ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Whites Science
A Scientific Erudition

Relationship between Corporate Image and Competitive Advantage in Mobile Telecommunication Industry in Nigeria

Okocha Ebere Rejoice[1], Otika Udoka Stephen[1]*, Osuagwu Blessing Oby[2]

[1]Department of Marketing, Evangel University, Akaeze, Ebonyi State, Nigeria, [2]Department of Business Management, Hezekiah University, Umudi, Imo State, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

Background: The turbulent market environment has warranted companies to look for ways to sustain business operation. Corporate image is the way the organization members believe others to perceive their organization. In the study, companies use corporate identity and corporate reputation strategy to build their corporate image. Furthermore, competitive advantage is seen as the ability of the organization through their business strategy outperforms their rivals in the same industry. In the study, cost leadership and differentiation were used as a strategy to have competitive advantage. The study looks at how corporate image strategy will help firms to compete favorably in the unstable market environment. Much work has been done by scholars in the area of competitive advantage without much emphasis on corporate image strategy as a tool to achieve competitive advantage in developing countries like Nigeria especially in the telecommunication industry.

Objective: The purpose of the study is to investigate the relationship between corporate image and competitive advantage in mobile telecommunication industry in Nigeria.

Materials and Methods: The cross-sectional survey design was adopted. Data were obtained from 38 managers in the selected telecommunication firms in Port Harcourt. The questionnaire was used for data collection. A total of 28 questionnaires was retrieved and analyzed. Spearman's Rank correlation coefficients analytical tool was used to test the hypotheses.

Results: The finding revealed that there is a significant relationship between corporate image and firm's competitive advantage. The study also shows a significant relationship between corporate identity and companies' competitive advantage, as well as a strong relationship between corporate reputations and competitive advantage.

Conclusion: Building a solid corporate identity through media and personal contacts are important for sustaining customer loyalty. Also, a good corporate image is an effective way of staying in touch with customers and maintaining customer loyalty.

Key words: Competitive advantage, corporate identity, corporate image, corporate reputation

INTRODUCTION

Corporate strategy studies have been related to business environment changes along the last decades and created new challenges to companies, which have to adapt their strategies and increase their abilities to compete in a tumbling market. Competitiveness has been the major focus of corporate strategy studies. Generic competitive strategy is intensively discussed as a corporate competitive advantage and as the most competitive advantage.[1] Several scholars dedicated a great part of previous works to describe different procedures and concepts about environmental dynamics and the challenges created for corporate and for business competitiveness, based on Porter's five force model.[1-4] Most of the earlier approaches consider mainly the influence of external factors as determinants of organization performance and the firm's ability to respond to challenges of competition and customer demand. Opposing this approach,[5] Barney proposed the resource-based view (RBV) of the firm. According to these authors, the forms of competitiveness and their sustainability come from their ability to develop strategies that can generate a value, which is difficult to be imitated or that is costly.[6] Chandler stated that competitiveness comes from the ability to create an economy of scale and economy of scope. Over the years, business strategies have been found to have a direct influence on a firm's competitiveness and growth performance.[7] To this effect, a number of competitive strategy frameworks have been proposed and empirically tested[8] among others.[1] Generic strategy framework is the most notable in terms of achieving superior performance and has significantly contributed to the development of the

***Corresponding author:**
Email: ud.otika@evangeluniversity.edu.ng/otikaudoka3@gmail.com

ISSN 2056-9904 © 2019

strategic management literature and serves as an excellent starting point for the framework proposed in this study. A differentiation strategy seeks to provide products or services that offer benefits that are different from those of competitors and that are widely valued by buyers.[9] The aim of using a differentiation strategy is to achieve a competitive advantage. There are different differentiation strategies for the company to choose from; it can be, product differentiation, service differentiation, personnel differentiation, channel differentiation, and image differentiation.[10] Further on, the company can choose to have a unique marketing mix or retail mix. The retail mix consists of merchandise, price, advertising and promotion, customer services, and store design.[11]

Winning business strategies are mainly grounded in sustainable competitive advantage. The desire to gain a competitive advantage is the main focus of organizational performance, as such understanding, the source of sustained competitive advantage has become a major area of study in strategic management.[1,12] Companies that are successful invest heavily in creating the sustainable competitive advantage as it is the single most dependent contributor that gives an above-average level of profitability. The goal of all business is getting a competitive advantage in relation to other competitors in the market.[1] Once a competitive advantage is achieved, organizations will always strive to maintain its competitive position to ensure survival in competitive markets. Firms sustain a competitive advantage only for as long as the products/services they offered and the manner in which they presented, or they have attributes that still correspond to the major buying criteria of a substantial number of customer its base.[13] A competitive advantage laboriously achieved can be quickly lost. The company's ability to maintain the competitive advantage obtained depends on the speed with which competitors will be able to imitate and outperform. In search of a sustainable competitive advantage, which is difficult imitate and can differentiate the firm from rivals, organizations have turned to intangible assets such as the firm's corporate image.[6]

Managing corporate image is an essential key to attain security and maintain public trust.[14] It involves actions taken with the intention to create, maintain, and probably, regain a required image in the eyes of the stakeholders. Every organization has its corporate image, irrespective of the fact that such an organization may or may not want one. If this image is properly developed and managed, the firm's corporate image could reflect the firm's level of commitment to quality, excellence and good relationship with its stakeholders including current and also its potential customers, present employees, and future employees, also competitors and investors, governing bodies and the general public at large.[15] The process of managing the firm's corporate image is an on-going, synergistic management tool, rather than a one-time corporate image exercise to enable sustainable relationship advantages to be developed with key audiences. Organizations that do not engage in successful image management increase the chances of failure.[16]

In the quest to be on top of the competition, mobile telecom operators in Nigeria are employing different sales promotion strategies. However, it is difficult to develop hard to copy sales promotion strategies. The initiation of a strategy by one company leads to its replication by the competitors. In 2006, MTN launched the extra cool package which was particularly introduced to capture the youth market with free midnight calls. This package was quickly replicated by the other networks; Zain (now Airtel) with Tru talk, Etisalat with Easy Cliq, and Glo with Glo infinito. Due to its ease of replication, sales promotion strategies alone cannot furnish the company with a sustained competitive advantage. The introduction of Mobile Number Portability in 2013; which enables a subscriber to switch mobile service provider while retaining his/her existing number, reduced internet and call tariffs has increased the level of competition in the industry and service providers that are less competitive have been left down the ladder or completely eroded from the industry.

Much work has been done by scholars in the area of competitive advantage without much emphasis on corporate image management as a tool to achieving it in developing countries in Africa such as Nigeria, especially in the mobile telecommunications industry. Customer loyalty and customer retention are one of the most emphasized challenges confronting telecommunication companies. The occurrence of powerful competition in the Nigerian telecommunication industry has made customers persistently having to decide which service provider is preferable and economical to them. This has led to price wars among telecommunication companies in a bid to retain existing customers and attract new customers. At the inception of GSM in Nigeria, in 2001, customers made calls at N50 per minute. The entry of Globacom into the telecoms market in 2003 with per second billing gave birth to a new era in the Nigerian telecommunications industry. By 2004, MTN and V-mobile (now Airtel) had no choice than to follow suit in quick succession. Airtel club-10, Etisalat Zone, Glo Flexi, Mm Zone, and other price-crashing initiatives have since been introduced. Operators are in a continuous price war as they see them as a master strategy for gaining competitive advantage. Having identified these problems of competition, this study looks to solve the problem of how organizational competitive strategy is created and incorporated into an organization. In trying to understand the relationship between corporate image management and companies' competitive strategy we asked the following research questions.

1. What is the relationship between corporate reputation and companies' competitive advantage?
2. What is the relationship between corporate identity and companies' competitive advantage?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Corporate Image

Every day, the constantly growing competitive business environment is becoming a big challenge for companies to sustain its operations and existence. Issues such as innovation, dynamism in economic conditions, are becoming a big threat to organizational survival and sustainability. These fundamental changes have made organizations shift their focus toward intangible assets in an attempt to optimize budget, processes, and financial performance, with the sole goal of gaining a positive, sustainable competitive advantage.[15] Harward defined the corporate image as all the visual, verbal, and behavioral elements that make up the organization. On the other hand, whatever the argument is[17] explain that corporate image is originated from subjective, rather than objective cognitive processes and customer perceptions are main determinants of the represented fact.[13] Dutton and Dukerich identify a corporate image as the way organization members believe others to see their organization. This idea is oriented more at internal perceptions of the image than on external ones. Hence, it is possible to claim that corporate image should consider the controversial perceptions of external and internal stakeholders. In other words, the corporate image is determined by customers' perceptions, which is simultaneously supported and improved by internal employees of the organization.

Corporate Image Management

Organizations have the corporate image and when properly crafted and managed, the corporate image will accurately show the level of organization's commitment to quality, excellence, and relationships with its various constituents ranging from employees present and future to customers, government, and other stakeholders. "Corporate image management is a systematic and multi-aspect process that entails plans and policies aimed at fashioning a positive image for the organization's internal and external atmosphere, and eliminating negative thoughts and attitude toward the organization."[6] Corporate image management brings about the birth of a corporate language, corporate traditions, and a dialog that focus on self-expression of an organization in some way. This dialog is consistent with the expectations and understanding of all stakeholders of the firm including customers and employees about what the organization stands for, what its main strengths, its tradition, and principles are.[18] The concerns of both organizations and stakeholders are affected by a host of variables, including market dynamics, technology, and contemporary social and political issues, among others. The challenge for organizations lies in being able to understand these changes and continually adjust the organization's image in anticipation of and/or response to environmental change. Furthermore, the multiplicity of organizational stakeholders demands a strategic approach to image management in which organizations attempt to present itself in terms relevant to all stakeholders, both internal and external.[19] Although challenging, organizations must engage in image management to be successful.

The corporate image of an organization if managed effectively will protect the organization against competition from new competitors or current competitors offering new products and services.

HO_1: There is no significant relationship between corporate identity and cost leadership.

Corporate Identity

Corporate identity[20] refer to corporate identity as the strategically planned and operational self-presentation of a company, both internal and external, based on an agreed philosophy, long term company goals, and a particular desired image, combined with the will to utilize all instruments of the company as one unit achieved by means of behavior, communication, and symbolism. The organization considers that the transmission of positive image is an essential precondition for establishing a commercial relationship with target groups.[21] Outlines four stages of building an identity program. First, investigation, analysis, and strategic recommendations are carried out internally to determine what a corporate entity should represent. The identity of an organization is tied to its core values.[13] Dutton and Dukerich defined corporate identity as what organizational members believe to be its central, enduring, and distinctive character.[22] Balmer and dan Wilson defined corporate identity an organization's unique characteristics that are rooted in the behavior of members of the organization.[23] Markwick and Fill defined corporate identity as what the organization is, what it does and how it does it and is linked with the way organization goes about its business and the strategies it adopts. Corporate identities are created by organizational members based on organizational values.[22] Balmer and dan Wilson defined corporate identity as the summation of those tangible and intangible elements that make any corporate entity distinct.[22] Further stresses that "corporate identity is shaped by the actions of the corporate founders and leaders, by tradition and the environment at its core being the mix of employees' values which are expressed in terms of their affinities to corporate, professional, national, and other identities."[22] Melewar and Karaosmanoglu defined corporate identity as strategically planned expressions of the corporation that is communicated through clues given by company's behavior and symbols. Corporate identity can thus be said to guide a company's brand strategy. It is the corporate identity that employees and managers build on when making a brand unique, and if the brand cannot be made unique, the competitive advantage and benefits of differentiation will be lost.

However,[18] Melewar and dan Jenskins identify four sub-construct to measure corporate identity or organization, including communication and visual identity; behavior; corporate culture; and market conditions. The model adapts a multidisciplinary approach in the analysis of corporate identity. It unites the psychological, graphic design, marketing, and public relations paradigms of corporate identity. In this way, the model represents different views and school of thoughts of corporate identity, aiming for a balanced combination between these different disciplines. Furthermore, in terms of its application, the model presents a practical tool for analysis with its simple structure summarized in a comprehensible graphic presentation.

$H0_2$: There is no significant relationship between corporate identity and differentiation.

Corporate Reputation

Corporate reputation is an attribute or a set of attributes ascribed to a firm and inferred from the firm's past actions. It is the belief of market participants about a firm's strategic character.[24] Robert[25] assert that corporate reputation is the public's cumulative judgment of firms over time. Corporate reputation as a history of customer perception about the firm, such as collective beliefs that exist in the organizational field about a firm's identity and prominence,[26] Fombrum defines corporate reputation as "a perceptual representation of a company's past actions and future perceptual representation of a company's past actions and future prospects that describe the firm's overall appeal to all of its key constituents when compared with other leading rivals."[27] According to Balmer and dan Wilson,[22] corporate reputation refers to the perception of an organization which is built up over a period of time and which focuses on what it does and how it behaves.[4] Certo and Peter defined reputation as "a set of key characteristics attributed to a firm by various stakeholders," and while this is clearly an appropriate definition of corporate reputation, it makes no reference to competitors or comparison with others in an industry or field. This definition does, however, suggest "comparison." Rather than comparison occurring among competitors or industry leaders, the comparison in this instance is between various stakeholders' identifications of a set of key characteristics of the firm.

Measuring corporate reputation when analyzing or measuring a company's reputation, one must keep in mind that reputation is a multi-dimensional phenomenon and evaluations on a company's reputation are made based on these dimensions. Before listings became a key factor in defining corporate reputation, there have been studies on how corporate reputation should be measured. One of the earliest theories is a Reputation Quotient by Fombrum.[8] Reputation Quotient is a multi-stakeholder (for example, investors, customers, and employees) measure of corporate reputation, and it consists of six dimensions: (1) Emotional appeal: Stakeholders are content with the company and the way it executes its strategies and operations. They trust the company. (2) Products and services: In the stakeholders' opinion, the products and services that the company provides are of high quality, innovative, and valuable. (3) Financial performance: Stakeholders are confident that the company's future prospects are solid, the company is profitable and able to outperform competitors, and it is a low-risk investment. (4) Vision and leadership: The company has a clear vision which helps it to prosper in the future as well as take advantage of market opportunities. To execute the vision, the company's leadership has to be on point as well. (5) Workplace Environment: Stakeholders agree on the fact that the company has well educated and efficient employees who are well managed and that the company is able to attract new and able employees. (6) Social responsibility: Stakeholders are aware of the company's activities as "a good citizen" which includes supporting good causes, environmental responsibility, and taking into account what the local communities might need and providing them with it.[27]

Managing reputation more and more executives appreciate the positive impact that reputation can have on a company's success.[19] The fact that corporate reputation is one of the most important value creators to a company in today's markets makes it clear that it should be treated as a valuable asset. Solid management, strategies, and execution are needed to take full advantage of this factor that might be key for sustainable competitive advantage.[28] Managing reputation can be a very hard job since all the stakeholders have to be taken into account and treated well, but at the same time, it is important to know how and when to prioritize who should be treated a little better and when. In the business world, today business strategies and applying them in everyday business have become essential in governing a company. The companies with good reputations understand the importance of good and clear strategies and the ability to communicate these strategies to the stakeholders. In these companies, they have also succeeded in emphasizing the interaction of the process and made it clear that staff is welcome to participate in the process. Trust and appreciation between the executives and the staff are a thing that reputation leaders have also accomplished in their companies.[19] Basically what reputation management requires is ability to recognize changes in the markets and react to them in the correct way; clear vision and strategy; ability to evolve and adapt; understanding the business environment as well as the company's internal operations, for which the SWOT analysis is a good tool, etc.[19]

HO_3: There is no significant relationship between corporate reputation and differentiation.

Competitive Advantage

Today's business organizations operate in a hyper-competitive global market which is characterized by extreme turbulence and rapid evolutionary change that provide greater opportunities as well as greater challenges to managers. Organizations are in a state of continuous flux occasioned by the competitive war in the marketplace. New firms in the same business spring up daily to offer virtually the same product or services, thus, reducing the marketplace for already existing competitors and increasing the stakes for their survival.[28] Consequently, only the tough get going. Different scholars have defined competitive advantage in different ways making it very difficult to have a particular definition of competitive advantage.[1] Porter first introduced the term competitive advantage and described it as being at the heart "of a firm's performance in competitive markets. After several decades of vigorous expansion and prosperity, however, many firms lost sight of competitive advantage in their scramble for growth and pursuit of diversification. Today, the importance of competitive advantage could hardly be greater. Firms throughout the world face slower growth as well as domestic and global competitors that are no longer acting as if the expanding pie were big enough for all.[1]

Porter[1] further went on to say "competitive advantage grows fundamentally out of the value a firm is able to create for its buyers that exceed the firm's cost of creating it."[29] Barney and Hesterly defined competitive advantage as the implementation of a value-creating strategy that is not simultaneously being implemented by any current or potential competitors.[10] Kotler and Keller defined competitive advantage as an organization's ability to perform in one or more ways that competitors cannot or will not match.[29] See the competitive advantage as an enterprise being able to create more economic value than the marginal (breakeven) competitor in its product market. Base on the above definitions, it makes sense to say that competitive advantage is the ability of organizational distinctive capabilities to stay ahead of the present or potential competitors. It also provides the understanding that resources held by a firm and its strategies will have a profound impact on generating competitive advantage. Building a competitive advantage alone is not enough; the key to success over time is building and maintaining a sustainable competitive advantage.

HO_4: There is no significant relationship between corporate reputation and cost leadership.

The fundamental basis of the long-run success of a firm is the achievement and maintenance of a sustainable competitive advantage. Sustainable competitive advantage provides a long-term advantage that is not easily replicated.

A firm is said to have sustained competitive advantage when it is implementing a value creating strategy not simultaneously being implemented by any current or potential competitors and when other firms are unable to duplicate the benefits of the strategy.[12]

Barney[5] maintained that a firm will obtain a sustainable competitive advantage over her competitors by implementing strategies that utilize their inner strengths, only if they can respond to environmental opportunities and at the same time neutralizing external threats and avoiding internal weaknesses. To obtain a holistic perspective of the firm's internal strengths and weaknesses and uncover the external threats and opportunities, organizations perform a SWOT analysis to analyze the competitive position of the firm. SWOT analysis uses the SWOT matrix to access both internal and external aspects of conducting business in a particular environment.

Cost Leadership

Cost leadership is defined as a business strategy wherein a firm sets out to become the low-cost producer in its industry.[1] Porter striving that the low-cost producer is a powerful competitive approach in markets where many buyers are price-sensitive. The aim is to open a sustainable cost advantage over competitors and then use lower costs as a basis for either underpricing competitors and gaming market share at their expense or earning a higher profit margin selling at the going price.[1] Organizations can achieve cost leadership by out-managing rivals in mass production, mass distribution, the construction of efficient scale facilities (economies of scale), rigorous pursuit of cost reductions from experience (experience curve), tight cost and overhead control, avoidance of marginal customer accounts combined with finding creative ways to cut cost producing activities out of the activity cost chain. If a firm can achieve and sustain overall cost leadership, then it will be an above-average performer in its industry provided, and it can command prices at or near the industry average.[25] A low-cost leader is in the strongest position to set the floor on market price and still earn a profit, which erects barriers around its market position.[8] A competitive power of low cost-leadership is greatest when rivals' products are essentially identical, price competition dominates, most buyers use the products similarly and want similar features, buyer switching costs are low, large customers shop aggressively for the best price. Furthermore,[24] Miller maintained that cost leader try to supply a standard, no-frills, high volume products at the most competitive selling price.

Differentiation

In a differentiation strategy, a firm seeks to be unique in its industry, along with some dimensions that are widely valued by buyers. The firm selects one or more attributes that many buyers in the industry perceive as important and uniquely positions its self to supply those needs.[1] Therefore, a firm seeking to succeed through differentiation must study needs and behavior carefully to learn what buyers consider important, what they think has value and what they are willing to pay for Barney.[4] In the differentiation strategy, the customers look at the attributes of the products other than looking at the price.[30] The firm is, therefore, rewarded for its uniqueness with a premium price. A firm that can achieve and maintain differentiation will be an above average performer in its industry if its price premium exceeds the extra costs incurred in being unique.[1] A differentiator, therefore, must always seek ways of differentiating that lead to a price premium greater than the cost of differentiating. The logic of differentiation strategy requires that the firm choose attributes in which to differentiate itself that are different from its rivals. Approaches to differentiation can take many forms; design and corporate image, technology, features, customer service, dealer network, and other dimensions. Ideally, the firm differentiates itself along with several dimensions. The most appealing approaches to differentiation are those that are hard or expensive for rivals to duplicate.

Theoretical Framework

Resource-based theory

The theory which this study hinges on is the resource-based theory of the firm which combines concepts from organizational economics and strategic management.[22] In this theory, the competitive advantage and superior performance of an organization are explained by the distinctiveness of its capabilities.[9] The RBV as a basis for the competitive advantage of a firm lies primarily in the application of a bundle of valuable tangible or intangible resources at the firm's disposal.[31,32] To transform a short-run competitive advantage into a sustained competitive advantage requires that these resources are heterogeneous in nature and not perfectly mobile. Effectively, this translates into valuable resources that are neither perfectly imitable nor substitutable without great effort.[29]

A strategy has been defined as the match an organization makes between its internal resources and skills and opportunities and risks created by its external environment the resources and capabilities of a firm are the central considerations in formulating its strategy; they are the primary constants upon which a firm can establish its identity and frame its strategy. The key to a resources based approach to strategy formulation understands the relationships between resources, capabilities, competitive advantage, and performance. The RBV has been a common interest for management researchers, and numerous writings could be found for the same. A RBV of a firm explains its ability to deliver sustainable competitive advantage when resources are managed such that their outcomes cannot be imitated by competitors, which ultimately creates a competitive barrier.[16]

METHODS

The cross-sectional survey method, a form of quasi-experimental design, is considered most appropriate for this study. The population studied in this work comprised 32 managers in the GSM providers in Nigeria. The population was restricted to the Managers and HODs in this industry in view of the responses required in the study, which can only be provided by top echelon and senior staff of the organizations, particularly as they relate to corporate image and competitive advantage. The entire population was studied since it was relatively a small number, so there was no need for sample size determination. Primary data were utilized in the study; hence, the questionnaire was the main instrument for collecting primary data in this study. The questionnaire was adapted from a mixture of instruments for measuring various aspects of the study. The questionnaire was personally administered, through the use of resource persons, to the randomly chosen management staff.

RESULTS

In the presentation of the results for the primary data, descriptive measures such as mean scores and standard deviation are used to illustrate the distribution of each variable (independent and dependent). The independent variable – the corporate image is measured using two dimensions namely – corporate identity and corporate reputation. Each

Table 1: Dimensions of corporate image

Corporate image	*n*	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
Identity	28	1.00	5.00	4.0821	0.86510
Reputation	28	1.00	5.00	4.3941	0.88710
Valid N (listwise)	28				

Source: Data output

Table 2: Dimensions of organizational competitive advantage

Competitive advantage	*n*	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
Cost	28	1.00	5.00	4.0801	0.73511
Differentiation	28	1.00	5.00	4.0222	0.90182
Valid N (listwise)	28				

Source: Data output

Table 3: Analysis of the study variables

Variables	*n*	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
Image	28	1.00	5.00	4.2381	0.70882
Competitiveness	28	1.00	5.00	4.1014	0.91724
Valid N (listwise)	28				

Source: Data output

Table 4: Hypothesis one

		Cost leadership
Spearman's rho identity	Correlation Coefficient	0.672**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	n	28

Source: data output

Table 5: Hypothesis two

		Differentiation
Spearman's rho identity	Correlation Coefficient	0.509"
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	n	28

Source: Data output

Table 6: Hypothesis three

		Cost leadership
Spearman's rho reputation	Correlation coefficient	0.801"
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	n	28

Source: data output

Table 7: Hypothesis four

		Differentiation
Spearman's rho reputation	Correlation coefficient	0.779**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	n	28

Source: Data output

variable is scaled on a consistent 3-item instrument and a 5-point Likert scale. This rule also applies to the scaling of the dependent variable – organizational competitive advantage.

Table 1 illustrates the descriptive statistics for the independent variable, which is the corporate image and its dimensions, namely – corporate identity and corporate reputation. The results indicate high mean scores of values x >3.00 for the two dimensions; therefore, based on the structure of the scale, this implies a tendency for positive affirmation to the indicators and the variables.

Table 2 illustrates the descriptive statistics for the dependent variable, which is an organizational competitive advantage and its dimensions, namely – cost leadership, differentiation, and market share. The results indicate high mean scores of values x >3.00 for the two dimensions; therefore, based on the structure of the scale, this implies a tendency for positive affirmation to the indicators and the variables.

Table 3 summarizes the descriptive statistics for the independent variable – corporate image and the dependent variable – organizational competitive advantage. The results indicate mean scores of x >3.00, thereby implying relatively high levels of affirmation to the positive tendencies of the variables as observed in the organization.

Table 8: The decision table

Hypotheses (null)	Significance (0.05)	Decision
There is no significant relationship between corporate identity and cost leadership	*P*=0.000 0.05	Reject
There is no significant relationship between corporate identity and differentiation	~*P*=0.000<0.05	Reject
There is no significant relationship between corporate reputation and cost leadership	*P*=0.000<0.05	Reject
There is no significant relationship between corporate reputation and differentiation	*P*=0.000<0.05	Reject

Source: Data output

HYPOTHESES TESTING

The test for hypotheses was carried out using the Spearman rank order correlation at a 95% confidence interval and a criterion of $P < 0.05$ for significance. A total of six null hypotheses are tested (two-tailed).

HO_1: There is no significant relationship between corporate identity and cost leadership.

(rho=672, $P = 0.000 < 0.05$).

As shown in Table 4, the association between corporate reputation and cost leadership indicate a strong and significant relationship between both variables given the correlation coefficients; therefore, the null hypothesis is on this basis rejected.

HO_2: There is no significant relationship between corporate identity and differentiation.

(rho = 509, P = 0.000 < 0.05).

The findings reveal in Table 5 that association between corporate reputation and differentiation indicate a strong and significant relationship between both variables given the correlation coefficients; therefore, the null hypothesis is on this basis rejected.

HO_3: There is no significant relationship between corporate reputation and cost leadership.

(rho = 801, P = 0.000 < 0.05).

From Table 6 shows that the association between corporate reputation and cost leadership indicate a strong and significant relationship between both variables given the correlation coefficients, therefore, the null hypothesis is on this basis rejected.

HO_4: There is no significant relationship between corporate reputation and differentiation.

(rho - 779, P = 0.000 < 0.05).

In Table 7 the findings for the association between corporate reputation and differentiation indicate a strong and significant relationship betwe en both variables given the correlation coefficients; therefore, the null hypothesis is on this basis rejected.

In Table 8 the summary of findings from correlation analyses was presented and all the hypotheses were rejected in null hypotheses.

DISCUSSION

The study examined the effect of the corporate image on the organizational competitive advantage with findings indicating significant levels of association between both variables. The results of the study imply that for management to sustain its growth rate as well as achieve competitiveness, the corporate image should be encouraged through adequate policies enabling opportunities for enhanced image identity and reputation such that the advantages accruing from cost leadership, differentiation and market share are achieved and operational activities which further facilitate growth are achieved. The results of the analysis are stipulated as follows:

Corporate Identity and Organizational Competitive Advantage

The findings show a significant relationship between corporate identity and organizational competitive advantage a 95% confidence interval and a 0.05 level of significance. The analysis is correlational and two-tailed using the Spearman rank order correlation. As a result of the analysis and based on the decision rule of P = 0.000 < 0.05 for rejecting the null hypothesis, we, therefore, reject all previously hypothesized null associations as the study finds that corporate identity strongly influences the competitive advantage of the organization.

Corporate Reputation and Organizational Competitive Advantage

The findings show a significant relationship between corporate reputation and organizational competitive advantage at a 95% confidence interval and a 0.05 level of significance. The analysis is correlational and two-tailed using the Spearman rank order correlation. As a result of the analysis and based on the decision rule of P = 0.000 < 0.05 for rejecting the null hypothesis, we, therefore, reject all previously hypothesized null associations as the study finds that corporate reputation strongly influences the competitive advantage of the organization.

CONCLUSIONS

This concern of this research was investigating the relationship between corporate image and organizational competitive advantage. Results from the analysis revealed significant levels of association between the dimensions of a corporate image – corporate identity and corporate reputation and the dependent variable – organizational competitive advantage. We, therefore, conclude as follows: (i) Communication should be encouraged to effectively achieve and sustain customer base and differentiation, (ii) building a solid corporate identity through media and personal contacts are important for sustaining customer loyalty, (iii) the effective portrayal of the company as being reputable is necessary for achieving patronages and brand advocacy, which further increase customer base and market share, and (iv) a good corporate image is an effective way of staying in touch with maintaining customers, thus a requirement for maintaining customer loyalty.

Recommendations

In view of the research and the importance of corporate image in achieving an organizational competitive advantage, the following recommendations are important.

- Management should practice effective customer follow-up through the maintenance of customer database and records.
- The organizational atmosphere should be structured by

management in such a way that supports, appreciates, and recognizes repeat customers and related their issues.

- Management should pursue policies which facilitate harmonious workplace, thus fostering customer trust and satisfaction.
- Effort should be made by management to enhance the company's public identity through the use of media channels and face-to-face communication.
- Effort should be made to ensure that good and quality performance is maintained as a means to sustaining customer goodwill and corporate image.

REFERENCES

1. Porter M. Competitive Strategy: Technical for Analyzing Industries and Competitors. New York: The Free Press; 1980.
2. Hitt MA, Ireland DR, Hoskisson RE. Strategic Management: Competitiveness and Globalization. 5th ed. United States: Thomson South-Western; 2003.
3. Aaker DA. Administrative Strategy. Porto Alegre, RS: Bookman; 2001.
4. Certo SC, Peter JP. Administração Estrategica: Planejamento e Implantação da Estrategia. São Paulo SP: Makron Books; 1993.
5. Barney JB. Gaining and Sustaining Competitive Advantage. Upper Saddle USA: Prentice Hall; 2002.
6. Chandler AD. Scale and Scope: The Dynamics of Industrial Capitalism. Cambridge, MA, USA: Harvard University Press; 2009.
7. Sandlberg WR. New Venture Performance: The Role of Strategy and Industry Structure. Massachusetts: Lexington Books; 1986.
8. Hayes RH, Schmenner RW. How should you organize manufacturing? Harv Bus Rev 1978;56:105-18.
9. Johnson I. Scholes, H, Whittington O. Exploring Corporate Strategy. 8th ed. London: Pearson Education Limited; 2008.
10. Kotler P, Keller K. Marketing Management. 14th ed. India: Prentice Education; 2014.
11. Fairhurst A, Moore M. Marketing capabilities and firm performance in fashion retailing. J Fashion Mark Manage 2003;7:386-97.
12. Barney J. Firm resources and sustained competitive advantage. J Manag 1991;17:99-120.
13. Dutton J, Dukerich J. Keeping an eye on the mirror: Image and identity in organizational adaptation. Acad Manage Rev 1991;34:517-4.
14. Aaron J. Basic Dimensions of the corporate image. J Mark 1961;25:47-49.
15. Harward E. Organizational image management. Acad Manage Rev 2002;21:254-85.
16. Mahoney JT, Pandian JR. The resource-based view within the conversation of strategic management. Strateg Manage J 1992;15:363-80.
17. Morello G. The image of Dutch banks. Int J Bank Mark 1986;6:38-47.
18. Melewar TC, Karaosmanoglu E. Seven dimensions of corporate identity: A categorization from the practitioners' perspectives. Eur J Mark 2006;40:846-69.
19. Heinonen J. Mainejohtaja. Finland: WSOY Helsinki; 2006.
20. Birkight K, Stadler MM. Corporate Identity. Landsberg at Lech: Grundlagen, Funktionen, Fallspielen, Verlag Moderne Industrie; 1986.
21. Van Riel CB. Principles of Corporate Communication. London: Prentice Hall; 1995.
22. Balmer JM, dan Wilson A. Corporate identity: There is more to it than meets the eye. Int Stud Manage Organ 1998;28:12-32.
23. Markwick N, Fill C. Towards a framework for managing corporate identity. Eur J Mark 1997;31:396-409.
24. Miller D. Relating Porter's business strategies to environment and structure: Analysis and performance implications. Acad Manage J 1988;31:280-308.
25. Robert G. Strategic development and SWOT analysis at the University of Warwick. Eur J Oper Res 2002;3:631-40.
26. Rao H. The social construction of reputation: Certification contests, legitimation, and the survival of organizations in the American automobile industry: 1895-1912. Strateg Manage J 1994;15:29-44.
27. Fombrum CJ. Reputation: Realizing Value from the Corporate Image. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press; 1996.
28. Anupkuma A. Principles of Management: An Analysis of the Contributions of Various Thinkers to the Field of Management, and a Review of the Management Practices of Five Companies. Fatih University Press; 2005.
29. Barney JB, Hesterly W. Strategic Management and Competitive Advantage: Concepts and Cases. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall; 2006.
30. Galbraith C, Schendel D. An empirical analysis of strategy types. Strateg Manage J 1983;4:153-73.
31. Wernerfelt B. The resource-based view of the firm. Strateg Manage J 1984;5:171-80.
32. Wernerfelt B. The resource-based view of the firm: Ten years after. Strateg Manage J 1995;16:171-4.