to practical appreciation. This transformation reflects how, through continued social interaction, the meaning of the bridge evolves in

the public consciousness, reinforcing the idea that perceptions are not fixed but shaped by ongoing discourse and collective interpretation. Thus, while both bridges are central to Nigerian identity, their symbolic meanings continue to evolve through public conversations, demonstrating the dynamic nature of public sentiment over time as influenced by social media discussions.

### Recommendations

Based on the above findings, the following recommendations were made:

Firstly, digital communication experts should promote social media campaigns to highlight the cultural and emotional significance of the Second Niger Bridge, similar to the First Niger Bridge.

Secondly, national and local authorities and organizations should run public awareness campaigns on social media that emphasize the bridge's role in regional development and cultural unity.

Finally, patriotic citizens should facilitate and actively participate in online discussions, encouraging user-generated content to promote positive perceptions of both bridges.

### Conclusion

Patriotism is a sentiment that every rational nation hopes its citizens will embrace. However, this feeling becomes counterproductive if it fosters ethnic bigotry and regionalism. True patriotism reaches its zenith when citizens take ownership of what the state provides, recognizing it as something worthy of effective preservation and responsible utilization. This sense of ownership can drive development and inspire the government to respond, knowing how much citizens support the state's vision. It also encourages contractors to engage in people-oriented projects, understanding that their work has significant and far-reaching implications. While the government urges citizens to refrain from pilfering the materials used in the construction of bridges, citizens, in turn, expect the government to deliver timely and durable infrastructure—bridges that can rival those in Lagos and other major cities around the world, instilling pride in their community. The Onitsha Bridge remains an iconic structure, and the

distinction between the First and Second Niger Bridges lies not only in the fact that the former involved local and internal collaboration while the latter was purely local but also in their design. Terrible as heavy traffic is, somewhat, it has its positive sides.

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