

CORPORATE IDENTITY AND ORGANIZATIONAL RELEVANCE IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The efficacy of corporate identity to organizations and corporate bodies cannot be over underscored as it has helped numerous organizations to outshine their competitors in the corporate world. Businesses / corporations have thrived over the years because of the incorporation of the gimmick of corporate identity in their business operations. Organizations who demonstrated obstinacy in recognizing corporate identity strategy failed woefully, and those who effectively, judiciously and meticulously employed the component of corporate identity, and circumspectly managed it well, are usually ahead of their competitors or counterparts in the business realm. The research was to examine Corporate Identity and Organizational Relevance in Nigeria: Multi-step flow model was utilized to support the paper. The study concluded that corporate identity is important in the corporate world and it is gradually becoming imperative that every organization must manage its identity to be able to stand in the competition, irrespective of its size. However, the paper recommends that Organizations and all corporate bodies, regardless of its size and financial status should embark on corporate identity program by advertising corporate image through institutional than to let it alone to product advertising as this makes for the speedy and rapid attainment of organizational objectives or goals.

KEYWORDS: Corporate Identity, Organizational Relevance, Organization, Image, Company And Identity.

INTRODUCTION

The interest towards the concept of corporate identity started already in the 1950's, but it didn't emerge as a critical corporate level construct until 1970's and the 1980's. Starting from the period of the early 1960's, many academic articles were published, addressing the concept of corporate identity by the name

(Otubanjo, 2011). During the 1970's and 1980's, corporate identity emerged as a key organizational concern and a critical corporate level construct (Balmer, 2009). Corporate identity was seen as a useful way of differentiating a firm from its competitors (Otubanjo, 2011).

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From the early 1990s onwards, marketing and communications researchers have explored the concept of corporate identity further (Balmer, 2009). The benefits of the concept of corporate identity, corporate identity change and the corporate identity mix were studied. To date, studies on corporate and organizational marketing have extended beyond corporate identity into corporate branding. (Otubanjo, 2011).

The academic research on corporate identity uncovers an incredible measure of points of view with respect to different identity concepts, which additionally delineates the tremendous difference between the nature and part of the identity thinks about. This is for the most part because of the way that corporate identity is a multidimensional idea, which tends to different parts of an organization, for example, business strategy, philosophy and culture (Balmer, 2006; Melewar, 2003). The jumbled utilization of the phrasing has contributed more to the haze encompassing the corporate identity area than some other factor. The concepts that are often confused with corporate identity are corporate image, corporate profile, corporate culture, corporate reputation and corporate values. (Balmer, 2001).

The foundation of corporate identity relies on the corporate brand. It includes elements not directly associated with a product or service the company sells, such as social responsibility, employee relations and corporate trust. Corporate brands integrate a company's common product attributes and benefits, relationships with people, social values and programs and corporate credibility (Keller, 1998). Thus, corporate brand is the overall perception about an organization, reflected by its overall corporate identity (Balmer, 2001).

The audit on the diverse meanings of the idea of corporate identity uncovers two noteworthy roads: The internal looking and the outward-

looking point of view. As indicated by the internal looking point of view corporate identity can be characterized as the inward identity of the organization. It answers the inquiries of what the organization indubitably is, the thing that it stands for, what it does, how it does it and where it's going. (Kortetjärvi-Nurmi et al., 2008, 10; Otubanjo and Melewar, 2007; Balmer and Greyser, 2006; Melewar, 2003.) The concept relates to the organizations intrinsic characteristics in terms of personality, character, individuality, distinctiveness, meaning, essence and behavior (Melewar, 2008, 9). In contrast, according to the outward looking perspective corporate identity is the "set of meanings by which a company allows itself to be known and through which it allows people to describe, remember and relate to it". (Topalian, 1984; Cornelissen & Harris, 2001). It is the planned presentation of a firm's personality through various channels (Otubanjo & Amujo, 2012).

The difference between the two perspectives becomes apparent when they are compared with each other in a causal model. According to Kortetjärvi-Nurmi et al. (2008, 10) the concepts of corporate identity, corporate profile and corporate image are linked to each other and follow a causal relationship. Since Kortetjärvi-Nurmi et al. (2008) support the inward looking perspective, corporate identity is the true intrinsic identity of a company, which is followed by corporate profile; the "picture" the company wants to send to the stakeholders.

Corporate profile is then followed by the corporate image or the view of the company in the minds of the stakeholders. Based on the definition presented above by Kortetjärvi-Nurmi et al. (2008, 10), the outward-looking definition is actually describing what is called the corporate profile in the inward-looking perspective - the "picture" the company wants to send to its' stakeholders. The single clear

definition of corporate identity has not yet been established in the academic field.

The concepts of corporate identity, corporate profile and corporate image are still used interchangeably. The researchers do however agree to a great extent on the mechanism leading to corporate image as described by Kortetjärvi-Nurmi et al. (2008), but the use of terms differs between the outward-looking and inward-looking perspectives. Both perspectives are relevant in this thesis, because the research will, amongst other things, study how the intrinsic identity characteristics are expressed to potential and existing customers in the setting of social media.

The concepts of corporate identity, corporate profile and corporate image will, however, be discussed separately according to the inward-looking perspective as defined by Kortetjärvi-Nurmi et al. (2008, 10). This perspective better distinguishes the terms of corporate identity, profile and image from each other, so it's easier for the reader to understand the differences between them. Corporate profile as a term can be seen more valid in describing the picture that the company wants to send to its' stakeholders. Uuna (2013, p.11-13)

THE CONCEPT OF CORPORATE IDENTITY

Uuna (2013, p.5) opined that corporate identity is the core characteristics of a company, it has been a pressing issue for business managers and scholars over the past decades. The question of identity cuts across various organizational goals and concerns. As a result, using corporate identity for strategic purposes has attracted attention of various academic disciplines such as strategic management, public relations, psychology, marketing and organizational behavior. The field of marketing generally regards it as a strategic resource for building credibility and support amongst stakeholders and gaining competitive

advantage in the business environment. It's also widely accepted that audiences rely on the reputations of firms in making investment decisions, career decisions and product choices. (Melewar, 2003.)

Researchers have contended that with a specific end goal to have the capacity to convey its full esteem, corporate identity should be recognized and overseen, much the same as other vital assets of an organization (Bick et al. 2003; Cornelissen and Elving, 2003; Melewar, 2003). Be that as it may, because of the significant ongoing improvements of media and the way individuals devour it, organizations are looked with another period as far as the way they can and ought to deal with their corporate communications, marketing and consequently their corporate identity.

From the foregoing, it is noteworthy to assert that, corporate identity is a Paramount tool that helps to effectuate organizational efforts so as to flourish in business or to achieve the aim of the company. Most firms over the years have made tremendous progress in taking decisive steps, wooing consortium and remaining afloat in its bid for sustainability. While others who were not ingenious in keeping faith with corporate identity tool found themselves below their competitors.

FIP manual (1994) asserted that corporate identity is a management technique for communicating an organization's unique characteristics in a memorable manner based on the premise that the key publics must perceive an organization clearly and accurately if management or organization's objective must be achieved.

Rutledge (2006) agreed that corporate identity is the combination of color schemes, designs, words, etc. That firm employed to make a visual statement about itself and to communicate its business philosophy. It is an enduring symbol of

how a firm views itself, how it wishes to be viewed by others, recognized and remembered by it. This definition indicate that there is an actual image which the organization wishes to communicate its key publics which may or may not be inherent with the image the public already holds about the organization. It also connotes that, for an organization to achieve its set goals, it must be able to make the Public's perception of the organization match the one it holds for itself. It goes further to say that every organization, irrespective of its size has an identity which is either formal or informal , but what makes the identity stand out is whether an organization manages it corporate identity in the most effective, purposeful and suitable manner as possible.

To be able to manage corporate identity, the organization must understand the relevance of corporate identity and diagnose an appropriate program of improvement thereafter. (Fax, Balmer and Wilson 2001) When an organization has been able to identify itself that it can be able to communicate that to its public's.

Olins (1994) believed that an identity program is not a "quick fix" to a problem of corporate communication, nor should it be seen as a cosmetic that can represent something an organization is not. In developing an identity, one must examine the organization's past, present situation and where it wants to be in future. It involves long range planning a represent and integral part of corporate organization. The effect of this statement is that, whatever an organization wishes to communicate to its public's concerning its corporate identity must be based on truth.

Designing a corporate identity is the most complex of graphic design activities and it's essential to obtain the senior management both for its creation and its maintenance. The reason for this according to Aren and Bovee (1994) is because institutions take pride in their

logos and corporate signatures. Another reason is that the graphic designs identity, corporate name and products are valuable assets and thus organizations take great pains to protect their individuality and ownership.

Identification, recognition and access are both corporate and organization's to its public's because the clear and consist identification of an organization helps the public to find access easily to its program, products and services. Bovee (1994). This can be done by applying corporate signatures and organizational titles in coherent manner and ensuring that identification is functional and user oriented.

In the conceptualization of corporate identity program, according to D'Angelos and Nadia (2004) organizations should establish a free and balance flow of communication between management and its various public's in developing sources of information or establishing communication mechanism. Organizations should ensure that they are functional and able to meet the needs of their publics rather than satisfying bureaucratic prerogative (FIP manual, 1994).

Corporate identity is a cross-disciplinary concept that has been introduced in management sciences and scientific literature by separating it apart from the corporate image concept in relation to the graphic design paradigm. It was first identified by marketing and management practitioners in 1970s (Selame & Selame, 1975; van Riel & Balmer, 1997). Explicit management of various corporate identity dimensions is considered to facilitate achieving and strengthening of competitive advantage for individual corporations (Melewar, 2003).

The accessible research in connection to corporate identity does not reflect materialness of the corporate identity models for the utilization inside health care industry.

Subsequently, creators have recognized need to assess the understanding of the health care specialists with respect to presumptions incorporated into the development of the reasonable model for corporate identity management in health care. Furthermore, the expression of corporate identity dimensions and their management processes in the health care service provider companies in Latvia is explored to provide basis for discussion and comparison of health care industry expert evaluation and actual implementation of corporate identity management in within the health care industry. Didzis, Anda, Daina and Kristofer (2014,p.2). Olins (2002) stated that corporate identity makes the organization's strategy, structure and vision visible. Every organization has a unique identity. A corporate identity program enables the identity to be managed and projected to all of its audiences.

BENEFITS OF CORPORATE IDENTITY IN ORGANIZATION

Linda and Campbell (2010, p. 3-4) opined that a strong corporate identity helps reinforce a company's brand image and supports its marketing activities. When a corporate identity program is presented consistently, it creates a positive and lasting impression of the company. The value of corporate identity is immeasurable: Its value increases each time it is presented properly and decreases with every improper application. So what exactly is corporate identity? In short, it's the physical look of your brand. It generally includes a logo and supporting devices, such as your letterhead, business cards and web site, all assembled within a set of guidelines. The guidelines govern how the identity is applied and confirm approved designs for printed pieces, color palettes, typefaces, page layouts and all cross media applications that maintain visual continuity and brand recognition.

In today's competitive marketplace, it's imperative to establish corporate identity standards. They ensure that everyone within your company, from individual employees to branch offices, is representing the company the same way each and every time they interact with customers and prospects.

Etika (2014, p.29) posited that the benefits of corporate identity comes in different ways, for instance, a company that invests in a solid corporate identity tells its customers, " We are here to stay". It is a sign of longevity which is not only attractive to customers, but also desirable to potential investors that you are serious about being successful and that you are a reliable leader in your industry. A functional corporate identity conveys your company's idea, motive and objectives and a sense of what your business is all about. The advantage of a consistent and functional identity is that, it ensures your company will be recognized, remembered and respected.

Another advantage of corporate identity is that, it makes a solitary unflinching and clear visual identity for your organization, its division and/or its sub brand. It likewise shows your organization as an expert, dependable and contemporary association and uses your brand value and standardize media applications. Corporate identity gives the general picture of an association or firm, that is, it manufactures a decent picture of association in the brains of the assorted publics, for example, clients, financial specialists and workers.

THE AIMS OF A CORPORATE IDENTITY ARE TO

- Create a single, steadfast and clear visual identity for your company, its divisions and/or its sub brands;
- Project your company as a professional, reliable and contemporary organization; and

- Leverage your brand equity and standardize your company's visual presentation in all cross media applications

THE ROLE OF YOUR LOGO

At the core of corporate identity is your organization's logo. As one of your most important resources, it ought to be the principal thing your client sees and the exact opposite thing they recall. A very much planned and reliably utilized logo can join the organization, its workplaces and backups under one umbrella. By giving a uniform image wherever visual distinguishing proof happens, the logo ventures quality and polished methodology. Your logo should appear on all cross media, including letterhead, business cards and envelopes, checks, marketing materials, advertisements, the company web site and more.

CORPORATE IDENTITY MANAGEMENT

Uuna (2013, p.8) averred that corporate identity management is concerned with the conception, development and communication of what the company is and what it stands for (Balmer & Greyser, 2003). CIM focuses on the important role of employees and senior management and is mostly concerned with the controllable aspects of corporate identity. The central assumption is that companies are able to manage how they present their corporate identity through the corporate identity mix. (Melewar, 2008, 69).

As the concept under scrutiny here is the management of corporate identity and profile, managers naturally have a significant role in the process. Amongst others, Van Riel and Balmer (1997) have concluded that because a favorable corporate identity is an asset for a company, the implication requires the attention of the management function. It's also widely recognized that the way in which managers

connect with the organization influences how stakeholders, such as employees and customers, see and feel about the organization (Hatch & Schultz, 1997). According to Van Riel and Balmer (1997), "senior managers can narrow the gap between the actual and desired corporate identity through marshaling the corporate identity mix".

Thus, the role of corporate management is pivotal in a sense that they have a role in constructing and developing the corporate identity as well as communicating it to stakeholders and their identification with the organization. According to Melewar (2008, 69), managers can establish these roles in a successful manner by addressing the three aspects of the corporate identity management "triangle". The aspects are 1) the dissemination of mission and values, 2) consistent image implementation and 3) visual identity implementation. These elements should be specified and managed consistently. By doing so, the company is able to establish the desired corporate image in the minds of their stakeholders. (Melewar, 2008, 69).

The dissemination of mission and values stresses that successful corporate identity management requires the definition of relevant values and mission and sharing these with organizational members. (McDonald, de Chernatony and Harris (2001) have emphasized that employees are an essential intermediary between the company and the customer in conveying business messages. The corporate culture should ideally reflect the organization's philosophy, and the mission is the "vocalization" of the corporate philosophy to audiences. In other words, corporate identity is driven by the organization's unique philosophy, which is reflected in the mission, values and goals. This creates a need for developing consistent behavior among employees emphasizing their role in transmitting the right business messages. (Melewar, 2008, 70-71).

The second component, predictable image implementation, captures communications through different degrees of substantial quality. The view is worried about the consistency with which all parts of corporate identity are displayed, coming about to a reasonable corporate image. So as to accomplish an intelligible image, examination is required of marketing, promotional activities, employees and the visual presentation through logos and symbols used. Communications ought to be facilitated so all gatherings inside the organization in a perfect world begin from a typical point and offer similar qualities (Van Riel, 1995). Every individual from the organization has a part in this procedure, in light of the fact that each worker is a potential "sales representative" for the organization. (Melewar, 2008, 72-73).

The third aspect, visual identity implementation, deals with the physical elements of a company (such as logos, company name, colors and typography). These elements form the physical symbols and create the tangible recognition for the organization. When managed in a coordinated way, the physical symbols may enhance the appeal of the company. The goal is to seek consistency across the visual or tangible aspects and establish specific guidelines for visual presentations. Visual identity implementation can be seen as the most practical constituent of the corporate identity management. (Melewar, 2008, 74-75).

The management of corporate identity and profile is in no way, shape or form without challenges. (Clutterback 1979) has displayed a few reasons why corporate identity projects can come up short. The most unmistakable entanglements are thinking little of the exertion expected to execute a corporate identity program, neglecting to screen the procedure to guarantee the full implementation of the program, presenting visual symbols that contention with the culture of the organization,

making an inflexible or hardened corporate image, impersonating or duplicating other effective organizations, and surrendering too soon. Despite the fact that the research by Clutterback goes back to the 70's, the difficulties introduced are widespread it could be said that they can be connected to the 21st century as well.

FIP manual (1994) posited that corporate identity management literally means managing your corporate identity. It is making sure that corporate identity is applied correctly, taking into account the cost. We often see many applications being created under supervision of or in different divisions. Without corporate identity management, this easily results in the corporate identity being applied in different manners. Therefore, a central corporate identity is a necessity. It is the only way for your organization to build and maintain a strong brand.

Olins (1994, p.22) asserted that corporate identity management is a brand term used to identify the various strategies employed to oversee and direct the impact on the identity of a company, both internally and externally. This means that the identity management effort not only has to do with the cultivation of a viable corporate culture that leads itself well to the interest of the company, but also to how a company is perceived to its peers in the industry. Corporate identity management also has to do with presenting the business and its products to customers in a way that motivate customers to perceive the company in a positive light.

He further stated that, corporate identity management as an integral process is often focused on creating an internal flow of communication that makes it possible for employees at all levels to actively participate in moving the business forward. These will mean arranging an organization so that employees

exchange information that helps in the production process and improves conditions on the job.

HOW TO BUILD CORPORATE IDENTITY

REVIEW YOUR COMPANY'S HISTORY, MISSION AND METHODS

Before you establish a corporate identity for the public, you need an internal consensus on which you are. Examine your business plan, mission statement, values statement, strategic plan and other corporate document that might define why you exist and how you are different from others.

FIGURE OUT WHAT OTHERS THINK ABOUT YOUR COMPANY

Conduct surveys, ask questions, set up interviews and have general discussions and gain an understanding of stakeholder's views about your organization or company. Decide if you want to change the perception, if you feel like you are sending the wrong message, your corporate identity can help change it.

RESEARCH BUSINESS AND ORGANIZATIONS THAT ARE SIMILAR TO YOU

Check out your website, read pages. Decide what you like and do not like, and figure out how easy or difficult it is to grasp their corporate identities.

CREATE A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Your corporate identity should embrace your goals for the next 5 to 10 years as well as your present. Include employee, leaders and partners in your vision. Ask some of the people you first hired, what they envision for your company's growth and talk to people in the company who reflect what the staff and stakeholders think.

BEGIN A CREATIVE PROCESS

Brainstorm your ideas on logos, lines, colors, and objects that you might want to include reflecting your corporate identity. Put together a team of designers and writers, or hire a consultant if you didn't have the kind of creative staff talents.

MAKE SURE YOUR CORPORATE IDENTITY IS CUSTOMERS ORIENTED

For example, if your clients are on the Wall Street, keep a conversation identity. If your client is parents of preschool children, use primary colors and fun graphics to define who you are.

DEVELOPED A WRITTEN STRATEGY FOR YOUR CORPORATE IDENTITY

Document when and how certain materials, such as images, logo, and reproductions should be used when promoting or presenting your company. Consistency will help you to avoid misrepresenting your company without intending to. Etika (2014,p.23).

ORGANIZATIONAL RELEVANCE OF CORPORATE IDENTITY

Riel (1994) posited that the organizational relevance of corporate identity is to help the organization to communicate their business philosophy. Corporate identity is very important to organizations because it helps a corporation to be viewed in a way they wish to be. It is usually visibly manifested by a way of branding and use of trademarks.

Corporate identity comes into being when there is a common ownership of an organizational philosophy that is manifested in a distinct corporate culture.

The organizational relevance according to Olins (2002, p.35) helps organizations to answer

questions like; who are we? Where are we going? And where do we want to be? Corporate identity also enables consumers to denote their sense of belonging with particular human aggregates or groups. In general, this amounts to a corporate title, logo (logotype).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Multi-step flow is the integrative model used in describing the behaviors of mass communication messages. Its assumption or suggestion is that there are several ways through which messages and information may flow to the audience. Daniel (1995, p.54).

According to Roger's as referred by (Daniel 1995) in the Multi-step model, there are a variable number of relays in a communication flow from a source to a large audience. Some members will obtain the message directly through channels from the source, while others may be several times removed from the message origin.

This model is not specific that the message must emanate from a mass media source. It does, however declare that the number of steps between the source and the receiver are dependent on a number of factors which includes:

- The intent of the source
- Availability of mass media
- Audience exposure
- Nature of message
- Relevance of message to the receiving audience

The major segments of mass communication may be identified as follows:

- Broadcasting
- Advertising
- Public Relations
- Print journalism

It is therefore certain that, corporate identity is communicated to the publics in a variety of ways, thus using the Multi-step flow model is idea for the study.

CONCLUSION

Corporate identity is important in the corporate world and it is gradually becoming imperative that every organization must manage its identity to be able to stand in the competition, regardless of its size. It is that companies are aware of the reason or fact that, they must manage or maintain their corporate identity. Organizations should set out objectives to know if their corporate identity is in line with the perception of the public. That will help them to improve on their corporate identity.

It is worthy to state here that no matter the level of involvement in the program, no matter the financial backing the program is accorded, there must be quality control in the corporate outlook. D` Angelos and Nadia (2004, p.24) asserted that if the shade of the color used in the outlook is deep shade of red; it must not be compromised in any circumstances.

Finally, every organization must have corporate identity no matter how small or large they are in size because corporate identity is the overall image of a corporation and it also helps an organization to bring about positive changes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Organizations and all corporate bodies, regardless of its size and financial status should embark on corporate identity program by advertising corporate image through institutional than to let it alone to product advertising as this makes for the speedy and rapid attainment of organizational objectives or goals.
2. Organizations should improve their products and services because most

consumers prefer product that will satisfy their needs.

3. Organizations should be transparent and friendly to their customers; they should also ensure that their customers are treated with caution. By so doing, it will enable them to maintain good relationship with its customers.
4. Maintaining a favorable identity or image is the key for the sustainability of the organization, therefore, corporate bodies should ensure they act in line with who and what they say they are before its publics
5. Corporate identity management should be prioritized to enable organizations remain relevant before its publics
6. Logo is said to be one of the significant aspects of an organization, it is indeed a company's hallmark which differentiates you from others. So therefore, it should be designed in an auspicious manner so that as your clients sees it, they will identify you through Logo.
7. A well managed identity ensures organizational relevance and sustainability. Companies, captain of industries, business moguls, etc should at all times ensure that the identity of their organizations is not at stake. From time to time, they should conduct a research and carry out survey and interview to ascertain public perception on the organization.

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