Corporate Social Responsibility Reporting in the Online News Letters of ExxonMobil and SPDC in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study seeks to find out whether energy corporations that operate in Nigeria provide adequate information about their corporate social responsibility, and whether these programmes are available on their managed online media platforms. For this reason, the study investigates how two energy corporations have engaged the online newsletter platform to share information concerning their CSR performance. The research employs a content analysis method. The population of the study comprises all online newsletters published by these corporations from January 2013 to August 2014. There are recognized similarities and difference in their use of online newsletters to share information concerning their corporate social responsibility to their various stakeholders. The study recommended that: ExxonMobil (Nigeria) and SPDC (Nigeria) should make effort to be consistent in their online newsletter publication. SPDC (Nigeria) should de-emphasise the frightening account of oil theft and spillage and focus more on human capacity development of persons within their host communities.

KEYWORDS

Content Analysis, Corporate Communication, Corporate Culture, Corporate Identity, Corporate Image, ExxonMobil, New media, Shell Petroleum Development Corporation, Stakeholder, Strategic Management

INTRODUCTION

Recently, wonderful innovations in digital communication particularly the various media platforms the internet provides have ignited the intellectual interest of many communication scholars and media practitioners and produced better channels for corporations to interact with their various stakeholder groups (Lister et al., 2009; Livingstone, 1999). Communication between organisations and their stakeholders have changed tremendously. The change has provided organisations with several media channels they could communicate with their various stakeholder groups and obtain their comment easier and faster (Friedman & Friedman, 2008).

Prior to the discoveries of these great innovations in digital communication which many communication scholars and media practitioners have regarded as New Media (Logan, 2010; Lister et al., 2009; Livingstone, 1999; Friedman & Friedman, 2008), interaction between organisations and their diverse stakeholder groups was one-way patterned and often only electronic media and print media were used. Today, because of these great innovations in digital communication, most organisations can communicate better with various stakeholders on a number of media channels the internet platform provides (Ath et al., 2018). Among these media channels are a company blog, website, Facebook page, twitter handle and others.

DOI: 10.4018/IJSECSR.2019010102
However, the use of these channels particularly the website by organisations to inform their various stakeholders about their programmes and contributions in the society seems not to be well acknowledged and effective or perhaps most stakeholders are not conscious of the information provided on these channels (Livingstone, 1999). Because most stakeholder groups of these organisations are not aware of their corporate social responsibility programmes, the contributions of some corporations in this regard have been questioned on several fora. In addition, some stakeholders appear to be biased in their appraisal of these corporations. Thus, their comments and actions lead to agitation, protest, corporate reputation and image deformation. For this reason, one may like to know if these organisations make available adequate information about these programmes on their managed media platforms. In view of this challenge in focus, this study seeks to investigate how two energy corporations have engaged the online newsletter medium to share information with their various stakeholder groups about their CSR programmes and draw attention of most of the stakeholder groups to the contents of online newsletters of ExxonMobil (Nigeria) and SPDC (Nigeria) through a comparative study from January 2013 to August 2014.

**ExxonMobil (Nigeria)**

ExxonMobil (Nigeria) is among the notable flourishing publicly owned energy companies in Nigeria. ExxonMobil’s commercial operation is organised through some individual operating companies. Among these companies are Mobil Oil Nigeria, Esso Exploration and Producing Nigeria Limited and Mobil Producing Nigeria Unlimited. Some of ExxonMobil’s affiliate companies have been in business in Nigeria for more than 100 years. Considering its pedigree, ExxonMobil is among those multinational energy corporations in Nigeria that are likely to operate at the highest standards of business ethics, safety, and environmental advocacy, financial and technical excellence. Most ExxonMobil affiliate companies in Nigeria are engaged in production and discovery of basic oil and normal gas. Their businesses also include serving retail, industrial and wholesale customers through their fuels and lubricant products.

In December 1999, Exxon and Mobil merged. The amalgamation between Exxon and Mobil brought as one three notable energy corporations in Nigeria: Mobil Oil Nigeria Plc (MON), Mobil Producing Nigeria Unlimited (MPN) and Esso Exploration and Production Nigeria Limited (EEPNL). These three companies have an outstanding history, confirmed experience and an exceptionally strong record of contributions to the development of the oil and gas sector in Nigeria. When combined together, these companies have more than 2,000 employees, with over 90 per cent being Nigerians.

**Shell Petroleum Development Corporation (Nigeria)**

SPDC, according to LAMP 2008, is the first energy corporation in Nigeria. Shell D’Arcy, the premier Shell Company in Nigeria, established the Royal Dutch/Shell Group in 1936. Shell D’Arcy has issued an exploration license by the Colonial government in November 1938 to look for mineral deposit throughout Nigeria. The energy company in January 1956 marked the first successful well drilled in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. In April 1956, Shell D’Arcy was changed to Shell-BP Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria Limited. The Company’s name changed to Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria (SPDC) in December 1979. The company for the first-time exported oil from Nigeria in February 1958. Shell’s Bonny Terminal was officially opened in April 1961 while in September 1971; Shell’s Forcados Terminal was commissioned.

**Research Questions**

This study seeks to provide answers to the following questions:

1. What is the prominent theme in ExxonMobil (Nigeria) online newsletter?
2. What is the prominent theme in SPDC (Nigeria) online newsletter?
Teachers' Professional Development in the Digitized World: A Sample Blended Learning Environment for Educational Technology Training
www.igi-global.com/chapter/teachers-professional-development-in-the-digitized-world/167347?camid=4v1a

Ethical Research Methods and Practice in the Twenty-First Century
www.igi-global.com/chapter/ethical-research-methods-and-practice-in-the-twenty-first-century/130593?camid=4v1a