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THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF CORPORATE COMMUNICATION'S INFLUENCE ON CORPORATE REPUTATION OF SELECTED RETAIL BUSINESS IN LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract
In today's business world, organizations need corporate elements for survival. These elements are image and identity. These identity elements are developed through the projection of positive image that will increase its public confidence about the quality and achievements of the organization. This study examined the influence of corporate communication on corporate reputation in selected retail businesses in Lagos state, Nigeria using thematic analysis. Qualitative method was used as a research design; the population was infinite as the study focused on customers of the 3 selected retail outlets in Lagos state, the study adopts multi-stage sampling technique. Face-to-face interview was used to collect the primary data; four respondents were interviewed for the study. The data was analyzed with Nvivo software version 12. Consequently, from the outcome of the qualitative analysis, there was significant relationship between the independent variables and dependent variables through the semi-structured interviewed held with the 4 participants. The study concluded with the observation that high corporate reputation is achieved when the retail service providers are able to develop enviable corporate communication programs that will assist the firm in achieving the mission of building sustainable corporate identity and image that will guarantee customer repeat patronage and loyalty. The study recommended that service providers should try to package their communication strategy to create awareness, arouse interest and desire and elicit actions of their customers towards their offerings and to build a formidable corporate reputation that can stand a test of time in creating trust and credibility in the minds of their customers.

Keywords: Corporate Communication, Customer Loyalty, Customer Service, Customer Satisfaction, Service Quality

Introduction

Retailing management can be viewed as the management process of helping the consumers to find the products and services in the stores. Retailing largelycommits about 5.8% to the compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of Nigeria's economy (Marketreasearch.com, 2021).Thisprecinct which comprises the activities of both wholesales and retailsare the third largest contributors to nation's GDP, contributing about 16 percent of the total (Obayagbona, 2022). Research surveys by AC Nielsen (2014) which has wide presence in Nigeria shows that between 2005 and 2010, the number of retail outlets across the country sporadically increased by 36 percent. In Lagos state alone, there is total number of 903 shopping and specialty retail stores which also includes 79 online shopping lines (directory.org.ng, 2022). The number of outlets as at year end 2019 is expected to have increased far more than what it was in year 2010 because the industry has grown significantly within this period (Nigeria Retail Sector Report, 2014). Parts of the reasons for the growth is as a result of Nigeria's emerging middle class that are confident and comfortable with trying new products; also, they are interested in breaking with the yoke of traditional retail system with the introduction of discount stores, hyper market, department stores, specialty stores, convenience stores and host of others where possible (Nigeria Retail Market, 2019).

In creating awareness about their offerings, retail service providers communicate their messages to the ultimate consumers through different communication platforms. Organizational communication can be perceived as the process by which information aretransferred 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 extend 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 important for a company because it is through communication that organizations make contacts and build relationships with its customers, suppliers and other elements 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.

From the foregoing, the thrust of this research work is to investigate 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 shopping and specialty retail business.Identity, image and reputation are the main agenda of organization through corporate communication activities (Muhammed, Abubakair&Abdulrahaman, 2007).In globalization, image is seen as one of the element 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 lieu of this, organization must agree that the public is much concerned about their corporate imageas 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 proclaimed through the corporate communication elements of the organisation.

Statement of the Problem

In today's turbulent and complex business environment, organisation needs to intimate their esteem customers about the uniqueness of their offering that they are socially responsible and sell reliable as high quality product entails trust through positive corporate reputation (Tahian, D'Souza &Polonsky, 2012). The organization's reputation is one of the most inimitable valuable assets in achieving 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 and image is an important consideration in today's business world. In addition, a good and bad in an organization's reputation is a critical indicator of the company's success. Mostly in business it takes 20 years to build a company's reputation and can also takes five minutes to ruin it 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.

In addition, in the services marketing literature, the common relationship between corporate reputation and satisfaction is perceived quality. A good corporate reputation for high quality means more customers, fewer dissatisfied customers and increases in profitability. Actualsatisfied customers 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.

Furthermore, failure of most of the retail service providers in properly formulate a well-defined communication objectives that would build brand, corporate identity and association in terms of their stores and products is worthy of mentioning. This may be due to the organisation's failure or incapacitated in having clear objectives and harnessing feedbacks from their customers. Operating in retail businesses is no doubt a very hard job and managing both internal and external communication is no exception. The ultimate goal of the retail corporate communication mix is to generate sales in retailer's target market (Levy &Weitz, 2001; Chandramohan & Prem, 2007). To achieve this goal, retailers have to use variety of methods to inform, persuade and remind customers about their offerings so as to build sustainable and excellent 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 service providers should have enjoyed used to elude 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

Arising from the above problems, this question emanates:

I. How does corporate communication relate with corporate reputation in retail outlets in Nigeria?

Research Objective

i. Determine the relationship between corporate communicationand corporate reputation in the retail outlet in Nigeria;

Research Hypothesis

To achieve the stated objective, this hypothesis are formulated and tested in null form;

Ho_1: Corporate communication has no significant relationship with corporate reputation in a retail outlet in Nigeria.

Literature Review

Concept of Corporate Communication

Communication as a concept has no single definition; rather it varies from scholars to scholars and the way it appeals to them. Communication is the lifeblood of all organizations: it is the medium through which companies both large and small access the vital resources they need in order to operate. Communication is therefore is the heart of organizational performance. The success of an organization's efforts to acquire resources and to in?uence 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).Etzel, Walker, and Stanton (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 an objectives to be achieved.

However, from the perspective of corporate world, corporate communication is the total communication activity generated by a company to achieve its planned objectives. Corporate communication encompasses marketing communications, organizational communications, and management communications. By corporate communication, we mean a coherent approach to the development of communications in organizations, one that communication specialists can adopt to streamline their 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 dissemination 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.

The management of the corporate communication can be treated as a very important issue in the managerial strategy, as a result of its role in the selection of the messages related to company's objective and various point of views, and then disseminate 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 always ingrained about the internal activities of the various departments and all other related divisions of the organization, but more importantly is to have a close relationship with the public relations sections of the company; 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, Verhoeven, Tench, & Zerfass, 2010).

From the study conducted by Van (1997),it was found that there are three main elements in corporate communication as evidenced by the scholars. The elements are corporate identity, corporate reputation and communication management. Generally, 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 clears sense of purpose that the stakeholders understand.

Concept of Corporate Reputation

Reputation is not easy to conceptualize because it depends on various stakeholders' views, intentions, and expectations of organization's performance (Nwagu, 2022). Stakeholders, most especially investors and suppliers would perceive firm's reputation from a different perspective than the firm's esteem customers. Though both are directly involved in the affair of the organisation, customers focus on quality that would lead to satisfaction, business partners and suppliers would mostly assess financial and overall business performance.

In a relationship with other field of study, Nwagu (2022) connects corporate reputation with economics, strategy, marketing, organisation theory, sociology, communication, and accounting. In these relationships, the researcher advocates that corporate reputation is an aggregate construct that describes the collective perception of numerous stakeholders about a company's performance. This validates the statement that reputation is not easy to define because it all depends on stakeholders' perceptions.

Corporate image and reputation is considered to be an expository factor in the general appraisal of any organization (Kandampully & Hu, 2007; Sarstedt, Wilczynski & Melewar, 2012) as a result of the credence that are involved in the customers' sensitivity and perceptiveness when hearing the epithet of the organization (Hatch, Schultz & Williamson, 2003; Nguyen, 2006; Bravo, Montaner & Pina 2009). Corporate reputation is highly considered as one of the most critical strategic and enduring assets that a business, and indeed people that comprise the organisation should possess (Iwu-Egwuonwu, 2011). From the conceptual assessments of Fombrun and Rindova (2001) and Walker (2010), corporate reputation can be posited as the general perceptiveness of the organization's past actions and presupposition regarding its subsequent actions in relations to its efficiency and to its the main competitors. In addition, good corporate reputation perceptions have been considered to enhance positive customer attitudes towards the organization's products (Jeng, 2011), build buying intentions (Yoon, Guffey & Kijewski, 1993), increase customer loyalty (Jeng, 2011), enhance cross-buying intentions (Jeng, 2008), higher competitive advantage (Fombrun & Shanley, 1990; McMillan & Joshi, 1997), and reduce transaction costs (Compe´s Lo´pez & Poole, 1998).

More so, Company's reputation is a general perception of outsiders of the characteristics of a company (Kilibarda, Nikolicic & Andrejic, 2016). In essence, corporate reputation is the overall assessment in which an organisation is held responsible by its both internal and external stakeholders (employees and customers) based on its past actions and possibly of its future behavior. The main benefits of corporate reputation are for the organisation to build a solid and enduring solid reputation and trustworthiness. As emphasized by Haapaniemi (2000) and Schwartz (2000), it takes a very long time for an organisation to build a reputation, as it can also be destroyed overnight in a single event.

Empirical Review

Hadi and Indradewa (2019) conducted a study to discuss the service quality effect on corporate reputation, customer satisfaction, and loyalty. In the study, service quality variables are company reputation, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty. The study also made use of causality and quantitative analysis models. The purpose of the study was to determine service quality effect over corporate reputation, customer satisfaction, and loyalty, respectively. All the data were collected through the distribution of questionnaires to 250 forklift customers' rental companies in PT. Kianis Pratama, Indonesia. The study made use of Structural Equation Model for the analysis of the data. The results show that a good service quality would increase the corporate reputation and customer satisfaction; a good corporate reputation would also increase customer loyalty and high customer satisfaction would increase customer loyalty

Tankovi (2015) conducted a conceptual paper to examine the constructs of corporate identity, corporate image and corporate reputation, uncovering the considerable confusion and mismatch in their uses present in the literature, due to cross-disciplinary researches and vague distinctive elements. The study conducted a systematic terminology and theoretical review and all conceptual models presented in the literature where considered and four of them, presented by imminent authors were thoroughly examined. Seeing the discrepancy of development between theory and modeling and because of the indisputable interrelationship of these three constructs constituting corporate marketing, a new two-dimensional model is proposed. Challenges for future research were also identified by the study which includes proving the credibility of this conceptual model by using empirical instruments, expanding the model with new advancements in research as well as with the elements comprising the constructs, and applying the model in various sectors and in various research aims.

Kuang-Jung, Mei-Liang, Chu-Mei, and Chien-Jung (2015) researched integrated marketing communication, collaborative marketing, and global brand building in Taiwan. The study makes use of Primary Data, 50 questionnaires were administered to respondents. The study revealed that integrated marketing communication and collaborative marketing have a significant impact on global brand building. This research suggests Taiwanese corporations should focus on three aspects as organisational culture, organizational design and organisational process for coordinating and reaching the objective of building a global brand.

Umair, Islam, Hussain, Baqir and Muhammad (2021) conducted a study to investigate the influence of image of brand on loyalty of customer with the arbitrating role of customer satisfaction and brand awareness. The study made use of questionnaire from 300 respondents that are selected through non-probability sampling method to measure customer satisfaction and their loyalty to their favorite brand. The results were made by using different methods. The result of the studyreveals that the statistical test shows that the image of the brand and customer loyalty is very remarkable with customer satisfaction and brand awareness, but brand image is inconsequential with brand awareness.

Ajayi and Mmut (2020) conducted a research to explore how the communication of corporate social responsibility (CSR) contributes towards a favourable corporate reputation. To achieve the objective of the study, a qualitative content analysis using the directed approach was conducted on the textual CSR communication materials of ten reputable organisations in South Africa. The result of the study shows that seven out of ten organizations use both self-serving and society-serving motive in their CSR communication, while the other three uses only the society serving motive.

Methodology

This research work adopted qualitative method to assess the influence of corporate communication on corporate reputation. The qualitative data was collected and analyzed to reflect the interpretation of human behavior in the study.Survey method was also adopted through a semi-structuredinterview guide to enable the researcher to determine the opinions, attitude, and features of target beneficiaries. The population of the study is infinite while the study adopts a multi-stage sampling technique which involves using different sample techniques at different stages in selecting sample respondents in order to simplify the data collected as a result of large geographically spread of data. The number of 4 respondents (customers) was interviewedfrom selected retail stores in Lagos State, Nigeria. Primary data was obtained with the aids of semi-structured interview. The use of semi-structured interview was employed to gather necessary information from the respondents. The study employed the use of semi-structured interview as an instrument for data collection. The face-to-face interview for the four respondents was conducted in the office of the sales intern of the retail outlets as the transcriptions of the interviews were used for the qualitative analysis of the study. The studies equally used Nvivo software for qualitative analysis. Nvivo is preferred

over other software as it permits the use of a large quantity of data and also allows visual coding in the text editing and contextual comment, hence, it is comparatively simple to use (Hilal & Alabri, 2013).

Underpinning Theory: Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory

This study was underpinned by the disconfirmation theory of customer satisfaction and supported by the theories of cognitive dissonance and assimilation-contrast. The suitability of the underpinning theory is anchored on the fact that the theory explained the concept of customer satisfaction vividly by explaining the experience that occurs as a result of comparing services performance against expectations. The dominance of this theory amongst other theories of customer satisfaction is as a result of its validity and reliability in assessing customer satisfaction in services industry which are experiential in nature.

Data Analysis, Results and Discussion

Table 1 : Participants' Background Information (Qualitative Interview)

S/N	Participants' Codes	Location of retail store	Years of Patronage	Date of Interview
1.	Info 1	Ikorodu	3 years	10th September, 2022
2.	Info 2	Ikeja	2 years	18th September, 2022
3.	Info 3	Victoria Island	2 years	15th October, 2022
4.	Info 4	Festac	3 years	16th October, 2022

Source: Researchers field survey, 2022

Qualitative Analysis of Research Objective One

How has corporate communication influenced corporate reputation?

Based on the interview discussions with the participants, relevant communication theme and sub-themes that relates to corporate reputation emerged as a way through which the service quality can enhance customer loyalty.

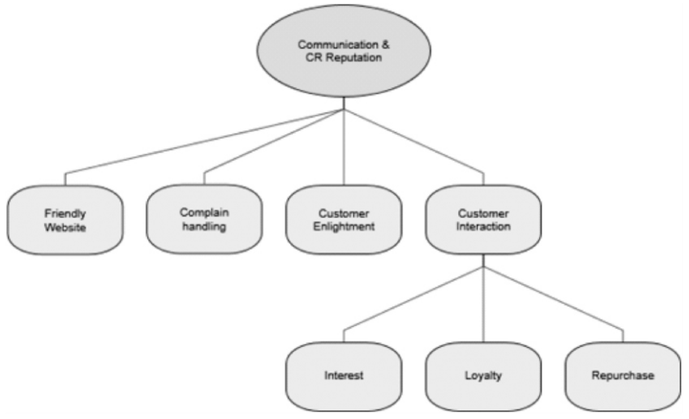


Figure 1:Thematic representation of communication

Source: Author's Field Survey, 2022

Customer Interaction

Customer interaction is aided by the ability of the organization to communicate with their customers in such a way that the message and purpose of the interaction will be achieved. Ogundele (2005) defined communication as a "translation of ideas or directions, command or guides, into oral or written words or action. This is, in such a manner that will transfer the ideas from the mind of the communicator to the mind of the receiver, with the aim that the receiver will react in a manner as envisaged by the communicator". The view of Ogundele (2005) is supported by Perwito, Rahayus andHendrayati (2021) asserts that integrated marketing communication(IMC) can assist and contribute significantly to brand equity by building a brand in the memory of the customer and creating a brand image that will last a longer period of time.

However, the dominance of customer According to interviewed informant "1, 2, 3 and 4", three fundamental communication elements are utilized to build corporate reputation and this can't be attained when the message or idea of the organization is not clearly communicated. Therefore, Customer interaction, friendly website, customer enlightment and complain handling through corporate advertising are essential

components which aid Service quality and Customer loyalty interaction and complaint handling was supported by Info4, Info2, Info3 and Info1. This implies that communication is a key in attaining customer loyalty. Also, Info2 was of the opinion that friendly website and complaint handling among the retail store and outlets ensures customer loyalty. Meanwhile, Info1Info2, Info3 and Info4 emphasized the relevant of customer interaction in attempt to customer loyalty that will lead to customer interest and products or services repurchase.

Similarly, Kotler and Keller (2016) see communication from the perspective of business and marketing. They view communication as numerous specific marketing communication platforms of styling and price of the products, the shape, and color of the package, the salesperson's manner, and dress, the store décor, the company's stationery - all communicate something to buyer as every brand contact delivers an impression that can strengthen or weaken a customer's view of the company, which can in turn affects loyalty.

Therefore, the idea that communication through customer interaction leads to corporate reputation among retails store and outlet was expressed by the participants in the interview. For instance, participant **INFO1** expressed thus:

> *"With different communication platform put in place by the management of the retail outlets ranging from Whatsapp, Facebook, Instagram and also direct SMS, the service provider have continuously being able to create customer interaction by delivering messages that gives positive thought about their services and products. These positive messages have inevitably led to trust and good reputation about the firm's products and services"* ***(INFO1)***

The above position is similar to the view of **INFO2** thus:

> *"the good communication messages initiated by the service provider through advertising, the retail firm's management has been able to show that they are on line with their brand mission with me as their customer and*

> *the perception I have with the firm in terms of their reputation keeps soaring higher all the time as I will never mind introducing their store to friends and associate. Furthermore, the service provider social media marketing programs has immensely being impacting on us the customers to continuing trusting the management of the retail firm."* **(INFO2)**

Corroborating the view of **INFO2's** perception, **INFO3** affirmed:

> *"For me as a regular customer of this retail outlet, the way the service provider of this outlet have been managing their communication messages have being having a positive effect on the company's reputation, and did not contradict the firm's mission. The external communication posture of this firm has not only worked on their corporate reputation but also making dramatic impact on their customer attraction through customer service. This is as a result of good communication skill always exhibited by their employees who have direct interaction with customers."* **(INFO3).**

In another submission, **INFO1** expressed:

> *"The effective communication posture of the retail store did not only attract customer but also assists the firm in building loyalty through customer interest that finally guarantee repeat purchase."* As evidenced in Fig. 1.

Discussion of Findings

These views as expressed by the participants suggest that service quality has significant relationship with customer loyalty. This apparently coincide with the findings from the quantitative research and the findings of Babaleye, Owolabi and Bodunde (2021) that organizations should pay good attention to Online Integrated Marketing Communication in order to deploy it more meaningfully to gain continuous customers' loyalty. This was also corroborated Bohyeon(2014) that the word of mouth communication had a significant positive impact on customer loyalty and also customer

loyalty led to increasing relationship marketing. The implication of these results is that different communication platforms work positively in building customer attraction, enlightenment of customer as regards the products and services through several promotional activities that would assists in building reputation through trust and integrity that will finally generate customer loyalty.

Similarly, Kotler and Keller (2016) see communication from the perspective of business and marketing. They view communication as numerous specific marketing communication platforms of styling and price of the products, the shape, and color of the package, the salesperson's manner, and dress, the store décor, the company's stationery - all communicate something to buyer as every brand contact delivers an impression that can strengthen or weaken a customer's view of the company, which can in turn affects loyalty.

Therefore, the idea that communication through customer interaction leads to corporate reputation among retails store and outlet was expressed by the participants in the interview.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study supported the idea that high corporate reputation is achieved when the retail service providers are able to develop enviable corporate communication programs that will assist the firm in achieving the mission of building sustainable corporate identity and image that will always guarantee customer repeat patronage and loyalty.

The study recommended that retailers service providers 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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CORPORATE ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE OF MICRO, SMALL, AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES IN NIGER STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The activities of many micro, small, and medium enterprises in Niger State have been recently understated and reported, which makes it apparent that studies on corporate entrepreneurship and operational performance have fallen short of the expectations of the government and people of Niger State. However, this study explored the relationship between corporate entrepreneurship and the operational performance of MSMEs in Niger State. A survey research design was adopted. The population of the study is 454,000 MSMEs in Niger State, from which a sample size of 400 MSMEs was drawn using Taro Yamane's formula. To collect primary data, a standardized questionnaire with a five-point Likert response scale was used.100% response rate was recorded which is attributable to the fact that anonymity was assured and damaged or misplaced questionnaires were replaced by the research assistants. In assessing the research question and testing the hypothesis, descriptive and inferential statistics were utilized, respectively. Findings revealed that innovativeness has a significant positive effect on sales growth (r = 0.988, at p = 0.010.01). It was concluded that, contrary to popular