

Corporate Image and Customer Perception of Primary Health Care Centres in Port Harcourt, Nigeria

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Abstract— Corporate image is seen as the mental picture of an organization and the totality of these mental pictures comprises of what is referred to corporate. The study examines the relationship between corporate image and customer perception of primary health care centres in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. A total of one hundred and thirty six (136) questionnaires were distributed to the respondents of the primary health care centres. One hundred and eleven (111) representing 81.6% were retrieved and useful for the study. Multiple regression was used to analyse the data. The analysis showed a positive and strong significant relationship between corporate identity, corporate reputation, corporate communication and customer perception. The study reveals that corporate identity significantly relates with customer perception positively, corporate reputation at the other hand insignificantly relates with customer perception and there is a negative relationship between corporate communication and customer perception. The study concludes that there is a positive and strong relationship between corporate identity and customer perception, while corporate reputation, corporate communication insignificantly relates with customer perception. The study further recommends that firms of primary health care centres should display a positive corporate image that gives customers a positive first impression about the firm.

Index Terms— Corporate image; corporate identity; corporate reputation; corporate communication; customer perception.

I. INTRODUCTION

The most crucial part of life is health, and without health, life and wealth is worthless. Taking a clue at the popular phrase, “Health is Wealth” remains true because without health, nothing significant comes out of life. The world will experience wealth and become wealthy when we attain “Health for All”. (Aigbiremolen, Alenoghena, Eboime and Abejegah, 2014). Since the introduction of the “Health for All” scheme was established, primary health care has been adopted and given a universal acceptance in Nigeria (Aigbiremolen, et al., 2014). The primary health care system is the first point of contact of individuals, organizations, family and friends, communities and the society at large with the national health system.

Primary health care centres are units which offer

individuals, families or the communities’ health services. Primary health care centre is a system that makes the community and family have access to the health services without going through rigorous experiences to get a medical service (Federal Ministry of Health Nigeria, FMOHN, 2004). World Health Organization, WHO (1998), further noted that the primary health care centre helps in bringing health care services close to where people live and work. The primary health workers also help in carrying out their duties (Obioha and Molale, 2011). Organizations are majorly concerned with protecting and managing their corporate image so as to attain their corporate goals and objectives.

Corporate images are seen to be mental pictures of an organization. And the totality of these mental pictures characteristics is what is referred to as corporate image. Corporate image has attracted huge number of attention in previous studies (Pomaret and Monroig, 2008, Taghian, 2012, Lievens 2007, Massey, 2015, Watson and Kitchen, 2010). Previous studies on corporate image have mainly focused on brand preference, and interaction with customers, corporate logo, and effect of advertising (Davies and Chun, 2002, Davies and Miles, 1998, Chun and Davies 2006). There are sufficient literature on the area of corporate image, but there seem to be lacking an empirical study addressing the relationship that exist between corporate image and customer perception of primary health care centres in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. Hence, our point of departure is to examine the unexplored areas in extant literature as it affects the primary health care centres and also to fill the gap in marketing literature.

Therefore, this study will examine the relationship between corporate image and customer perception of primary health care centres in Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

A. Statement of the Problem

Health sector in any given economy forms the pillar of its development. The most important ingredient of life is health. The popular slogan “Health is wealth still remains true. The provision of health care facilities in our various primary health care centres is in need of superior improved sustainable medical equipment and support.

Unfortunately, primary health care centres in Port Harcourt are lacking provision of health medical care facilities and the supply is at a very low state and these has resulted to making Nigerian to be dangerously exposed to death. Furthermore, there has been the issue of ineffective usage of previous opportunities that will help in developing a sustainable primary health care in Nigeria. The primary

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health care in Nigeria and its employees have actually not displayed efficient customer service, their customers are being treated and attended to without courtesy and this have actually affected the primary health care centres in Nigeria and it has also formed a wrong perception in the mind of the customers and thereby destroying the corporate image of the

firm.

It is the beliefs of the researcher of this paper that the application of positive organizational corporate image will to a very large extent curb the issues of wrong customer perception about the primary health care in Nigeria

Conceptual Framework for Corporate Image and Customer Perception

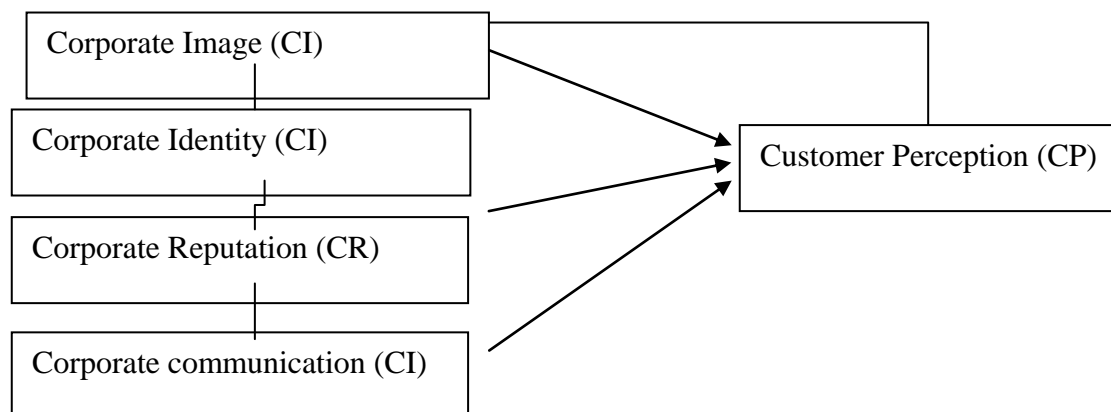


Fig. 1: Operational Framework of the relationship between corporate image and customer perception.

Source: Author’s Conceptualization, (2021).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

Resource Based View Theory (RBV) states that organizations analyses and interprets internal resources and emphasizes these resources and capabilities in formulating strategy that helps in achieving sustainable competitive advantages. RBV emphasizes on the concept of different – to – imitate factors of the organization as the reason of superior performance and also gaining a competitive advantage (Barney, 1986; Hamel and Prahalad, 1996), Resource Based View (RBV) is also a theory that enables organizations to build its business strategy around its strength. Resource Based View theory states that organization can be seen as human resources, organizational resources and physical resources put together (Barney 1991; Amit and Shoe Maker, 1993). Valuable, rare, imperfectly imitable and imperfectly substitutable are major avenues of sustainable competitive advantage for sustained better performance (Barney, 1991).

Resource Based View enables managers of an organization to understand why competencies are seen as an organization’s most valuable asset and also appreciate how these assets can help in improving a firm’s business success. Resource Based View (RBV) focuses on the management of internal resources (Andrews 1971). Wernerfelt (1984), sees Resource Based View (RBV) as an organization’s bundles of resources. Resource Based View (RBV) emphasizes on the internal resources of an organization. That is to say, an organization’s success is based on an organization’s resources and limited by managerial resources.

Drawing from the Resources Based View Theory, an organization can focus more on its internal resources such as

corporate image, identity, reputation and communication to improve on its business performance and have a sustained superior performance. Resource Based View Theory (RBV) can also help the primary health care firms to build its business strategy around its strength with its internal resources such as corporate image identify, reputation and communication. It further helps firms to manage its internal resources through superior performance, which in –turn leads to sustained competitive advantage.

Concept of Corporate Image

Corporate images are perceived by customers as the mental image or picture of an organization. Corporate image is the mental picture the public’s has about the organization. In other words, it is the reflection of a company in the mind of its customers and stakeholders. Corporate image can change from time to time, in that, customers’ needs and wants keep changing and their expectation of organization changes from time to time and varies between individual’s. Ind, Nicolas (1992), asserted that corporate image is viewed as the perception that any individual has of a firm through the accumulation of previous experiences and received information.

Corporate image further, is the sum total of everything an organization does (or does not), which either could be positive or negative. Smith and Taylor, (2006), noted that corporate image brings about perception of what an organization is in the mind of their customers. Corporate image is also seen as the actions organization take to create a positive and desired image in the mind of organization’s stakeholders (Willi, Nguyen, Melewarand Dennis, 2014). An image according to Cheney and Vibbert, (1987) is something that is showcased by the organization and something that is

perceived or interpreted by the public. Corporate images are however created and sustained by both the company and its customers' that is to say, that while company is actively attempting to showcase a particular picture of itself in the mind of their audience, the audience are forming perceptions of the organization's activities (Willi et al., 2014). Creating a positive corporate image is a vital tool that helps in building a competitive advantage in the marketplace. Corporate image is also used by the customer to analyse the firm's activities to its external customers. Lievens (2017) posits that corporate image refers to individual's global perception of a company or people's knowledge and belief about a particular firm.

Furthermore, corporate image is seen as the mind-set of a person in relations to the organization or what an individual knows an organization for. And there are direct constructs of corporate image such as corporate identity, corporate reputation and communication (Balmer and Gray, 1999; Ind, Nicolas, 1992).

Concept of Customer Perception

Customer perception is as how a customer perceives or sees the organization which could either be negative or positive. Customer perception is also seen as acting and reacting on what one sees (Kolter et al., 1998). Customer perception is usually formed through advertising a product or service to the consumers, and when it is done, it leaves an impression in the mind of the consumer whether to buy or not to buy. According to Sitter (2008), perception is how individuals recognize and interpret a particular stimuli. Zeithaml (1988), further noted that consumer's perception of a quality product or service is measured as a vital determinant of product or service choice. Munnukka (2008), asserted that perception is the first impression consumers draw from the product or service offered to them and it is on the basis of this, that they select and interpret information to form a meaningful picture about the quality of the products or services offered to them. That is why, it is believed that customer's perception of the firm's image goes a long way in determining whether the firm is achieving success or not. For organization's corporate image to speak volume in the mind of the consumers. The organization must ensure that consumers perceive their product or services as being the best compare to competitor's offerings. The mode of offering service by organization and purchase of product also affects perception and the buying behaviour of the consumer (Nandagopal and ChinnaIyan (2003). Positive organization's corporate image helps in providing firms with competitive advantages, by differentiating its products from that of competitors and also offers quality service that results to customer satisfaction. From the customer's point of view, the perception of quality of product or service is closely linked to their experiences with the product or service performance or benefits as compared with what competitors are offering them (Kenyon and Sen, 2002). Customer perception is very crucial for organizations because, it wholly depends on the success or failure of products/service in the marketplace. Customer perception here is conceptualized as impression, acceptance and awareness (LaMarco, 2018).

Impression is a feeling, opinion or mind-set an individual has about someone, a product, something or a service offered

to him. Acceptance is the process of consenting or agreeing to receive something that is offered to one. While awareness is the knowledge one has about something. Customer perception is affected by customer experiences, social media, advertising, services rendered, public relations and other advertisement channels (LaMarco, 2018).

Corporate Image and Customer Perception

Organizational corporate Image can be seen as how organizations are faced with the challenge of the quality of the image their products and services project to their customers. Customer perceptions are critical to firms and often are the underlying reason for success or failure of any firm. Fariaaand Mendes (2013), posits that firms sustain a desirable image that enables them to remain successful in the marketplace. Organizations that have a favourable corporate image gives the organization a competitive edge over their competitors, which also enhances customer perception about them (Van Ries and Balmer, 1997).

Gilpin (2010) noted that organizations that strive to successfully create an image, must tirelessly work to sustain that image, thereby improving their customer perception. Positive image of the organization enhances perception in the eyes of customers. Customer perceptions of a firm create a platform for organization to manage its corporate image. A firm's image influences customer's reactions to a particular corporate actions, products and services. Base on the above propositions: We therefore hypothesize that:

H₀: Corporate Image does not relate with customer perception.

Corporate Identity and Customer Perception

The vital goal of a good corporate identity is to build strong relationship with customers and stakeholders. Organizations do not project themselves on the basis positive performance rather they depend on how customers perceive the organization's performance based on their beliefs and perceptions. Corporate identity is the primary goal of how firm's positions themselves in the mind of stakeholders, employees and customers. Corporate identity is based upon the core values of a firm and it is expressed by customers to know who the firm is and what they are doing. Corporate identity is formed by an organization's history in the mind of customers. Corporate identity is a vital and if it is properly managed, it brings about positive customer perception which leads to competitive advantage for the firm. (Pomaret and Monroig, 2008). An organization that conveys their corporate identity properly, customers are likely to perceive a positive mental picture of the company. Balmer and Gray, (1999), posits that any change in corporate identity can affect the perception customers have about the organization. When employees perceive the organization to be unique and distinctive in their responsibilities and care towards them, they tend to treat the customers well, thereby positions the firm positively in the mind of the customers. Given the above proposition:

H₀: Corporate image does not relate with customer perception.

Corporate Reputation and Customer Perception.

Corporate reputation is customers overall evaluation of an organization over a period of time. This evaluation of the

customer is based on customer’s direct experiences with the firm, and any other communication that provides information about the firm’s performance (Gotskiand Wilson, 2001). Corporate reputation is the cumulative judgments of customers about the organization (Fombrim and Shanley, 1990). Organizations that have good reputations are able to attract customers which lead to greater market share and in turn charge higher prices for their services (Fombrum and Shanley, 1990). A favourable corporate reputation gives a firm a better competitive advantage and also enhances customer’s evolution about the firm (Van Ries and Balmer 1997).

When customers and stakeholders hold a positive view about an organization, it brings about strong commitment and loyalty. Secondly, an organization where it’s customers has a positive set of knowledge and beliefs about an organization, tends to enhance customer perception towards them. Corporate identity deals with how the employees perceives the organization to be, while corporate image and reputation is what customers thinks about the organization, and when that of customers are favourable it enhances loyalty, which in – turn leads to profitability. From the above propositions: We therefore hypothesize as follow:

H0²:Corporate reputation does not relate with custom or perception.

Corporate Communication and Customer Perception.

Organizations that freely interact and communicate with its customers are likely to enjoy their loyalty. Customers also want to be attended to by interacting with them. The ability for an organization to communicate what they do and who they are to its stakeholders, employees and customers enhances favourable feelings about a firm which may likely increase organizational sales volume. Corporate communication helps organization to strategically communicate with their customers to support desirable reputation and discourage undesirable ones (Massey, 2015). A favourable communication enhances the quality of organizational performance which further leads positive customer perception about the organization (Fombrum and Shanley, 1990).Corporate communication builds strategic values that enables an organization to maintain a competitive edge over rivals (Murray, 2003).Anderson and Sullivan (2003) and Weigelt and Camerer (2008), posits that when customers are satisfied it tends to develop favourable corporate image because it enhances positive referrals which also provides positive perception from customers. Corporate communication is crucial because, it conveys the organization’s identity to all customers, stakeholders and employees (Ind, N. 1992). The customers, stakeholders and

employees perceives it and it creates a positive image of the organization. (Pomaret and Awuah, 2008).

Corporate communication and identity are vital to a firm and if they are well managed, they are likely to enhance the firm’s competitive advantage through the organizational corporate image. Pomaret and Awuah, (2008) noted that if an organization properly communicates its corporate identity, customers are likely to perceive a positive mental picture of the firm. Any change or dishonesty in corporate communication can affect the perception of customers towards the image of the firm, which is critical to the achievement of their competitive advantage and marketing objectives. From the above propositions: We therefore hypothesize as follows:

H0³: Corporate communication does not relate with customer perception.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted quantitative research and a cross-sectional survey research design in a non-contrived setting, where the researchers were not in control of the study elements. The population of the study comprises of all the primary health centres in Port Harcourt. There are sixty-eight (68) registered primary health centres (according to Ministry of Health facility listing, 2018). The study adopted a convenience sampling technique that enables us to easily carry out primary data for this study. For convenience purposes, two (2) copies of structured questionnaire were hand delivered to the respondents representing the primary health care firms. In all, a total of one hundred and thirty-six (136) copies of questionnaire were distributed. Well-constructed questionnaires were used to administer to the respondents. The instrument adopted a five-point scale which includes: SA=Strongly Agree (5), A=Agree (4), U=Undecided (3), Disagree (2), Strongly Disagree (1). Multiple Regression analysis was adopted to analyse and test the formulated hypotheses.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher distributed one hundred and thirty-six (136) questionnaires to the respondents of the primary health care centres. One hundred and eleven (111) representing 81.6% were retrieved and useful for the study while twenty-five (25) questionnaires representing 18.4%, were not useful for the study, due the fact, they were not properly filled and was not returned.

Table 1. Respondents Sex Distribution

Details	Particulars	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	32	28.8
	Female	79	71.2
	Total	111	100

Source: Survey data, 2021.

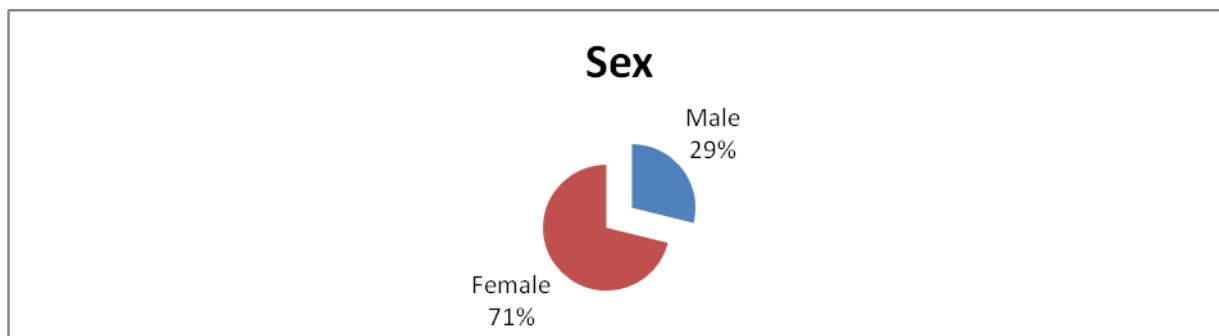


Fig.1.2. Graphical presentation of gender distribution

The table and figure above showed the sex respondents' distribution of which 32 of the respondents representing 28.8% were male who participated in the exercise. 79 of the respondents representing 71.2% were female respondents.

This result showed that, more of the female respondents were at the venue during the point when the questionnaires were administered.

Table.2. Respondents Age Distribution

Details	Particulars	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	20-30 years	21	18.9
	31-40 years	39	35.1
	41-50 years	28	25.3
	51-60 years	17	15.3
	61 years and above	6	5.4
	Total		111

Source: Survey data, 2021.

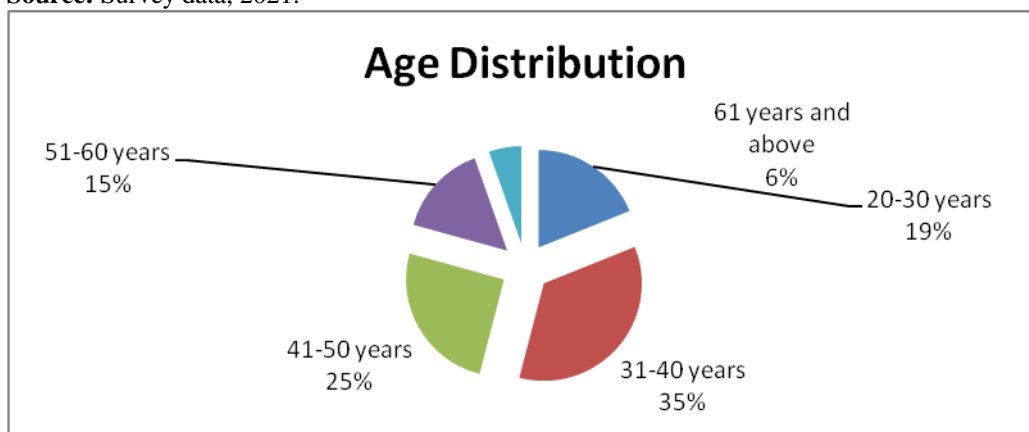


Fig.1.3. Graphical presentation of age distribution

The above table and graph represent the age bracket of respondents. 21 respondents which correspond to 18.9% of the total respondents fell within the age bracket of 20-30 years. 39 respondents representing 35.1% fell within the age group of 31-40 years. 28 respondents with a percentage of 25.2% fell with the age of 41-50 years. 17 respondents corresponding to 15% fell within the age bracket of 51-60

years while 6 respondents representing 5.4% fell within the age group of 61 years and above.

Table 3. Respondents Highest Educational Qualification Distribution

Details	Particulars	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Highest Educational Qualification	WASC/SSCE/NECO	21	19
	B. Sc/ B.ED	45	40.5
	M.Sc/M.ED	45	40.5
	Total	111	100

Source: Survey data, 2021.

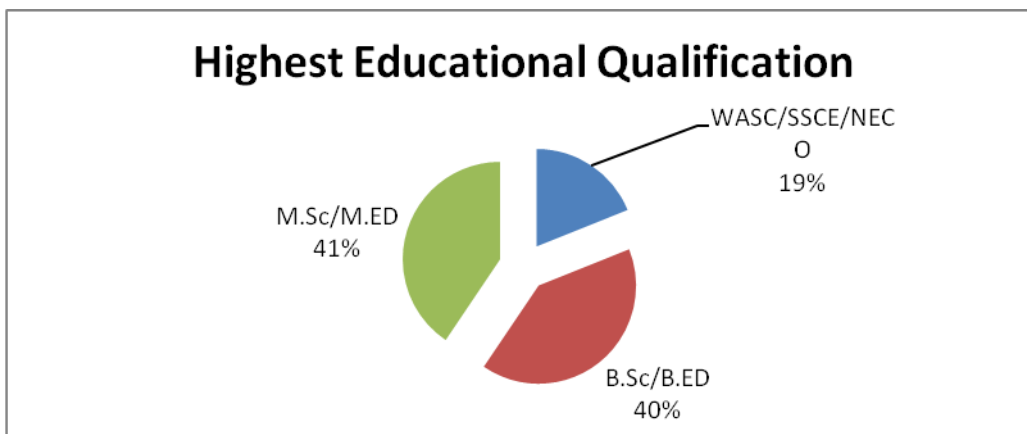


Fig. 1.4. Graphical presentation of highest educational qualification distribution

The above table and graph represent the educational qualification; 21 respondents representing 19% were WASC/SSCE/NECO holders, 45 respondents which represent 40.5% were first B.Sc/B.ED holders while 45 respondents representing 40.5% were M.Sc/M.ED holders.

Table 4. Respondents Occupation Distribution

Details	Particulars	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Occupation	Doctors	21	19
	Nurses	45	40.5
	Matron	33	29.7
	Medical Laboratory Scientist	12	10.8
	Total	111	100

Source: Survey data, 2021.

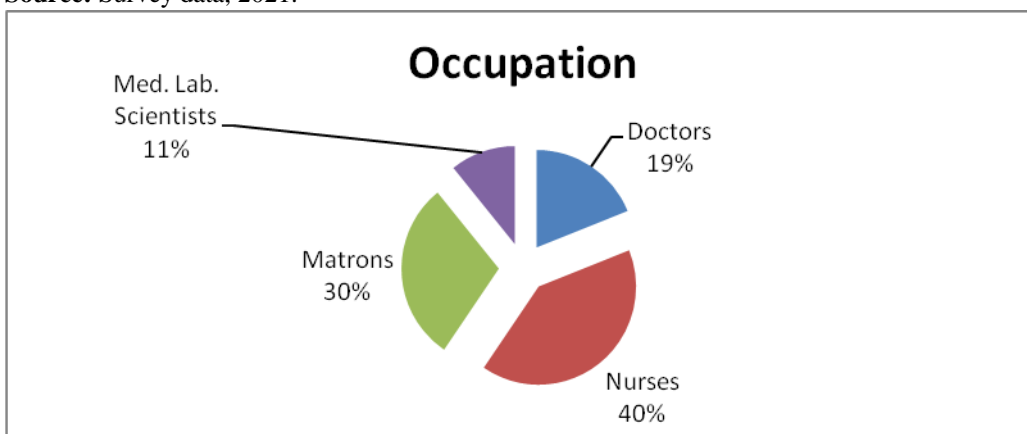


Fig. 1.4. Graphical presentation of highest educational qualification distribution

The above table and graph represent the occupational position of the respondents; 21 respondents representing 19% were doctors, 45 respondents which represent 40.5% were nurses, 33 respondents representing 29.7% were matrons while 12 respondents representing 10.8% were medical laboratory scientist.

Hypotheses Testing

Table 5:Regression Analysis showing the effects of Self-Service Technology and Customer-Contact Service Personnel on Customer Loyalty.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.888 ^a	.788	.821	32.87436

a. Predictors: (Constant), Corporate Identity, Corporate Reputation, Corporate Communication

Decision rule: Is premised on a $p < 0.05$ or equal to 0.05, as indicative of significant relationships (positive relationship) and as such Reject null hypotheses, and if $p > 0.05$ as indicative of an insignificant relationship (Negative relationship), accept the alternate hypotheses. Multiple Regression analysis was used to analyse the stated hypotheses.

Table 6: Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1 (Constant)	-8.185	7.206		-1.136	.272	-23.388	7.018
Corporate Identity	.046	.445	.035	.104	.918	-.892	.985
Corporate Reputation	1.122	.414	.909	2.713	.015	.249	1.995
Corporate Communication	.743	.641	.439	4.282	.003	.470	2.439

a. Dependent Variable: Customer Perception

Regression Model: CP = [(0.046CI) + (1.122CR) + (0.743CC)]-8.185

Table 7: ANOVAa

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	54287.921	3	42235.781	55.959	.000 ^b
	Residual	7396.733	108	564.633		
	Total	66334.701	111			

a. Dependent Variable: Customer Perception

b. Predictors: (Constant), Corporate Identity, Corporate Reputation, Corporate Communication.

Regression line

$Y = a + bX_1 + bX_2 + bX_3$

Where:

CP = [(0.046CI) + (1.122CR) + (0.743CC)]-8.185

R = 0.888

R² = 0.788

F_{3, 111} = 55.959

P-value = 0.000

The result of the multiple regression of the above variables indicated R = 0.888, R²=0.788 which is equal to 78.8% and this is the explanatory power of the model used for the study. It means that only 78.8% variation can be explained by factors within the model used for the study and the remaining 21.2% can only be explained by other external quantitative and qualitative factors of the model used for the study. The f-ratio (F_{3, 111}=55.959) showed significant effects in existence and this revealed the appropriateness of the model used for the study.

The beta values which are the strengths or the extent of contributions to the present position of customer perception. Corporate identity came first with a contribution 0.046 values, corporate communication came second with a contribution of 0.743. Corporate reputation came last with a contribution of 1.122 values. These results have revealed that the corporate identity made a significant contribution, while corporate communication and corporate reputation made an insignificant contribution. Also, the p-value < 0.05 for the three dimensions of predictor. These results mean that the

null hypotheses H₀₁, was rejected, while null hypotheses for H₀₂ and H₀₃ were accepted, as regard the customer perception.

V. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This section sought to discuss various findings as regards to analysis of data and findings.

The analysis showed that 136 copies of the questionnaires were distributed and 111 returned copies were considered valid for the analysis. The study also recorded that female respondents participated for this study more than the male counterparts with a total number of 32 and 79 respondents which occupied percentage of 28.8% and 71.2% respectively. For educational qualifications, WASC/SSCE/NECO holders had 21 respondents with a percentage of 19% of the total respondents, followed by B.Sc/B.ED holders with 45 respondents representing 40.5%. 45 (40.5%) respondents were M.Sc/M.ED holders.

Hypothesis one, two and three (H₀₁, H₀₂ and H₀₃) aimed at examining the significant relationship between corporate identity, corporate reputation, corporate communication and customer perception. The hypotheses were tested using

multiple regression analysis. Our analysis revealed a positive and strong significant relationship between corporate identity, and customer perception, while an insignificant relationship exist between corporate communication and corporate reputation ($R= 0.888$ and $R^2= 0.788$). That is to say, corporate identity, corporate reputation, and corporate communication had a positive relationship with customer perception. Our findings was supported by Gilpin (2010) who notes that, organizations that strive to successfully create an image, must tirelessly work to sustain that image, thereby improving their customer perception. Positive image of the organization enhances perception in the eyes of customers. Customer perceptions of a firm create a platform for organization to manage its corporate image.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study examined the effects of two constructs of corporate image (corporate identity, corporate reputation, and corporate communication on customer perception of primary health care firms in Port Harcourt. From the findings, corporate identity significantly relates with customer perception positively; corporate reputation at the other hand insignificantly relates with customer perception; there is a negative relationship between corporate communication and customer perception. The null hypotheses formulated for H_{01} was rejected and alternative hypotheses for H_{02} and H_{03} were consequently accepted.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study therefore recommends that firms of primary health care should display a positive corporate image that gives the customers a positive first impression about the firms. The study further recommends that primary health centres should also focus on improving their reputation and communication and interaction with their customers, so as to enable them handle customer's complaints promptly.

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DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

- (1) **Sex:** (a) Male (b) Female
- (2) **Age:** (a) 20-30years (b) 30 – 40 years
 (c) 40 – 50 years (d) 50 60 years
- (3) **Educational Qualification:**
 (a) WASC/SSCE/or NECO
 (b) B.Sc. Or B. ed
 (c) M.Sc. or Me
- (4) **Occupation:**
 (a) Doctors
 (b) Nurses
 (c) Matron
 (d) Med. Lab Scientist

Statement Items on (Corporate Image)

S/No	Corporate Identity	5	4	3	2	1
1	Your organization’s identity is what makes your firm unique and also what shows its personality (Massey, 2015).					
2	Your organizational identity is what your employees believe it to be its main, lasting and unique character (Albert & Whetten, 1985).					
3	Your organization’s identity is a unique characteristic that is embedded in the behavior of the employees of the organization (Van Riel and Balmer 1997).					
4	Your organization identity showcases what it does, how it does, and it also connects to the way your firm go about their business (Markwich& Fill, 1997).					
	Corporate Reputation	5	4	3	2	1
5	Your customers know that your organization sells high quality products.					
6	Your customers see your firm as a company that is highly innovative.					
7	Your customers are aware that your firm provides excellent value for the money they are paying					
8	Your customers believe that your firm offers unique products and services (Taghianet al., 2012).					

	Corporate Communication	5	4	3	2	1
9	Your company's communication to the customers is usually seen in action?					
10	Your company's communication is useful to your customers?					
11	Your customers appreciate your company's television advertisement? (Pomaret and Monroig, 2008)					
12	Your company communicates a clear and superior corporate identity that distinguishes your firm from others (Balmer& Grey, 1990).					
	Statement item for customer Perception					
	Customer Perception	5	4	3	2	1
13	Perception is the first impression your customers draws from your organization (Munnukka, 2008).					
14	Your customers reacts or acts favourably on how they see your firm's services (Kolter, <i>et al.</i> , 1998).					
15	Your customers determine their service or product choice base on the quality service or product they get from your firm.					
16	Your customer's experiences are affected based on the advertisement channels used to showcase your firm's products or services.					