

NASARAWA STATE UNIVERSITY, KEFFI

JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

JMRD

A PUBLICATION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION
FACULTY OF ADMINISTRATION
NASARAWA STATE UNIVERSITY, KEFFI

VOLUME 8, NUMBER 1, MARCH 2023

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VOLUME 8, NUMBER 1, MARCH 2023

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QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF CORPORATE COMMUNICATION AND CORPORATE REPUTATION OF A SELECTED RETAIL BUSINESS IN LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract
Organization seek corporate elements for survival in today's turbulent business world. These constituents could be perceived as image and identity. These identity constituents are developed through the projection of positive image that will increase its public confidence about the quality and achievements of the organization. The study examined the effect of corporate communication on corporate reputation of selected retail businesses in Lagos state, Nigeria in quantitative analysis. Quantitative method was used as a research design, the population size was infinite as the study focused on customers of the 19 selected retail stores across Lagos state. Survey method through questionnaire was used to collect the primary data; Cochlen (2004) model sample size was adopted and 246 was determined as sample size, multistage sampling technique was employed in the study. Out of the 246 copies of the questionnaire that were administered, 138 were finally retrieved and used for data analysis. Standard multiple regression (SPSS version 26) was adopted to analyze the data. The outcome of the study shows that when effective communication elements were put in place by the management of the retail firm, possibility of improving the image of the firm is guaranteed since the communication elements will provide a platform for interaction between the customers and the retail firms. The study recommended that service providers (retailers) should try to package their communication strategy in a way so as to create awareness, arouse interest and desire and elicit actions of their customers towards their offerings, in order to build a formidable corporate reputation.

Keywords: Corporate Communication, Corporate Reputation, Customer Satisfaction, Identity, Image

Introduction

The ultimate goal of every communication programs in retailing business is to generate sales. And in order to achieve this lofty goal, retail practitioners adopt different methods in informing, persuading and reminding their esteem target customers about their existence and their offerings. The consistency of these service providers in making the customers satisfied through different effective communication platforms guarantee firms in building reputation in the mind of their esteem customers. Corporate reputation is viewed as ethos, aspirations, values, and goals that drive a sense of commonness and alignment among the organization's stakeholders (Ugwunwanyi, *et al.* 2021). The important responsibility of corporate reputation in building and sustaining the excellent performance of an organization across all vanguard cannot be neglected.

Retailing in Nigeria contributes about 5.8% to the compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of the economy (Marketresearch.com, 2021). This area which encompasses the endeavor of both wholesales and retails are the third largest benefactors to Nigerian GDP, constituting about 16 percent of the whole (Obayagbona, 2022). Even the study conducted by AC Nielsen (2014) in Nigeria shows that from 2005 to 2010, the number of retail business across the country episodically grow by 36 percent. In Lagos state alone, there is total number of 903 shopping malls specialty retail stores which also includes 79 online shopping lines (directory.org.ng, 2022).

In a bid in creating awareness about retail service offerings, retail service providers transmit their information to the ultimate consumers through different communication platforms. Organizational communication can be perceived as the process by which information are transferred and acknowledged through feedback by two or more people usually with the intention to motivate or influence behavior (Daft, 1997). It is important to notice that this definition of communication widen its purpose - a purpose that may go beyond just transferring of information. The sender

has the intent to influence the receiver to do what the sender wants (Kelly, 2000). Corporate communication refers to a kind of communication which is used for the promotion of a product, services or organization. It can also be used for legal issues or to communicate the information within the organization. Thus, corporate communication is germane for an organisation because it is through transmission of information that organizations make contacts and build relationships with its customers, suppliers and other elements that are both internal and external to the organization. On the other hand, corporate communication is an important tool for a company to create and build the best corporate reputation that can stand a test of time in the mind of their stakeholders.

From the analysis, the essence of this research work is to examine how effective corporate communication could enhance the building of corporate reputation as a result of customer trust towards the satisfaction of the customer in the store-based retail business. Identity, image and reputation are the main agenda of organization through corporate communication activities (Muhammad, *et al*, 2007). In world view, image is seen as one of the considerations that is being highlighted by organization. In today's global world, image is seen as one of the considerations that organization should strategically define in their line of business.

In spite of this, organization must realise and belief that the public is much concerned about their corporate image as only the good and excellent image can attract the whole public most especially the consumers and other stakeholders in giving considerations to the firm's products and services offered. This corporate image and reputation are disseminated to the public through the corporate communication elements of the organisation.

In today's turbulent and complex business environment, organisation needs to inform their esteem customers about the specialty of their products and services that they are socially responsible and trustworthy through positive corporate reputation (Tahiri, *et al*, 2012). The organization's reputation is one of the most unique valuable assets in building competitiveness. Reputation is the building of perceptions that are stored in the memory of company's stakeholders which also includes customers and company's employees. The way employees and customers perceive the company's reputation will influence their behavior and relationships with the organization. This is noticeable in service businesses, where company's employees and customers interact very closely in the delivery of high-quality services (Ladhari, 2008). The company's image and reputation plays an important role in establishing relationships with customers.

The company's reputation, identity and image is an important consideration in today's business world. In addition, a good and bad in an organization's reputation is a serious indicator of the company's success. Mostly in business it takes more 20 years to build a company's reputation and can also takes less than five minutes to ruin it down as the company's reputation is one of the most valuable assets in achieving competitiveness (Syahfudin & Ruswanti, 2009). Reputation is a perception of product quality in addition with brand name or a trust in the good name of the service provider as perceived by consumers. A good reputation can be used to build customer satisfaction that will enhance customer attraction.

Furthermore, the common connection that corporate reputation has with satisfaction is perceived quality. A good corporate reputation with superb brand image element for high quality means more customers, less dissatisfied customers and increases in firm's profitability. A well satisfied customer will provide positive word of mouth to encourage friends and associates (Weigelt & Camerer, 2018). As Anderson and Sullivan (2013) also claim that high customer satisfaction creates positive corporate reputation.

In addition to this, negligence of most of the retail service providers in appropriately put together a well-defined communication objectives that would assist a firm in building brand, corporate identity and association in terms of

their retail stores and products is worthy of reference. This may be due to organizations' incapacitated in having reasonable objectives and making use of feedbacks from their loyal customers. Operating in retail businesses is no doubt a very complex endeavour and managing both internal and external communication is not excluded. The goal of the retail corporate communication mix is to make sales in retailer's target market (Levy & Weitz, 2012; Chandramohan & Prem, 2007).

To achieve this goal, retailers have to use variety of methods to inform, persuade and remind customers about their products and services so as to be able to build sustainable and excellent and superb corporate image and reputation. Considering the wide varieties of ways the retail service providers can use to communicate with their customers ranging from impersonal methods like mass advertising, sales promotion, publicity, merchandise demonstrations and sampling, contests and coupon to personal ones like personal selling and through other social media platforms, the faithfulness of the customers towards the organisation's brand which the retail service providers should have harnesses used to miss them as a result of poor and not well-defined effective communication strategy that can arouse or trigger the interest and emotion of the customers in ensuring continuous patronage that will inevitably leads to customer loyalty and repeat patronage.

Research Question

i. What is the effect of corporate communication on corporate reputation of the store – based retail outlets in Nigeria?

Research Objective

i. Examine the effect of corporate communication on corporate reputation of a store – based retail outlets in Nigeria.

Research Hypothesis

Ho Corporate communication has no significant relationship with corporate reputation in a store – based retail outlet in Nigeria.

Literature Review

Concept of Corporate Communication

Communication as a concept has no single definition, rather it ranges from scholars to scholars and the way they perceive it. Communication is the soul of all organizations; it is the means through which companies both large and small access the vital resources they need in order to operate towards the attainment of their goals and aspirations. Communication is therefore is the heart of organizational performance. The success of an organization's efforts to acquire resources and to influence the context within which it carries out its activities depends heavily on how well and how professionally a company communicates with its resource holders (Van riel & Fombrun, 2007). Emil Walker, and Stratton (2010) defined Communication as the verbal and nonverbal transmission of information between someone wanting to express an idea and someone else expected or expecting to get that idea for objectives to be achieved.

However, from the perspective of corporate world, corporate communication is the totality of communication activity orchestrated by an organisation to attain its planned objectives. Corporate communication encompasses but not limited to marketing communications, organizational communications, and management communications. By corporate communication, we mean a coherent and general approach to the development of communications in organizations, one that communication specialists can adopt to streamline and

own communications activities by working from a centrally coordinated strategic framework (Van riel & Fombrun, 2007). Corporate communication is the management and orchestration of both internal and external communications to create a favourable point of view and prompt desired behaviour among all organization's stakeholders.

Fombrun and Shanley (1990) and Fombrun (1996) posit corporate communication as the set of activities involved in managing and orchestrating all internal and external communications aimed at creating favorable starting points with stakeholders on which the company depends. Corporate communication consists of the transmitting of information by a variety of specialists and generalists in an organization, with the common goal of enhancing the organization's ability to retain its license to operate most especially in the present business environment that is characterize by instability in business environment variables.

The management of the corporate communication in an organisation can be seen as a very important issue in the managerial strategy, as a result of its functions in the selection of the messages related to company's objectives and various point of views, and then transmit them to the interested parties (Mihai, 2017). Communicators, as a specialist of the domain, have to be utmost ready to handle complex communication issues. They have to be well versed about the internal activities of the various departments of the and all other related divisions and elements of the organization, but more importantly is to have a close relationship with the public relations sections of the company that is dealing with outside stakeholders of the organisation, marketing, advertising, research and informational systems, in order to be able to manipulate successfully the existing pressure issued by the different category of public –mass media, stock-holders (Moreno, *et al*, 2018).

From the research conducted by Van (1997), it was discovered that there are three main elements in corporate communication as evidenced by the scholars. The elements are corporate reputation corporate identity and communication management. In a broad view, corporate communication is categorized as communication that are added with advertising, media affair, financial communication, employee communication and crisis communication. In order to be effective and efficient, every organization should have clear sense of purpose that the stakeholders understand.

Concept of Corporate Reputation

Devine (2001) asserts reputation acts as a gauge, defining and giving an organisation its sense of identity. Furthermore, Hanson and Stuart (2001) and Kowalczyk and Pawlish (2002) both agreed that corporate reputations, once created, are relatively enduring. From all criteria of differentiation strategies the most difficult to duplicate is an organization's reputation. Kandampully and Hu (2007) opined that corporate reputation and image consists of two main constituents; the first is functional such as the tangible features that can be measured and evaluated conveniently. The second+ is emotional such as feelings, attitudes and beliefs that one have as regards the organization. These emotional dimensions are the results from gradual experiences the customers have with the passage of time with the organization which can inevitably lead to loyalty or otherwise.

Furthermore, the terms, image and reputation have continued to be used mutually and reciprocally in most of the service quality literature. The most usual and contemporary definition of image in the ambience of reputation is a 'summary of the impressions or perceptions held by external stakeholders' (Bromley, 2013). From this definition, a self is considered from the position of the other. Amid external stakeholders, the main focus is on customers, so that image is defined not as what the company believes, but what customers believe or feel about the company from their experiences and observation (Bernstein, 2004).

Based on how organizational ethics impact corporate reputation, Doolan (1998) asserts that to gain a good corporate reputation, organization must not only have integrity at the top management level, but also be ruthlessly intolerant with company's employee that undermines the integrity and values of the organization which may hinder the organization in satisfying their customers. Organization should ensure that there is two way communications where there is good communication rapport between the top echelon of the organization and the lower level while communicating the organization's message to the public is also important of which firm's customers is an integral part. Nakra (2000) adds that full commitment to ethical practices will also help organization to attract and retain dedicated employees, reduce hostility toward the organization, help employees make critical business decisions and build confidence and loyalty in the mind of their customers.

According to Schwartz (2000), organization that has integrity and codes of ethics does not merely help employees to do what is right alone; research has shown that organizations with an ethical decision-maker are more effective and more productive and also have the ability to retain their customers at a cheaper cost. Richardson and Bolick (2002) state that reputable organizations protect their corporate images and ethos by maintaining high standards of practice the circumstances. The most admired organizations use a combination of transparency, strong ethics and commitment to high quality products and services to build and maintain their corporate reputations. Schreiber (2011) explains that corporate reputations are built, maintained and enhanced by several elements, such as being part of the organization's corporate strategy, not just a mere public relations or advertising slogan. Secondly, corporate reputation is built from differentiating and sustaining activities of the organization. Companies often fail to achieve their desired reputations because of two primary factors, firstly the failure to identify a clear core competency, relying on claims of superiority that have little value to the intended audience and secondly continuing to do the same things that made the organization successful, despite the fact that these things are no longer relevant to the current situation as a result of the dynamism of business environments.

Empirical Review

Vogler and Eisenegger (2020) researched a study to address the research gap by looking at the effect of CSR communication through Face book and news media coverage of CSR on corporate reputation in Switzerland. The results of this longitudinal research study show that the valence and tone of news media coverage of CSR were positively related to corporate reputation, even though the news media coverage about CSR was predominantly negative. No effect of CSR communication through Face book on corporate reputation was found. The results suggest that legacy news media still were influential in determining how the public evaluates corporations in the digital age.

Ugwuanyi, *et al.* (2021) empirically conducted a study to establish the relationship between corporate reputation and customer satisfaction. The study made use of survey research design method. The reliability of the questionnaire was estimated by assessing the internal consistency of the items representing each construct. Cronbach's alpha was used to establish the reliability of the constructs. The study also made use of correlation and multiple regression analyses. The sample size of 135 respondents was administered with the questionnaire. The finding of the analyses revealed that trustworthiness (β = 0.251, P<.001); corporate social responsibility (β = 0.283, P<.001); credibility (β = 0.198, P<.001) and reliability (β = 0.219, P<.001) were respectively significant and exhibited significant positive effects on customer satisfaction. The major conclusion that was revealed from the findings is that corporate reputation is a multifaceted construct whose dimensions have significant positive relationships with marketing performance outcome of customer satisfaction in the mobile telecommunications services industry.

Chigwende and Govender (2020) conducted a research study to examine the effect of corporate brand image and switching behaviour with a case study of mobile telecommunication customers in Zimbabwe. The study made use of cross sectional survey with the convenience sample of 385 through Rao software sample size calculator. The sample size was determined from the population of 1,973,906 inhabitants. The data for the study were collected using a five-point Likert scale questionnaire and were also tested for reliability and validity using SPSS version 25. Through the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), the results showed that mobile network service providers' brand image positively affects customer satisfaction, a positive relationship exists between mobile network service providers' brand image and consumer brand switching behavior; customer satisfaction positively affects their loyalty.

Oliou-Boateng and Agyei (2020) conducted a study to investigate the effect of customer satisfaction and marketing communication mix on customers' loyalty in the Ghanaian banking industry. The study made use of explanatory design to investigate the association between the independent variables: customer satisfaction, public relations, advertising, sales promotion and the dependent variable: customers' loyalty. Questionnaire was used as the main instruments for data collection from 250 customers of banks in Accra, Ghana. Statistical package for social science (SPSS) version 20 was employed for data analysis. The study revealed a strong positive relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in the Ghanaian banking industry. Also, the finding of the study showed a moderate but significant relationship between public relations and customers' loyalty in the Ghanaian banking industry. It was recommended that public relations must not be abandoned but strengthened to complement the other marketing communication mix to help encourage customer loyalty in the Ghanaian banking industry.

Abd-El-Salam, *et al.* (2013) conducted a study to explore the relationship among corporate image and reputation, service quality, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty through a case analysis on one of the biggest Egyptian company. The crucial reason for this study is to discover how an international company can effectively and efficiently adapt to the Egyptian culture by gaining their customers satisfaction and loyalty. In conducting this study, a structured questionnaire was used. The hypotheses formulated for the study was concurrently tested on a sample of 650 respondents out of 800 distributed, thereby giving a response rate of 81.25 percent. Analytical techniques that were used to determine the relationships among the variables under investigation are Pearson correlation, chi square, and multiple linear regression while hierarchical regression was used to assess the mediating role of customer satisfaction. The findings of the study show significant relationships among the variables under consideration.

Methodology

This study adopts quantitative method to assess the effect of corporate communication on corporate reputation of selected store-based retail outlets in Lagos state. Survey method was adopted through a self-administered questionnaire to enable the study to determine the opinions, attitude, and features of target beneficiaries on the effect of service quality on customer loyalty with evidence from selected store- based retail outlets in Lagos state Metropolis. Survey techniques assisted the researcher in describing the characteristics of the large population needed for the research work and also protect the anonymity of the respondents. The research work specifically focused on the customers of the nineteen stores based retailing outlets domiciled in Lagos state while the sample size of the study was determined using Godden (2004) model and estimated to be 246. Multistage sampling technique was also used and instruments used for the analysis was SPSS version 26.

Results and Discussion

Mean and Standard Deviation of the Communication

The mean and standard deviation indicated in table below shows there are 10 items representing communication with two sub-constructs (advertising and sales promotion). All the items recorded high levels of mean score. "Information on firm's webs enhances customer's knowledge about the retailer's products and services" recorded highest mean score (M = 4.11, SD = .984), whereas "Lifestyle discounts promotion idea enhances the new segments to the retail store" recorded the lowest mean score (M = 3.99, SD = 1.135). Therefore, the result shows that information on firm's web enhances information to educate the customers" is the main characteristic represents the communication in selected retail store in Lagos Nigeria.

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Communication

Code	Detail	Mean	SD
Advertising			
ADV1	Information on firm's websites enhances customer's knowledge about the retailer's products and services	4.11	.984
ADV2	Personal communication with customers enhances fast complaint handling.	4.06	1.113
ADV3	Face-to-face discussion with customers affords the customers to seek information about the retailer's products/services.	4.02	1.096
ADV4	Good communication message stimulates customer's action to make a repurchase of products/services.	4.07	1.075
ADV5	Word-of-mouth with customers builds interest and loyalty.	4.07	1.097
Sales Promotion			
SP1	Buy one; get one promotion activities encourage the customers to buy more than what they planned for.	4.07	1.112
SP2	Free shipping promotion activities attracts customers to a retail outlet	4.05	1.134
SP3	Offering free samples to customers attracts customers to new products offered by the retail store.	4.00	1.147
SP4	Lifestyle discounts promotion idea encourages the new retail segments to the store.	3.99	1.135
SP5	Flash sales promotion techniques build customer loyalty.	4.05	1.128

Sources: Field Survey, 2022

Mean and Standard Deviation of the Corporate Reputation

The mean and standard deviation indicated in table below reveal there are five items representing corporate reputation. All the items recorded high levels of mean score. "Outlets with reliable, low and consistent price enjoys the continuous patronage of customers" recorded highest mean score (M = 4.03, SD = 1.077), whereas "Customers build trust in a retail firm that sells local manufactured products" recorded a lowest mean score of (M = 4.01, SD = 1.083) respectively. This result shows that "Outlets with reliable, low and consistent price enjoys the continuous patronage of customers" is the main characteristic representing the corporate reputation.

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Corporate Reputation

Code	Detail	Mean	SD
COR1	Store that is environmentally responsible in term of packaging gain customer loyalty	4.01	1.126
COR2	Outlets with reliable, low and consistent price enjoys the continuous patronage of customers	4.03	1.077
COR3	Customers patronize retail business with good corporate social responsibility.	4.01	1.111
COR4	Customers build trust in a retail firm that sells local manufactured products	4.01	1.083
COR5	Customers' perception of retail store with standard and regulated products and services build customer satisfaction	4.01	1.084

Sources: *Field Survey, 2022*

Regression Analysis and Hypotheses Test between Communication and Corporate Reputation

Multiple regression analysis was conducted in determining the relationship between communication (Sales Promotion and Advertising) effect and corporate reputation of selected store- based retail outlets in Lagos state Metropolis.

Table 4.18: Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.720[a]	.520	.492	1.06378	1.970

a. Predictors: (Constant), Sales Promotion, Advertising

b. Dependent Variable: Corporate Reputation

Sources: *Researcher's Survey, 2022*

The model summary as indicated in table 4.18 above shows that R-Square is 0.520; this implies that 52% of variation in the dependent variable (corporate reputation) was explained by the constant variables (communication) while the remaining 48% is due to other variables that are not included in the model. This means that the regression (model formulated) is useful for making predictions.

Table 4.19: ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	31.203	2	25.701	26.684	.000[b]
	Residual	123.745	167	.925		
	Total	143.480	148			

a. Dependent Variable: Corporate Reputation

b. Predictors: (Constant), Sales Promotion, Advertising

Sources: *Researcher's Survey, 2022*

The table 4.19 above summarized the results of the analysis of variation in the Revisit Intention with large value of regression sum of squares (31.203) in comparison to the residual sum of squares with value of 123.745. This value indicated that the model explains a lot of the variation in the Revisit Intention. Yet, the estimated F-value (26.684) as given in the table above with significance value of 0.000, which is less than p-value of 0.05 ($p<0.05$) means that the communication as a whole can jointly influence change in the corporate reputation.

Table 4.20: Coefficients of Corporate Reputation

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	2.312	.320		7.234	.000
	Advertising	.227	.251	.111	2.015	.011
	Sales Promo.	.412	.239	.420	1.925	.005

a. Dependent Variable: Corporate Reputation

Sources: Researcher's Survey, 2022

The dependent variable as shown in the table 4.20 explains the influence of communication on the corporate reputation. This was used as a yardstick to examine the influence between the two independent variables (advertising and sales promotion). Regarding the relationship between advertising and corporate reputation, the result indicated that advertising had significant relationship with corporate reputation ($\beta = .227$, $t = 2.015$, $p < .011$). Therefore, Hypothesis H_{03} was supported.

Hypothesis H_{04} predicted that sales promotion is positively related to corporate reputation. Result indicated that sales promotion had a positive and significant relationship with corporate reputation ($\beta = 0.412$, $t = 1.925$, $p = .005$). Thus, the Hypothesis H_{04} is supported at 10% level of significant. The overall summary of this regression analysis result in relations to the coefficient of communication have significant influence on corporate reputation of store- based retail outlets in Lagos state Metropolis in the area of advertising and sales promotion. This implies that the null hypothesis was rejected, hence, the alternate hypotheses was accepted. Thus, communication has significant influence on corporate reputation of store based retail outlets in Lagos state Metropolis. Therefore, corporate communication is seen as a determinant of corporate reputation (MohdJohan & MohdNoor, 2013; Effiong & Moldovan, 2013; Vogler & Eisenegger, 2020; Hadi & Indradewa, 2019; Risky & Winda, 2018; Ajayi & Mmut, 2020).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study supported the idea that high corporate reputation is achievable when the retail service providers are able to develop a superb corporate communication program that will assist the firm in achieving the mission of building sustainable corporate identity and image that will guarantee and build customer attraction and loyalty.

The study recommends that service providers (retailers) should try to package their communication strategy in a way so as to create awareness, arouse interest and desire and elicit actions of their customers towards their offerings in order to build a formidable corporate reputation that would be able to stand a test of time in creating trust and credibility in the minds of their customers. This is because corporate reputation is the principal means through which the customers find organisation to be reliable, credible, responsible and trustworthy. Through this, customers would be willing to pay more when dealing with business and companies that have built up strong reputation as this would attract more customers, increase the firm's profitability, attract and retain talented employees and enhance customer loyalty.

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