Exploring and Managing Reputation Quotient of Selected Nigerian Deposit Money Banks: The Role of Public Relations.

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ABSTRACT

In today's competitive corporate landscape, managing corporate reputation occupies a central place. In this study we explored the reputation quotient of ten deposit money banks licensed to operate by the Central Bank of Nigeria. Our fundamental purpose was to evaluate the reputation quotient using components of the reputational quotient monitor to explore how the customers of the deposit money banks consider the dimensions of the reputation quotient when applied to the banking industry. Corresponding research questions in line with the objectives of the study and corresponding hypotheses were raised to guide the study. The study employed cross sectional research design executed through a survey. A sample size of 384 respondents obtained using Cochran's formula was used for this study. Obtaining data was through a well structured research instrument designed in a five form Likert scale. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained using cronbach alpha test statistic which yielded a value over 0.7 for all constructs of the variables studied indicating a high degree of items consistency. We used a one sample t-test to examine the significance of the differences between these indexes with the aid of SPSS 16.0. The results show that all three null hypotheses are not supported. Appropriate recommendations were made in line with the findings of the study. .

Keywords: Corporate Reputation; Reputation Quotient, Public Relations; Stakeholders Management.

INTRODUCTION

Corporate reputation is a critical asset for all financial institutions especially for the Deposit Money Banks (DMBs), which rely on public trust, customer confidence, and regulatory goodwill. It is the overall perception, trust, and credibility that an organizations stakeholders including customers, employees, investors, regulators, and the general public have about the organization (Pires, & Trez, (2018). The reputation quotient (RQ) serves as a key measure of public perception, influencing customer loyalty, investor confidence, and overall business performance. In today's dynamic and competitive business environment, public relations (PR) play a strategic role in shaping, managing, and enhancing corporate reputation. In this study we explore the reputation quotient of selected DMBs and suggest how public relations strategies contribute to reputation management.

Essentially, corporate reputation is the shared perception of an organization's past decisions and anticipated future actions, based on its effectiveness compared to key competitors (Fombrun, 1996; Fombrun & Rindova, 2001; Walker, 2010). Some scholars argue that corporate reputation influences organizational success and is shaped by a company's conduct, achievements, core principles, and communication over time. A strong corporate reputation fosters customer loyalty, attracts investors, and establishes a lasting competitive edge, whereas a negative reputation can result in diminished trust, lower customer engagement, and financial instability (Walker, 2010; Pires & Trez, 2018).

To effectively conduct business operations in today's evolving world and dynamic market, which is open, interconnected, and influenced by activists and vocal stakeholders, organizations must demonstrate a high level of accountability and responsibility. This is because their actions are widely observed, shaping public opinions and perceptions that individuals are free to express and influence on a larger scale (Savitz & Weber, 2006). These collective perceptions then become a potential risk factor, as they directly impact critical business decisions, including consumer purchasing choices, vendor selection, and even employment preferences, ultimately affecting the company's financial performance. Pires and Trez, (2018) aver that corporate reputation is an aggregate perception from internal and external stakeholders; and that all organizations have a reputation rating. When an organization fails to effectively manage its reputation, it becomes increasingly susceptible to reputational risks, which can have long-term consequences on its overall success and stability.

Reputational risk arises when negative public perceptions about a company's actions, decisions, or business practices gain traction, potentially damaging its credibility and market position. In a study conducted by Deloitte the significance of reputational risk in today's business landscape was highlighted. According to the study, 87% of top business executives rated reputation risk as more crucial than other strategic risks their organizations face (Deloitte, 2014). This underscores the growing concern among business leaders that a company's reputation is not just an intangible asset but a critical determinant of its survival and growth. Consequently, Deloitte identified reputation risk as one significant strategic business challenge, emphasizing the need for organizations to prioritize reputation management as a key component of their overall risk strategy.

The Federal Reserve System's Board of Governors (2004) further elaborated on the implications of reputational risk. It defined reputation risk as the probability that negative publicity - whether accurate or misleading - about a company's business conduct could result in severe consequences. These may include a decline in customer trust and loyalty, increased legal disputes, reduced revenue streams, and disruptions to critical business partnerships and service offerings. This definition highlights how reputation risk extends beyond mere public relations concerns, influencing various operational and financial aspects of an organization.

In todays' era where digital media, social activism, and stakeholder engagement play a pivotal role in shaping public opinion, businesses must be proactive in managing their reputation. The rapid dissemination of information both positive and negative can significantly impact investor confidence, impinge overall business sustainability, cause their customer base to be depleted, generate lawsuits, decrease their revenue stream and / or negatively affect the organization's business associations or the services it offers.

As a result of the intangible nature the services offered by commercial banks to the public, their reputation risk is higher since such financial processes are based essentially on trust and confidence. The consequence of diminished trust in the relationship between the bank and its customers, leads to reputational risk identified as a top strategic business risk in the banking sector (Trotta & Cavallaro, 2012). However, it appears that several organizations do not take reputation management very seriously until their reputation is threatened. While the importance of reputation has been emphasized, the worth of commercial banks reputation to their customers has been under explored in Nigeria. Our review of literature suggests that corporate reputation in the deposit money banks in Nigeria has been under explored. This limited research into the field leaves a lot of room for further research on corporate reputation to properly understand its practicability and implications for organizational sustainability in Nigeria. In the view of the foregoing, this study sought to examine the customers' perspective on corporate reputation using the corporate reputation quotient (Axios Harris Poll, 2020 cited in Johnson, & Bonds, 2021) as a measure for the corporate reputation of commercial banks. Specifically the research sought to:

Investigate customer perception of the reputation quotient of sampled deposit money banks using emotional appeal, products and services, and social responsibility dimensions;

Ascertain if there is any significant difference in the reputation quotient across the deposit money banks;

Investigate the differences in the reputation quotient (if any) of the sampled deposit money banks using emotional appeal, products and services, and social responsibility dimensions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Corporate Reputation

Corporate reputation as posited by Wartick cited in Taghian, D'Souza and Polonsky, (2010) is the sum of the perception of a single stakeholder's group of the extent to which an organization meets the demand of other stakeholders groups. This definition reflects the perception of one stakeholder group on the extent to which the

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company's activities meets the expectations of other stakeholder groups (Taghian *et al.*, 2010). In the view of Fombrun, Gardberg and Sever (2000) corporate reputation can be viewed as a depiction of a firm's past activities and predictions, based on perception, which describes how the organizations business activities and qualities appear when likened with that of other competitors. This definition birth the idea that different stakeholders assess the activity of a company, as it resonates with them, and compare it with the activities of their competitors. From the view point of Neville, Bell and Menguc (2005) a fusion of the different stakeholders' perceptions is proposed here and this generates an organizational character which could be managed. Fombrun viewed reputation as an aggregate of the various constituencies (both internal and external).

Bennett and Kottasz (2000) proffered a reputation definition which aggregated elements from the various reputation schools of thoughts. They postulated that coporate reputation is a combination of all expectations and beliefs of a business organization built procedurally, by its stakeholder groups, relative to the organization's behavior, features or potentials, and is generally founded on their previous actions, individual encounters with the firm or rumor. Different groups form their opinions about an organization. Some groups are internal i.e. an integral member of the organization (for example, employees and investors) and some are external i.e. they have business relationships with the organization but are not direct members of it (for example, customers and suppliers).

The perception of those inside the firm, that is, its employees and managers is referred to as corporate Identity. Tench and Yeomans (2014) define corporate identity as the active, responsive and unintended actions and messages an organization communicates. An organization would only communicate what it thinks it is to its stakeholders. On the other hand, the perception of the firms' external observers including customers, suppliers, and immediate community is the firm's corporate image. The understandings of corporate image are in three dimensions; the believe of the organization about what outsiders think of them, what outsiders really think of them and their attempts to influence what outsiders think of them (Whetten & Mackey, 2002). This attempt is the link between the corporate image and identity.

Carrio (2011) stipulates that corporate image, corporate identity, and corporate desired identity are the elements of reputation. It is often said that a gap exists among how others see the organization (image), what the organization really is (real identity), and what it says it is (desired identity). Similarly, Esenyel (2020) puts forward that the two components of reputation are perception (the way the firms' stakeholders view it) and reality (the practices, performance, and strategies of the firm). The gap between is the actual reputation of the organization. The terms corporate identity and corporate image and their relationship with corporate reputation is clarified in the table below:

Table 1: Basic definitions

Corporate identity	**Corporate image**	**Corporate reputation**
How we see ourselves – i.e what members of an organization perceive, think and how they feel about it	How others see us – i.e what customers and other external stakeholders believe about the company from their experiences and observations.	This means the sum of images accumulated over time by stakeholders that helps them form an opinion about the organization.

Source: Researcher's compilation.

Corporate Reputation and Organizational Outcomes

Cravens, Oliver, and Ramamoorti (2003) assert that reputation is a vital and enduring strategic asset that significantly influences an organization's success and sustainability. They emphasize that reputation is not just an intangible concept but a valuable resource that can enhance competitive advantage, stakeholder trust, and long-term business viability. The authors identify several critical dimensions and organizational components that shape corporate reputation. These include corporate strategy, which defines the company's long-term vision, objectives, and market positioning; financial strength and viability, which reflect the organization's ability to generate profits, maintain liquidity, and ensure financial stability; and organizational culture, which encompasses shared values, beliefs, and behaviors that drive internal cohesion and employee engagement. Additionally, ethics and integrity play a crucial role in shaping reputation by fostering transparency, fairness, and responsible business conduct. Governance processes and leadership also contribute significantly, as strong leadership and well-structured corporate governance ensure accountability, effective decision-making, and adherence to regulatory standards. Furthermore, an organization's reputation is influenced by the quality of its products and services, as customer satisfaction and brand perception are directly tied to their reliability and value. Strategic alliances and business partnerships are also essential, as collaborations with reputable entities can enhance credibility and market reach. Lastly, innovation is a key driver of reputation, as organizations that continuously adapt, improve, and introduce new solutions are perceived as industry leaders and forward-thinking enterprises. Overall, the study underscores that corporate reputation is a multifaceted asset shaped by a combination of strategic, financial, ethical, and operational factors, all of which must be effectively managed to sustain long-term success (Cravens, et. al., 2003)

Previous studies have examined the relationship between corporate reputation and outcomes within and outside the organization. Authors have established some relationship between the reputation of an organization and its financial performance (Gorondutse, Hilman, & Nasidi, 2014; Kabuoh, Chigbu, Ogbuanu & Onyia, 2016); favourable customer perceptions and patronage / favorable attitudes toward a company's products (Erdem & Swait, 2004; Jeng, 2011); increases the customer loyalty (Jeng, 2011, Maduagwu, Agu & Ugwu, 2017); greater willingness to purchase multiple products or services from the same company (Jeng, 2008), enhanced competitive edge (Fombrun & Shanley, 1990; McMillan & Joshi, 1997), it supports brand identity and serves as an indicator of quality and reliability (Jeng, 2011). Furthermore, a strong reputation enhances consumer perceptions of a company's offerings and increase the likelihood of purchasing newly introduced services (Erdem & Swait, 2004; Jeng, 2011; Jeon & Nolan, 2023). Overall, when a corporation has a strong reputation among its customers and they are satisfied with the quality of services provided, it is more likely to foster long-term customer commitment and loyalty.

Although corporate reputation is undeniably a valuable and important corporate asset, various challenges have prevented this critical intangible asset from being fully harnessed by some organizations. Some of these challenges include the lack of know-how, absence of strategic management commitment, absence of ethical leadership, improperly managed communication, etc. Effectively addressing these challenges requires organizations to adopt a proactive and comprehensive reputation management strategy, transparency, ethical leadership, strong stakeholder engagement, and crisis preparedness.

The Role of Public Relations

Public relations essentially is the strategic communication process that organizations use to build and maintain a positive relationship with their stakeholders, including customers, employees, investors, the media, and the general public. It involves managing a company's image, handling communication during crises, and ensuring that the organization is perceived in a favorable light (Bashir, & Al-Refai, 2025). Some scholars emphasize the imperatives of public relations and equate it to reputation management (Hutton, Goodman, Alexander, & Genest, 2001). Public relations plays a pivotal role in shaping and managing the reputation quotient of organizations such as deposit money banks and telecommunication organizations (Bashir, & Al-Refai, 2025). By adopting strategic communication, crisis management, digital reputation monitoring, corporate citizenship initiatives, and stakeholder engagement, banks can enhance public trust and sustain a strong reputation. As the financial industry evolves, the ability of public relations to navigate reputation challenges will remain a key determinant of long-term success. (Seitel, 2017; Hutton, et al. 2001).

Theories of Corporate Reputation and Public Relations

Public relations play a critical role in managing corporate reputation by shaping stakeholder perceptions, ensuring transparency, and mitigating reputational risks. Some theories provide a framework for understanding the relationship between corporate reputation and public relations. These include:

The relational theory of corporate reputation focuses on views of multiple stakeholder groups (Fombrun, 1996; Davies & Chun 2002). This theory recognizes that that the perceptions of a firm will differ with different stakeholder groups, depending on their area of interest. It holds therefore, that a company does not have one reputation, it has several. It recognizes the gaps between internal and external stakeholders' views, it also contains the indication that those views are interrelated (Chun, 2005). The relational corporate reputation theory is built on the stakeholders' emotional association with the firm. Though the multi-stakeholder approach is widely accepted, Taghian et. al (2010) reckons that any multi-stakeholder approach to measure reputation will be an aggregate of all stakeholders' perception and this combined reputation could be one that does not resonate with any stakeholder group. However, the previously mentioned definition of corporate reputation by Bennett and Kottasz highlights the following: corporate reputation is built overtime, it depends on the company's behavior overtime and more importantly, it is multidimensional in nature and it differs with each the stakeholder group being investigated, and the stakeholders' experience influences corporate reputation.

The Stakeholder Theory, proposed by Edward Freeman in 1984. This theory emphasizes the need for organizations to balance the interests of various stakeholders, including customers, employees, investors, regulators, and the public. Corporate reputation is directly influenced by how well an organization meets stakeholder expectations and addresses their concerns. Public relations efforts should align with stakeholder priorities to foster trust and long-term loyalty. For instance, some Nigerian banks enhance their reputations through corporate social responsibility (CSR**)** programs focused on sustainability, financial literacy, and community engagement, reinforcing their commitment to both business success and societal well-being.

The Excellence Theory, developed by James E. Grunig and Todd Hunt in 1984. This theory argues that organizations achieve excellence in public relations when they practice two-way symmetrical communication**,** which fosters mutual understanding between the company and its stakeholders. Reputation is best managed when PR is integrated into top management decision-making, ensuring that communication is strategic, ethical, and transparent. Open and honest interactions help organizations build credibility, minimize misinformation, and enhance stakeholder trust. For example, a bank that proactively addresses customer concerns through interactive platforms and crisis communication strategies not only resolves issues efficiently but also strengthens its reputation as a customer-centric institution.

The **Social Responsibility Theory**, developed by various scholars from the 1940s to the present, highlights the moral duty of organizations to act in the public interest beyond profit-making. This theory suggests that corporate reputation is significantly impacted by an organization's ethical behavior, commitment to social causes, and CSR initiatives. Banks and financial institutions that invest in financial inclusion programs, scholarships, and environmental sustainability projects **e**nhance their public image and foster goodwill among stakeholders. By engaging in socially responsible activities, businesses not only contribute to societal development but also build a strong, positive reputation that enhances customer loyalty and investor confidence

Empirical Review

Kabuoh, Chigbu, Ogbuanu and Onyia (2016) published a paper on corporate reputation strategy and customer satisfaction in selected banks in Lagos state. The population of the study was the customers of Union bank, Ecobank, First bank and Diamond bank in Lagos, Nigeria. A research instrument prepared in Likert scale questionnaire was distributed across the 2000 sample size. Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, ANOVA and linear regression were used for the data analysis. The banks reputation was measured using performance, people, products, pacesetters, and purpose. They found that a strong positive relationship exists between corporate reputation management and customer satisfaction. Therefore, the recommendation that banks should maintain a positive reputation in other to continue to satisfy their customers was made.

Ajayi and Mmutle (2020) explored the contributions to the firm's reputation its communication strategy for corporate social responsibility (CSR) makes. They sampled 10 of the most reputable companies in South Africa according to South Africe Reptrak Survey, 2018. They established that corporate social responsibility is a major driver of corporate reputation, and as such companies actively engage in communicating their corporate social responsibility activities for a composite of self-serving and society-serving purposes to influence the perception of stakeholders 78.17% of companies used informing strategy while 28.83% used the interactive strategy.

Jie and Hasan (2018) researched on student's perception of the selected facets of reputation quotient in a Malaysian public university. They studied five of the six dimensions of corporate reputation leaving out the workplace environment. The research instruments were distributed to 383 students and the data received were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics (including mean and standard deviations) and the one sample t-test. The results showed that the students had a positive perception of the subscales of reputation quotient pertaining to the five dimensions of concern. They concluded that the management of public higher institutions should focus on the mentioned dimensions in order to boost the good perception and images from their different stakeholders and this will in turn increase the chances of the survival of the institution in this dynamic and competitive business market.

Maduagwu, Agu and Ugwu (2017) researched the effect corporate reputation on the performance of the selected commercial banks in Enugu state, Nigeria. The objectives of the study were to ascertain the effect of quality product offerings on customers satisfaction, the kind of relationship between favorable working condition and productivity, and how social responsibility could affect creativity and innovation in commercial banks in Enugu state, Nigeria. The population was made up of the employees of Union bank and First bank Plc, from which a sample size of 188 was drawn. Using a five scale Likert questionnaire as primary research instrument and Pearson correlation was used for data analysis, the study found a significant positive relationship between quality product and productivity, good working environment and productivity, social responsibility and creativity / innovation. The study concluded that corporate reputation is one vital tool used by organizations to attract and retain customers, easily raise capital, attract an effective and efficient workforce and become a good member of society.

The relationship between corporate reputation and customer loyalty on Nigerian food and beverages industry with focus on Cadbury Nigeria, was investigated by Gorondutse, Hilman, and Nasidi (2014) using Partial Least Square – Structural Equation Modeling (PLS - SEM). The study investigated the influence of corporate reputation on customer loyalty. The study was conducted in Kano state, Nigeria using a purposive sample size of 250 customers. Factors such as behavioural price, monetary price, emotional appeal and quality were used to evaluate corporate reputation. Based on the study findings they established that there is a significant effect of the corporate reputation on customer loyalty.

Kanto, Run and Isa (2016) in their paper ran a confirmatory analysis for reputation quotient as a corporate reputation measurement in the Malaysian banking industry, aimed at determining the fitness of the reputation quotient for measuring the corporate reputation of the Malaysian banking industry. The study used a quantitative approach with confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to text the six dimensions of factors of the reputation quotient. Eight Malaysian banks were considered and the population of the study was Malaysian citizen identified to be banking stakeholders. There were four stakeholder groups: customer, functional, normative and diffused groups, 100 samples were used to represent each group. The study found that of the six dimensions of RQ, the Malaysian view of corporate reputation dimensions only confirmed five. Workplace and environment failed the second order measurement model. Other dimensions exceeded the required measurement suggesting that RQ is a true determinant of the CR of the Malaysian industry.

Jeon and Nolan (2023) explored the meta-analytic review of firm reputation and firm performance. In this meta-analysis, Jeon and Nolan delved into the past four decades of firm reputation studies, aiming to untangle the intricate relationship between firm reputation and firm performance. Their investigation sheds light on the causality and effect size issues between these two constructs. Notably, they found that firm performance has a stronger influence on firm reputation, particularly when viewed through the lens of signaling theory. Therefore, when a firm performs it sends signals of trustworthiness, competence and stability to the outside world and these signals shape how stakeholders perceive the firm. However, during reputation-damaging events (for instance scandals), the connection (or signal) weakens - a reminder that reputation is both delicate and dynamic.

Research Gaps and Hypotheses Development

Studies show that the dimensions of the reputation quotient have somewhat been explored across various cultures and groups globally and with researchers successfully analyzing how different stakeholder groups feel about the dimensions and attributes of the reputation quotient; and which dimension works for certain industries and stakeholder groups. The review of literature however suggests the subject of corporate reputation quotient in Nigeria has been underexplored to the best of knowledge of the researchers. We therefore embarked on this

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study to explore how the sampled customers of the deposit money banks consider the six dimensions of the reputation quotient when applied to the banking industry. In pursuance of our earlier stated objectives we hypothesized the following:

H_{o1} - the perception of customers on emotional appeal, products and services, and social responsibility dimensions of the reputation quotient of the deposit money banks in Benin City is negative;

Ho_2 - there is no significant difference between the deposit money banks in terms of their reputation index;

H_{o3} - there is no significant difference across the deposit money banks in terms of the six dimensions of the reputation quotient (emotional appeal, products and services, vision and leadership, workplace environment, financial performance and social responsibility).

METHODS.

Research Design

For this work, a cross sectional research survey was used. More specifically, the gaps and holes case study design was applied. This study described the customers' perception of the facets of the reputation quotient and determined the reputation of the selected case study without attempting to influence the respondents.

Population of the Study

The population of this study consists of the customers of 10 licensed commercial banks in Benin City, Nigeria. It is assumed that the larger population of the city uses at least one of the top ten banks for their personal and corporate banking needs. The ten (10) banks used for this study were compiled based on six (6) of the most recent bank rankings based on their total assets, revenue, net income, tier and share price (Ojekunle, 2018; Egwuatu, 2018; Margaret, 2018; Admin, 2018; Tijani, 2018; and corporate financial institute, 2018). The most visible banks were then selected and utilized for this study.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A sample of 384 bank customers were used for this study. The value was obtained from the mathematical computation using Cochran's formula (Serekan & Bougie, 2016) below:

$$n = \frac{cpq}{d^2}$$

Where: n = sample size,

c = confidence level

p = proportion of the population having the characteristic,

q = 1 – p, and

d = the degree of precision i.e. margin of error

The proportion of the total population (p) who are customers of any of the commercial banks in Benin City is unknown. Factoring in that some customers would open their accounts at a Benin city branch, relocate to another town for work, school or other reasons and operate their accounts from the new location. The reverse is also feasible as a good number of persons currently living in Benin City did not open their bank accounts at the Benin City branch but successfully carry on their banking transactions with them. Therefore, we assume the worst case that 50% of the population are customers of at least one commercial bank, therefore, p = 0.5. The degree of precision (d) is 5%. The sample size for this research paper is calculated at a 95% confidence level as thus:

$$n = \frac{1.96^2 \times 0.5 \times 0.5}{0.05^2} = \frac{0.96}{0.0025} = 384$$

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According to Sekaran and Bougie (2016), for any social science study, a sample size of 30 – 500 would suffice. Therefore, 384 is an ideal sample size to be used in this study. The study applied quota sampling technique in selecting each sample representative. First, the 384 samples were proportionally divided among the banks based on the number of branches they have in Benin City. Five copies of the questionnaire were added to cushion any deficiencies that may arise as a result of invalid copies or unreturned questionnaire. Secondly, at each branch, every fifth customer arriving at the bank was selected for the study. The proportioning was calculated using the formula below:

$N_x = \frac{B_n}{N_T} * S$

Where,

N_x = number of respondents per bank,

B_n = number of branches per bank,

N_T = total number of branches of all 10 banks in Benin City, and

S = calculated sample size (384).

The proportion of samples was computed using Microsoft Excel 2010. The results are shown in the table 4.

Table 2 – Proportion of Samples per Bank.

No.	Bank	No. of Branches	Proportionate sample size	Approximated value	Copies of questionnaire distributed
1	Access Bank	8	35.7	36	41
2	Diamond Bank	5	22.3	22	24
3	Eco Bank	11	49.1	49	54
4	First Bank of Nigeria	18	80.3	80	85
5	Fidelity Bank	5	22.3	22	27
6	Guaranty Trust Bank	5	22.3	22	27
7	Sterling Bank	5	22.3	22	27
8	United Bank for Africa	12	53.5	54	59
9	Union Bank	6	22.3	22	27
10	Zenith Bank	12	53.5	54	59
	Total	87	384	384	430

Researcher's compilation (Data collection was in 2019)

Measures

Different reputation models propose different components and sources of corporate reputation (World's most admired companies, World most respected companies, RepTrak, e.t.c). These varied models make it difficult to properly assign an index to the reputation of an organization. The Reputation Quotient (RQ) by Fombrun, Gardberg and Sever (2000) is the most popular measure of corporate reputation and was employed in this study. It combined various reputation models and proposed six drivers of corporate reputation being - emotional appeal, vision and leadership, products and services, workplace environment, financial performance and social responsibility. The significance of these drivers have been tested across several cultures and countries but largely under explored in the Nigerian deposit money banks.

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Data Collection

The data for this research was collected using an adapted reputation quotient questionnaire containing 7 Scale Likert questions which indicates the extent to which the respondent agrees or disagrees with a given statement. The questionnaire which was adopted from Fombrun *et al*. (2000) was grouped into three sub-sections to represent the three dimension of the RQ the study is focused on.

Reliability of the Instrument

A pilot study was conducted using 40 respondents and Cronbach's alpha statistic was used to test the reliability of the instrument measuring reputation quotient. The results are shown in the table below.

Table 3 – Reliability values

	Dimension	**alpha score**	**Percentage**
1	Emotional appeal (EQ1, EQ2, EQ3)	0.865	87%
2	Product and service (PQ1, PQ2, PQ3, PQ4)	0.883	88%
3	Social responsibility(SQ1, SQ2, SQ3)	0.800	80%
	Overall instrument reliability	0.849	85%

Source: Researcher's field work.

From the results as presented, all three dimensions of the RQ questionnaire were above 70%. The overall RQ alpha score of 0.849 (85%), indicating the instrument is reliable and can be used for this research.

Method of Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics (mean, mode and standard deviation) were used to determine the perception of the population on the dimensions of the reputation quotient (RQ). One sample T-test was used for hypothesis testing. If the p value is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_o) is rejected, otherwise the null hypothesis (H_o) is accepted.

The RQ score can be calculated using the formula by Fombrum *et al.* (2000):

$$\text{Reputation Quotient (RQ)} = \frac{\left(\frac{\text{Sum of ratings on each attribute}}{N}\right)}{(\text{the total number of attributes answered x 7})} \times 100$$

Where: N stands for the number of respondents.

RQ performance ranges set out by Harris poll (2013) are as follows –

80% & above: excellent

75% - 79% : very good

70% - 74% : good

65% - 69% : fair

55% - 64% : poor

50% – 54% : very poor

Below 50% : critical

The same formula was applied to calculate the difference between the banks in terms of the three RQ dimensions. A one sample t-test was used to identify the significance of the differences between these indexes. Statistical

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Program for Social Science (SPSS) version 16.0 was used to compute the mean, standard deviation and T-test and all RQ computations were made using Microsoft Excel (2010).

Data Presentation and Interpretation

Table 4 – Customers' Perception of the Facets of the Reputation Quotient

Dimension / Attribute	Mean	Std. Dev	Mode
Emotional Appeal			
Good feeling about the bank	5.41	1.47	6
Admire and respect the bank	5.43	1.43	6
Trust the bank	5.38	1.42	6
Overall	5.41	1.27	
Products and Services			
High quality service	5.16	1.52	6
Innovative products and service	5.02	1.50	6
Value for money	4.97	1.46	6
Stands behind their products	5.17	1.23	6
Overall	5.08	1.22	
Dimension / Attribute	Mean	Std. Dev	Mode
Vision and Leadership			
Excellent leadership	5.21	1.41	6
Vision for the future	5.14	1.43	6
The bank is opportunistic	5.24	1.28	6
Overall	5.20	1.21	
Workplace Environment			
Good place to work	5.34	1.53	6
Rewards employees fairly	4.73	1.33	4
Good employees	5.23	1.42	6
Overall	5.10	1.18	
Financial Performance			
Record of profitability	5.37	1.27	6
Growth prospects	5.41	1.35	6
Outperforms competitors	4.97	1.53	6
Overall	5.25	1.18	
Social Responsibility			

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Supports good causes	5.03	1.39	6
Environmentally responsible	5.08	1.47	6
Community responsibility	4.62	1.59	4
Overall	4.91	1.48	
Overall RQ	5.15	1.04	

Source: Researcher's Field Survey.

As shown on the table above, the bank customers are favourably disposed towards all the dimensions and attributes of the reputation quotient. The mean score of the dimensions, from lowest to highest, 4.90 (social responsibility), 5.08 (products and services), 5.10 (workplace environment), 5.20 (vision and leadership), 5.25 (financial performance), and 5.41 (emotional appeal) and standard deviation figures of 1.04, 1.22, 1.18, 1.21, 1.18 and 1.27 respectively, reveal the perception of customers on the dimensions of the reputation quotient when applied to commercial banks in Benin City is positive.

For the attributes, most had a mean score of greater than or equal to 5.0 and mode of 6 which represents 'agree'. The attributes – value for money, rewards employees fairly, outperforms competitors, and community responsibility scored below 5.0 and all had a modal value of 4 which represents 'neutral'. The standard deviation figures are all low which indicates that majority of the responses on each dimension is closely related to the mean score, this is made more evident with a modal value of either 4 or 6 on all dimensions.

Hypotheses Testing

Ho_1 – The perception of customers on the dimensions of the reputation quotient when applied to the deposit money banks in Benin City is negative.

Table 5 – One sample Statistics Test for the Dimensions of Reputation Quotient

Dimension	t	Df	Sig.	Decision
Emotional appeal	84.69	397	0.000	Reject null hypothesis
Products and services	83.22	397	0.000	Reject null hypothesis
Vision and leadership	86.00	397	0.000	Reject null hypothesis
Workplace environment	86.43	397	0.000	Reject null hypothesis
Financial performance	88.93	397	0.000	Reject null hypothesis
Social responsibility	75.19	397	0.000	Reject null hypothesis
Overall RQ	**99.12**	**397**	**0.000**	

Source: Researcher's Field Survey.

(Where: t = t-statistic, df = degree of freedom, Number of respondents (N) = 397, confidence interval - 95%). From the table above, the P value of all the dimensions are 0.000 which is below the 0.05, therefore, the null hypothesis Ho_1 is rejected. This means customer perception on the dimensions of the reputation quotient when applied to the deposit money banks in Benin City is positive.

Ho_2 – There is no significant difference between the sampled deposit money banks in terms of their reputation index.

A one sample test was run to determine whether the RQ scores and differences between the banks are significant. The result is shown in the table below.

Table 6 – One sample test for the calculated RQ index

	T	df	Sig.	Mean Difference	Decision
RQ index	46.44	9	.000	73.84	Reject null hypothesis

Source: Researcher’s Field Survey.

As shown above, with a p - value of 0.000, the difference between the reputation quotient (RQ) indexes of the banks is significant. Therefore, we reject Ho_2 .

Ho_3 – There is no significant difference between the sampled deposit money banks in terms of the six dimensions of the reputation quotient (emotional appeal, products and services, vision and leadership, workplace environment, financial performance and social responsibility).

A one sample test was run using the scores obtained to determine the significance of the differences in the banks in terms of the six dimensions of the reputation quotient. The results are shown in the table below.

Table 7 – One sample test for the calculated dimension scores

Dimension	t	Df	Sig.	Decision
Emotional appeal	40.17	9	0.000	Reject null hypothesis
Products and services	43.04	9	0.000	Reject null hypothesis
Vision and leadership	46.15	9	0.000	Reject null hypothesis
Workplace environment	56.47	9	0.000	Reject null hypothesis
Financial performance	36.41	9	0.000	Reject null hypothesis
Social responsibility	45.50	9	0.000	Reject null hypothesis

Source: Researcher’s Field Survey.

As shown above, with a p value of 0.000 on the index of all six (6) dimensions (emotional appeal, products and services, vision and leadership, workplace environment, financial performance and social responsibility) of the reputation of the banks, the difference between these scores are significant. Hence, there is a significant difference between commercial banks in terms of the six dimensions of the reputation quotient. Therefore, we reject null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

In hypothesis one, with their mean scores ranging from 4.91 (social responsibility) to 5.41 (emotional appeal), the customers perception of all six RQ dimensions are positive. A one sample t-test confirmed this to be significant with a p-value of 0.000 on all dimensions. It also revealed that all six dimensions had high t statistic values ranging from 75.19 (social responsibility) to 88.93 (financial performance). This indicates that all the dimensions of the RQ are quite important to customers in weighing the corporate reputation of their banks. These findings are in line with the study done by Kanto *et al*., (2016) who stated that facets of reputation quotient, namely product and services, social responsibility, vision and leadership, financial performance, and emotional appeal are the dimensions that shape the corporate reputation within a Malaysian context. The sixth dimension workplace environment was excluded from their study. Jie and Hasan (2018) had the same output when the customers’ perception of the reputation quotient was applied to the university context. For Page and Fearin (2005), they asserted that the components of corporate reputation that customers care the most about are perceptions of fair dealings and customer orientation as well as perceptions of excellent leadership and organizational success, rather than public responsibility. Therefore, asserting a corporate social responsibility programme to consumers may not likely produce strong pay offs.

With respect to hypothesis two, the study results also indicated a variance between the selected 10 commercial banks in terms of their calculated reputation index and all six dimensions of the RQ. From the results it is clear that these differences and reputation quotient scores are largely significant (p-value 0.000 & t statistic ranging from 36.41 – 56.47). Being able to compute significant reputation quotient scores using the data collated from the bank customers supports the position of Fombrun *et al.*, (2000) that corporate reputation is a multi-dimensional construct.

For hypothesis three as shown above, the study revealed that there is a difference between commercial banks in terms of these elements of corporate reputation - emotional appeal, products and services, and social responsibility, as they were measured and used to rank the banks using the ranking system set out by (Harris Poll, 2013; Axios Harris Poll, 2020 cited in Johnson, & Bonds, 2021). The results showed that for the reputation of the banks, the difference between these scores is significant. Hence, there is a significant difference between the deposit money banks in terms of the six dimensions of the reputation quotient examined.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study found the disposition of customers to the dimensions of the reputation quotient to be positive. All six considered dimensions of the RQ are quite important to customers in weighing the corporate reputation of their banks. Overall, of all six dimensions, the highest mean score was that of emotional appeal, followed by financial performance, vision and leadership, workplace environment and products and services. The dimension with the least score was social responsibility.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were proffered

1. Of the top 10 banks, none scored 80% and above on their overall reputation index, therefore it is recommended that commercial banks need to become more deliberate in managing their corporate reputation as studies show that this will lead to increased customers' satisfaction and sustained patronage.

2. Furthermore, the RQ should be employed as a tool to measure and effectively manage the reputation of various organizations. It allows for the overall reputation to be broken into different dimensions and deliberate efforts could be made to improve those dimensions were they score low or mediocre.

3. Since they performed poorly on all fronts, Ecobank, should take advantage of this tool to remedy customers' perception of their corporate reputation.

4. Also, the deposit money banks should ensure more effort in their social and community responsibility initiatives as they generally performed relatively lower on that dimension.

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