American Journal of Interdisciplinary Research and Development
ISSN Online: 2771-8948
Website: www.ajird.journalspark.org
Volume 19, Aug., 2023

CORPORATE IMAGE MANAGEMENT AND EFFECTIVENESS OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMPANIES

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This study investigates the link between organizational effectiveness, as measured by client acquisition and corporate image management, which is accomplished through corporate identity and reputation. A cross-sectional survey was used to collect data from 209 consumers of different telecommunication companies. The data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, including Pearson's product moment correlation. The study's findings showed a link between corporate image management and organizational success, as evidenced by a substantial and positive correlation between CEM components and organizational performance measures. Unlike previous findings, the study's conclusion presented solid proof of a company's reputation and identity having a major influence on word-of-mouth marketing and client acquisition. In practice, the study stressed how important it is to manage your company's image and brand strategically in order to attract new clients and promote goodwill. Moreover, the findings offer theoretical backing for the connections among corporate identity, corporate reputation, and organisational success, enhancing the current body of literature and directing future investigations. The research suggests that organizations should prioritize the development and maintenance of a trustworthy corporate identity.

Introduction

In the current economic environment, an organization's organisational effectiveness is a critical factor in determining its ability to maximise its resources while effectively achieving its goals. It covers a variety of characteristics of an organization's success, from productivity and innovation to customer satisfaction and market competitiveness. According to Robbins and Judge (2019), an organization's organisational effectiveness is determined by how well it achieves its stated goals. This multifaceted idea reflects both an organization's internal dynamics and its external effects on its constituents, customers, and society at large.
Businesses across all industries are always striving to maintain and increase organizational effectiveness. In this context, it is necessary to promote a stimulating work environment, make processes more efficient, and adapt strategies to the changing needs of the market. Effective organizations demonstrate the ability to adapt and adjust to changes, improving their resilience and long-term viability, as highlighted by Cameron and Green (2015). Furthermore, an organization's ability to succeed depends on developing a cohesive work

culture that values creativity, employee accountability, and their commitment to shared goals.

Corporate image management is the strategic process of establishing and influencing stakeholders' perceptions of an organization. All the components that make up an organization's public identity are included in this, including its brand identity, communication strategies, social responsibility initiatives, and overall reputation. Building confidence and trust via a positive corporate image has several advantages. Organizations with a positive image tend to attract and retain the best people, build stronger relationships with their clients, and charge more for their goods and services (Chaston, 2019). The effectiveness of communication is a key factor in managing an organization's image. Transparently conveying an organization's beliefs, mission, and operations to its stakeholders can help it gain their trust and understanding. Furthermore, a favorable corporate image may improve a business's standing for moral behavior and social responsibility, which promotes positive word-of-mouth advertising and increases client loyalty (Becker-Olsen, 2020).

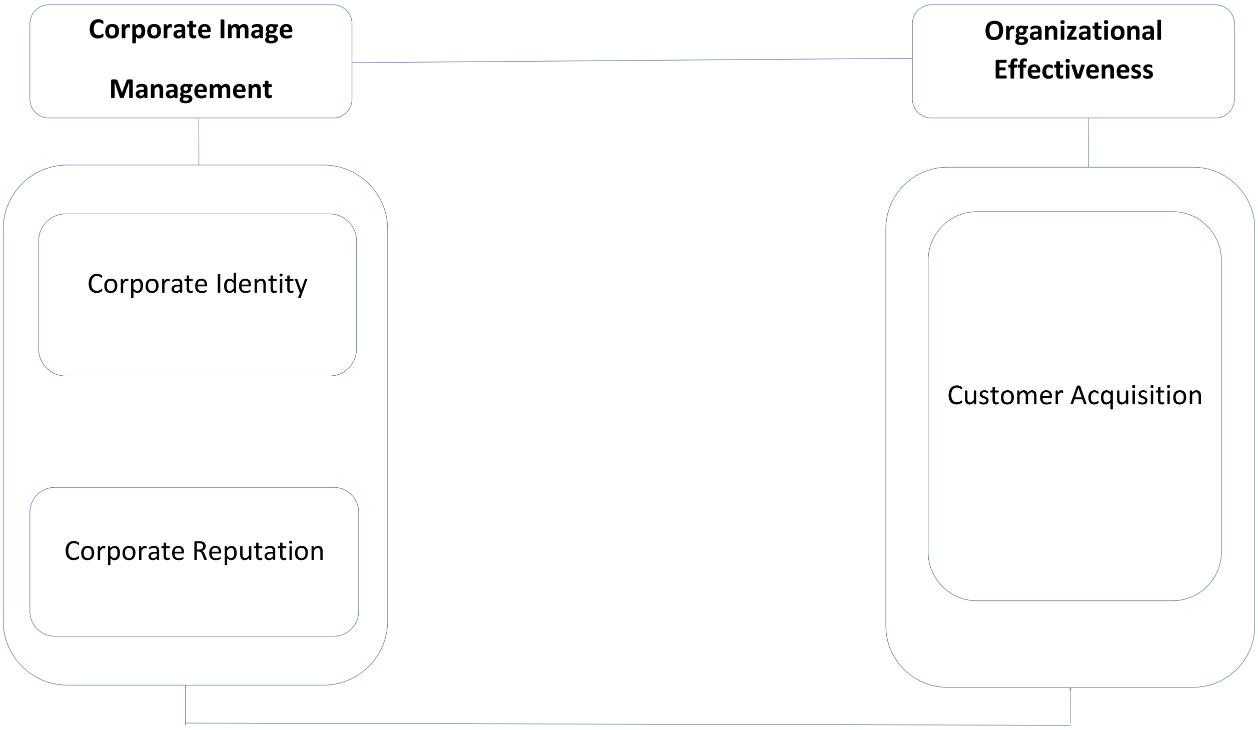
Considering the strategic importance of organisational effectiveness, many businesses struggle to realise their full potential. Attracting and keeping customers in a competitive market is a major issue. A few indicators of this issue are a decline in sales, a reduction in consumer participation, and an increase in customer turnover. The key to resolving these problems is effective business image management. Organisations may increase their attraction to their target audience, maintain their credibility, set themselves apart from their competitors, and build a strong corporate brand and reputation. Businesses may take advantage of the positive word-of-mouth effect to enhance their reputation with customers. In the past, studies conducted by Adeniji et al. (2015), Okoisama et al. (2017), and Leblebici (2012) have examined the relationship between organisational performance across various industries in various settings. This study examines the relationship between business image management and organisational effectiveness in mobile phone businesses.

Objectives of the Study

First and foremost, this investigation's main goal is to ascertain the relationship that exists between corporate image management and organizational effectiveness in telecom companies. The main objectives were to:

i. evaluate the relationships between the corporate identity and customer acquisition

ii. evaluate the relationships between the corporate reputation and customer acquisitions;



CIMOE Model adapted from Okoisama et al., (2017); and Barney (1991)
Source: Conceptualized by the researcher

Theoretical Framework

Resource Based View Theory

According to the Resource-Based View (RBV) paradigm, a company's competitive advantage comes from its unique combination of resources and capabilities rather than the external environment. Based on this theory, businesses can gain an advantage over competitors over the long run if they have resources that are valuable, uncommon, unique, and non-replaceable. Barney (1991) introduced RBV as a framework for understanding why some firms outperform others consistently. According to the RBV, resources can be tangible or intangible and include assets like patents, brand reputation, skilled workforce, and organizational culture. These resources, when combined effectively, enable firms to develop core competencies, which serve as the foundation for competitive advantage.

In the context of corporate image management and organizational effectiveness, the RBV offers valuable insights into how firms can leverage their resources to enhance their image and improve overall performance. Corporate image management involves shaping stakeholders' perceptions of the firm through strategic communication and actions (Dowling, 2001). By leveraging its unique resources and capabilities, a firm can develop a distinctive corporate image that resonates with stakeholders and differentiates it from competitors.

Furthermore, the RBV underscores the role of intangible resources such as organizational culture and reputation in shaping corporate image and driving organizational effectiveness (Barney, 1991). A strong organizational culture that values innovation, integrity, and social responsibility can contribute to a positive corporate image, attracting stakeholders and fostering employee engagement. Additionally, a favorable corporate image can enhance a firm's ability to attract top talent, form strategic alliances, and retain customers, thereby bolstering organizational effectiveness.

The resource-based prospect theory provides a thorough framework for understanding how businesses may enhance organisational performance and control their brand image. Businesses that operate in dynamic environments have the opportunity to improve their competitiveness, project a positive image of their brand, and achieve long-term success through the identification and preservation of valuable assets, the development of new skills, and the establishment of a positive organisational culture.

Literature Review

Corporate Image Management

The term "business image" refers to all of the behavioural, verbal, and visual components that comprise a corporation (Okoisama et al., 2017). According to Jacket et al. (1998), an organisational image is a collection of perceptions that arise directly or indirectly from a series of official and informal communications coming from the business.

Consumers' reactions to a company's whole offering are referred to as the corporate image, which is also referred to as the public's beliefs, ideas, and perceptions about a certain business (Lee et al, 2017). Corporate image is a result of the accumulation of an individual's consumption and purchase experiences over time, according to Abdulmalik and Ishola (2020). According to them, it has two main components: emotional and functional. Thus, the functional aspect of an organization's image is linked to the measurable quality of its products and services. On the other hand, the emotional aspect is related to the psychological aspect, which is represented by people's feelings and perceptions about the company (Kotler & Keller, 2015).

Information and assumptions regarding the company's employee, employer, customer, community, supplier, and corporate citizen roles are included in its corporate image (Adeniji, Osibanjo, Abiodun, & Oni-Ojo, 2015).

Corporate Identity

Corporate identity is defined by Cornelissen and Elving (2003) as a company's operational and strategically designed self-presentation both internally and internationally. It is predicated on a common philosophy, long-term goals, and a particular intended image, as well as the resolve to employ every resource available to the organization as a whole, as evidenced by conduct, symbols, and communication. Corporate identity serves as a crucial aspect of corporate image management strategies, facilitating the establishment of a distinct and recognizable image for organizations in the eyes of stakeholders. This multidimensional concept encompasses various elements such as visual identity (logo, color schemes, typography), communication style, and organizational behavior, all aimed at conveying a coherent message about the company's values, culture, and objectives. Research by Balmer (2001) emphasizes the significance of corporate identity in shaping stakeholders' perceptions and attitudes towards the organization, influencing aspects like trust, reputation, and loyalty. Effective corporate identity management not only fosters brand recognition but also cultivates a sense of trust and credibility among stakeholders. Studies by Hatch and Schultz (2003) and Van Riel and Balmer (1997) highlight the role of consistent and cohesive corporate identity in building positive perceptions, enhancing customer loyalty, and ultimately contributing to financial performance. By aligning internal values and external communication, organizations can reinforce their brand positioning and differentiate themselves in competitive markets, as underscored by Balmer and Gray (2003).

However, the implementation of corporate identity strategies requires careful planning and integration across all levels of the organization. Research by Hatch and Schultz (2003) emphasizes the importance of organizational culture in shaping corporate identity, suggesting that internal alignment and employee engagement are essential for conveying authenticity and credibility to external stakeholders. Furthermore, ongoing monitoring and adaptation are necessary to ensure relevance and resonance with evolving market dynamics and stakeholder expectations, as discussed by Melewar and Karaosmanoglu (2006).

Corporate Reputation

It is widely acknowledged that an organization's reputation is a valuable yet intangible asset that is influenced by the perceptions of both internal and external stakeholders. Thus, these perceptions have an impact on the company's overall value. According to Luis, Jesus, and Belen (2020), an organization's reputation is a reflection of its past actions and results, and it symbolises its ability to create value for all of its stakeholders. According to The Oxford Handbook of Corporate Reputation (2012), since the term "corporate reputation" was introduced in 1983, scholarly research on the topic has significantly increased.

Corporate reputations play a crucial role in facilitating economic transactions by incentivizing companies to adhere to acceptable standards of behavior. As Shamma (2012) points out, they are geared towards delivering sustainable value not only to shareholders but also to society at large. Consequently, corporate reputation has been a subject of discussion and analysis across various disciplines. Many studies view it as a strategic asset, attributing it to long-term profitability, growth, and competitive advantage (Rose and Thomsen, 2004; Krueger et al., 2010).

The growing interest in corporate reputation stems from its perceived strategic significance, with numerous studies highlighting its potential to drive sustainable profitability and competitive edge (Shamma, 2012; Adeosun and Ganiyu, 2013). Despite not featuring on balance sheets as a quantifiable asset, reputation significantly influences investor confidence, employee recruitment, supplier relationships, and other stakeholder dynamics, effectively functioning as a form of relationship capital (Adeosun and Ganiyu, 2013).

Organizational Effectiveness

Organizational effectiveness is a crucial facet in the realm of corporate image management, with profound implications for businesses' reputations and bottom lines. A seminal study by Barney (1991) emphasizes that organizations must possess and deploy valuable, rare, and non-substitutable resources to achieve sustained competitive advantage. This underscores the importance of effective internal processes, structures, and resource allocation strategies in fostering organizational effectiveness. Moreover, Cameron and Whetten (1983) argue that an organization's image is shaped not only by its external communications but also by its internal dynamics, including employee morale and commitment. Therefore, organizational effectiveness, manifested through efficient operations, clear communication channels, and robust employee engagement initiatives, plays a pivotal role in shaping corporate image.

The interplay between organizational effectiveness and corporate image management is further elucidated in research by Deephouse (2000), who proposes that organizational capabilities, such as innovation and adaptability, contribute significantly to enhancing corporate image. A high level of organizational effectiveness enables companies to respond promptly to market changes, customer demands, and stakeholder expectations, thereby reinforcing a positive corporate image. Conversely, inefficiencies within an organization, such as bureaucratic red tape or a lack of responsiveness, can tarnish its image and erode stakeholder trust. Hence, the cultivation of organizational effectiveness is not only a strategic imperative but also a reputational asset.

Building on these insights, Fombrun and Shanley (1990) contend that organizational effectiveness is intricately linked to the alignment between internal practices and external perceptions. They posit that organizations perceived as effective are more likely to be viewed favorably by stakeholders, including customers, investors, and regulators. This alignment fosters a positive corporate image, characterized by attributes such as trustworthiness, reliability, and credibility. Conversely, discrepancies between perceived and actual organizational effectiveness can lead to skepticism and skepticism, undermining the corporate image. Thus, organizations must proactively manage their internal processes and external communications to ensure congruence and enhance their corporate image.

In summary, the literature underscores the critical nexus between organizational effectiveness and corporate image management. By cultivating efficient internal processes, fostering employee engagement, and aligning internal practices with external perceptions, organizations can enhance their corporate image and bolster their competitive advantage in today's dynamic business landscape. Consequently, a strategic focus on organizational effectiveness is imperative for companies seeking to maintain a positive reputation and sustain long-term success.

Customer Acquisition

Customer acquisition is often touted as a fundamental metric for gauging organizational effectiveness, especially in the realm of marketing and business development. Numerous studies have delved into this concept, aiming to unravel its complexities and implications for modern enterprises. For instance, in their research published in the Journal of Marketing, Kumar et al. (2010) emphasized the pivotal role of customer acquisition in sustaining competitive advantage and fostering organizational growth. Their findings underscored the significance of strategic customer acquisition initiatives in driving profitability and market share expansion, thereby highlighting its intrinsic link to organizational effectiveness.

Moreover, a study by Verhoef et al. (2014) shed light on the multifaceted nature of customer acquisition by examining its relationship with customer retention and firm performance. Through a comprehensive analysis of data from various industries, the researchers revealed that effective customer acquisition strategies not only facilitate initial transactions but also lay the groundwork for long-term customer relationships, ultimately enhancing organizational resilience and adaptability in dynamic market environments. This underscores the broader implications of customer acquisition beyond mere transactional outcomes, reaffirming its status as a vital determinant of organizational effectiveness.

Furthermore, recent research by Liu and Guo (2021) delved into the role of digital technologies in reshaping customer acquisition practices and their implications for organizational effectiveness in the digital age. Their study highlighted the transformative impact of digital platforms and data analytics on enhancing the efficiency and precision of customer acquisition efforts. By harnessing the power of artificial intelligence and machine learning algorithms, businesses can better identify and engage with high-potential prospects, thereby optimizing resource allocation and maximizing returns on investment. This underscores the evolving nature of customer acquisition strategies and their pivotal role in driving organizational performance in contemporary markets.

Customer acquisition serves as a critical yardstick for evaluating organizational effectiveness, as evidenced by a growing body of empirical research. By leveraging insights from studies such as those conducted by Kumar et al. (2010), Verhoef et al. (2014), and Liu and Guo (2021), businesses can refine their customer acquisition strategies to not only drive short-term sales but also foster long-term relationships and sustainable growth. As digital technologies continue to reshape the business landscape, understanding the nuances of customer acquisition will remain imperative for organizations striving to stay competitive and adaptive in an ever-evolving marketplace.

Empirical Review

Corporate Identity and Customer Acquisition

Eze and colleagues (2023) investigate the relationship between First Bank Nigeria Limited's performance and its image management strategies. In order to examine the relationship between identity, communication, and reputation management (CIM) strategies and

business success, the study used the rate of customer loyalty as a performance indicator. By using questionnaires as a research tool, they have gathered primary and secondary data. The statistical techniques used in the data analysis included the chi-square method, basic percentages, and frequency distribution. The findings revealed that First Bank Nigeria Limited utilizes corporate image management strategies to gain a competitive edge over its rivals.
In a similar vein, Obiora and Ekeke conducted an investigation of organisational effectiveness and business image management in Nigeria's retail tourism sector in 2019. Their study examined how employee satisfaction and profit are affected by work environment and customer interactions at travel businesses in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. Using a dataset of 120 workers, they investigated four hypotheses, all of which were shown to be true. Their results make it abundantly evident that workplace culture and customer interactions have a big impact on employee happiness and profitability.
The study conducted by Asaolu and Ogunleye (2023) investigated the correlation between supermarkets' organisational effectiveness and corporate image in Benin City, Edo State. 180 workers at different local supermarkets were polled using a cross-sectional survey study technique. They used a standardised questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale and the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size selection table to choose a sample size of 123 employees. Their investigation, which made use of SPSS software and included descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis, showed that aspects of corporate image affect organisational performance. They discovered that while corporate social responsibility has a good influence on organisational performance, corporate integrity has a favourable impact on organisational effectiveness.
While Eze et al. (2023), Obiora and Ekeke (2019), and Asaolu and Ogunleye (2023) have all investigated the variables in the current study, each applied them within different demographics and utilized various statistical analyses. However, none of these studies have specifically applied the variables as utilized in the current research. This gap in knowledge led the researcher to propose the following hypothesis:
H_{01}: There is no relationship between brand identity and customer acquisition.

Corporate Reputation and Customer Acquisition
A study on "Corporate Reputation and Business Performance: Evidence from Service Firms in Nigeria" was conducted by Abdulmalik and Ishola (2020). Their research has examined how the elements of corporate reputation, such as a society's image and identity, affect the success of businesses in Nigeria's telecom sector. 390 participants were included in this investigation, chosen from among the 15,000 students at Kwara State University. By using a questionnaire and doing a multiple regression analysis thereafter, the researchers discovered that corporate reputation significantly affects a company's performance. Even while one hypothesis has had a significant impact, the other has not. This result highlights the significance of business reputation for the success of service-oriented businesses in Nigeria.

Inglis et al. (2006) examined Australian business reputation and organisational performance. Utilising Australian data and an econometric research methodology, their goal was to ascertain whether there was a correlation between an organization's reputation and its financial results. Despite this, their findings have not demonstrated a direct relationship between an organization's financial performance and its reputation.

Ananaba et al. (2021) have examined the business reputation and customer satisfaction in Nigeria's telecommunications industry. They employed a survey study design to collect data from 135 respondents. Multiple regression analysis and correlation studies revealed that customer satisfaction was favourably impacted by dependability, credibility, corporate social responsibility, and trustworthiness.

While studies by Abdulmalik and Ishola (2020), Inglis et al. (2006), and Ananaba et al. (2021) have examined corporate reputation in relation to performance, none have explored its implications for customer acquisition, revealing a gap in current knowledge. Based on existing evidence, this study aims to address this gap by hypothesizing

H_{02}: There is no relationship between corporate reputation and customer acquisition

Methodology

To investigate the proposed hypothesis, a cross-sectional survey was employed, gathering data from a specific segment of the population at a singular time point to capture their opinions or traits. The target group consisted of customers from selected telecommunications companies, with 323 participants contributing to the survey, representing a significant portion of the intended population. To ensure fair participation, a straightforward random sampling method was utilized, assigning each population member an equal chance of selection for the study.

A structured questionnaire served as the primary tool for data collection, comprising closed-ended items to streamline data gathering and analysis. To evaluate corporate reputation, corporate identity, customer acquisition, and word-of-mouth, a five-point Likert scale was incorporated into the questionnaire, offering a standardized means to gauge respondents' agreement levels on specific statements, likely ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Data analysis followed a dual approach. Initially, descriptive statistics like frequency and percentages were used to summarize the gathered data, providing insights into the prevalence of specific responses within the sample. Subsequently, inferential statistics were employed to test the formulated hypotheses, including techniques such as Pearson's product moment correlation. This statistical method aids in identifying relationships between multiple independent variables (e.g., corporate reputation, corporate identity) and a single dependent variable (e.g., customer acquisition).

By combining descriptive and inferential statistics, the researchers not only characterized the sample but also drew conclusions regarding the relationships between study variables that could be generalized to the broader population.

American Journal of Interdisciplinary Research and Development
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Results and Discussion of Findings

Questionnaire Response Rate

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Copies Retrieved	185	88.5	88.5	89
Valid	Copies Invalid	24	11.4	16.4	11
	Total	**209**	**100**	**100**	100

Source: Survey Data, 2024.

According to Table 1, a total of 209 sample questionnaires were administered, of which 185 were correctly completed and returned to the researcher, and 24 were incomplete. Eighty-nine percent of the total surveys administered were returned. This means that in order to represent all respondents, 209 examples of returned questionnaires were used in the data analysis.

Table1 Pearson correlation showing the relationship between Corporate and Customer Acquisition

Based on the results, corporate identity and customer acquisition have a high positive link

		Corporate Identity	Customer Acquisition
Corporate Identity	Pearson Correlation	1	.856**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	185	185
Customer Acquisition	Pearson Correlation	.856**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	185	185

(Pearson link Coefficient: 0.856), with a statistically significant P-value of 0.000. A significant association between the two variables is suggested by the alternative's rejection of the null hypothesis. The findings of Eze et al. (2023), who had before argued against the existence of such a link, are in conflict with this result.

Additional investigation reveals that corporate identity accounts for 73% of the variability in client acquisition, leaving this aspect alone unable to explain 27% of the variability. This emphasises how important corporate identity is in the context of organisational strategy and marketing initiatives, and how much of an impact it has on acquiring new customers.

Table 2 Pearson correlation showing the relationship between corporate reputation

		Corporate Reputation	Customer Acquisition
Corporate Reputation	Pearson Correlation	1	.864**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	185	185
Customer Acquisition	Pearson Correlation	.864**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	185	185

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

A substantial P-value of 0.000 and a Pearson Correlation Coefficient of 0.864 are displayed in the analysis's results. Because the P-value is less than the usual cutoff of 0.05, the alternative hypothesis is accepted and the null hypothesis is rejected. This demonstrates a strong correlation between business reputation and client acquisition. A closer look reveals that the correlation coefficient indicates a strong connection ($r=.864$, $r^2=0.74$) and a probability value of.000. This confirms the significant impact that a society's reputation has on attracting customers. This study backs up the assertions made by Abdulmalik and Ishola (2020) and supports the idea that an organization's reputation has a positive and significant impact on the success of society, particularly by attracting new customers.

Conclusion

In contrast to previous findings, the findings of this study demonstrate that company identity and reputation have a significant impact on both customer acquisition and word of mouth. According to the analysis, there are strong positive correlations between corporate identity and client acquisition, as well as corporate identity and word of mouth. This contradicts the previous assertions that no relationships exist. The study also emphasises the importance of business reputation and identity as explanatory variables.

Practical and Theoretical Implications

These findings have far-reaching consequences for practitioners and researchers in the disciplines of organisational management, marketing, and corporate communication. Practically speaking, they emphasise the importance of strategic business branding and reputation management in driving client acquisition and nurturing positive word of mouth. Furthermore, the findings add to theory by giving empirical evidence for the relationships between corporate identity, corporate reputation, and organisational success, complementing current literature and directing future research efforts.

Recommendations

According to the findings of this study, organisations are encouraged to prioritise investment in the development and maintenance of a strong corporate identity and reputation. In this case, it is necessary to align the organization's values, goals, and marketing actions in order to improve customer perceptions and increase positive feedback. Managers should utilise these insights to inform their strategic decision-making processes. They should emphasise the importance of integrating company identity and reputation into broader business objectives. Furthermore, future research should look further into the underlying processes and moderating variables that influence the connections revealed in this study, therefore expanding our understanding of corporate image management and its implications for organisational performance.

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