MANAGING CORPORATE IMAGE AND STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTION IN A CHANGING WORLD: A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF THE ROLE OF CORPORATE VISUAL IDENTITY ASSET

Nnachi Okafor

Abstract

This study evaluates the role of Corporate Visual Identity Assets (CVIA) in managing corporate image and the perception of organisational stakeholders. It examines the interrelationships among corporate image, identity management, and corporate visual elements and their impact on stakeholder perceptions and corporate image management. The study applied the mixed methods of quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis research, surveys, and inferential statistical analysis techniques. They were complemented with interviews, descriptive, content and critical discourse analysis techniques to provide a clear and comprehensive understanding of the research problem and objectives. The study reviewed relevant empirical literature, identifying critical CVI elements – logo designs, typography, colour palettes – and how they interact with other corporate artefacts and key stakeholders to shape their perceptions, organisational image, and overall corporate and marketing communications. Findings show that 70 per cent of an organisation's corporate communication goals are better achieved if brand builders, corporate communications and reputation managers adopt more effective harmonisation and integration strategies in utilising CVI elements and digital assets to shape their stakeholders' perceptions and corporate image. The study repudiates the misconception that well-polished CVI and consistent branding strategies automatically translate to positive stakeholder perception and a favourable image. The study proffers sustainable solutions including the need for PR and marketing communications managers to adopt a more innovative, harmonious, consistent and strategic approach to CVI management andChanging world, application that resonate with the organisation's publics and contribute to effective stakeholder perception and sustainable corporate image management.

Introduction

Scholars and practitioners in public relations (PR), advertising, marketing, and corporate communications, have long recognised the importance of corporate visual identity Assets (CVIA) as an indispensable component of an organisation's corporate heritage, strategic communication and overall corporate image promotions in commercial and non-commercial organisations. In today's fast-changing competitive business environment, the application of an effective and creative CVIA can significantly contribute to managing an organisation's corporate image, stakeholder perception and public sentiment to impact its reputation, progress and prosperity. Marziliano (1997), Fiol and Kovoor-Misra (1997), and Whetten and Godfrey (1998)reinforce this view by observing that:

Neither the importance of examining the relationship among these concepts has received much attention from researchers or practitioners, nor has its urgency been adequately felt. Although the need to pay more and immediate attention to these has been strongly advocated (e.g. Whetten 1997) as a way of enhancing a firm's competitive position (Dowling

2001), exploiting the significance of the relationships among these concepts from the standpoint of stakeholder groups has often been neglected (Rufaidah, 2004, p.1).

Therefore, for effective management of an organisation's corporate image and stakeholders' perception, it is critical to understand the complex interrelationships among corporate image, stakeholder perception, and corporate visual identity assets, and their significant contributions to promoting a company's reputation and prosperity. According to Bernstein (1984), "The image does not exist in the organisation but in those that perceive the organisation", while Fill (2009) argues that "an organisation cannot change its image in a directly managed way, but it can change its identity. It is through the management of its identity that an organisation can influence the image held of it" (Fill, 2009, p.399). Fill further notes: "The image stakeholders hold of an organisation is a result of a particular combination of many different elements, but is essentially a distillation of the values, beliefs and attitudes that an individual has of the focused organisation" (ibid). Since corporate images are shaped by stakeholders' interpretation of the identity cues they perceive about an organisation, for an image to be sustainable, the identity cues around which the image is fashioned must be based on reality, reflect the values and culture of the organisation.

Imagine the fascinating swoosh of NIKE, the memorable and iconic golden arches of McDonald's; the three parallel black-and-white stripes of Adidas, (symbolising a sense of movement and the herculean mountains that athletes have to climb); and the sleek logo design of the leaping Puma sportswear company. One can also visualise the three overlapping ovals of Toyota automobile company cast in shades of blue and silver (conveying a sense of trust, ruggedness, reliability, technological innovation), and the Hewlett-Packard 'HP' monogram logo, reflecting the company's focus on personal computers, and the ICT innovation. These designs are not mere logos, but symbolic corporate assets, representing their brand experience that spark emotional responses, positive associations, a deep sense of fraternity, concord and consistency.

The study argues that well-designed CVIA create brand personality, recognition, awareness, acceptance, brand loyalty, positive image, and stakeholder perception, which translates into brand patronage and loyalty, favourable purchasing decisions, and increased investment. They serve as an integral and indispensable component of a company's overall identity and reputation. In this regard, the growing importance of corporate image and identity management can be attributed to the increasing recognition of tangible and intangible corporate assets as key drivers of an organisation's value. Thus, an effective corporate image

and identity management can distinguish an organisation from its competitors, foster brand loyalty, and bolster stakeholder engagement.

Given the preceding analysis, the study critically evaluates the role of corporate visual identity assets, in managing stakeholder perceptions and corporate image. Copious research evidence from extensive literature reviews show that so much research effort has been expended in the field of semiology and corporate identity studies (CIS), centering on marketing and organisational behaviour. However, theresearcher found that little or no study seems to have been done on the role of CVIA in managing stakeholder perception and corporate image within the context of stakeholder relations and a changing corporate world order. He and Balmer (2005) affirm this view by noting that "Within the disciplines of marketing and organisational behaviour, identity studies have attained considerable prominence over the last decade. However, little has been done to synthesise both bodies of literature and to discover in-depth implications for corporate-level marketing" (He and Balmer, 2005, p.1).

2. Statement of the Problem

With the upsurge of business activities and brand competition, the need for entrepreneurs, marketers and PR managers to communicate with consumers about the availability of certain products and the unique quality of their brands, has become imperative. As the global economy becomes more volatile, complex and competitive, the need for business organisations to seek more effective and efficient strategies not only to maximise profit, but also to achieve competitive advantage and manage their corporate reputation and stakeholders' perception, is even more compelling. As the tempo of production increases, stocks and inventories pile up, and business organisations, ad agencies and PR managers need to adopt more creative and sustainable strategies to boost their sales volume. They can achieve this significant objective by identifying their brands' CVIA) and unique selling point (USP), and communicating them to their customers.

Flowing from the preceding analysis, and extensive empirical literature reviews in the field of PR, advertising and marketing communications, the researcher uncovered a critical research problem that impelled him to investigate the role of CVIA in managing corporate image and organisational stakeholders' perception. Within the context of effective stakeholder relations and corporate image management in a new world corporate order, the study identifies the research problem by answering the following critical questions: What roles can CVIA play in enhancing organisational image and stakeholder perception? How can PR and

brand practitioners leverage CVIA to manage their corporate image and stakeholders' perception of their policies and programmes?

4. Research Questions

Consistent with the study's research problem and objectives, four research questions were formulated and analysed, while providing appropriate answers to them with empirical data. The research questions are as follows:

1. What roles can corporate visual identity (CVI) tools play in managing organisation's corporate image and stakeholders' perception in response to changing global market conditions?

2. How can stakeholders' perception help companies to develop effective image management strategies in a changing world?

3. What are the effective CVIA management strategies that can be used to managecorporate image and stakeholder perception?

5. Research Hypotheses

Three research hypotheses were formulated for further investigation in line with the preceding research questions, the research problem, and the study's objectives. This helped the researcher to proffer practical solutions to the research problem according to the recommendations of Asika (1991, p. 75) and Dominick & Wilmer (2006, p. 26).

Hypothesis 1

Ho: Corporate visual identity assets cannot play any role in managing organisation's corporate image and stakeholders' perception in response to changing global market conditions.

H$_1$: Corporate visual identity assets can play some roles in managing organisation's corporate image and stakeholders' perception in response to changing global market conditions.

Hypothesis 2

Ho: Stakeholders' perception cannot help organisations to develop effective image management strategies in a changing world.

H$_1$: Stakeholders' perception can help organisations to develop effective image management strategies in a changing world.

Hypothesis 3

Ho: There are no specific CVI strategies that can be used to manage corporate image and stakeholder perception.

H₁: There are specific IMC strategies that can be used to penetrate the table water market and gain a market share for Aquifer brand in the FCT?

5. Review of Related Literature

5.1 Conceptual Review

The following concepts were reviewed: Corporate Image/Reputation, Identity, Stakeholder Perception, and Corporate Visual Identity Assets.

Corporate Image versus Corporate Reputation

The concept of image refers to the set of beliefs, impressions, notions, sentiments, and perceptions that individuals, groups, audiences, or members of the public hold about a person, persons, institutions or organisations arising from their understanding or interpretation of the cues presented by the organisation.

Conversely, reputation is "the collective representation of an organisation's past performance that describes the firm's ability to deliver valued outcomes to multiple stakeholders" (Wilcox and Cameron, 2009, p. 267). It consists of the track records, achievements and virtues that distinguish an individual or organisation in the minds of its stakeholders. While image deals with how an organisation's publics see it, reputation, on the other hand, refers to what the organisation really is, including its past accomplishments. According to Wilcox and Cameron, 2009, "Reputation isn't formed by packaging and slogans. A good reputation is created and destroyed by everything an organisation does, from the way it manages employees to the way it handles conflicts with outside constituents" (Wilcox and Cameron, 2009, p. 268).

Corporate image is the impression, perceptions or opinions an organisation's internal and external publics and other stakeholders have about the organisation. It is a complex construct shaped by various factors, including communication, experiences, reputation and visual cues. It is a dynamic entity influenced by internal and external forces – corporate visual identity heritage, corporate objectives, vision and mission, corporate culture and values, as well as management style, quality of human resources, product quality, research and development and innovation. Other factors influencing corporate image include company history, purpose, corporate social responsibility (CSR) programmes, staff attitudes and accomplishments.

Stakeholder Perception

Stakeholders refer to individuals, groups, institutions, organisations, including key shareholders existing within an organisation's internal and external environments, and who have direct or indirect relationships or contacts with the organisation. Organisational stakeholders are known for having vested socioeconomic, political and environmental interest in their organisation's operations, performance and success, influencing their management's policies and actions.

Generally speaking, perception deals with the cognitive process of selecting, organising and interpreting meaning, messages, information, action and behaviour to create a meaningful picture of the real world. Schiffman and Kanuk, (2003) describe perception as "the process by which an individual selects, organises, and interprets stimuli into a meaningful and coherent picture of the world" (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2003, p. 158). Contextually, stakeholder perception deals with how an organisation's publics including individuals, groups, institutions, customers, employees, contractors, investors, the media, and other forces in its internal and external operational environment see, perceive, interpret, understand the organisation, its image, products and services, corporate identity and philosophy, messages, behaviours, actions and inactions. Stakeholders' perception plays a critical role in shaping their opinions about an organisation – how they think, feel, behave, act and relate with the organisation.

Corporate Identity

Kotler and Keller (2006) define identity from the corporate level standpoint as "the way a company aims to identify or position itself or its products", while image is "the way the public perceives the company or its product" (Kotler & Keller, 2006, p. 321). Fill in his view, sees identity as a means by which an organisation differentiates itself from other organisations, while Oliver (2010) defines identity as "a state of having unique identity or individual characteristics by which a person or thing recognizes or defines him/her/itself" (Oliver, 2010, p. 71). He and Balmer (2005) notes that "The concept of identity provides the platform by which many corporate-level concepts can be understood such as corporate branding, corporate communications, corporate image and corporate reputation. As such, it can be viewed as providing the foundation to the nascent field of corporate marketing" (He and Balmer, 2005, p. 1).

Corporate identity, on the other hand, deals with a series of visual cues by which the publics or stakeholders of an organisation can recognise a company or firm or differentiate an organisation from another. Fill (2009) describes corporate identity as "the promotion of the cues by which stakeholders can recognise and identify the organisation" and "a means by which an organisation differentiates itself from other organisations"(Fill, 2009, p.394).

However, some contemporary writers feel that corporate identity is increasingly becoming an obsolete term that needs to be replaced with brand identity or corporate branding. According to scholars like Balmer (1988), "Corporate identity was the accepted terminology in the 1980s and early 1990s, and this gave way to corporate branding at the turn of the century". Nevertheless, organisations need to address identity-related issues that provide answers to three critical questions: 'Who are we?', 'What business are we in?', and 'What do we want to be?'

5.2 Empirical Review

Corporate Visual Identity Assets (CVIA)

Corporate Visual Identity (CVI) is a branch of semiology that deals with the study and analysis of how sign systems work. Also known as semiotics, CVI deals with the language of signs, symbols, signifiers and the signified. According to O'Shaughnessy and Stadler, (2008), semiology "explores the logic and methodology behind communication, and shows how we can understand systemically, through the semiotic method, what communications mean. It is also concerned with the meaning and with how meanings are produced and transmitted" (O'Shaughnessy and Stadler, 2008, p.133). Semiotics is also the science or study of signs, and signs systems, e.g. logos, insignia, trademarks, nameplates, traffic lights, road signs, colour and other symbolic representations that can be interpreted and analysed with meaning.

Therefore, Corporate Visual Identity Assets (CVIA), refers to the various physical, concrete or abstractive signs, symbols and optical representations that communicate meaning by representing a thing or an idea, philosophy, culture, belief system or values to which it refers. Such communication artefacts like the Nigerian Coat of Arms, the National Flag, First Bank's "White Horse", the Shell of Shell Development Company, and the bitten Apple Mac logo of Apple Computers, are all visual and abstractive signs and symbolic corporate resources and heritages that speak the language of reputation management.

However, Bernstein (1984) avers that "All organisations have an identity whether they like it or not". But, some organisations may choose to manage their CVIA, just as some individuals decide on some specific lifestyles. Other organisations may be careless about their

identity and end up confusing and misleading their publics and other stakeholders. Nevertheless, there is little evidence to show that PR and corporate managers are consistent in their approach to managing CVI resources as they often claim.

Corporate Visual Identity and Image Management

Corporate visual identity and image management deal with "the way in which organizations or companies are presented and perceived, and how they interact with their various stakeholder audiences. It is also concerned with the images that people form as a result of interpreting the various identity signals that organizations transmit and any interaction that may ensue" (Fill, 2009, p. 388). Melewar (2003) observes that corporate identity is concerned with the set of meanings by which an organization allows itself to be known and through which it enables people to describe, remember and relate to it" (Cited in Fill, 2009, p. 388).

Hatch and Schultz (2000) identify two schools of thought about strategic identity management – the 'visual school', and a 'strategic school'. According to them, the visual school deals with operational aspect of strategic identity management, while the strategic school is concerned with an organization's aims and how it positions and distinguishes itself. Chris Hill underscores the importance of the differentiation or 'demarcation' as it facilitates the identification of the evolution of identity management and reputation management.

An example is Shell Development Company's logo. Created over a century ago, Shell logo seems to have remained unchanged, while in reality "it has undergone many changes and what we see today is nothing like the original. This has occurred through careful continuity of the idea of the seashell and adaption of it to various contexts through tine" (Fill, ibid). He and Balmer (2007) identity some identity-related topics, which include "visual identity, strategic identity, social identity and organizational identity". Fill suggests that "The social and organizational forms of identity are part of the organizational behaviour school of thought.

Forms of Corporate Visual Identity Assets (CVIA)

1. Corporate Logo

A logo is a unique symbol, signature, icon or word mark that represents a company's identity and its stakeholders. It is one of the popular virtual or graphic elements of a brand's visual identity (VI) that harmoniously provide a system for identifying and representing a corporate brand. Examples are the iconic Spenserian script spelling out *CocaCola* in a distinctive flowing elegant and timeless typeface with red colour lettering and white background, conveying a sense of tradition and corporate global heritage. **Google**'s logo presents a 5-letter word mark with each letter elegantly illuminated in various bright, vibrant

and attractive colours in a playful, slightly rounded sans-serif font, reflecting the brand's innovative and hi-tech global image. Though **Nokia**'s logo has undergone several iterations, it is symbolised in a simple word mark with dark blue sans-serif font, conveying a profound sense of reliability, durability and sophistication.

2. Colour Schemes

A colour scheme or palette is a combination of colours used consistently across all brand's visual elements or platforms. It is an organisation's in-house corporate colour or colour palette. In-house corporate colours are complementary visual identities of business organisations as they support the corporate logos and names of companies to give them the desired identity. Corporate colours evoke emotions, mood, aesthetics, elegance and prestige about an organisation. A good combination of colour schemes can provide memorable and sustainable impressions for organisations, e.g. Red + Blue = Purple; Red + Yellow = Orange; Blue + Yellow = Green. Instances of corporate colours are the beautiful colours of UBA and Zenith, and the vibrant colours of MTN, and Chelsea FC.

3. Typefaces and Typography

Typography refers to the style, arrangement and appearance of text. A consistent corporate typography helps to create a distinct visual identity and reinforce the brand's message. Typefaces and typographies constitute the major elements of corporate branding and reputation management. They include all the symbolic and textual representations of a company such as fonts, type sizes, and typefaces used in corporate branding, and communicating messages such as letterheads, memos, colours, layouts, special effects and installation points. They promote maximum exposure and corporate image. Integrating corporate elements such as names, symbols, payoffs, and typefaces, express the distinctiveness of organisation's CVIA.

4. Signs and Symbols

Signs and Symbols are indispensable CVI artefacts often used in strategic brand promotion, brand-building, stakeholder relations and image management campaigns. An organisation's image always flourishes with a touch of CV impressions such as logos, letterheads, package designs, livery, labels, beautiful corporate premises, gates, and office designs. They often combine with other visual elements – branded official vehicles, magnificent-looking tiles and carpets, attractive wallpapers, POP ceilings, and roofing sheets, air-conditioned luxury rooms, conference halls and interior-exterior designs – to add luxury, prestige and pleasant aura to organization's premises.

5. Digital Assets (DAs)

Digital assets include company's website designs, packaging, branding, aesthetics and durability of its marketing and promotional materials, contributing to the overall impression. Other DAs include website designs, social media graphics, email templates and iconology, i.e. the use of icons, graphics, and symbols to communicate and reinforce a brand's message. Print materials include business cards, letterheads, brochures, newsletters, while environmental designs comprise signage, way finders, and public information panels.

Role of Corporate Visual Identity Assets (CVIA) in Shaping Stakeholder Perception and Organization's Image

Corporate Visual Identity Assets (CVIA)contributes to shaping stakeholder perception and the organisation's image by serving the following roles and functions:

CVIA serve as a corporate heritage: Examined from the perspective of a resource-based view (RBV) of the organisation, CVI's management's roles, functions or influences on stakeholder perception and organisational image, are premised on the fact that CVI artefacts constitute the major critical assets of a company. Some CVI resources include brand name, copyright symbols, trademarks, price, designs, labelling and packaging, and other elements that help customers to form associations about the brand.

Promotion of the organisation's corporate personality: CVIA or visible artefacts – logo, colour palette, typography, signage, etc. – are not mere ornamental decorations. They are corporate personality promotional elements deliberately designed to evoke psychological and emotional feelings. They tell a story and convey a positive impression about an organisation. For instance, a well-designed letterhead, a bold and colourful sharp logo and other observable corporate signs and symbols combine to herald organisation's personality and dignity.

CVIA promote brand differentiation: As brands share different features, qualities or values, CVIA help to differentiate an organisation, product or brand from its competitors. They also offer a unique opportunity for an organisation to "offer products and services to broad customer groups, who perceive the offering to be significantly different, and superior to its competitors" (Fill, 2009, p. 925).

Facilitating strategic corporate communications: Communicating organisation's stakeholders, its values, purpose, vision and mission, is one of the primary goals of corporate communications. Therefore, corporate communications managers use CVIA to identify and communicate organisational stakeholders the purpose, vision, mission, corporate culture and

values of the organisation, and how it is strategising to achieve them. With the aid of CVI symbols: logos, colour schemes, typography, labels, and other tangible and intangible corporate and digital assets, stakeholders can cooperate and support organisational managers to achieve their vision/mission.

Creating psychological and emotional feelings: CVI also evokes a strong feeling of mood, confidence, prestige, dignity, class, creativity, innovation and accomplishment, while promoting corporate heritage. For instance, soft and gentle pastels and elegantly flowing fonts and typefaces often whisper to communicate corporate gentility, angelicness, kindness, confidence, love and meekness with a subtle caress and seduction of the sensory organs. CVI not only contributes in shaping and promoting stakeholder perception and organization's corporate image, but also serves as "fantasy imagery" (Fill, 2009, p. 926).

6. Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on Social (stakeholder) Identification Theory (SIT) to provide a strong theoretical framework for understanding how corporate visual identity influences stakeholder perception and shapes the organisation's image. Developed by Tajfel and Turner in the 1970s, SIT argues that individuals attain self-concept from group memberships and social categorisations. From an organisational perspective, stakeholders form perceptions based on the visual cues and symbols associated with CVIA. The theory also holds that maintaining consistency in visual identity elements reinforces a sense of belonging and corporate heritage while fostering positive stakeholder perceptions and organisational image.

Integrated Approach

The researcher proposes the integration of Social (Stakeholder) Identity Theory (SIT), Corporate Identity Theory (CIT), and Sign Theory (ST) as an alternative theoretical approach to provide a robust and cohesive theoretical framework for the study. While SIT explains the sociological and psychological processes underlying stakeholder identification and evaluation of the organisation, CITA provides a framework for understanding the importance of internal and external corporate communications in shaping corporate identity. The Sign Theory, on the other hand, provides a framework for understanding how the CVI elements combine to perform as a system of signs and symbols to communicate messages to stakeholders about the organisation.

7. Methodology

7.1 Research Design

The study is a cross-sectional survey research that used descriptive designs to investigate the role of CVIA in managing corporate image and the perception of organisational stakeholders. The study applied the mixed research method involving both quantitative and qualitative techniques, using systematically structured investigative questions and hypotheses. The quantitative method involved the collection and analysis of empirical data to investigate the research problem, while the qualitative component dealt with the collection of secondary data through extensive interviews, literature reviews and case studies.

The primary sources of data were questionnaire responses from respondents during the administration of structured and unstructured questionnaire, constructed in line with the research problem, research questions, hypotheses and other variables.. To enrich the quality and depth of the research, the questionnaire was supplemented with interviews. The study's secondary sources of data include corporate asset – archives, mission statements, books, scholarly journals, periodicals, abstracts, and indexes, marketing/sales reports, conference and workshop papers, theses, and academic research websites.

7.2 Population of the Study

The study was conducted in the Federal Capital City (FCC) Abuja, based on the cosmopolitan nature of the relevant respondents as they possess multi-dimensional demographic and psychographic characteristics such as professional and educational backgrounds. The target population for the study comprised professionals, focusing mainly on top-management executives, policymakers, PR and advertising practitioners, sales, marketing and brand managers and other respondents working in public and private media organizations in the FCC, Abuja. The study was based on 3000 respondents as the population of study using a proportionate allocation technique at 10 per cent of the total population = 300 as the sample size. That is: Size of population = 3000; Sample size = 300 at 10 percent. A detailed breakdown of this study population shows that they were literate respondents selected from a group of top-management officials, PR, advertising, sales and marketing professionals. Table 1 below shows the distribution of the study population of 3000 people working in various organizations.

Table 1: Population of the Study Showing Characteristics of Respondents Comprising Workers in Various Organizations in which the Research Questionnaire were Administered

S/No.	Characteristics of the Respondents	Population	Proportionate	Sample Size

		Frequency	Allocation Technique (10%)	(Percentage)
1.	Journalists in Govt./Private Media Organizations	1500	150	50.00
2.	Government officials, communication aides, etc.	700	70	33.33
3.	Media Practitioners in Embassies, UN Agencies, NGOs, etc.	500	50	16.67
4.	Professional Bodies, i.e., the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR), & Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON).	300	30	10.00
	Total	**3000**	**300**	**100.00**

7.3 Sample Size/Sampling Procedure

Using purposive and convenient sampling techniques, the researcher selected an appropriate sample size from the population of study at 3000 respondents since it was vital to take a sufficient sample size to cover the entire population considering the limitations of the study. As earlier noted in Table 3.1, 300 respondents from the study population of 3000, were thoroughly studied through the proportionate allocation technique. At 10 per cent of the total population, a sample size of 300 respondents was derived and this was adequate in making accurate, precise and objective conclusions. The sample population comprised 195 males and 105 females with different demographic characteristics drawn from respondents in various organizations in the FCC, Abuja.

7.4 Research Instrument

A total of 325 questionnaires were designed and administered to the respondents during work hours and retrieved shortly before the break periods of the respondents' organizations. During the data collection period, the researcher and two of his research assistants engaged the respondents one-on-one to explain some questions they could not understand. At the end of the exercise, 300 questionnaires were returned, while 25 questionnaires were not returned. This approach helped the researcher to achieve a high response rate and reduction in the questionnaire's mortality rate.

7.5 Method of Data Analysis

All primary and secondary data were collated, analysed, computed, and presented in tables. Percentages were used to calculate the frequency of responses to questions concerning the salient issues raised in the questionnaire, the research problem, research questions/hypotheses, and theoretical postulations. Other relevant data drawn from interviews

and other sources were also analysed and interpreted, while they were properly edited to eliminate errors that would have created inconsistencies. These were done with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), Likert Scale of Analysis (LSA), and correlation coefficient techniques.

8. Data Presentation and Analysis

The presentation, interpretation, and analysis of data were made in tables, with and standard deviation, Likert scale of analysis, chi-square, and correlation coefficient analysis. A population of 3000 participants was targeted for the study. Simultaneously, a proportionate allocation technique was applied to derive the study's sample size, which was 10 per cent of the total population = 300 participants.

Table 2: Questionnaire Distributed and Sample Size Determined

Groups	Questionnaire Distributed	Questionnaire Returned	Questionnaire Not Returned
1.	325 Questionnaire	300 (90.23%)	25 (9.77%)

The total number of questionnaire printed and administered to the respondents was 325, while 300 questionnaire were returned for analysis, representing 90.23 per cent, whereas 25 questionnaire were not returned, representing 9.77 per cent. Section A of the questionnaire represents the respondents' demographic characteristics, while Section B is for the study's objectives and hypotheses.

Responses on the Research Problem, Questions, and Hypotheses of the Study

Table 3: The Role CVIA in Managing Organisational Image and Stakeholder Perception

Response Category	Level of Agreement (x)	Frequency (f)	Fx	Percentage
Strongly Agree	5	145	725	48.33
Agree	4	41	164	13.67
Strongly Disagree	2	45	90	15.00
Disagree	1	39	39	13.00
Undecided	3	30	90	10.00
Total	**15**	**300**	**1,108**	**100.00**

In Table 3 above, the researcher sought to ascertain the role CVIA in managing organisational image and stakeholder perception. The data interpretation reveals that 145 and

41 respondents of the population strongly agreed and agreed, respectively, in favour of the fact that CVIA play significant roles in managing organisational image and stakeholder perception. The total number of respondents stands at 48.33 per cent and 13.67 per cent, respectively. However, 45 and 39 respondents representing 15.00 percent and 13.00 percent, say they strongly disagree and disagree, respectively, while 10 per cent of the respondents undecided in their views. Therefore, the mean calculation of 3.69 signifies a preponderant level of significant roles played by CVIA in managing corporate image and stakeholders' perception. It, therefore, justifies the Research Question **1.**

9. Discussion of Findings

Empirical research evidence drawn from qualitative and quantitative data show that over 69 percent of organisation's corporate communication functions, goals and objectives are better achieved if brand builders, corporate communications experts and reputation mangers adopt more effective harmonization and integration strategies in the utilization of CVI elements – corporate logos, colour schemes, and other visual symbols and digital assets – in shaping their organisation's stakeholder perception and reputation management.The study also found that, by evaluating CVIA's rolein shaping stakeholder perception and managing organisation's image,corporate reputation and identity management practitioners can explore the extent in which CVI resources contribute to effective stakeholder identification and engagement.The study concludes that the growing importance of corporate image and identity management can be attributed to the increasing recognition of tangible and intangible corporate assets as key drivers of an organisation's corporate values as an effective CIIM differentiates organisations from their competitors, foster brand loyalty, and stakeholder engagement.

10. Conclusion

In conclusion, an organisation's image and reputation are shaped by the perceptions, opinions and attitudes of its stakeholders to the organisation, and CVI's role in shaping stakeholder perception and an organisation's image, cannot be quantified because of its invaluable contributions to organizational growth and development. Therefore, a well-designed and articulated CVI boosts an organisation's reputation and builds credibility. It also supports business growth and contributes significantly in driving corporate objectives such as increasing brand awareness, driving sales, and attracting investors.CVI helps in creating brand

recognition, differentiating the organisation, conveying brand personality, corporate values, and influencing stakeholder behaviour.

However, CVIA are not a magic wand. The use of a CVI is not a guarantee for a positive stakeholder perception or corporate image for an organisation. A carefully designed and crafted CVI will prove revolutionary and irresistible, while a poorly implemented CVI strategy may prove disastrous.

11. Recommendations

Based on the preceding discourses, the following recommendations are proffered for organisations seeking to leverage corporate visual identity to shape stakeholder perception and boast its corporate image:

1. CVI practitioners, graphic designers, brand managers, corporate communications, PR and ad managers should conduct regular research to adopt more innovative strategies and technologies to design creative and sustainable CVI designs that can communicate, engage and resonate with stakeholders.

2. Organisations should conduct regular stakeholder analysis for easy identification and understanding of their perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours towards the organisation and its CVIs. In other words, having relevant, accurate and timely data about the general demographic and psychographic characteristics of organisational stakeholders and the operational environment is essential in creating an impactful CVI language that speaks directly to their hearts.

3. Organisations should adopt more effective artificial intelligence (AI) and data analytics systems for measuring and tracking key metrics in evaluating the effectiveness of CVI in shaping stakeholders' perceptions, and managing corporate image not only to achieve their business objectives but also ensure that visual identities remain valuable corporate assets.

4. Organisations should avoid logos that are poorly designed, inconsistent, incompatible and unmemorable. Therefore, they must always employ the services of well-trained CVI professionals – skilled graphic artists and designers, brand strategists, PR and marketing communications experts – to create consistent and sustainable CVIs across all touch points and platforms, including digital, print and multi-media networks.

5. The organisation's CVI must be authentic, sustainable, realistic and achievable while reflecting the company's true character, culture, purpose, and value proposition and not

creating a fantasy or jamboree, rather than a reflection of the stakeholders' core aspirations.

References

Akinwunmu, L. (March, 2006). Corporate identity and branding: A case for better understanding and application. *Visual Edge.*

Belch, G.E.& Belch, M.A. (2003). *Advertising and promotion: An integrated marketing communication perspective* (6ᵗʰ end) Tata McGraw-Hill.

Bernstein, D. (1984). *Company image and reality: A critique of corporate communications.* Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Dowling, G. R. (1994). *Corporate reputations: Strategies for developing your corporate brand.* Kogan Page.

Fertik, M. &Thomson, D. C. (2005). *The reputation economy.* Crown Publishing Group.

Fill, C. (2009). *Marketing communications: Interactivity communities and content.* (5ᵗʰ ed.) Prentice-Hall.

He, H. W. & Balmer, J. M. T. (2007). Identity studies: Multiple perspectives and implications for corporate level marketing. *European Journal of Marketing.* 41(7/8), 765-85.

Hornby, A. S. (2020). *The Oxford advanced learner's dictionary of current English* (10ᵗʰ ed.) Oxford University Press.

Ind, N. (1992). *The corporate image: Strategies for effective identity programmes.* Kogan Page.

Kotler, P. & Keller, L. (2006). *Marketing management.* Pearson.

Martin, J. N. & Nakayama, T. (2005). *Experiencing intercultural communication: An introduction.* (2ⁿᵈ ed.). Mc-Graw-Hill.

Melewar, T. C. (2001). Measuring visual identity:A multi-construct study. *International Journal of Corporate Communications.* 6 (1), 36-42.

Melewar, T. C. (2003). Determinants of the corporate identity construct: A review of the literature. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 9, 195-220.

Oliver, S. (2010). *Public relations strategy.*Kogan Page.

O'Shaughnessy, M. & Stadler, J. (2008). Media & society. (4ᵗʰ ed.) Oxford University.

Oyeneye, P. (1997).*Public relations: Principles, concepts and practice.* Media-Gate

Oyeneye, P. (1999). *Public relations ideas and thoughts: A handbook for African PR Practitioners.* Media-Gate.

Rufaidah, P. (2004). *Identity, image and reputation: A conceptual model of the three sides of the pyramid.* Published in the Proceedings of the 2004 Academy of World Business, Marketing and Management Development Co9nference, Gold Coast, Australia.

Wilcox, D. L. & Cameron, G. T. (2009). *Public relations: Strategies and tactics.* Pearson Education.