

EFFECT OF PUBLIC RELATIONS CORPORATE IMAGE MANAGEMENT ON THE PERORMANCE OF NATIONAL POPULATION COMMISSION CENSUS EXERCISE IN NIGERIA

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KEYWORDS

Public Relations, Corporate Identity, Corporate Communication, Organizational Performance

ABSTRACT

This study examined the effect of public relations corporate image management on the performance of National Population Commission (NPC) census exercise in Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study were to; ascertain the effect of corporate identity on the public acceptability of census figures from the National Population Commission (NPC) in Nigeria; determine the effect of corporate communication on the awareness of the target publics of National Population Commission (NPC) census exercise in Nigeria. For the methodology, explorative survey design was employed in the study. The population of the study was 20,525,843

million people, from which a sample size of 392 was statistically determined. The systematic random sampling technique was used in selecting the sample elements and in administering the questionnaire. The findings indicate that: corporate identity is significantly effective for enhancing acceptability of population census figures from the National Population Commission in Nigeria. Corporate communication will be significantly effective for creating awareness of the target publics and stakeholders before population census exercise in Nigeria.

Keywords:

Introduction

Increasing globalization alongside the rapid development of media and technology has resulted in a situation that nobody could accurately predict and or anticipate public relations problems. And the inability to accurately predict these public relations problems has lead to ineffective communications with the target publics. Every management has a duty and responsibility to manage the organization and its publics, including National Population Commission (NPC) through its functions of planning, organizing, leading, and controlling, hence public relations is considered a management discipline; and no organization worth its name can afford to ignore public relations (Okonkwo et al., 2023; Okonkwo & Nnabuko, 2022). Public relations is a distinctive management discipline which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance and cooperation between an organization and its publics; involves the management of problems or issues; helps management to keep abreast of and effectively utilize change, serving as an early warning system to keep anticipating trends; and uses research and sound ethical communication techniques as its principal tools. The quality of these relationships determines the extent of the success, and is also an important indicator of the long-term contribution that public relations make to their organizational effectiveness towards enhanced performances (Jethwaney& Sarkar, 2012, Okonkwo & Nnabuko, 2022 Okonkwo et al., 2023). Building relationship with the target audiences, and maintain it on a high level, requires that public relations specialists use a variety of tools, techniques and strategies. Some of the most useful tools include: public relations' research, public relations' education/mass-enlightenment, media relations, corporate image management, and corporate reputation management (Nkwocha, 2016).

Others include attendance at public events, press releases, newsletters, social media marketing, advertorials, billboards, brochures and catalogues, and speaking engagements. Public relations research makes it possible for improved public relations management and practice, hence it serves as a guide on public relations programmes implementation (Okonkwo, et al., 2023; Okonkwo & Nnabuko, 2022; Nkwocha, 2016; Nkwocha, 2009).

According to Okonkwo, et al. (2023), the National Population Commission's challenges in conducting population census in Nigeria since 2006, has become a serious worry to all concerned stakeholders in the Nigeria project. The inability of the successive government and the governmental agency saddled with this responsibility of conducting population census since 2006 indicates lack of the true understanding of the importance of accurate census figure to a nation especially in planning and development.

Developed economies such as Italy, UK, USA and Canada that employed public relations communication campaigns built on an integrated, articulated and flexible marketing communications specific plans comprising of: advertising plan, social digital plan, classic and digital public relations plan, press office plan, and the placement plan aimed at achieving successful population census that demands credible image of the implementers, called "trusted members" (Okonkwo, et al. 2023; Okonkwo & Nnabuko, 2022; UK Office for National Statistics, 2011; U.S. Census Bureau, 2020; US HTC, 2020; UK Office for National Statistics, 2020; Italian National Institute of Statistics, 2019).

Every successful census campaign must be designed with persuasive public relations communication tools to convince people to participate in the census and encourage others to do the same. This requires trusted messengers with public-relations attitudes whose images are considered safe and credible by the people they are engaging in population census, since these messengers are essential to having the census information heard, share and accepted, and they will help dispel fears or disinformation that might prevent a successful census (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020; US HTC, 2020).

The major focus of this study is to ascertain the effect of public relations corporate image management tool on the performance of National Population Commission conducting Census exercise in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Since the government agency saddled with the responsibility of conducting credible population census have been unable to carry out this task due to the fact that either the government or the agency lacks the true understanding of the need for acceptable census figures in a nation's planning and development. Almost all the population censuses conducted in the country had been marred by allegations of manipulations, controversies, conflict, record-doctoring, economic interests, political interests, distrust, and religious biases (Okonkwo et al., 2023; Okonkwo & Nnabuko, 2022; Reference.com, 2011; Akerele, 2007 & Adim, 2007). No issue has generated controversy, intense debate and ethnic antagonism than that of manipulation of National census figures in Nigeria (Aliyu, 2013). Consequently, Nigerians have developed systemic apathy towards census and have the belief that no census can succeed in Nigeria, whether conducted by a civilian or military government (Okonkwo et al., 2023; Okonkwo & Nnabuko, 2022; Idike and Eme, 2015; Aliyu, 2013 & Onyeka-Ben, 2007). These controversies and political-economy of censuses in Nigeria have raged on for several years with allegations of inflation, manipulation and politicization of figures to derive long term economic and political benefits of revenue sharing, allocation of Federal House of Representatives seats and politics of number between North, South, Islam and Christianity (Aliyu, 2013; Tinubu, 2007; Yakasai, 2002).

Public relations experts believes that problems like these accrued from the fact that government and governmental agencies do not often use strategic two-way communication and public relations corporate image management to build long-term relationships, enhance public perception by their target publics, which translates into public awareness, acceptability, confidence and trust by the target publics on the outcome of the population census (Okonkwo et al.,2023; Okonkwo & Nnabuko, 2022; Black, 2009 & Grunig, 2005). In order to ensure successful National Population Commission programmes, public relations corporate image management paramount in order to ascertain the level of the awareness, acceptability, trusts and confidence, cooperation and support of the target publics. That is, public relations corporate image management should be used to determine perceptions, views and opinions of the target publics, and then employ the right media strategies in addressing that. Hence, in order to build healthy relationship with the target public which is inevitable for any programme's success, public relations specialists often use tools, techniques and strategies like public relations corporate image management, corporate reputation

management, public speaking at events, press releases, newsletters, social media marketing, advertorials, newsletters, billboards, brochures and catalogues, and many more (Okonkwo, et al., 2023; Nkwocha, 2016; Odigbo, 2016).

This study, however, intends to unravel one of the most salient point for the conduct of successful and acceptable census in a multi-ethnic country like Nigeria, which include public relations corporate image management (Okonkwo, et al., 2023; Okonkwo & Nnabuko, 2022). Ascertaining the extent to which this public relations corporate image management will contribute in improving the performance National Population Commission of Nigeria (NPC) in the conduct of population census exercise in Nigeria is the major focus of this study.

Research Objectives

The broad objective of this study is to ascertain the public relations corporate image management effect on the performance of National Population Commission in conducting census exercise in Nigeria. The specific objectives are:

1. To ascertain the effect of corporate identity on the public acceptability of census figures from the National Population Commission (NPC) in Nigeria.
2. To determine the effect of corporate communication on the awareness of the target publics of National Population Commission (NPC) census exercise in Nigeria. .

Review of Related Literature

This study assessed works done by other scholars and relevant of information on population census, corporate image management, public relations concepts and theories as well as public relations strategies that are related to this study.

Conceptual Review

The conceptual framework of this study dwells more on public relations corporate image concept, public relations and public relations two-way communications concept, and these are treated as follows.

Public Relations

Public Relations News of New York (2004) as cited in Okonkwo et al., (2023), opine that public relations is the management function that examines public attitudes, identifies the policies including procedures of an individual or an organization with the public interest, and plans and executes programmes of action to earn public understanding including acceptance. This implies that both individuals and organizations need public relations in their interactions with various publics. Cutlip, Centre & Broom (1994) as cited in Okonkwo & Nnabuko (2022), was of the view that public relations is a “management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the target public on whom its success or failure depends.” The above definition implies that public relation is a two-way communication process between an organization and its recognized publics which is meant to benefit both parties. In other words, mutual understanding can only come through effective two-way communications (Okonkwo et al., 2023; Okonkwo & Nnabuko, 2022).

According to the British Institute of Public Relations (BIPR) as cited in Black (1989), define public relations as a “deliberate, planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between an organization and its publics”. According to Jefkins (1987) as cited in Okonkwo & Nnabuko (2022) aver that “public relations consists of forms of premeditated exchange of information both inward and outward between an organization and its publics for the purpose of achieving objectives with reference to mutual understanding”. From the above definition, “inward and outward communication” consists of two-way communications that involves the organization, its internal and external publics. According to the Mexican statement as cited in Okonkwo & Nnabuko (2022), “public relations is the art and social science of analyzing trends, predicting their consequences, counseling organization’s leaders as well as implementing a planned programmes of action which serves both the organization and the public interest”. This definition was adopted at the First World Congress of the International Public Relations Associations held in Mexico in 1978. This definition suggests that public relations is multi-disciplinary and takes expertise and knowledge from the social sciences and arts. For instance, the survey research method has become very useful in public relations to find out peoples’ perceptions, opinions, attitudes including beliefs in order to predict their behaviour and level of acceptability of the programmes, project / or policy.

As a management function, Harlow (1981) as cited in Okonkwo & Nnabuko (2022), opine that public relations is a distinctive management function that assists in establishing and maintaining mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance including cooperation between an organization and its publics, which involves the management of problems or issues, aid management to keep informed on and receptive to public, define and emphasizes the responsibilities of organization to serve the public interest, help the organization to keep abreast of and effectively utilize change, serving as an early warning system to help anticipate trends, and uses research, sound and ethical communication as its principal tools (Okonkwo et al., 2023; Okonkwo & Nnabuko, 2022; Al-Jenaibi, 2013 & Canfield, 2004).

Public Relations Two-way Communications

According to Black (2004) as cited in Okonkwo et al. (2023), every public relations conflict, crisis or problem emanates from either lack of information/communication, poor information/communication or inadequate information/communication, and their solutions lie in effective two-way communication based on truth and full information. Here lies the essence of two-way communications in public relations practice. According to Grunig and Hunt (1984) as cited in Okonkwo et al. (2023), this public relations concept emphasizes that dialogue must occur so that it can be spell-out and understand the position of an organization's publics. Hence, both parties involved may be ignorant of the other's values and understanding if they do not have a dialogue (Grunig, 2001; Pearson & Clair, 1998; Ulmer et al., 2007; Ulmer, 2001; Jaques, 2010).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical construct for this study hinges on public relations two-way symmetrical communications' model and corporate image management and identity management model as the best options for the success and generally acceptable census in Nigeria.

Public Relations Two-Way Symmetrical Communications’ Model

Model Name	Type of Communication	Type of Characteristics
One-way asymmetrical model	One-way communication	Uses persuasion and manipulation to influence audiences to behave as the organization desires. Do not use research to find out how its public(s) feel about the organization
Two-way symmetrical model	Two-way communications	Uses communication to negotiate with public, resolve conflict, and promote mutual understanding and respect between the organization and its public(s).

Fig. 1 Grunig's one-way and two-way models of public relations.

Source: Westbrook (1999) as cited in Okonkwo & Nnabuko, (2022), *The Four Models of Public relations*, <http://iml.jou.ufl.edu/projects/fall99/westbrook/models.htm>.

Unlike the one-way symmetrical model where organizations force down anything they wish to communicate down the throats of their publics, the two-way symmetrical public relations is based on research and uses communication to manage conflict and improve understanding with the public(s). The two-way symmetrical model is a public relations philosophy that believes that organizations and their publics should adjust to each other. It focuses on achieving mutual understanding and two-way communication rather than one-way persuasion. That is why the two-way symmetrical model is also called: mixed motives, collaborative advocacy, and cooperative antagonism, because it balances self-interests with the interest of others in a give-and-take process that can waver between advocacy and collaborations (Okonkwo et al., 2023; Okonkwo & Nnabuko, 2022; Shima & Mahmood, 2022; Westbrook, 1999). Hence, this model is termed the most ethical communication because in it, all groups are made part of the resolution of problems. Thus, the two-way symmetrical model is a “win-win” communication system in which the

organization and the public use communication to achieve a decision acceptable to both sides. The model places public relations because it considers both parties in the public relations situation.

Concept of Corporate Image

Corporate image or reputation capital is an important concept and a phrase commonly preached in many organizations, yet, it remains difficult to define. Image incorporates or conjures up perceptions of the public about an organization or reputation of the organization before the public. It represents the impression of the overall corporation held by its several audiences or groups that have a stake in the organization; customers, distributors and retailers, financial institutions and analysts, shareholders, government regulatory agencies, social action organizations, employees and the general public (Onyeaghala, 2019).

Corporate image can be said to be the public perception of the experience, beliefs, feelings, and knowledge of an organization. It incorporates the image associated with business name, architecture and variety of products, traditions, ideology and the impression on the quality of communications made by any employee who interacts with the client of an organization.

The Institute of Corporate Management and Strategy (2012), corporate image is the manner in which a company, its activities, and its products or services are perceived by outsiders. Conceptually, corporate image is a relational construct defined by contrast between „how an organization is“ and „how others perceive the organization“. Kotler (11) as cited in Onyeaghala (2019) views corporate image as the public response to the overall offering provided by the organisation and it is defined as the number of beliefs, ideas, and the impression of people (public) in an organization. Corporate image cannot concoct itself but rather it is shaped by society through communication and openness in the organisation's efforts to build a positive image. It suffices to say that the image of an organization in the eyes of its stakeholders and larger society is important to the organization. This is because stakeholders are affected by the actions of the organisation and, in return, their actions affect the organisation.

The image that stakeholders have of an organisation will influence their willingness to either provide or withhold support. In this case, the stakeholder's theory applies: publics are principally interested in the credibility, acceptability, and reliability of the organisation's offerings. To maintain good image, logically, an organization should tailor its activity to each stakeholder group

individually to address the special concerns of that group Downey (1986) as cited in Onyeaghala (2019).

Corporate Identity

Corporate or organizational identity is the reality and uniqueness of the organization. It refers broadly to what members perceive, feel and think about their organizations. It is an assumed collective, commonly-shared understanding of the organization's distinctive values and characteristics. Corporate identity as a concept build on an idea of what the organization is. It is grounded in local meanings and organizational symbols and thus embedded in organizational culture. Corporate identity is what people perceive about the offerings of an organization; a view supported by Strong and Bolt (2016) as cited in Onyeaghla (2019). The symbolic construction of corporate identity is communicated to organizational members by top management, but is interpreted and enacted by organizational members based on the cultural patterns of the organization, work experiences and social influence from external relations with the environment. It emerges from the ongoing interactions between organizational members (including middle-level managers) as well as from top management influence.

Corporate Image and Identity Management

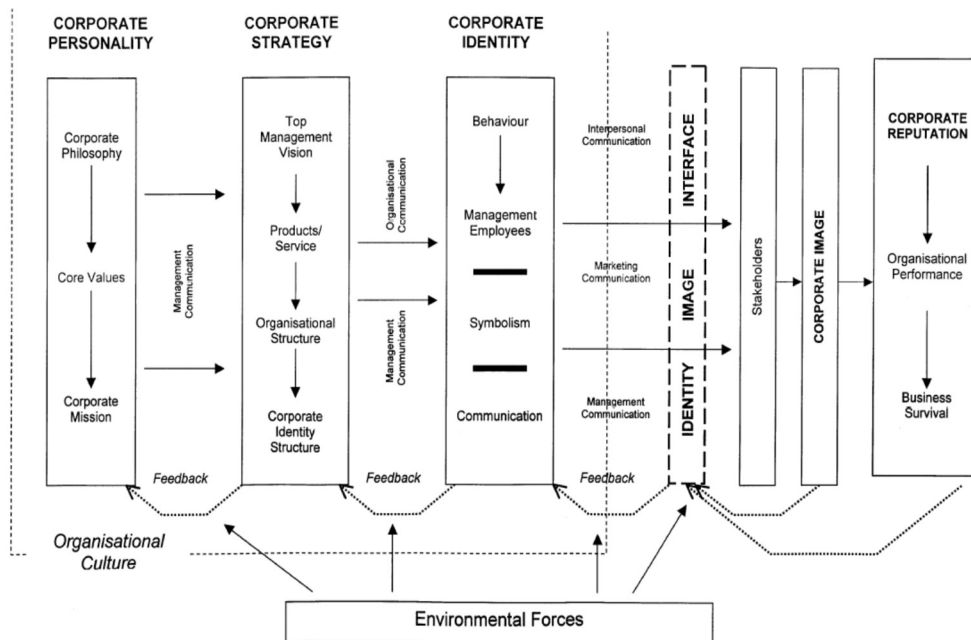


Fig. : Corporate Image and Identity Management Process Model (Stuart, 1999). Source: Stuart, H. (1999). Towards a Definitive Model of the Corporate Image/Identity management process. Corporate Communications, 4(4): 200.

Corporate behaviour on its part is an aspect of corporate culture since the inherent culture will determine the manner of response to unprecedented circumstances. Incorporating “corporate mission”, therefore adheres to Balmer (1995) conceptualization. Accordingly, Alessandri (2001) model as cited in Onyeaghala (2019), clearly differentiates what is implicit in the earlier models (the firm’s construction of itself versus how it is perceived by its intending stakeholders) and relies on theories in psychology as a way of explaining how the process of conditioning builds desired perceptions in the mind of key stakeholders. This however, is built from low-involvement (i.e. low-involvement theory) of consumers through the firm’s (consistent) strong positioning and fulfillment of pleasurable experience(s) which the customers gain by aligning with the brand. By so doing, customers evolve into the phase of classical conditioning where nothing by the specific brand is desired. Employees create identity for the organization which may be accessible through publicity materials. Accordingly, organizations are expected to build good personalities or identities before their publics to earn good image. Identity depicts reputation and good reputation by creating wealth through the development of strong and consistent images (Onyeaghal, 2019; Fombrun, 1996)

Corporate Communication

Each idea, facts or opinion is static until communicated and understood by the target publics or stakeholders. The 21st century information based society has acknowledged severally that communication is as vital as shelter, food, clothing, etc. Corporate communication is a set of activities involved in managing and orchestrating all internal and various external communications which are designed to create favourable starting points (Asemah & Ekhareafo, 2022; Onyeaghala, 2019). Corporate communication is the communication issued by organisation to its public(s) or stakeholders. It also refers to the way in which organizations communicate with its internal and various external publics, audiences, or stakeholders. This implies that corporate communication is all about how organizations like National Population Commission interact with its various stakeholders through internal and external communication channels. Corporate communication is a set of activities involved in managing and orchestrating all internal and external communications aimed at creating a favourable point of view among stakeholders on which the company depends.

It is the messages issued by a corporate organization, body or institute to its audiences, such as employees, media, channel partners and the general public. Organizations aim to communicate the same message to all its stakeholders, to transmit coherence, credibility and ethics. Corporate communication helps organizations explain their mission combine its many visions and values into a cohesive message to stakeholders. The concept of corporate communication could be seen as an integrative communication structure linking stakeholders to the organisation.

Empirical Review

In this part of this study, the researcher will be reviewing several studies conducted by others, and relate same to this study.

In a study conducted by Ginzel, Kramer and Sutton (1993), the findings show that an organization's image represents a collaborative social construction between an organization's top management and the multiple actors who comprise the organizational audiences.

Dutton and Dukerich (1991) conducted another study on the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, result indicates that the port authority's organizational identity was reflected in a mirror held up by the opinions and views of the media, community members and other external stakeholders. Dutton and Dukerich (1991) further reported that the opinions and reactions of others affect identity through mirroring and suggested that mirroring operates to motivate organizational members to get involved in issues that have the power to reduce public opinion of their organization. The discrepancy analysis they presented suggest that, if organizational members see themselves more or less positively than they believe that others see them, they will be motivated by the discrepancy to change either their image or their identity.

In a similar study by Albert (1998); Scott and Lane (2000); Hogg and Terry (2000) on the theories of individual identification with organizations, result shows that there is relationship between self and organization in terms of individuals' self-definitions and self-reflections.

Ginzel, Kramer and Sutton (1993), who were involved in the study of the ways organizational audiences shape organizational impression management efforts, found that impression management is "an interactive process involving organizational actors (top management) and the targets of their influence attempts (the members of the organizational audience)".

Kotter (2011), carried out a study he called “The Heart of Change”. The survey covered 400 people across 130 companies in 4 continents. Result showed that the secret to change within a company is not about fancy strategy but it is about changing the behavior of the individuals that work there.

Rindova and Fombrun (1998) undertook a study on organizational identity. Their findings indicate that identity is projected to others through broadcasting corporate advertising, engaging in public relations practices, creating and using logos, building corporate facilities, or dressing in the corporate style. This means that there is relationship between these projected images with organizational identity because projected images reflect not only a firm’s strategic objectives but also its underlying identity.

Hatch and Schultz (1997), conducted a study on the relationship between organizational culture, identity and image. Their position is that contemporary organizations need to define their corporate identity as a bridge between the external position of the organization in its marketplace and other relevant environments, and internal meanings formed within the organizational culture

Methodology

The researchers adopted explorative survey design for this study. The area of this study is Nigeria but the research study is however limited to three cities of Enugu, from the East; Lagos, from the West, and Abuja, from the North. The target population as recorded by the NPC (2016), and FBS (2017), is put at 20,525,843 million people, made up of Enugu (4,411,119), Lagos (12,550,598), and Abuja (3,564,126). Since the population is known, the researchers used Taro Yamane in determining the sample size and 392 respondents were selected as the sample size for this study. Structured questionnaire was used as the main instrument for data collection. Content validity was used to validate the instrument, but 377 (96.17%) were correctly filled and returned. South-East that was allotted 122 of the copies of the questionnaire produced 30.10% of the respondents. South-West that was allotted 125 questionnaire copies returned 31.89% of the respondents, while the North that got 140 questionnaire copies produced 34.18% of the respondents. This response rate (96.17%) shows that there is a high level of enthusiasm on the part of respondents for this study.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The 392 questionnaire were distributed, but 377 copies representing (96.17%) were correctly filled and returned, and was used for further analysis.

Hypotheses Tests

Hypothesis 1

- H₀: Corporate identity is not significantly effective for enhancing acceptability of census figures from the National Population Commission in Nigeria.
- H₁: Corporate identity is significantly effective for enhancing acceptability of census figures from the National Population Commission in Nigeria.

Test Statistics = Pearson’s Product Moment Correlations (r)

Test Table 1: Distribution of Respondents Aggregate Responses to Questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 on Corporate identity and enhancing population census acceptability

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	309	16.39	16.39	16.39
	Disagree	201	10.66	10.66	10.66
	Undecided	151	8.01	8.01	8.01
	Agree	776	41.17	41.17	41.17
	Strongly Agree	448	23.76	23.76	23.76
	Total	1,885	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2024.

Test Table 2: Summary of Correlation Analysis Results Testing Ho₁

		Corporate Identity	Organisational Performance
Corporate Identity	Pearson Correlation	1	.531**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	100	100
Enhancing population census acceptability	Pearson Correlation	.531**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	100	100

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Test Table 2 above gives the results of correlation coefficient analysis carried out to test H_{01} . The results show that there is a significant relationship between public relations corporate identity and enhancing population census acceptability ($r = 0.531$, $t\text{-cal.} > t\text{-crit}$; $0.000 < 0.01$). Therefore, H_{01} is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted, which states that: “Public relations corporate identity is significantly effective for enhancing acceptability of population census figures from the National Population Commission in Nigeria.”

Hypothesis 2

H_0 : Corporate communication have no significant effect on the awareness of the target publics of National Population Commission census exercises in Nigeria..

H_1 : Corporate communication have significant effect on the awareness of the target publics of National Population Commission census exercise in Nigeria.

Test Statistics = Regression Analysis (R)

Test Table 3: Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	RStd. Error of the Estimate
1	.053^a	.001	-.007	.153

Predictors: (Constant), target Public awareness result.

Test Table 4: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.002	3	.002	.191	.677^b
	Residual	1.859	79	.025		
	Total	1.956	95			

Dependent Variable: Corporate communication -- Predictors: (Constant), target Public’s awareness results.

Test Table 5: Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
	(Constant)	1.066	.061		
Target public awareness results	-.011	.055	-.047	-.464	.677

Result Interpretation:

Test of tables 3 - 5 gives results of the regression analysis test of the corporate communication and the awareness of the target publics before population census exercise in Nigeria by the NPC. The results indicate a significant positive effect with $R = .053$, and $R^2 = .001$; $F_{cal(3,79)} = .191$; $p = .000 < .005$. Hence, the R indicates a good level of prediction, while the R^2 shows significantly positive effect of corporate communication on the awareness of the target public before the conduct of population census exercise in Nigeria. Therefore, the researchers rejected the null hypothesis and accepted the alternate hypothesis which says that: “Corporate communication have significant effect on the awareness of the target publics of population census figures of National Population Commission (NPC) census exercise in Nigeria.”

Organizational performance

Performance is the main point of interest by organizations in making strategic decisions. Several dimensions have been used to operationalize the concept of performance such as profitability, customer satisfaction, productivity and efficiency. Productivity basically reflects on the general ratio of the company input to the output. This entails all cost of production incurred by the company to the products and services produced. The productivity rate elaborates different approaches on production efficiency. Productivity is one of the most crucial factors in a firm’s production. Hence enhancing national productivity can greatly be a major source to enhance real income and better living standards Forbes, (2013).

Efficiency refers to the performance levels which explain using the least inputs to attain any given higher output. Efficiency further explains the use of all inputs to produce specific targeted output. Primary efficiency is illustrated from the concept of ensuring that resources required to produce a specific product are effectively used, this eliminates both the possible wastage of resources or inability to composing specific activity to produce a given output with specific allocated resources.

Results and Discussion

After analyzing the hypotheses, the following results were obtained;

- i. That corporate identity is significantly effective in enhancing the acceptability of census figures from the National Population Commission in Nigeria.
- ii. There is significant effect of corporate communication on the awareness of the target publics before every census exercise in Nigeria.

From the first result of this study, which indicates that public relations corporate identity is significantly effective in enhancing the acceptability of census figures from the National Population Commission in Nigeria, we could see that this result finds support in the observations of Onyeaghala (2019) and Fombrum (1996), that organizations are expected to build good personalities or identities before their publics to earn good image. Identity depicts reputation and good reputation by creating wealth through the development of strong and consistent images. This viewpoint was also endorsed by the Cornelissen & Harris (2001) opine that corporate identity as “all expressions of a company” particularly as the company relate to the dualistic conceptions of corporate image and reality since corporate identity emerges in the course of all the organizational activities. That corporate identity emerges in the course of social interaction and that there may be an emergence of multiple identities in the course of such interaction. This is close to the rhetorical or symbolic interactions view of communication in which signs and symbols issued by a company do not so much designate objects but rather constitute them asserting that corporate identity can be created, transformed (Gioia & Thomas, 1996), restructured and that organizations have to achieve a defined standard of consistency to create desired impressions with stakeholders or target publics over a period of time in order to establish viable reputations and a high degree of confidence and trust (Giola & Thomas, 1996).

The second result shows that there is significant effect of corporate communication on the awareness of the target publics before every census exercise in Nigeria. On the effect of corporate communication on the awareness of the target publics, 96.7% of the respondents strongly agreed, while only 2.5% strongly disagreed thereby indicating that effective corporate communication enhances the awareness of the target publics and other stakeholders of the organization and as such agrees with that of Onyeaghala (2019) which aver that corporate communication is very essential to the survival of organizations hence the need to provide at all times unique value proposition, earn the trust, and support to the target publics and Okoisama, et al. (2017) whose finding reveal that corporate communication enhances market share and sustains loyalty and product differentiation in an organization.

Conclusion

Every country, including Nigeria requires a good and articulate census exercises that will be successful and acceptable to all citizens and the international community. Acceptable and successful population results of any nation enhance qualitative planning and national development (Okonkwo, et al. 2023; Okonkwo & Nnabuko, 2022). This is made possible through pre-census public relations corporate identity or target audiences' research, a pre-opinion research, aimed at building mutual awareness, building better relationship with the publics/ stakeholders and the diverse media channels, coupled with effective census monitoring and evaluation plan. This is the only way to convince all Nigerians to participate in any census exercise and encourage them to willingly accept the results afterwards. Then and only then, will we have a credible tool for successful national planning and development.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations are proffered:

1. The National Population Commission of Nigeria should give public relations corporate identity research before embarking on population census exercise in Nigeria, in order to boost its public perceptions and acceptability among the local and international publics.

2. The National Population Commission of Nigeria should prioritize public relations corporate communication across the states in Nigeria in order to create more awareness of the target publics through the application of strategic public relations team in carrying out corporate communication to shore up its public support thereby winning the target publics' trusts and confidence on census exercises in Nigeria.

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