CORPORATE IDENTITY OF AFRICAN INDEPENDENT TELEVISION (AIT) AND PERCEPTION OF PORT HARCOURT RESIDENTS

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Abstract
This study is an examination of the corporate identity of African Independent Television (AIT) and the perception of Port Harcourt residents. The objectives were to find out the specific programmes, embarked upon by African Independent Television as identity building mechanism that may influence the view of Port Harcourt residents and ascertain how the perception held by Port Harcourt residents has influenced the viewership of African Independent Television (AIT). The study adopted the descriptive survey design. Residents of Port Harcourt Capital of Rivers State formed the population of the study. The population of the study is 3,171,000 Port Harcourt residents and the sample size for the study is 384. The multi-stage sampling technique was used to select the subjects for this study. The data for this study were generated using the questionnaire. The data for this study were analysed using weighted means score (WMS), in assessing the number of affected residents by different variables. The findings showed that, the specific programmes embarked by African Independent television as identity building mechanism are cultural message of Nigeria, 'sharing African Experience', indigenous culture blowing its own pipe through its identity, Odenigbo which projects Igbo culture, Minijojor that portrays Yoruba heritage, and Africa's rich cultural heritage, beliefs and ways of life. Another revealed that, the impression they had about AIT was in the area of fascinating cross-cultural theme, vibrant content, untainted appreciation of the world and its people, programmes affiliating the communities in Nigeria and share off English name of the staff-such were the African spirit. Based on the findings, it was concluded that, the objective of having identity is to find the best image and to deliver the message related with the image to the public. In view of the findings from the study, the following recommendations have been made that, in order to be consistent and sustainable, organizations need to well-prepared

corporate identity that does not only consists of design and symbols but also the connection between internal and external corporate publics.

Keywords: Corporate Identity, African Independent Television (AIT), Perception, Port Harcourt Residents.

Introduction

Corporate identity building is an imperative instrument towards goal achievement. As individuals need to express themselves with an identity so are organizations or corporate. The first traits of identity symbols trace back to the use of coat of arms for kings, nobles, cities and on army uniforms. The purpose for these signs and symbols were to bind the people together, create a common sense of oneness and communicate their goals as one. These days, organizations have a similar approach towards a corporate identity. In the same vein, Argenti (2007), corporate identity is the visual manifestation of the organization's reality as conveyed through the organization's name logo, motto, products, services, buildings, stationary, uniforms, and all other tangible process of evidence created by the organization and communicated to a variety of constituencies. Constituencies then form perceptions based on the message that an organizations said in tangible form if these images accurately reflect an organization's reality, the identity programme becomes a success.

The foregoing shows that corporate identity is used to distinguish organizations from their competitors, present marketing opportunities, introducing concrete personality and designing skills that differentiate from others. Hence, many organizations need an effective corporate identity management. The importance of corporate identity is increasing every day with the amount of remembrance of the corporation and its image having effect consumer choices. In addition expression, Melewar and Jenkins (2002):

> Firms have become increasingly aware of the importance of developing and managing their corporate identity. The identity of a corporation has been recognized as a strategic resource and source of competitive advantage: effective management of corporate identity can serve to address the needs of the firm's important stakeholders by generally inspiring confidence in the company to all target groups (p.1).

Some organizations who have not thought about corporate reputation tend to underestimate its value. This partly is due to a lack of knowledge and understanding about what corporate identity is all about that an inappropriate or outdated identity can be as damaging to an organization as weak financial performance (Argenti, 2007). Every organization has a corporate identity to protect and project. When this identity is properly designed and managed, it reflects accurately the level of the organization's commitments to excellence and relationship with both current and potential consumers, employees and competitors, partners, governing bodies and the general public.

Corporate identity of an organization therefore becomes an important concern for the public hence it deserves the same or more attention and commitment given to the vital issues in the organization if the organization must survive. So, any organization that wishes to succeed must ensure that it maintains a good corporate identity. To achieve this, organization cultivate genuine friendly relationship with public of the organization so that the identity of the organization be protected and projected (Wokomezie, 2010).

In other words, a congenial atmosphere that would aid such an organization to thrive is a necessary condition for a successful business. This is often contained in the mission statement of such corporate organization. Mission statement of corporate organization is strategic corporate message of commitment and identity which must state responsibility of organization and its public. Corporate identity according to Berstern (1984) as cited in Odigbo (2007) is seen as that powerful impression that determine how the company is perceived as weak or strong, open or devious, warm or cold, rigid or flexible will influence the person's disposition towards the company. Based on this premise, corporate identity represents what the organization is known for, the way the public perceives its activities which will determine the impression the public of the organization will have about it and will also influence the public response. It is imperative to streamline that corporate identity may be positive or negative depending on the interest of the public. A company that mismanages or ignores its identity is likely to encounter a variety of problems in that company will not be guaranteed.

However, African Independent Television (AIT) is a sister station to Raypower 100FM. The call sign for this television station is AIT and it is on channel 40 UHF band. It began its transmission in December 1996, it reputedly transmits a 24-hour non-stop television programmes. The AIT,

like Raypower 100, is powered by two 30kw transmitters, each of them is solid state up to the final amplifies, which is a single tetrode tube producing 30,000 waits of power in PAL G. standard, complete with digital stereo sound and complemented with some of the best audio processors available. In order to properly appraise and evaluate corporate identity of African Independent Television (AIT) will form the basis of this study. That is to provide an in-depth understanding of the African Independent Television corporate identity.

Statement of the Problem

African Independent television (AIT) is one of the private television station in Port Harcourt Metropolis. Since its operation as from 1993, AIT has claimed to be viewers friendly, projecting Africa cultural values their appellation, 'sharing African Experience.' True to its appellation, this television station has continuously carried the cultural message of Nigeria and indeed Africa to the outside world and has successfully Africanized its programming mode. All these are done to portray the organization as a good corporate citizen and to give it a good identity.

However, some viewers who live in Port Harcourt seem not to see AIT as good corporate citizen mainly because of poor network signals and other service lapses. As has been stated earlier on, television programmes are unifying factor which cuts across religious, ethnic and cultural differences to bring the people or viewers under one umbrella. But sometimes, the reverse appears to be the case. Some overzealous viewers, such as fanatics tend not to see AIT as providing satisfactory services but the fact that some viewers do perceive AIT as a leading television service provider necessitated this study. The concern of this study hence is to find out the specific programmes AIT embarked as identity building mechanism amongst residents of Port Harcourt.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study was to provide an in-depth understanding of corporate identity of African Independent Television (AIT) and the perception of Port Harcourt residents. More specifically, the study was guided by the following objectives:

1.   To find out the specific programmes, embarked upon by African Independent Television as identity building mechanism that may influence the view of Port Harcourt residents; and

2.   To ascertain how the perception held by Port Harcourt residents has influenced the viewership of African Independent Television (AIT).

Research Questions

The study attempts to answer the following research questions in order to assess the purpose of this research study.

1.   What are the specific programmes embarked upon by African Independent Television as identity building mechanism that may influence the perception of Port Harcourt resident?
2.   How does the perception held by Port Harcourt residents influence their viewership of African Independent Television?

Scope of the Study

The scope of this study was limited to resident of Port Harcourt Metropolis which is the city of Rivers State. Emphasis is on the corporate identity of African Independent Television (AIT) and the perception of Port Harcourt residents.

Literature Review
Concept of Perception

The degree of disposition a public has of an organization is a product of how that organization is perceived. Bernard and Gary (1964) describe perception as the process by which an individual selects, organizes, and interprets information inputs to create a meaningful picture of the world. Closely related to this definition is that by Barovick (1982), who stated that, perception is a complex process by which the publics' select, organize and interpret sensory stimulation into a psychological term used to refer to the direct understanding of objects and their relations to situations and events. Perception is a process by which living beings become aware of changes through the senses of sight, hearing, feeling, smelling and taste. The way an organization is perceived influences the kind of action the perceiver makes towards it. Perception is influenced by several factors.

Robert (1985) identifies two factors that influence public perception of an organization, individual, or an institution. First, is the nature of information people are exposed to or experienced in their environment. Robert argues that, the environment forms the basis upon which individual organizes his own image of reality. That is to say that the environment deals with the way things should be, it determines what is good or bad and what will serve as the individual needs and what will not. The second factor

is the concept of self. Kotler (1985) posits that, self means individual as perceived by that individual in all socially determined frames of reference. Kotler adds that, this perceived self-influences the person, institution or an organization from the way the object is perceived. One important thing that must be taken into cognizance by any institution or organization that seeks to influence public attitude is to understand public perception of itself.

Corporate Identity
It should be noted that, corporate identity can be known as the visual variables which help the general public to recognize an organization and its activities. According to Balmer and Gray (1999), corporate identity tends to be more associated with visible symbols than corporate image which tends to be more associated with metal thought, intangible, invisible things or impressions. Corporate identity is a planned assembly of visual cues by which the publics of an organization or the audience generally, would recognize a firm and differentiate one company from the other and which, may be used to represent or symbolize the company, corporate identity is the sum of values and purposes of a company; its organizational structure, corporate strategy, as well as its organizational culture. To this end therefore, Oyedepo and Okorie (2007) note that:

> That corporate identity is formed by a company's history, its beliefs and philosophy, the nature of its technology, its ownership and its people, ethical and cultural values. It helps organizations answer questions like, who are we? And where are we going? Corporate identity can be viewed as been composed of corporate designs, which are logos, uniforms, corporate colours, (p.66).

The key elements of corporate identity are logos, graphic designs, clothing, colours, letter heads, corporate or company's name, trade characters, delivery slogans, delivery packages, typography and printed materials, flags, building, corporate slogans, structures among others. These corporate identities help to ensure or contribute to the formation or emergence of a good corporate image or picture in the minds of the people (Nwosu, 1996, as cited in Asemati, 2011). Account in support of the above is Nwosu (1996) who advised that, organizations must conceptualize, design and produce these corporate identity materials or symbols very carefully and professionally and take the right decisions and actions on

them. Increasing the symbols and identities, we must be simple, creative, imaginative, original identities of Union bank are elephant, which means that is big, strong and reliable. Corporate identity programmes have the power to contribute positively to the success, growth and survival of any organization working with other vital business factors.

Theoretical frameworks

Theoretical framework aids in distinguishing between the scientific and unscientific proposition. Hence the study derived its theoretical framework form the perception.

Perception Theory

Perception theory as propounded by Bernard Bereleson and Gary Steiner (1964) has its main focus on individual differences. How audience members select, organize and interpret data to have a meaningful understanding of the world. Perception theory is basically a psychological concept which describes different angles individuals view event, situation, ideas from their own perspective; which more often than not, does not reflect the true state of things. Hilgard et al. (1979) in Ayittah (2013) look at perception from the sense organ as; with the ability to determining objects and its qualities and response to stimuli. There is physical or chemical stimulation of the five sense organs by way of signal in the nervous system during perception of sight, touch, taste, smell and hearing.

Okechukwu (2001) in Okpoko (2013) in his postulation views perception from personal construct. Okechukwu argues that, everybody has his "perceptual screen" which comprises his aspirations, needs, values, expectations, experiences and attitudes which shapes his interpretation of whatever data that comes his way. These pre-existing attributes in individuals is what differentiates them from the other person which makes for different interpretation of issues of the same status. There are a set of theories that guide the study of perception theory in communication. They include: **selective exposure, selective retention, selective perception and selective attention.**

Selective exposure is at play when people tend to expose themselves to communications which are in line with what they believe but avoid communications that challenge their beliefs. Members of the audience have a variety of media contents to choose from, but whatever content one is to be exposed to will be such that agrees with what one stands for.

Selective attention: Selective attention According to Nwachukwu et al. (2013), is a person's selection of contents he can concentrate on among a variety of available options, while ignoring others. The eye receives data and transfers to the brain for interpretation. For the fact, that the eye is fast in capturing events as they occur means that there is tendency to view many things at the same time. As such there is need to sift contents and concentrate on what is the most pressing need of the moment.

Selective perception: Selective perception is hinged on the individual's misinterpretation of a message based on his pre-existing attitudes, experiences and opinions. No matter how factual what is being viewed is, the individual is judging from an already existing stereotyped template which definitely will influence the result of his assessment. **Selective retention:** This is the ability of an individual to remember media contents which makes more meaning to him than the ones which he considered secondary. Though sometimes, such contents are retained with distorted interpretation depending on how they were perceived. One of the major aids to selective retention is on the medium the message was received. Messages, which came through visual aids, have the tendency to stick for a long time and be easily recalled.

The relevance of the theory to the study cannot be overemphasized considering the fact that members of the audience will react to the same programme in different ways. The reactions are guided by pre-existing attitudes, opinions, backgrounds, cultures experiences which shape their perception.

Methodology

The survey design was used for the study. The method adopted was considered appropriate because it is essentially a design that is useful in gathering data on peoples' views, opinions, actions and reactions towards social issues and phenomena such as the prevention of solid waste generation and disposal. People who reside in Port Harcourt Capital of Rivers State formed the population of the study. The population of residents in Port Harcourt city in 2024 as projected by National Bureau of Statistics stood at 3,171,000 by 5.00%. Therefore, the population of the study is 3,171,000.

According to Wimmer and Dominick (2011), a sample is a subset of the population that is representative of the entire population. According to Meyer's recommendation, for a study population of 3,171,000, a sample of 384 is adequate. The multi-stage sampling technique was used to select the

subjects for this study. Port Harcourt Local Government Area has eleven communities and these communities formed eleven clusters that is the first stage. At the second stage, purposive sampling was used where only Port Harcourt residents of 18 years and above and those who were exposed to AIT programmes were considered. At the next stage, the convenience sampling technique was used to administer the questionnaire on only respondents that met the criteria and were willing to participate in the study. Since the exact population in each of the clusters could not be determined, all clusters were made to produce the same number of respondents. Hence, the sample size of 384 was adjusted to 385 to enable all clusters to produce 35 respondents each.

The data for this study were generated using the questionnaire. The questionnaire with 10 items had close-ended items which were aimed at easy assignment of values obtained from respondents. Items were based on Port Harcourt residents' perception on solid waste generation and disposal. The researchers personally administered the questionnaire and retrieved the instrument by the same method. Respondents were met in their homes, places of work, cancer awareness events and centres, among others. Where respondents were not able to complete the questionnaire immediately, a date was agreed upon for the researcher to return and pick it up. Those who were hesitant in completing the questionnaire were encouraged to do so and they eventually took part in the exercise. The data for this study were collated and analysed using weighted mean score (WMS). The research questions were analysed with 4 -point weighted mean score as follows: Strongly Agree = 4 points; Agree = 3 points; Disagree = 2 points; Strongly Disagree = 1 point. The score of the weighted mean score was 3.00 (5+4+3+2+1= 15 divided by 5 = 3.00). Any item that has more than 3.00 points was considered positive but scores below 3.00 points was taken to be negative.

Results
The results of the analysis are presented in the table below:
Research Question 1: what are the specific programmes, embarked upon by African Independent Television as identity building mechanism that may influence the view of Port Harcourt residents?

Table 1: Specific Programmes Embarked by AIT as Identity Building Mechanism

Items	Nature of response	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	Total 375 (100%)	Total weighted (fx)	WMS FM÷ Total	Decision
1	Cultural message of Nigeria 'sharing African Experience.'	856	468	10	-	375	1334	3.56	Accepted
2	Indigenous culture blowing its own pipe through its identity.	444	666	66	9	375	1185	3.16	Accepted
3	Odenigbo which projects Igbo culture	476	618	78	11	375	1183	3.15	Accepted
4	Minijojor that portrays Yoruba heritage.	468	645	70	8	375	1191	3.18	Accepted
5	Africa's rich cultural heritage, beliefs and ways of life	724	387	118	6	375	1235	3.29	Accepted
	Average weighted mean score					375	1535	4.09	Accepted

In Table 1, shows that, the specific programmes embarked by African Independent television as identity building mechanism are cultural message of Nigeria, 'sharing African Experience', indigenous culture blowing its own pipe through its identity, odenigbo which projects Igbo culture, Minijojor that portrays Yoruba heritage, and Africa's rich cultural heritage, beliefs and ways of life as the weighted mean score for items 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 were positive. The average mean score totals to 4.1, which is positive. This shows the specific programmes embarked by AIT as identity building mechanism that influenced the views of the respondents about AIT

Research Question 2: How does the perception held by Port Harcourt residents influence their viewership of African Independent Television?

Table 2: Perception held by Port Harcourt Residents that influence their viewership of AIT

Items	Nature of response	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	Total 375 (100%)	Total weighted (fx)	WMS FM÷ Total	Decision
6	I view AIT because they share off English name-such is the African spirit.	840	378	68	5	375	1291	3.44	Accepted
7	I love watching AIT because their programme affiliates the communities in Nigeria.	484	636	78	3	375	1201	3.20	Accepted
8	I have a revealing insight proudly echoed in AIT's untainted appreciation of the world and its people	456	603	108	6	375	1173	3.13	Accepted
9	The way I feel about AIT vibrant content is exciting.	440	636	147	4	375	1227	3.27	Accepted
10	The impression I have about AIT in the area of fascinating cross-cultural theme is positive	664	417	138	6	375	1225	3.26	Accepted
	Average weighted mean score					375	1223	3.26	**Accepted**

In Table 2, reveals that, the impression they had about AIT was in the area of fascinating cross-cultural theme, vibrant content, untainted appreciation of the world and its people, programmes affiliating the communities in Nigeria and share off English name of the staff-such were the African spirit. The weighted mean score for items 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 were positive. The average mean score totals to 4.1, which is positive on the perception held by Port Harcourt residents that influenced their viewership of African Independent television.

Discussing of Findings

The findings of the study were discussed in response to the research questions. The items 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 were prepared to answer research question one which are the specific programmes, embarked upon by African Independent Television as identity building mechanism that may influence the view of Port Harcourt residents. In response to this, Port Harcourt residents highly agreed that the specific programmes embarked by African Independent television as identity building mechanism are cultural message of Nigeria, 'sharing African Experience', indigenous culture blowing its own pipe through its identity, odenigbo which projects Igbo culture, Minijojor that portrays Yoruba heritage, and Africa's rich cultural heritage, beliefs and ways of life. This finding is synonymous with assertion by Udoudo (2007) that, the functional elements of every organization or business are people. No organization exists in vacuum but in a mutual relationship and acceptance between the organization and the publics.

The second aspect which is the question two, in response to it, the respondents also accepted that the impression they had about AIT was in the area of fascinating cross-cultural theme, vibrant content, untainted appreciation of the world and its people, programmes affiliating the communities in Nigeria and share off English name of the staff-such were the African spirit. This is in consonance with the view of Hynes et al (1994) that, product/service choice and viewership are based on viewers perception, image, attitudes formed from experiences, information and need.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study was able to establish the following which will be the bases for organizations that corporate identity is seen in the AIT as to emphasis development issues and methodically promote the reduction of tension and friction to achieve global harmony. Their programme slant seeks to integrate Africa's rich cultural heritage, beliefs and ways of life for a more constructive global appreciation of the contribution of the African continent to humanity. From the perception of the residents of Port Harcourt it was concluded that, AIT network strength is derives from combining AIT's strong national identity and programme with local identity and programming of its affiliation in communities across Nigeria.

The objective of having identity is to find the best image and to deliver the message related with the image to the public. Therefore,

corporate identity is formed with these elements mentioned above. Organizations do not create their corporate identity on their stakeholders, but they create their well-prepared positive corporate identity. Moreover, Africa Independent Television (AIT) involved its workers in every step to process. However, the success of Africa Independent Television comes with the workers who embrace the identity, culture, philosophy and image of the station (organization).

Recommendations

In view of the findings from the study, the following recommendations have been made.

1)   In order to be consistent and sustainable, organizations need to well-prepared corporate identity that does not only consists of design and symbols but also the connection between internal and external corporate publics.

2)   The organization should know that corporate identity as an aspect of public relations need to move one step ahead and the objective of having corporate identity to find the best image related to the public.

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