

# Content and Patterns of Usage of Websites of Corporate Organizations in Nigeria

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## Abstract

The paper examined the content, patterns and extent to which Nigerian corporations are using websites as a communication strategy to combine the multiple functions of providing information on organisation's activities and image-building strategies for their brands as well as direct and indirect selling functions. A content analysis of 112 corporate web sites was carried out, using cookies to generate user content and unit of analysis. Findings show that corporations in Nigeria use websites for several communication functions ranging from corporate communications to advertisements and user guide information. Further findings reveal that message strategy for most of the websites is to build brand and corporate image. The study also found that features of the websites do exercise some level of influence on users, while features such as instant messaging, chat rooms, e-mails amongst others enables interactivity on the websites. The study concludes that websites are emerging communication media to watch. Opening of oars to the emerging trend by corporations in Nigeria, ensuring enhanced interactivity, and frequent updating of the sites amongst others is recommended by the study.

**Key Words:** Nigerian Corporations, Websites Content, Usage Patterns, Corporate Communications.

## Introduction

Revolutions in Information Communication Technologies as witnessed in the telecommunications, communications satellites and internet advances has revolutionised the spate of communication in Nigeria. Coupled with the interdependence of nations' economies through comparative, relative and absolute cost effective advantages and increased international trade propelled by globalisation, these innovations have provoked changes in the field of communications. This trend as observed by Arens, Weigold and Arens (2009:488), has affected the scope and concept of organisational communications across the globe. Corroborating, Schultz, Tannenbaum and Lauterborn (2008:94), observe that with these changes, corporate communications management via websites have gained significant following both as philosophies and methods. According to them, the trend suggests that there are three themes that have emerged from the numerous conceptual and operational definitions of corporate communications management in line with the changing dynamics. These themes as they observe, include adoption of the audience perspective, the integration of messages and media, and the evaluation of outcomes.

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Hoey (1998: 52) also notes that with the rapid evolution of the computers and Internet technology, more and more corporations across the globe have started to harness the advantages of computer-mediated communications, which are characterised by temporal and spatial independence through the use of websites. According to him these two features have prompted the shift away from one-way, mass communication to a one-on-one interactive communication as another dimension of corporate communications management. Corporations in Nigeria as suggested by NIIT (2009:3) are also caught up with the global trend, and many of them have established their own websites to communicate with their various publics, advertise and sell products or services, and manage customer relationships online. Both practical and theoretical studies have demonstrated that interactivity is one of the most prominent features of a website that influences online attitudes toward the site and purchase intentions (Ghose and Dou 1998, Wolfenbarger and Gilly 2003; Yadav and Varadarajan 2005).

Although there has been tremendous and significant research in the field of communications in Nigeria, and the application of new technologies in communications management, there seem to be dearth of literature on the utilisation of websites by corporations in Nigeria as both a corporate reputation management media and corporate communications management strategy. However, online survey conducted by the Nigerian Institute of Information Technology (NIIT) 2009 shows that there are 469 corporations in Nigeria with interactive websites. Out of these corporations, 191 are multinationals and foreign missions, 139 are government ministries, agencies and parastatals; 98 are private business conglomerates, 23 are media organisations, 17 are for NGOs, and 18 are for small private firms. This could not be unconnected with the elucidation of Arens, Weigold and Arens (2009:258) that because many customers see all sponsored communications as advertising, advertising people (account managers, creatives, media planners) must grow beyond their traditional specialty, practices and strategies to become enlightened generalists, familiar with and able to integrate all types of organisational communications activity and media, especially trends in internet communications. The implication is that synergistic use of communication channels has become crucial to corporate communications management, hence the mass adoption of corporate websites as a communication channel by corporations in Nigeria.

### **Statement of Problem**

As the study by NIIT shows, many corporations in Nigeria have developed corporate web sites to provide information to users about their operations, product, services, brands, and to help them manage their reputation and image through effective communications with their various publics and stakeholders. However, the extent to which these websites are used by the corporations as corporate communications management strategy to communicate with their various publics, advertise and sell their products or services, and manage relationships with their stakeholders online is still not clear.

Also, the extent to which visitors to these sites are satisfied with the information they receive, as well as having access to the corporations' staff through the websites in line with the trends of adoption of the audience perspective is uncertain. The content and patterns of usage of the sites to integrate messages and media, and the evaluation of outcomes as observed by Schultz, Tannenbaum and Lauterborn is also not clear, in spite of the interactive nature of most of them.

This raises questions regarding the content and patterns of usage of the websites by corporations in Nigeria. The questions also resonate around the extent to which the sites are used provide adequate information and receive feed back from online users. It is against this backdrop that this study is examining the content and patterns of usage of websites by Nigerian corporations for corporate communications management.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The broad objective of this study is to ascertain the content and patterns of usage of websites by Nigerian corporations as a corporate communications management strategy. This is to determine the extent to which the websites are used to combine the multiple functions of providing information on organisation's activities, managing brand image and building corporate reputations. How the corporations are able to use their websites to address multiple audiences from a single communications media umbrella is also of importance to this study. The specific objectives are however, to:

- i. Examine the content of websites of Nigerian corporations with regards to their information and message strategies.
- ii. Ascertain the multiple communications and management functions performed by websites of Nigerian corporations.
- iii. Find out the pattern of usage and the kind of information visitors to websites of Nigerian corporations seek.
- iv. Establish the interactive nature of the websites of Nigerian corporations and the extent to which visitors' inquiries are addressed.
- v. Determine the extent to which visitors to the sites are influenced by the content of the sites.

### **Research Questions**

Drawn from the general objective of examining the content and patterns of usage of websites by Nigerian corporations for corporate communications management, this study aims to address the following questions:

- RQ1:** What information and message strategies compose the content of websites of corporations in Nigeria?
- RQ2:** What are the key communication functions performed by the websites of corporations in Nigeria?
- RQ3:** What is the pattern of usage and kind of information sought on the websites by Nigerians?
- RQ4:** What are the interactive features and tools of Nigerian corporations' websites?
- RQ5:** How do Nigerian corporations evaluate the influence of their websites' contents on users?

### **Theoretical Framework**

The aim of corporate communications management by organisations is to promote build credible brand images for their products, goods, services, and ideas in order to influence and create favourable dispositions towards them. This they do by providing relevant, persuasive and enticing information to the target audience and prospects. This underscores the relevance of the persuasion theory as the underpinning premise for this study.

### **Persuasion Theory**

Persuasion theory is based on the ideologies of the celebrated Greek philosopher Aristotle and his theories of rhetoric. According to the accounts of Bradley (1984:351), the theory of persuasion is anchored on the process whereby an attempt is made to induce changes in attitudes and behaviour through involvement of a person's cognitive and affective domain processes. Folarin (1998:74) adds that based on the individual differences perspective, the theory holds that: for a persuasive message to be considered effective, it must succeed in altering the psychological functioning of the recipient in such a way that

he/she or they will respond overtly with models of behaviour desired or suggested by the communicator.

In their own contribution, DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach (1975:249) add that the theory of persuasion seeks to explain the ways in which variables such as organizational membership, work roles, reference groups, cultural norms and primary group norms exercise social control and help to shape and channel people's overt actions based on persuasive messages in ways that depart from their own internal psychological dispositions. They posit that persuasion theory employs the technique of comparative feedback to induce attitudinal change. The theory has evolved several studies and has been found to be the bedrock of advertising and public relations practice.

The theory of persuasion finds relevance in this study because the extent to which websites can be used as a corporate communications management strategy much depends on the persuasive nature of their contents and patterns of usage. The ability of the websites to address multiple audiences from a single umbrella medium with interactive capabilities is crucial to the extent to which users will be influenced by the content and patterns of usage of the websites of Nigerian corporations.

### **Literature Review**

The premise of available literature on websites of corporations suggests that the website can be an extension of, or a different form of, traditional corporate advertising and that corporations websites can be synergistically utilised as a broad based corporate communications management strategy. This study examines the available literature on three characteristics of websites - function, audience, and message strategy - and explores how these characteristics are applied in the multiple types of websites designed by Nigerian corporations. Product category and size of company were considered in selection of the websites analysed in this study to ensure that a wide range of functions, audiences, and message strategies could be identified.

Reviewed literature showcases how websites are changing both the theory and practice of corporate communications management. By analysing the use of websites as a corporate communications management strategy, traditional concerns such as function, audience, and message strategy remain, but issues may shift in an environment where marketers have virtually unlimited time and space to communicate their messages, and focus on how websites can build on and expand the function of corporate communications management. Since the main objective of the study is to ascertain the extent to which Nigerian corporations are able to use their websites to combine multiple functions such as providing information and image-building strategies for their brands as well as direct and indirect selling functions, the focus of the review was on the purpose, audience, and message strategy of websites. This is aimed at evaluating the potency of websites as both corporate communications management strategy and corporate reputation and image management media.

### **Corporations' Websites: Purpose, Audience, and Message Strategy**

With the enormous growth of the internet as an effective communications media, websites have become significant corporate communications activity with huge investments and expenditures by corporations (Belch and Belch, 2008:76). It is critical for brand managers as well as corporate communications executives to understand websites as core corporate communications management strategies of their organisations, because publics' knowledge formed from information on websites may influence the way they think about services of the corporations and the individual brands they market (Biehal and Sheinin, 1998:48). Research on websites has examined its messages (Garbett 1983; Rothchild 1987), its objectives of enhancing corporate image (Haley 1996; Javagli

et al. 1994; Schumann, Hathcote, and West 1991), and its role in increasing investment for brands (Javagli et al. 1994; Winkleman 1985; Winters 1986).

Corporations' websites pursue several purposes. Schumann, Hathcote and West (1991:35) in their historical review of websites, stated that the role of websites has changed over time. In its emergent years the primary function was "corporate image" and its subdividing topics were engendering of "goodwill," "patronage," "public relations," and "public services" (Stanton 1998:23). The concept of "image marketing" was later broadened and advocacy and issue advertising became central to websites. Advocacy and issue advertising provide means for companies to promote political, social and economic ideas and to elicit public support for corporate positions (Schumann, Hathcote, and West 1991). Currently, the demands of the marketing environment require that corporate image marketing continue to promote goodwill, but also that the messages being conveyed have more clout. This according to Hartigan and Finch (1999:86) can be achieved through issue or advocacy advertising, or through the newer "hybrid" ads - advertising that combines promotion of products and services while communicating a general message about the company, thus addressing the constraints of limited advertising budgets.

McLeod and Kunita (2004:87) proposed a typology of websites contents based on either image-based objectives such as: "goodwill," "charity," "financial," "employee recruitment," and "awareness" or issue-based objectives such as "issue position" and "counter arguments." Strauss and Frost (2005:56) also categorised websites as "issue or advocacy," "image or identity," "financial or investor relations," and "market preparation (sales-related)" advertising. He also identified different objectives for different kinds of corporate communications management. Many researchers suggest that corporations' websites are fundamentally different from other forms of corporate communications (Garbett 2003; Rau and Preble 2008; Waltzer 2008). Issue or advocacy websites are designed to promote the corporation's position on current social issues in order to influence public attitudes or public policy (Waltzer 2008; Sethi 2009).

One objective of corporations' websites may be to persuade an investor to look into a company's stock while other corporations' websites have objectives such as attracting top skilled professionals to work for the company. Explaining the increasing importance of corporations' websites and their adaptation as corporate communications management media, Fristch and Fastenau (2009:98) contend that the process of identifying and reaching the right audience has become too complex for corporations to manage using traditional media. According to them:

This process of identifying and reaching the 'right audience' has become more complex and has grown in importance with the emergence of two countervailing trends: while markets are getting larger, market segments are getting smaller. Witness the expanding globalization of markets and the concurrent shift from mass marketing to the targeting of increasingly smaller segments (micro marketing).

Therefore, the website of a company usually needs to consider multiple objectives to satisfy multiple audiences (Garbett 2003; McLeod and Kunita 2004). Different objectives, or functions, and different target audiences can be associated with different message strategies on websites. Message strategy is usually determined after communication objectives and targeting are established. Thus, corporations need to vary their message strategies for different stakeholders (e.g., investors, consumers, etc.) and objectives (e.g., building corporate image, driving sales, etc.).

Websites can be used for all of the roles of corporate communications management identified above. To address multiple objectives and the differing needs of different audiences, corporations can include a variety of content in their sites. For example, multi-purpose umbrella corporate advertising can be effectively used in the web environment because adding additional messages does not result in the need for purchasing additional time or space in media vehicles. In fact, like hybrid advertising, many websites contain

information about their products and services as well as messages that focus on both corporate image and issues.

Many features of these websites reflect the objectives of corporate advertising detailed above. For example, some Web sites such as those of MTN, Globacom and Chevron contain menu items for investor information that lead to information targeted to stockholders and other investors. A career menu item often leads to information targeted at prospective employees. Features such as these may satisfy the objective of enhancing relationships with various stakeholders. Other parts of the websites provide information and/or branding for the company and its products.

The websites adds an important functionality that is not often available in traditional communication. Many websites as observed by Arens, Weigold and Arens (2009:418) combine advertising messages and distribution channels. Additionally, the Web offers a unique opportunity to combine multiple message types targeted to multiple stakeholders that was simply not possible when corporate advertisers were limited by the constraints of time and space available in traditional media. Thus, the Web has the potential to build on and expand the opportunities for corporate advertising. Finally, the nature of websites might be influenced both by product category and company size. Inherent characteristics of product categories are a critical factor affecting message strategies because the consumer's motivation to purchase a product can vary based on product characteristics. For example, food companies might be more likely to appeal to the senses while apparel companies might be more likely to appeal to the ego.

Big companies such as MTN, Globacom, Chevron, Nigeria Breweries, Guinness Nigeria, Dangote Group of Companies, and Etisalat amongst others are more likely to invest heavily in websites than are smaller corporations such as government agencies and parastatals resulting in sites with more features and more message sophistication. High-revenue companies are also more likely to manage relationships with multiple stakeholders and will thus be likely to address more audiences through their websites than do small corporations or companies.

### **Methodology**

Content analysis offers a method for examining manifest content of messages and is an ideal tool for the current study that examines corporations' websites. Traditionally, content analysis is primarily a quantitative method but it requires some qualitative analysis as well. Researchers generally need to develop their own coding scheme for analyzing content, though sometimes researchers can adopt existing coding schemes established by their peers. Although every research is subject to some human intuition as Babbie (2001:84) notes, the process of content analysis allows relatively more room for the researcher's intuition than do some methods such as surveys or experimental designs. Analysis of Web-based messages adds new complexity to the process of content analysis due to the problems of sampling, unit of analysis, and work of coders which are most challenging because of characteristics of the Web that are different from traditional media.

The number of Web homepages is virtually impossible to measure and the number of subsequent pages under a homepage varies considerably by site. Moreover, many sites continuously change content. These ambiguities and complexities lead to complications in sampling, defining units of analysis and achieving reliable coding. However, careful steps were taken to address these concerns. Before the final content analysis was conducted, a series of initial pre-tests were used to develop a coding scheme for web features and message strategies. Using the sampling frame and procedures to collect data, 44 websites of corporations in Nigeria were examined by two coders recruited as research assistants in the pretest. This pretest primarily aimed to identify ways to measure site

functions and types of information sought by audiences through the corporations' websites.

Sampling for the study was not done in the normal way as applicable to traditional media. Rather, Cookies (a tiny software used in keeping log and tracking sites people surf, initially designed to track hackers and fraud) was used. The cookies was placed on all computers in the internet café where the study was conducted (Panet Technologies, Makurdi) which enabled us to track 112 websites of Nigerian corporations visited repeatedly by online community members during the two weeks of the research. At the end of the two weeks, corporation's profile information, communication about the corporation, communication about service, products and brands, advertising, sales and purchase information, communication about achievements and reputation, user directory and help information, jobs, careers and vacancy announcements, were identified as the communication functions of the websites' home pages.

Thus, the unit of analysis was the homepage of the 112 websites of Nigerian corporations. Analysis of message strategy focused on text and graphics of the homepage but did not include analysis of links. By looking at the homepages in this way, the primary text and graphics can be considered as similar to many print advertisements. Furthermore, focusing on just the primary text and graphics helps to equalize differences between small sites with few links and larger sites with many links. Analysis of functions and audiences focused more on the links that were provided on the homepages as obtained using cookies. The homepage not only states a key message, but it also provides a kind of "front door" to all corporate messages contained in the site. Most visitors to a Web site decide whether they will continue to browse a site based on their impressions of the homepage (Ha and James 1998). Thus, the homepage of websites is an effective and valuable unit of analysis for this study. This made the coding framework to comprise of message strategy and the information sought by users as well as the influence of the sites on them.

### Results and Analysis

Average time spent coding each website was approximately ten minutes. To calculate the intercoder reliability, 20% of the sample (32 Web sites) was selected. Selected sites were representative of the whole sample in terms of information category and message strategy. Two out of three research assistants examined each of the 32 sites and the intercoder reliability of each coding item was calculated using Holsti's formula. Intercoder reliability ranged from 75.9% to 87.5% with an average of 81.0%. The few items with lower reliability required qualitative and subjective decisions (e.g., the five-point Likert scale for overall message strategy).

**RQ1:** What information and message strategies compose the content of websites of corporations in Nigeria?

Content Function and Strategy	Frequency	Percentage
Corporation's profile information	10	9%
Communication about the corporation	14	10%
Communication about service, products and brands	11	10%
Advertising, sales and purchase information	13	13%
Communication about corporation and brands	23	21%
Communication about achievements and reputation	7	6%
User directory and help information	3	3%
Jobs, careers and vacancy announcement	31	28%
<b>Total</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: *Internet Users Generated Content, 2010*

Data contained in this table shows that content of the 112 websites analysed is composed of several information functions, however, they are used the most for jobs, careers and vacancy announcements (28%) and communication about corporation and brands, while they are less used for user directory and help information (3%).

The significance of the data is evident in the fact that it has shown that websites of Nigerian corporations are used synergistically for several communications functions and message strategies as shown by the average percentages of 13% advertising, sales and purchase information, 10% for communication about the corporation, 10% for communication about service, products and brands, 9% for corporate profile information, and 6% for communication about achievements and reputation. Also, the corporations combine the various communications functions in a manner that projects a favourable image for them and their brands, products or services. This is evident in the websites of almost all the websites analysed, especially MTN, Glo, Etisalat, NB, Dangote Group etc. All the sites have inspiring welcome notes on the homepages of their websites, and they have made the sites friendly in a manner that confers significant prestige on the status and image of the corporations.

**RQ2:** What are the key communication functions performed by the websites of corporations in Nigeria?

Function	Frequency	Percentage
News	11	10%
Advertising and corporate identity promotion	16	14%
Public Relations and reputation management	18	16%
Direct Marketing and sales promotions	21	19%
Image and Brand promotions	34	30%
Answers to user inquiries and blogging	12	11%
<b>Total</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Source: Internet Users Generated Content, 2010*

Data gather on the key communication functions of Nigerian corporations websites as contained in this table also shows that the 112 websites analysed are used for several information functions such as news, advertising and corporate identity promotion, public relations and reputation management, direct marketing and sales promotions, image and brand promotions, and for answering of user inquiries and blogg posts.

This is prominently evident on the sites of glo Nigeria which welcomes users on the home page by identifying glo Nigeria as Africa's fastest growing telecommunications company, and the market leading mobile service provider in Nigeria. The website of the Nigerian Debt Management Office (DMO) though a government agency, also welcomes users with the organisation's vision, mission and core values, with the aim of building confidence in the organisation while providing links to the array of other web pages. This reflects and showcases the multiple communication functions of Nigerian corporations' websites. The variations in the percentages on the communications function of the web sites also shows that they are viably used to fulfill a variety of communication functions with the corporations' publics and prospects, thus lending credence to the relevance of the data to this study.

**RQ3:** What is the pattern of usage and kind of information sought on the websites by Nigerians?

Information Sought/Usage Pattern	Frequency	Percentage
Information on services rendered	21	16%
Corporate information	18	19%
Events, News and Updates	24	21%
Jobs, careers and vacancy information	36	32%
Links to other sites	13	12%
<b>Total</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Source: Internet Users Generated Content, 2010*

Regarding the pattern of usage of the websites of Nigerian corporations and the kind of information Nigerians seek on the websites, the data shows that 32% of the websites' content users do visit the jobs, career and vacancy information page. Also, 21% of people who surfed the net during the period of the study visited the events, news and updates page, while 19% of the users visited the corporate information (home page) page of the websites, and 16% users browsed information on the services rendered by the corporations. The link to other sites page is the leased browsed page with 12% users visiting it.

Significance of this data to the study is that since internet users are constantly in search of varying information on websites, Nigerian corporations' websites are formidable media that can be used in targeting segmented audiences, by employing several message strategies as corporate communications management approaches to build brands and corporate image, or promote the services and corporate profile of the corporation.

**RQ4:** What are the interactive features and tools of Nigerian corporations' websites?

Feature/Tool	Frequency	Percentage
e-mails	38	34%
Chat rooms	25	22%
Instant Messaging	11	10%
Message outlook	18	19%
Pop-ups and buzz	13	13%
Intranets	7	6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Source: Internet Users Generated Content, 2010*

Content generated on the interactive features and tools of Nigerian corporations' websites indicate that electronic mail (e-mail) is the most interactive tool used by Nigerian corporations' websites with 34% dominance. This is followed by chat rooms with 22% usage category, and message outlook with 19%. Pop-ups and buzz and Intranets are less used. This implies a less user engagement in the content of websites of corporations in Nigeria.

However, it is worth noting that in spite of less audience or user visibility in terms of interactivity of the web sites, users still persist in ensuring that they are also heard as shown by the significant number of those who either make enquiries, post comments or chat with the corporations' staff to obtain relevant information that will serve their purpose. What this portends is that when effectively harnessed, websites can be

effectively used to influence the users by engaging them in active communication that will serve both the purpose of the corporations and the users.

**RQ5:** How do Nigeria corporations evaluate the influence of their websites' contents on users?

<b>Evaluation Technique</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
List serve ratings	36	43%
Frequency of log-on per day	18	19%
Number of e-mails per day	13	13%
Kind of information surfed	21	16%
Comments by users	24	21%
<b>Total</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Source: Internet Users Generated Content, 2010*

Data contained in this table shows that corporations have several ways of examining the influence of their websites' content on the users. As indicated in the table, list serve ratings is the most common tool used by corporations to evaluate the influence of their websites' content and message strategies on the users (43%). Apart from list serve ratings, comments posted by users (21%), frequency of log-on per day (19%), kind of information surfed by users (16%), and number of e-mails received per day (13%) are the other strategies used by the corporations to evaluate the influence of the content of their websites on the users. This shows that the websites of Nigeria corporations have significant influence on the users, with the tendency for stimulating repeat visits to specific sites and pages.

### **Implications**

The data analysed have suggested some implications for corporations in Nigeria with regards to the use of websites as a corporate communications management strategy. Specifically, Nigerian corporations seem not to be fully aware of the immense potentials of their websites as corporate communications management media in terms of many of the characteristics of the websites of Nigerian corporations examined by this study. But, there is evidence that Nigerian corporations can still make effective use of the websites. In particular, small companies seem to be exhibiting a fair amount of flexibility in using their websites to support their sales functions and maintain their relationships with business partners.

While some connections were found between message strategy and service category, they were not strong enough to suggest any kind of mandate. Not all private corporations used a sensory strategy and not all multinational corporations used an ego strategy (in fact the most common message strategy for both of these corporations' categories was routine). This suggests that website developers have a great deal of flexibility in determining what strategies to use for making the sites of their corporations effective corporate communications management venue. However, there is some evidence that the simple type of routine strategies described earlier can often be a kind of "crutch" for small private firms and NGOs that do not spend the time or creative effort to develop a solid message strategy.

The study also has implications for researchers. Perhaps most significantly, it confirms the notion that the website can be considered to be a form of corporate communications management. It fulfills many of the purposes of corporate advertising, direct marketing, brand promotions and allows the corporations to address multiple audiences. From a research and theory perspective this has broad implications ranging

from identifying the websites as valid venues for the study of corporate communications management, and to the possible need to redefine corporate communications management principles in Nigeria. Banners, buttons, and pop-up messages are "like" traditional advertising because they are messages placed in a medium by a marketer with the intent of reaching a specific audience. The entire website is a marketer-controlled message that doesn't have to be bought from any content provider. Targeting of audiences ceases to be based on concerns about finding the right venue for a message and shifts instead to a focus on how to make sure that the appropriate audiences find relevant information on the websites. The study also provides an important venue for applying the persuasion theory. It illustrates the flexibility of the theory for using subtle messages as a strategy to influence and stimulate patronage of corporations' brands while promoting the corporations' image.

### **Conclusion**

The goal of this study was to critically assess the content and patterns of usage of websites of corporate organisations in Nigeria as corporate communications management strategy to combine the multiple functions of providing information and image-building strategies for their brands as well as direct and indirect selling functions. Also, how the Nigerian corporations are able to use their websites to address multiple audiences from a single umbrella was another area of interest to the study. Findings of the study demonstrate the significance of websites in the field of marketing communications with effect of affective social influence on internet users. Drawing from these findings, it is worth concluding that online experience with websites which enables interactivity enhances consumers' perceptions of control, synchronicity, and responsiveness to advertising and corporate communications management. The provision of cognitive and affective social presence cues results in more favourable attitudes toward the website, as mediated by consumers' perceived control, synchronicity, and responsiveness.

### **Recommendations**

It is therefore recommended that while there are social costs associated with corporations' websites and online virtual experience, Nigerian corporations' websites are no doubt strategic corporate communications management media to watch. As such:

Corporations in Nigeria should be open to their site users by creating more room for interactivity in order to build online community members that will transform into brand loyalists of the corporations.

Enquiries and inquiries of online community members and their responses to advertising and other messages on the sites should be taken seriously and addressed promptly so as to create in them the confidence that will affect and influence them towards the site. This will engender increase surfing of the sites and enhance users' perceptions of their relevance and value to the corporations and their services or brands.

Corporations in pursuit of specific advertising goals should integrate with other features of the sites in such a manner that will not become offensive to the online community members, but that which will enable the corporations to create strong identity and group benefit norms among members. This is because only when community users are comfortable with the presence of advertising on the websites that they will visit the site often and be responsive to community advertising.

Government parastatals and agencies should endeavour to update their websites with relevant information that will position them as transparent institutions in the eyes of the public. A situation where one can only find information on events of 2008 in 2010 on websites of organisations only exposes the adamant nature of the organisations. This in turn will definitely generate apathy as people seeking information on such sites will become frustrated and tend to hate such corporations together with their brands and services.

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