

An Investigation of Marketers' Attitudes Towards Corporate Restructuring and CSR in Sub Saharan Africa: A Case of the Nigerian Service Industry in Lagos Metropolis

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The concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) continues to grow in recent years and is gradually becoming a global trend. Despite this growth, the adoption of CSR is still very small in the Nigerian service marketing industry. This paper investigated marketer's attitude towards corporate restructuring and CSR in the Nigerian service marketing industry in Lagos metropolis. It concluded that there is a positive relationship between Nigerian service marketing industry marketers' attitude and the adoption of CSR despite the current wave of corporate challenges in the country. Overall results indicate that actions that followed restructuring were judged to show social responsibility.

INTRODUCTION

Though traditionally, the role of business is viewed to be the creation of wealth for shareholders, employees, customers and society at large at a profit, happenings in the external business environment within the last decade has shown that various parties and persons are beginning to see the need to re-define the role(s) of business in society to include corporate social responsibility (Okomoh, 2004). This view is supported by Aguilera, Rupp, Williams, and Ganapathi (2007) who opined that organizations are pressured to engage in CSR by many different actors, each driven by instrumental, relational, and moral motives. To this effect, some organizations' corporate policies world-wide have started reflecting the new demands of their external environment by incorporating the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) (Okomoh, 2004). To this effect, there is need for businesses to restructure their organizations to cope with happenings in the dynamic business environment. Restructuring is the corporate management term for the act of reorganizing the legal, ownership, operational, or other structures of a company for the purpose of making it more profitable, or better organized for its present and future needs (McAteer,

2011). It is a managerial strategy aimed at improving efficiency, controlling costs or gaining more profitability, and coping with fluctuating business environment to survive in the long term. Given the dynamic nature of the business environment, organizations need to embark on restructuring at one point in time or another.

However, given the direct business benefits of CSR such as building a reputation, generation of positive corporate image, reducing resource use, waste and emissions in the environment, ensuring compliance with regulatory requirements, improvement in company/employees' morale, among others (Business Link, 2012; Schmidt, 2011), it is advisable for organizations to incorporate CSR in their restructuring. This paper as part of a larger study seeks to investigate how this can be done in the Nigerian service marketing industry by determining the more socially responsible practices that companies in the Nigerian service industry can adopt during restructuring.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Given the recent rising interest in CSR globally among academicians and organizations both in the private and public sector, organizations have engaged in serious efforts to incorporate CSR into all aspects of their businesses (Albareda, Lozano and Ysa, 2007) including during restructuring. However, research has shown that decisions to incorporate CSR in any organization are usually initiated by the management team (Dixon-Ogbechi, Aiyeku, Haran and Jarutirasarn, 2011). Therefore, there is a need to see how organizations can incorporate CSR in their corporate restructuring efforts by investigating the attitudes of marketers toward corporate restructuring so as to find out what they perceive to be the actions or practices that are more socially responsible in restructuring.

This is important because an understanding of an individual's attitude towards an object could help in the prediction of the individual's overall pattern of responses towards that object (Ajzen&Fishbein, 1980; Dixon-Ogbechi *et al.*, 2011). Given this background, it can be inferred that an understanding of marketers' attitude towards the actions or practices they perceive as being more socially responsible in restructuring will facilitate their adoption of CSR in their corporate restructuring efforts.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Corporate Social Responsibility

Over the last decade scholars have conceptualized the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) concept in different ways. For instance, Eilbrit and Robert (1973) viewed CSR at the micro-level in terms of good neighbourliness, which encompasses the responsibility not to spoil the neighbourhood (negative injunction duties), and the voluntary assumption of the obligation to help solve neighbourhood problems (affirmative duties). In 2001, The European Commission defined Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as a concept whereby companies decide voluntarily to contribute to a better society and cleaner environment and, second, as a process by which companies manage their relationship with stakeholders. This view is supported by Xu and Zhang (2011) who added that corporate social responsibility is the positive fulfillment of obligations and responsibilities to employees, business partners, customers (consumers), community and nation through enterprise systems and behaviors; and a benign reaction to enterprise' stakeholder groups and also the enterprise operation objectives' overall target.

While agreeing with these views, Visser, Matten, Pohl and Tolhurst (2007) defined CSR from the developing country's perspective as 'the formal and informal ways in which business makes a contribution to improving the governance, social, ethical, labour and environmental conditions of the developing countries in which they operate, while remaining sensitive to prevailing religious, historical and cultural contexts'. They further identified four rationale for focusing on CSR in developing countries as distinct from CSR in the developed world based on findings from organizations such as International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Resources Institute (WRI), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and world Bank as follows: developing countries are where globalization, economic growth, investment, and business activity are likely to have the most dramatic social and environmental impacts

(both positive and negative) (World Bank, 2006); developing countries represent the most rapidly expanding economies, and hence the most lucrative growth markets for business (IMF, 2006); developing countries are where the social and environmental crises are usually most acutely felt in the world (WRI, 2005; UNDP, 2006); and developing countries present a distinctive set of CSR agenda challenges which are collectively quite different to those faced in the developed world (Visser, 2012; Visser *et. al.*, 2007).

Given the foregoing, it can be seen that CSR is about giving back to society from which business has taken so much. This notwithstanding, some scholars argued that corporate social responsibility (CSR) is not just about doing the right thing but also about behaving responsibly (Business Link, 2012). Then we can conclude that CSR is a matter in which a corporate willingly responds to the economy, society, and environment in a responsible manner with the aim of benefiting people, groups, and society.

Corporate Restructuring

Restructuring or corporate restructuring in its dictionary definition is the act or process of changing the terms on the assets and/or liabilities of a company (Financial-Dictionary, 2011). It can also be viewed as a significant modification made to the debt, operations or structure of a company. It is a corporate action which is embarked upon when there are significant problems in a company with the hope that through restructuring, a company can eliminate financial harm and improve the business (Investopedia, 2011). While from the business/commercial point of view, restructuring is a change in the business strategy of an organization resulting in diversification, closing parts of the business, etc., with the aim of increasing organizational long-term profitability (Free Dictionary, 2012).

Given the dynamic nature of the business environment, there is no way organizations can survive without embarking on one form of restructuring or the other. However, to adapt to the current strategic thinking of CSR, the organization needs to be socially responsible in its restructuring efforts. To this effect, it is important to know what marketers attitude towards CSR and corporate restructuring are so as to ensure organizational survival and long term profitability.

CSR in Nigeria

Research has recently shown that organizations in Nigeria, just like in other developed and developing nations, are increasingly practicing CSR. Although in Nigeria, the history of 'organised' CSR can be traced to practices in the oil and gas sector driven by western MNCs. A study by Amaeshi, Adi, Ogbechie and Amao (2006) revealed that in Nigeria, CSR was mainly seen from a philanthropic and altruistic perspective as a way of 'giving back' to the society. They then concluded that while indigenous firms were more involved in philanthropic CSR, multinational firms were more strategic in their CSR activities. This, according to them, is at variance with an understanding and practice of CSR in Western economies, where CSR is argued to have 'advanced' beyond philanthropic understanding in many ways (Amaeshi *et al.*, 2006).

Research by Amaeshi *et. al* (2006) also revealed that there have been a number of studies on CSR in Nigeria, most of which have, mainly, focused on the CSR activities of multinational firms in the Nigerian oil industry like Shell, ENI, ExxonMobil, ChevronTexaco, TotalFinaElf and less on indigenous firms (e.g. Ite, 2004, 2005; Frynas, 2000, 2001; Boele, Fabig, and Wheeler, 2001; Wheeler, Fabig, and Boele, 2002). This view is supported by Idemudia (2007) and Tuodolo, (2011) who further opined that oil multinational companies are making considerable contribution to host community development.

However, these companies mainly engage in CSR in order to make up for the government's governance failures, in order to protect their business interests in the region and also in order to remedy the effects of their extraction activities on the local communities; and the Niger Delta region of Nigeria (Tuodolo, 2011; Idemudia, 2007). Also, a recent study by Dixon-Ogbechi *et al* (2011) investigated marketers' perception of corporate social responsibility and the impact on performance of companies in the Nigerian service industry in Lagos metropolis and discovered that firms who participate in CSR will have more customers, and they will face low business conflict and have more loyal employees. Given this and given the fact that there are little or no study on CSR and corporate restructuring in the Nigerian service marketing industry, this paper seeks to fill this gap in knowledge.

METHODOLOGY

Research Objectives

1. Investigate the attitude of marketers in the Nigerian service industry toward CSR.
2. Determine the impact of stakeholders on the corporate image/reputation of companies in the Nigerian service industry.
3. Determine which are the more socially responsible practices that companies in the Nigerian service industry can adopt during restructuring.
4. Investigate the attitude of marketers in the Nigerian industry toward corporate restructuring and CSR.

Research Hypothesis

H₁: Marketers' opinions of the CSR components will be positive overall.

H₂: There will be significant differences among demographic grouping of marketers in their assessment of the impact of stakeholders on their firm's public image/reputation. Specifically, assessments will vary by size of company, but not by age, education or gender. There will also be significant differences among the impact of stakeholder groups.

H₃: The actions perceived as most socially responsible in connection with corporate restructuring will be those that take place during the actual process as opposed to those which take place prior to, or after, restructuring.

H₄: All socially responsible actions offered as options during restructuring will be seen as positive actions a company should follow.

Research Instrument

This study used the questionnaire to investigate corporate restructuring and CSR in companies in the Nigerian service Industry. The larger study used the same instrument to find out marketers' attitudes toward corporate social responsibility, stakeholders, socially responsible behaviors, corporate social performance, and CSR activities. It is composed of 7 parts including details of sampling firms, attitudes of managers toward CSR, stakeholders, socially responsible restructuring, CSR activities, firm's performance, and respondents' profile. The questionnaire was designed to be a self-completed form for marketers to evaluate various dimensions related to corporate restructuring and CSR. The Likert scale, the most common and widely used scale in measuring attitudes and perceptions was mostly used to design the questionnaire (Achyar, 2008).

Population and Sample Size

The population of this study was the marketing staff of companies in the Nigerian service industry in Lagos metropolis. The sample size for this study is 550. The 550 respondents were selected using multistage sampling from a total of 13 companies (including banks, electricity and water service, ministry of works, telecommunications service, academy press, aviation handling, media services and insurance) in the Nigerian service industry in Lagos metropolis.

Limitations of Study

1. Retrieval of the questionnaires in some instances were quite difficult, even after a series of follow ups, 34 questionnaires were not returned; hence we could not get a 100% response rate; nevertheless, the 93.8% response rate was more than adequate.
2. It was difficult to get full attention from some of the respondents because they claimed that they were busy and could not give much time; however this was overcome through frequent follow up.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The research instruments were administered over a period of three months and data were collected using self administered questionnaires. Out of the 550 questionnaires administered, 516 were returned with a response rate of 93.8%. Descriptive statistical analysis of the data was done using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS); inferential analyses were performed to identify factors comprising the scale and to test the hypotheses. They included Factor Analysis, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) with Post Hoc tests.

RESULTS

Respondent Profiles

The respondents classified by gender were 51.6% male and 48.4% female. Six percent (6.3%) of the respondents were age 25 or below, but most were between 26 and 55: 21.7% were between 26-35 years old; 26.2% between 36-45 years old; and 20.3% between 46 and 55. The majority, 55.7%, had some college or a bachelor's degree. Another 29% had a high school or technical diploma. Only 10.7% had an advanced degree and very few, 4.7% had less than a high school education. Most respondents reported that they worked in large firms, 31.8%, followed by medium 21.8%, and semi-medium, 18.1%. Only 13.4% reported they were from small firms and 14.9% said medium-large firms. The ownership type was 20% state-owned, 15% collective owned, 24% shareholding, 25% private and 16% other.

Marketers' Attitudes Toward CSR

Attitudes toward CSR were measured by a 5 level scale of agreement to statements about CSR. Factor analysis indicated that the statements covered 3 components, described as "information about CSR"; "characteristics of firms with CSR"; and "employees in high participation CSR firms." The statements which loaded on the first factor included: A firm will participate more actively in social responsibility in prosperous economic times than in recession; A firm is participating in CSR because it wants to gain a good image from the public; Participating in CSR is called Public Relations (PR); A firm with a high socially responsible image will face low levels of business conflict; Corporate social responsibility is a part of running a business. The statements which loaded on the second factor were: A firm with high reputation does not need to participate in CSR in order to gain more reputation; A firm with more activities in social responsibility will have more profitability than a firm with less or none; A firm with high participation CSR needs to spend lots of money on CSR activities. The employee factor was comprised of: Employees in a firm with high participation in CSR will work more efficiently for the firm; Employees in a firm with high participation in CSR will have more loyalty to the firm.

In general the attitudes toward each of the statements related to CSR were in the neutral range. The means ranged from 2.96 to 3.26, with all medians equal to 3. Respondents were more neutral to whether CSR is in conflict with pursuit of profit, with whether CSR activities are affected by economic times and whether companies participate in CSR to gain public image. They were more split in their opinions on whether CSR is PR, and on whether firms with high reputations do not need to participate in CSR. The highest percentages of agreement were with the statements about firms with high levels of CSR will have more customers, more profits, will spend more money and will have employees that are more efficient.

Analysis of Variance with Post Hoc tests was used to analyze differences in attitudes by size of firm, level of education, age, and gender. Size of firm showed significant differences on three attitude statements, about image, high reputation and profits. Medium-large firms showed significantly more agreement to the opinion that firms participate in CSR to improve public image than medium sized firms. The idea that firms with high reputations need not participate in CSR was disagreed with by the small firms and they were significantly different than the medium, medium-large, and large firms in

this regard. Medium large firms were significantly higher in agreement with the statement that firms active in CSR will have more profits than medium sized firms.

Level of education showed significant difference in three attitude statements as well: image, high reputation and efficiency of employees. The first two overlap with those in size of firm, above. Those with less than a secondary education were significantly more in disagreement to the idea that firms use CSR to gain good image than those with a bachelor's degree. They were also significantly more in disagreement that firms with high reputations need not participate in CSR to gain more reputation than those with advanced degrees. They were also significantly more in disagreement that firms with high CSR will have more efficient employees, in this case they differed from those with a high school diploma, a technical degree, a bachelor's or an advanced degree.

Analysis by age showed significant differences on many CSR attitude statements. Post Hoc analyses showed these significant differences to be between the older age group(s) which tended to be more in disagreement and the younger age group(s) which tended to be more in agreement. With the prosperous economic times statement, the CSR is PR statement, that CSR firms will have more customers statement, that a firm that participate in CSR has to spend lots of money and that employees in a high participation CSR firm will be efficient the difference was between the 65 and up (more in disagreement) and the 26-35 group (more in agreement); with the statement that firms participate to gain image and that CSR is part of running a business the split was under 45 (more agreement) vs. over 45 (more in disagreement.)

There were many significant differences between the genders. In almost all cases the males were in more agreement with the CSR statements. The one exception was that the females were more in agreement that firms with high reputations need not participate in CSR to enhance their reputations. More men were significantly more positive that: CSR was for prosperous economic times; that firms participate to gain image; that CSR is PR; that firms that participate in CSR will have more customers; and that they will face low business conflict; and that they will have more loyal employees.

Assessment of the Impact of Stakeholders

Analysis of the impact of stakeholder groups on a firms' public image/reputation was based on seven identified stakeholder groups. Each group was evaluated on a 5-point Likert scale which evaluated the extent of impact the stakeholder group had on the firm's public image/reputation. The impact for almost all stakeholder groups was judged to be in the "to some extent" range, with all medians in that level and only the shareholder group with a mean in the neutral range. The evaluations of the shareholder and government stakeholder groups showed the most variability.

Analysis of variance with Post Hoc analyses were carried out to determine if demographic characteristics affected the ratings. Analysis of difference in mean evaluation of the impact of the stakeholder group based on age, gender and size of company showed only a few significant differences. Males were more likely to give a higher level of impact to the government as stakeholder than females, no other differences were significant. There was a significant difference given to the impact of local communities between the very small and the largest companies, with the small companies rating the impact the lowest. No other significant difference among the various sized companies and their ratings of stakeholders were found.

The age of the managers showed differences in how they rated the customers and the employees, in terms of impact on public image. The 36-45 age category rated customer impact significantly higher than older managers did. The 26-35 age category rated the impact of employees significantly higher than those of age 46-55 and 56-65. The major differences were seen in the ratings of stakeholder by type of company. All categories of stakeholders showed significant differences. The shareholder stakeholder category was judged significantly higher by those in shareholder companies vs. those in private companies. Just the opposite was found for customers: they were seen as having significantly higher impact by private companies vs. shareholding companies. Employees had significantly higher impact for state owner companies than for private firms. Business partners were significantly more of an impact in state owned companies than in privately owned. The general public and the local

communities had significantly more impact for state owned companies than for private ones; and the same was true when government was rated as a stakeholder.

Attitudes Toward Corporate Restructuring

Managers were asked to evaluate actions that would be most socially responsible during the course of restructuring, if their firm ever needed to restructure. The managers were first given the definition of restructuring as a managerial strategy aimed at improving efficiency, controlling costs or gaining more profitability, and coping with fluctuating business environment to survive in the long term such as downsizing, sale or termination of a business line, facility closures, consolidations, relocations, reduction of wages, incentives, bonus, and welfare; and then asked to indicate on a 5 point Likert scale their agreement with 11 statements about actions that could be taken prior to restructuring, during restructuring and after restructuring. Reaction to all statements was in the neutral range, with the exception of "Give laid-off employees priority for job vacancies" with which the majority was in agreement. The only statement that had an average rating lower than neutral was "Make an advance announcement to employees and community about restructuring."

Analysis of variance was performed to see if the reaction to the statements would differ depending upon whether they were to take place prior to, during or after restructuring. There was a significant difference among the reaction to actions depending upon the time they would occur, ($p < .05$). Actions taken after restructuring were looked at in a more positive light. These included severance pay, part time work, relocating employees to other departments or firm and job priority, as mentioned above.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The results do not support hypothesis one in its entirety. While the attitudes were not negative, they were mostly in the neutral range. The CSR statements which received the most positive responses were that firms with high levels of CSR will have more customers, more profits, will spend more money and will have employees that are more efficient (although it is not clear if this is due to the CSR or the perhaps mitigating opinion that large companies are more likely to participate in CSR).

There were differences in opinions among the firms when grouped by size, supporting hypothesis two. The groups most likely to think significantly different were the middle to large size group. They were significantly more likely to believe that CSR should be used to improve public image and profits. Perhaps because they aspire to become more involved in these activities, and want to believe that they will pay off. Interestingly, it was the small sized firms who were stronger in their belief that firms with high reputations still have to be involved with CSR, other groups felt that high reputation firms need not be involved in CSR. It is not clear that they think CSR might put them on the path to an improved image and then might not be needed, or activity in this area might be decreased but this is a topic that warrants further study. Education was not hypothesized to make a difference, however, while those with diplomas or degrees were more likely to be neutral or positive, those with less than a secondary education were significantly more in disagreement that CSR is used to gain good image, that firms with high reputations need not participate in CSR to gain more reputation and that firms with high CSR will have more efficient employees. Further analysis of the employment sector may be needed here to determine if these opinions are across the board for this education group or if there are other factors involved. While age was not hypothesized to make a difference, it was in this area that the most clear cut differences were found. The significant differences were between the older age group(s) which tended to be more in disagreement and the younger age group(s) which tended to be more in agreement with the CSR statements. Perhaps the older respondents are more set in their ways, or less knowledgeable about the recent activities in CSR.

A similar unexpected difference existed between males and females, with males being more positive. Females were only more positive that firms with high reputations need not participate in CSR to enhance their reputations. Could it be lack of knowledge or cynicism on the part of the females? Assessment of the importance of various stakeholder groups was considered to be "to some extent" for

all groups. The largest differences were found among type of companies, as one might expect. Privately held companies rated customers significantly higher; shareholder companies rated shareholders higher; and state owned companies were higher on their ratings of employees, business partners, local communities and the general public. Younger respondents rated customers and employees highest. In summary, hypothesis two was only partially supported as many more differences among demographic groups were found, than had been expected.

Hypothesis three was mixed. Rather than the expected reaction that the actions taken during the restructuring would be those perceived as most socially responsible, it was the actions that followed the restructuring that were judged to show social responsibility: severance pay, part time work, relocating to other departments or firms; and giving laid-off employees priority for job vacancies. For the first three of these it could be argued that they are actually part of the restructuring activities, the last takes place after the restructuring.

Almost all of the actions related to restructuring were in the neutral range. Only one was rated high—priority for rehiring—and one rated low—making an advance announcement. The expectation of positiveness toward these activities was not realized, thus not supporting hypothesis four.

The overall results indicate a more neutral view of CSR and restructuring activities overall. This may be because the ideas are fairly new to this group of respondents, and to the service area in Lagos, Nigeria overall. Lack of familiarity and or information may have contributed to the less than positive attitudes. Nonetheless the differences that were identified will be important to follow as research of this type moves forward.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. There is a need to promote and encourage Nigerian service marketing industry to participate in CSR activities at all levels.
2. Both government and non- government organizations need to embark on public relation effort that will help the Nigerian service marketing industry realize the added values from conducting a CSR program in their restructuring efforts.
3. There is a need to educate the consumer on the importance of CSR programs and the direct impacts to the society as a result encourage them to support and patronize companies that are engaged in corporate social activities.

FUTURE RESEARCHES

1. Future studies should consider other factors such as attitudes of customers toward CSR. The outcomes will be helpful in establishing strategies to push CSR adoption.
2. Future studies should look at the obstacles and limitations of incorporating corporate social activities in restructuring efforts and also compare these to successful integration from other industries in the same Lagos metropolis.
3. Similar studies are needed in other part of the country using same tools so as to compare the results with Lagos Metropolis and develop strategies to encourage adoption and implementation of CSR throughout the country when restructuring.

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Elizabeth has been involved in the field of education for 40 years. She is currently a professor in the Marketing and Decision Sciences Department at Salem State University, a position she has held for over 25 years. She also served the University as Acting Dean of the Bertolon School of Business for three years. Her B.A., Math, and M.Ed., Community Counseling, are both from Salem State; her Ph.D. is from Boston College. Current research activities are in Business Intelligence and Analytics.

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