An Evaluation of the Impact of Community Relations Programmes/Projects on Host Community- Company Relationship

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Abstract

This study was aimed at examining the impact of community relations strategy from the perspective of the community by evaluating a youth empowerment programme implemented by Nigerian Breweries in Awo-Omamma, located in Imo State, South East Nigeria. The study adopted the stakeholder theory of corporate social responsibility and come up with grounded theory known as the opinion swing theory based on the responses of the participants. Responses obtained from the beneficiaries of the youth empowerment programme were evaluated using quantitative and qualitative research designs, using questionnaire copies and interviews to gather data from the critical stakeholders such as the traditional rulers, community leaders, and youth leaders. Findings from the research indicate that the youth empowerment programme redefined the engagement process between the company and the community and provided evidence to support in further studies in strategic community relations in Nigeria beyond the oil industry interventions. Also, there was opinion swing in favour of the Nigerian Breweries plc company based on the positive disposition of the beneficiaries of the empowerment project towards the image of the company which stood at a total score of 86% for positive impression and 76% positive relationship.

Keywords: Community relations • Corporate social responsibility • Youth empowerment • Stakeholder relationship

Introduction

Background to the Study

In the past, corporate organizations were seen to be detached from their operating communities and the essence of social contract was perhaps not understood. Government was held responsible or accountable for public relations activities for public good. Corporations were only required to obey extant laws and discharge their civic responsibilities such as payment of taxes. In recent years, community relations just like corporate social responsibility has increasingly gained recognition globally. These days Community relations have become a key part of stakeholder expectations beyond profitability. Therefore, to thrive in the 21st century knowledge economy, smart companies are moving away from mere observance of fiscal and regulatory laws to a more strategic engagement with communities where they operate and where their employees work and live. Proponents of corporate social responsibility have attempted to use the concept to cover a wide range of issues such as employee relations, human rights, corporate ethics, community relations and the environment. Widespread emphasis on public relations have focused on employee relations, human rights, customer relations, environmental stewardship and ethical conduct with very little on community relations. In Nigeria, not much has been studied in terms of community relations by corporations beyond the issues around environmental degradation in the oil producing communities, Nworgu (2008), which have gained global attention. In most illustrations, researches on community relations and how corporations responded are limited to instances of community restiveness and environmental related crisis in the Niger Delta [1-7].

While companies now increasingly recognising the need to embark on community relations and implement programmes that improve the lot of members of their operating communities and engender collaboration in shared values, not much has been captured in terms of an assessment of the impact or outcome of such programmes from the beneficiaries perspectives. Published studies in the area of community relations strategies by corporate organizations in Nigeria are extremely low, with most research focusing on the right CSR model for the oil industry in the Niger Delta region [6,8] Therefore, there is need to expand researches on community relations by corporate organizations in Nigeria from the perception of the beneficiaries on the activities of corporate organizations in not only the oil industry but in other industries such as manufacturing. This is the gap this study tired to fill by identifying a youth empowerment programme implemented by Nigerian Breweries Plc in Awo-Omma, host community located in Oru-East Local Government Area of Imo State, Nigeria for impact evaluation. To achieve this, the study sought to find an answer to the following research question: How effective was the youth empowerment programme implemented by Nigerian Breweries Plc in Awo-Omamma in enhancing community relations from the perception of the community? How has the program affected positive the opinion of the participants about the company involved?

Nigerian Breweries Plc and Community Relations in Awo-Omamma

Incorporated in 1946, Nigerian Breweries Plc is the pioneer and largest brewing company in Nigeria. Currently, the company has nine operational breweries and two malting plants. In December 2014, Nigerian Breweries Plc completed a merger with Consolidated Breweries facilitated by Heineken N.V, an international brewing company with majority shares in both companies. Subsequently, Nigerian Breweries assumed responsibility for the operations of Awo-Omamma brewery (The Heineken Company, 2014). In the following months, after the acquisition of the company witnessed a surge in petitions from the host community for compensation on the land for the brewery, payment for right of way for effluent pipeline, demand for employment opportunities and community development. Occasional threats, intermitted extortion from transporters and disruption of brewery operations were experienced by transporters, vendors and employees in the operating community have characterized the relationship between the company and

the host community.

According to a communication on its corporate website of the Nigerian Breweries, (2019), Nigerian Breweries embarked on a youth empowerment programme in Awo-Omamma in August 2019 as part of its corporate social responsibility strategy of growing with the host communities based on the theme: Partnership for Growth. As a rationale, the company identified an opportunity to generate positive energy from the youths and entrench sustainable platforms to provide young people in the community with access to business and vocational skills with the objectives of the implementation of the youth empowerment programme through vocational skills training and practical demonstrations conducted by the company from August 2019 to October 2019 in the following skill areas.

(1) Confectionery (baking);

(2) Cosmetology: Make-up, manicure & pedicure, hair braiding;

(3) Solar panel installation;

(4) Barbing;

(5) Soap Making;

To this end, basic book-keeping, business management, customer service and life skills were also facilitated as part of the programme.

Statement of the Problem

Forsty relationship seems to define the host communities-company operation in recent times. There are the issues of either high expectation from the communities from the companies operating in their area or pure negative of the host communities by companies as the case may be. Much as there have been different CSR carried out by companies in Nigeria, not much has been researched on the outcome of such projects from the perception of the communities [9] In recent years, Nigeria's population has increased tremendously, putting overwhelming pressure on the limited and already overstretched economic opportunities. Many companies are therefore faced with the problems of coping with the expectations of host communities who demand for the involvement of corporate organizations in providing infrastructure and supporting livelihood in their host communities. In the absence of this, economic protest, community restiveness and crime could escalate.

While companies now increasingly recognising the need to embark on community relations and implement programmes that improve the lot of members of their hosting community, not much has been captured in terms of an assessment of the impact or relevance of such programmes from the point of view of the community. Studies in the area of community relations strategies by corporate organizations in Nigeria are low, with most researches focusing on environmental degradation in the Niger Delta region and the right CSR model for the oil industry [6,8]. Therefore, there is need to expand research on community relations by corporate organizations in Nigeria, with respect to the perception of the beneficiaries on the activities of corporate organizations in not only the oil industry but in the other industries such as manufacturing and brewing companies. This is the gap this study intends to fill. To achieve this, the study identified a youth empowerment programme implemented as a community relations project by Nigerian Breweries Plc in its host community in Awo-Omma, in Oru-East Local Government Area in Imo State, Nigeria for impact evaluation.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the research was to evaluate the impact of the youth empowerment programme implemented by Nigerian Breweries in Awo-Omamma from August to November 2019 as perceived by the beneficiaries. The study was intented to determine the perception of the beneficiaries of the on the quality of the program and determine if the projects meets the expectations of the host community in terms of improving their relationship with the company.

The other objectives were:

1. Identifying the ways relevant stakeholders were engaged in the host community through the skills programme/projects;

2. Ascertaining the value created through the skills programed/projects for the community;

3. Identifying the challenges encountered in using skills programmer/ projects for community relations by the company.

Literature Review

The concept of CSR date back to as far as the French Revolution , at least to the corporate philanthropy of Joseph Rowntree who provided housing and education to the poor in the area of his factories. [10] CSR has been viewed in different ways by different scholars. Some perceive CSR as anti-capitalism [11] while others believe it improves corporate organisation's relations and in turn creates corporate clarity [7] enabling business environment for long-term profitability. CSR like many other concepts in the field of public relation is difficult to define universally[10] alludes that CSR is a vague and intangible concepts which can mean anything to anybody, and therefore is effectively explained without explained definition. An attempt is made to define CSR in Dahlsrud's Corporate Social Responsibility Definition Survey in "a concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis." In the same vein the Kennedy School of Government's CSR Initiative defines CSR to "encompass how companies make their profit and not only what they do with the profits". It went further to advise that CSR goes beyond philanthropy and compliance to address the manner in which companies manage their economic, social and environmental impacts and their stakeholder relationships in all their key areas of influence: including the workplace, the marketplace, the supply chain, the community and the public policy realm [12]. The concept of CSR encourages companies to take cognizance not only of the economic and financial dealings in a company, but also the social and environmental effects of business on its shareholders and the host community. Kan (n.d) says that CRS is not something that is required by the law for business to follow and implement but a voluntary action that improves company's performance and image. According to [10], CRS is an invention of public relations (PR) and that is the reason why CSR does not have commonly understood definition, a common set of benchmarks to measure its attainment, a process to achieve the benchmarks, system of internal audit, and a system of external verification by accredited bodies.

[13] opined that one of the domains of PR practice includes community relations and that CSR is an element of corporate PR. Therefore, Community relations are various measures undertaken by corporate organizations to foster cordial and sustainabile relationship with its operating communities. The relationship is expectedly mutual and one that results in goodwill for the company and development for the community. Desatnik (2000) emphasises on the importance of community relations as that "community involvement builds public image and employee morale, and fosters a sense of teamwork that is essential in long-term success" community relations is social outreach and programmes corporations established to build relations and foster an understating of the role and responsibilities a corporation has to its local community. Corporations reach out to the communities they operate in through CSR programme.

[14] listed specific programmes that engender community relations to include activity interest in addressing community issues, youth empowerment initiatives, engaging competent community members in procurement as suppliers, support for education and involvement in civic initiatives. Community relations have therefore become an imperative for businesses and thus requires in-depth reviews and subsequent studies.

The Review of the Concept of Community Relations

Community relations is regarded a multi-dimensional field, with varying

views and reviews by scholars. [15] is of the opinion that a company needs to recognize its stakeholders, especially host communities in an integrated manner which supports their livelihood and in return advances patronage. This is therefore focused on "doing good" in the interest of the company. Community relations should be aimed at a relationship that creates an ambient atmosphere of co-existence and supports the resolution of dispute in a mutually acceptable manner. [7] notes that public relations consists of community relations which is based on "good neighbourliness" anchored on good deeds which leads to goodwill for both the host communities and companies operating in them. Googins (1997) introduced a mantra to emphasize on the need for companies to include community relations as part of its strategy. Hence, she introduced what she referred to as "neighbour of choice". According to Googins (1997), a company can leverage community relations to expand and retain its license to operate. Therefore, to become a neighbor of choice, a company must establish a legacy of trust by:

- Building positive and sustainable relationships in its communities with key individuals, groups and organizations;

- Demonstrating sensitivity to community concerns and issues;

- Designing and implementing community programs (philanthropy, volunteerism, partnerships, in-kind donations) that improve the quality of community life and promote the company's long-term business strategies and goals.

According to Mohamad (2017), the best and suitable way to address conflicts between companies and host communities is through dialogue and appropriate consultation. He further identified three characteristics of community relations such as:

Involvement

To achieve an enduring community relation, companies are supposed to carry local community along in developmental programmes. Involving community through a developmental initiative comes in a different form such as educational support, youth empowerment, social welfare and even providing aid to the needy societies, and more importantly these new ways of involvement are blended in company's core area of proficiency for business strategy and marketing [16]. Lack of involving community members is largely the major causes of misunderstanding and rancour between companies and communities.

Communication and Community Relations

Communication serves as fundamental means of creating and enabling environment for understanding between company and host community. Communication is a veritable tool for resolving conflict and proper solution through consultation. Communication management is about effective supervision of free flow of information and organizational external relations, which consist of public issues and engagement with organizational external relations, which consist of public issues and engagement with social groups, the media and other related agencies [17] agrees that effective two-way flow of communication gives room to monitor any change or variation in community attitude or anticipation, so as quickly take the necessary measure which could result to commitment and satisfaction between company and community. Some researchers have identified community involvement as the most effective instrument of building harmonious coexistence between companies and their host communities [7] according to [18] Community involvement could however be sustainable only if it built based on mutual trust, control mutuality , commitment and satisfaction. Therefore, Mohamad (2017) developed a conceptual model to further signify the causative relationship within the various constructs, and other factors that influence community involvement and concluded that the antecedents of community involvement and relationship determinants are trust, commitment, satisfaction and control mutuality.

Trust and Community Relationship

Huang (2001) defines trust as one party's level of assurance in readiness to be subservient of the transact with the party. Mohamed (2017), opined

that trust, however can bring about an atmosphere of serenity with one another and reinforce the connection between two or more individuals in a relationship or between an organization and its host community. Similarly, trust is a significant component which aids organizations or companies in actualizing their goals and aspiration, because is a linkage that bond organizational system. To buttress this, Sharma & Kirn (2012) assert that trust is demonstrated through the reliance and dependence of one party on another for the fulfilment of a commitment to one another. This is exemplified by the degree to which local communities and companies are mutually involved in each other's development and sustainability. In reality, Du & Vieira (2012) are with the opinion that, sincere and genuine conversations and engagements between a company and its host communities are key elements of community development. This, according to Durko&Petrick (2015), could only be attained if host communities are deeply involved and engaged about a certain key decisions that affect their existence. Although researchers identified trust as an important mechanism for determining a relationship between companies and their stakeholders, especially the host communities, surprisely , Ugwuanyi (2016) found out in a study that, trust is not a determinate in an online business purchase relationship. Rather, people heavily rely on interactivity. To make purchases notwithstanding, Mohamd (2017), notes further that the level of trust between a company and its host community will positively affect community relations.

Control Mutuality and Community Relations

As Grunig (1999), notes, control mutuality demonstrates the extent in which parties consent to an authority by one party to influence the other party. This is observed as a new business derivative by companies in engaging with their local host community by giving them, a sense of belonging while seeking a competitive advantage. The aim of every business therefore is to make/remain profitable and competitive. However, this cannot be achieved without effective community relations. In other words, a business would not thrive in a tensed and unstable operating environment. Therefore, there is a link between control mutuality and community involvement in the area of meeting the stakeholders expectations, especially in the host community. Mohamad (2017) reasons that companies who ignore community expectations by refusing to involve the community in the company's sustainability agenda would likely face a crisis situation in the community. He therefore concluded that there is a significant impact of control mutuality of company's interterm of host community.

Commitment Satisfaction and Community Relations

Ting (2016) defines commitment as a conscious approach to sustain relationship, even to the extent of compromising some immediate needs to secure long-term interest. Commitment also can be defined as the extent to which each party's readiness and believe that the relationship is worth been sustained and promoted to a higher level. Many scholars assert that commitment signifies how each partner looks at target in a successful and persistent relationship (Lin 2012; Mohamad (2017). It is important to note that, the current debte among researchers on business and society, emphasizes that, organizations and companies competing in the market circles should strive show their ethical commitment by providing their public with satisfying information concerning product contents and social services, accruing from it. Satisfaction is described to have been achieved by Sharma & Kiran (2012) as the degree to which both parties have the impression that the relationship is favourable to them based on the real expectation of the outcome characterized satisfaction as enjoyable attainment. Satisfaction can be seen as either product or service related. This study is intended to identify satisfaction as an evaluation of the outcome of a relationship between a company and the host community based on skills acquisition sponsored by Nigerian Breweries Plc.

Bernard (2015), has tried to establish a relationship between satisfaction and community involvement. He argued that people evaluate community satisfaction with an outcome of various levels of involvement within the community setting. Thus, network structure within the community determines their satisfaction. The community with solid and formidable structure of involvement and networking are susceptible to bringing a

diverse group of settlers such as investors. Although satisfaction is usually perceived as the fulfillment derived from the service been rendered or meeting set expectations, brand or organizational reputation plays a significant role in relationship building rather than the actual satisfaction from the service rendered. Hence, Mohamad (2017), and Sengupta et al (2015) therefore conclude that there is significant relationship between strong community relations and satisfaction derived by host communities from their relationship with companies operating in their location.

Theoretical Framework

Most debates on CSR revolves around either pro-profit arguments or the profit cum social responsibility argument. In most cases, the theory of CSR advises companies to seek the maximum profit while obeying a moral minimum. In PR literature, scholars adopt different perspectives to understand CSR as the theory of CSR often brings up the debate about whom corporations have responsibility to [19] opined by [20] belives in three approaches to CSR which he described as shareholder theory, stakeholder theory, and societal theory. Shareholder approach is a classical view which maintains that corporate organizations owned by the individuals who have financial stakes in the organization and not created by society (Hasnas, 1998). Therefore, corporations are only responsible for and accountable to maximizing shareholders benefits. Hence, companies can be prefer t the socially responsible at the discretion of shareholders. Friedman (1993) pointed out that the only responsibility of business is to employ its resources and activities to create wealth and increase profit for the stakeholders while playing by the rules of doing business. In this vein, corporations can only be concerned about CSR if it supports the aim of profitability for shareholders [20].

Corporate social responsibility is in with Stakeholder theory, which emphasises that companies take into account of their stakeholder when making corporate decisions [4,21,22] Stakeholders are defined as "any group or individuals who can affect or are affected by the achievement of the firm's objectives" (Freeman, 1984). Evan and Freeman (1995) point out that each stakeholder group "has a right not to be treated as a means to some end, and therefore must participate in determining the future direction of the firm in which they have a stake" Corporations need to be concern e-c about the needs, hopes and influences of stakeholders [23].

Therefore cooperate organizations have a duty not only towards their shareholders but also stakeholders (the public).Finally, the societal approach concerns the responsibility of corporations to society as a whole, of which corporations are an integral part This approach maintains thats "corporations operate by public consent (trust), (license to corporate) in order to serve constructively the needs of society - to the satisfaction of society" (Marrewijk, 2003). This approach suggests the need of corporations to consider their position and act in terms of the complex societal context of which they are a part (Marrewijk, 2003). This approach is a response to corporate challenges in the current complex societal context. Corporations face increasing pressures to deal with and respond to the societal issues arising from their activities (Pinkston & Carre 11. 1996). Society's expectations towards corporations have evolved in response to the various difficulties they have experienced. The societal issues directed to the organisation by its stakeholders can be various and often conflicting [24]

Within this situation, the organisation experiences difficulties in its attempt to identify issues for its CSR programs. Within these three broad schools of thought are assumptions about what motivates organisations and influences particular CSR approaches among organisations. [25] model of CSR identifies four categories of responsibilities as economic; legal/political; ethical, and discretionary/philanthropic benevolent. In the economic category, companies are supposed to perform well financial and meet consumption needs. As companies meet the needs of society through production of goods and services, they will as well make profits and be socially responsible (Kan, n.d.). Under the legal group, companies should

abide and comply with the haws, which yield a good corporate citizenship. Companies should conduct their businesses ethically and follow society's moral rules under the ethical category. The last category, discretionary/ philanthropic in nature connotes serving and helping communities to contribute and engage in social activities for social development within the community. These are expectations placed on the corporation by corporate stakeholders and society as a whole. For the purpose of this study, corporate social responsibility is used to evaluate the impact of a youth empowerment programme implemented by Nigerian Breweries Plc from the perception of one of its key stakeholders - the host community.

The Second Theory for the Study is the Opinion Swing Theory

In public opinion spheres opinions are never static, the change from time to time. The reason for the change may vary from one public opinion (Nworgu, 2018) situation to the other. This is called the morning and evening of public opinion. Sometimes, opinion public opinion may change based on the availability of new information - new reasoning or new actions. The issue of public opinion swing cannot be complete without at looking at the role(s) of opinion leader(s). What we call public opinion, may be the opinion of the "vocal minority" over the opinion of the "silent majority". The role(s) of opinion leaders the opinion formation and expression has remained interesting and intriguing because opinion leaders are not always altruistic in their opinion, They may never mean well for the general public. There are factors that can lead to one becoming an opinion reader. They may include but not limited to education, wealth, and age, Knowledge, position/authority, physical appearance and personal idiosyncrasies. In understanding opinion swing concept (theory) we have be illustrative in demonstration how opinion leader is) and issues surrounding an event can lead to opinion change (swing). Nworgu narrates an African fable about the tortoise and his family. The story has it that tortoise raped the daughter at night and the family members, including his children, brought him out in the morning to the village square and tied to him a tree. Everybody going to the market in the morning saw tortoise tied to a tree and inquired about what happened. When they were told what tortoise did, they all condemned him for committing such heinous incestuous act. However, in the evening when the same people were coming back from the market, they still saw tortoise tied to the tree and having been beaten by the scorching sun without food and water, the opinion swinged in support of tortoise. The people condemned the children for melting out such a harsh treatment to their father. The argument changed from tortoise committing a huge crime, to did he ("tortoise") do what nobody has ever done"? The people tagged tortoise children 'wicked' and demanded the poor tortoise be released forth with. (Nworgu, 2018,

The process of opinion swing is a delicate and intricate one hence it should always be monitored by every forward looking public relations practitioner. The information that helps in opinion swing must be true, authentic and credible. 1: -rust be approached with caution in order to sustain public interest and attention. Outside the actions of the companies and their sustained communication e irons, other factors which can affect public opinion and ensure opinion swing are religion, value system, past and present experiences (Nworgu, 2018). In trying to achieve favourable opinion swing, we should remember the role of attitude in opinion change. Changing peoples' attitude towards a company may require changing their ego, using ego- boosting programmes that attract public interest, support appreciation, identification and direct participation. The skills acquization programme by Nigerian Breweries Plc in Umuchima community achieved opinion swing based on the above approach. Before the beginning of the programme, the host community had a very negative impression about the operations and existence of their community. Through focus group discussion, community engagement and personal interviews the researchers were able understand and appreciate the "no love lost" relationship existing between the host community and the company.

Hence, efforts were made to communicate and understand the reason for the skepticism expressed by the host in their relationship with the company.

Or in: on swing theory as a grounded was put to test in trying to persuade the host community to give company a chance to remedy the bad impression through the skills acquisition programme/project. After the programme, a set of questionnaire questions were used to gauge the extent of opinion swing in favour of the about the company. About 39.6% and 36.3% of the participants in the study, who were incidentally the beneficiaries of the skills acquisition programme, indicated that there was positive opinion swing in favour of the company, since the project had affected their impression about the company in some positive ways (36.3%) , and in most positive ways (19.8%) respectively. Therefore, we conclude that there is a significant positive opinion swing about Nigerian Breweries, Plc by Ubachima, Awommama youths based on the skill acquisition programme/project sponsored by the company. To this effect a successful community relations programme/project through efficient and responsible performance is an easier and effective strategy for public opinion swing, among the publics.

Our study also indicated that there was positive attitude and relationship between the host community and the youths. To the effect. 76% o of the trainees indicated that the project/programme had positively affected their relationship with the company. This is because the present day business world with increasing responsibilities, opportunities, demands a good dose of corporate social responsibility, opinion swing and attitudinal change for the sustenance of a good relationship between an organization and stakeholders (publics). The more the public are able to be aware of their rights and opportunities from a company, the more difficult and demanding the task of opinion swinging process becomes. However, opinion swing theory enabled the Nigerian Breweries Plc to cultivate, win and retain the host community support. Opinion swing theory signifies a systematic and planned information gathering: approach which is based on holistic methodology, designs and pragmatic practice of arriving at solution to public opinion management in public relations.

Methodology

The study used public opinion survey, case study design to assess the opinion of the opinion of the participants on impact of the exposure of over 100 youths to skills acquisition programme for a period of three months; examining their impressions about their relationship with Nigerian Breweries Plc, Awommama - the sponsors of the skills programme. The population for the study consisted of all the youths in Ubachima. Offekata II, in Awommama Oru West LGA, Imo State, Nigeria. The total number of youths in the community was estimated at 2,000 (both at those at home and abroad). However, a simple percentage was used to determine ihe sample size of 105 participant, representing 1.2% of the entire youth population. A stratified random sampling method was used to divide the community into eight villages that make up the autonomous community, A purposive sampling method was used to select participants who participated in the training, and 10 community and youth leaders were selected along village line. who are above 18 years but not more than 40 years of age, educated up secondary school level. Based on their participants in the skill programme, a proportionate sampling method allowed the participants to be selected in relation to the population of each village. Hence, the villages with larger population of youths had a higher number of participants. The test instruments were the questionnaire and interview guide. The copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the participants during a facilitate visit to Nigerian Breweries facility at the end of the three months intensive training using boot camp method, involving theories, practices and demonstrations. The interview session was conducted with critical stakeholders, including the youth leaders, before, during and after the training programme -The data were computed using special packages for social sciences research (SPSS). Results were presented in figures, using simple percentage.

The transparent selection process increased the quality of the study. Hence, the process identified the needs of the host community, by involving them in identifying the critical skills for training. The programme gave equal opportunities for representation of participants from each of the seven villages in Ubachima community. Also, to ensure quality skills, teaching,

the facilitators/trainers were selected through a rigorous interview session. The facilitator, supervisors and enumerators were used for questionnaire copies administration and used for data gathering and were used for data gathering for the impact assessment study Figure 1.

Results

RQ 1. In what ways were the relevant stakeholders engaged in the Nigerian Breweries' community relations projects? The engagement of the community is necessary in community relations.

The project was anchored on the following activities which involved all the stakeholders:

i. Community and critical stakeholder's engagement;

ii. Needs assessment;

iii. Stakeholders meetings;

iv. Selection of participants through a transplant process;

v. Selection of the facilitators;

vi. Boot camping (training);

vii. Brewery visits (facilitate tour);

viii. Graduation ceremony (start-up)

Therefore charts 1 and 2 shows the process of engaging the relevant stakeholders by representing the means of the age distribution range and the skills acquisition distribution. The results, show of the that the relevant stakeholders were appropriately and effectively engaged in the skills programme as a community relations strategy; with those within the age of the age bracket of 18-25 having the highest percent representation (69.4%). Also, Baking and Confectionary had the highest representation/participation of 26.0%, which female participants dominated the skill. This showed an even distribution of participants in the study based their even distribution in the skills acquisition. This also indicated a high stakeholder's involvement in both the skills in the study Figures 2 & 3.

RQ2: What were the values created by the project on Host Community – Nigerian Breweries Plc Relationship?

A preliminary study carried using the participants/trainees shows that 66.3% indicated that the training programme enabled them to acquire the skills "perfectly well". Only 1.7% indicated that they did not acquire the skills
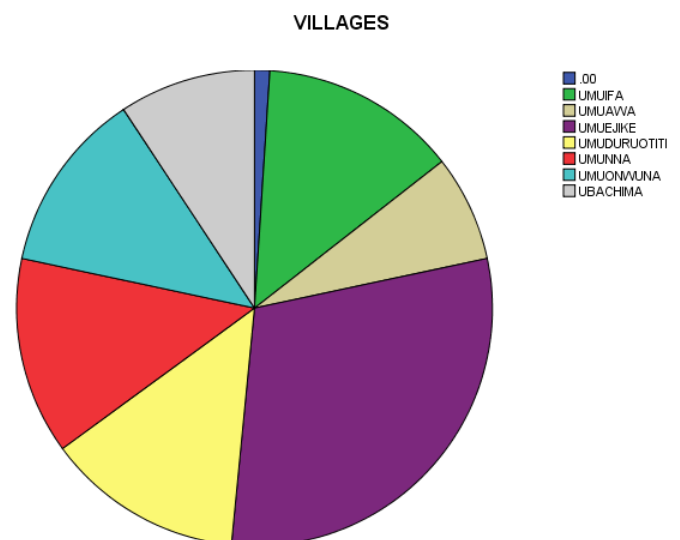

Figure 1. The mean distribution of sample size according to the seven villages.
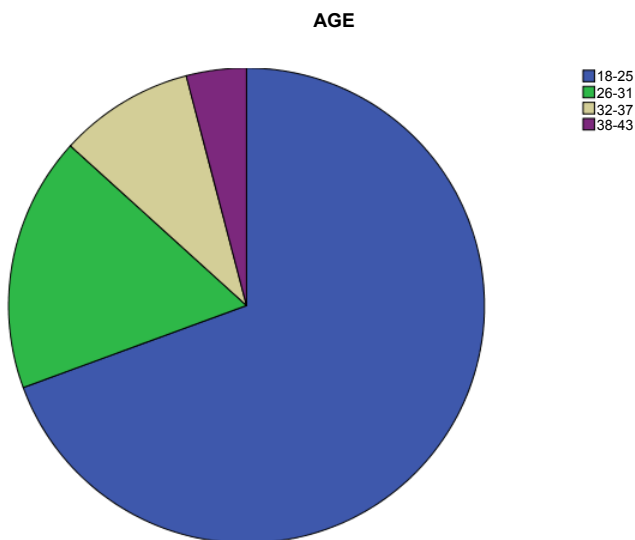
AGE

Figure 2. The distribution of the participant according to age range.
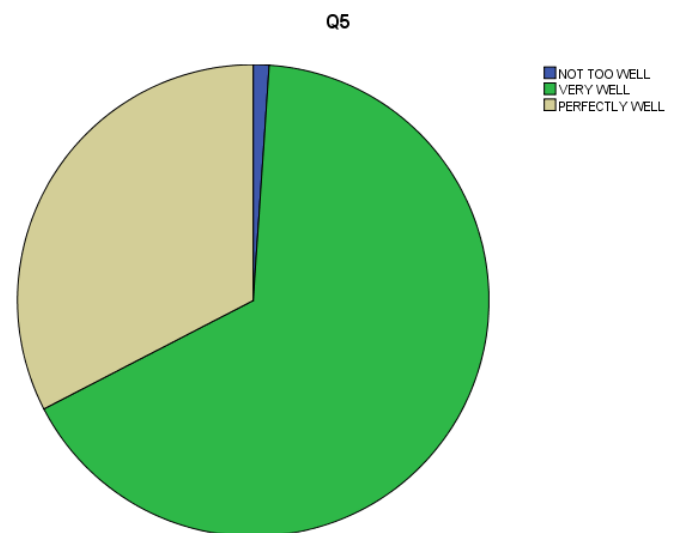
SKILLTYPE

Figure 3. The distribution of the participant according to skills.

Q5

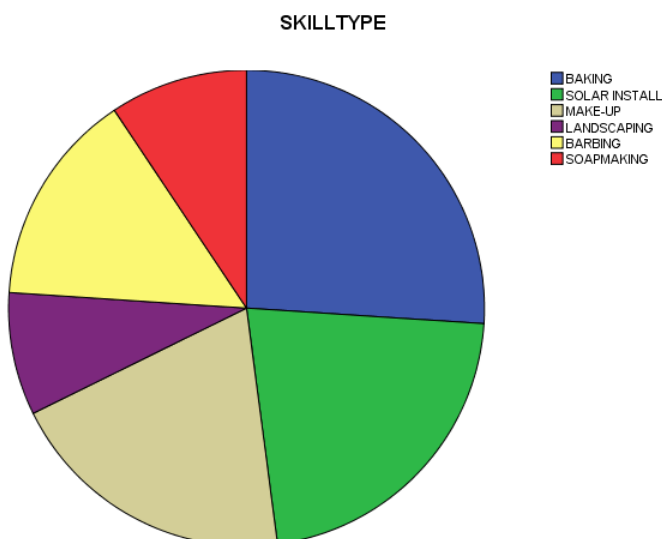**Figure 4.** The distribution on how well the participants learnt the skills.
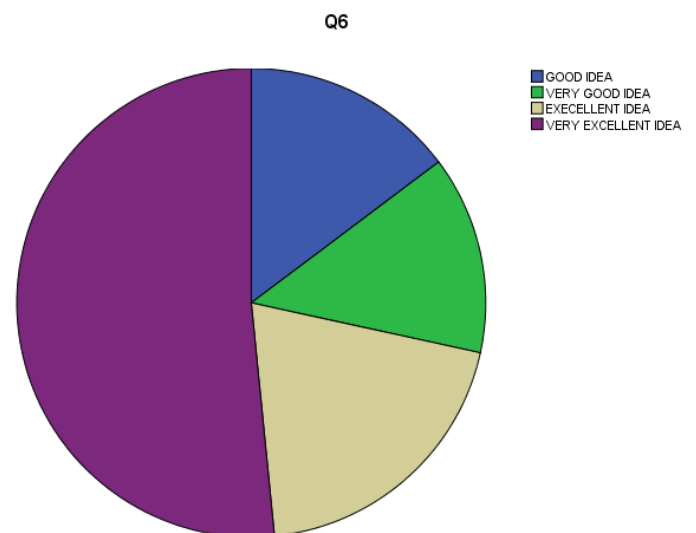
Q6

Figure 5. The distribution on the participants responses on their impression about the skills acquisition project.

very well. Therefore, we can conclude that the project was very successful since the participants indicated that they acquired the necessary knowledge in their chosen skills (See figure 4 below) Figure 4.

Furthermore, the participants were asked to rate their impressions of the training. The results show that 51.6% indicated that the skills acquisition project was a "very excellent idea". The other results in this regard showed that 20% of the participants saw the programme as not an "excellent idea". To this effect, the project can be regarded as very excellent community relations strategy for the Nigerian Breweries Plc and host community relationship Figure 5.

RQ3: What are the impacts of the programme on host community Youth's–Nigerian Breweries Plc Relationship?

On how the project has changed the participant's impression about the company, about 39.6% indicated that the project had affected their impression about Nigerian Breweries Plc in some positive ways; 36.3% indicated that it affected their impression in "very positive ways" however, only a small percent 4.4% indicated that the project did not positively affect their impression about the company. Based on the result, it is obvious that the project was successful since it had affected positively the majority of participants' impressions about Nigerian Breweries Plc.

Discussion of Findings

Also, a fellow-up question tried to find out whether the training programme had positively affected the relationship between the company and the participants. The result showed that 76.0% of trainees indicated "yes", it had positively affected their relationship with Nigerian Breweries Plc, while 20.8% indicated "No" that the training did not positively affect their relationship with the company. Since the greater percentage indicated that skills programme positively affected their relationship with the company, we rate the impact of the project very high Figures 6 & 7.

We therefore conclude that, this preliminary impact assessment study shows that the project succeeded in changing the negative impressions and hostile disposition of the participants towards Nigerian Breweries Plc. The majority of the participants (76%) who were sampled in the study indicated the training programme had changed their impressions and as well as their relationship with the company in the most positive way (see Charts 5 & 6). To this effect, we can conclude the project had achieved its main objective by creating positive image for Nigerian Breweries Plc.
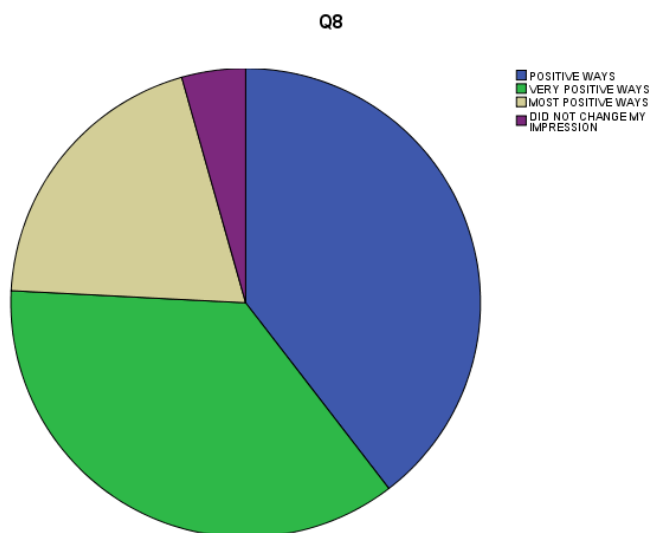
Q8

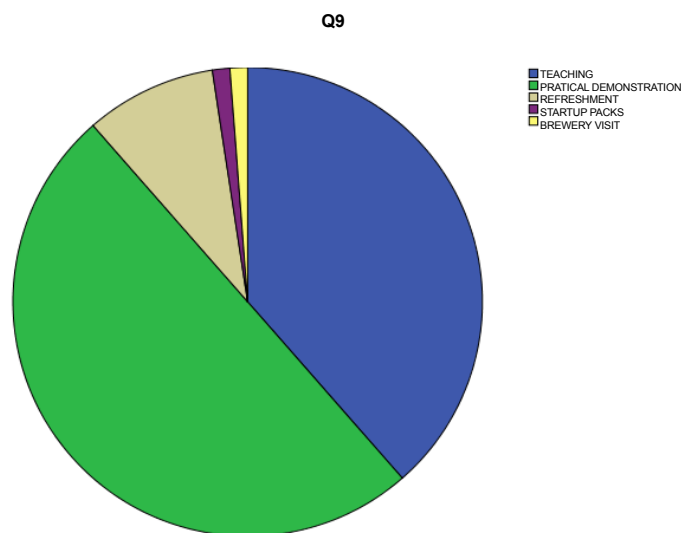Figure 6. Participants' impressions about the company after the training.
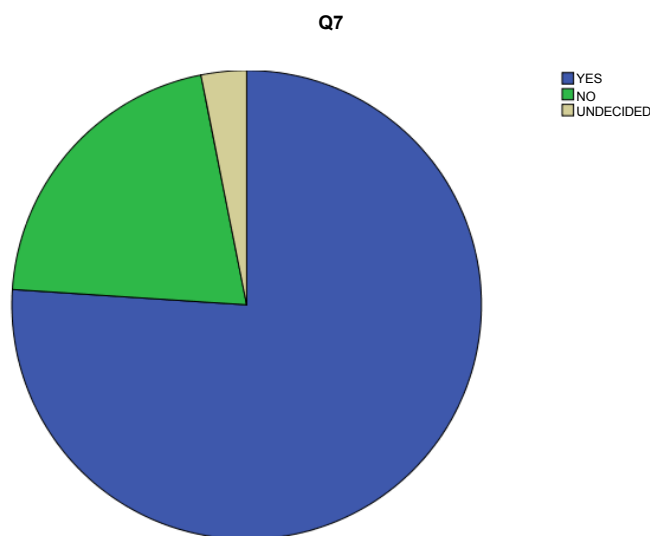
Q7

Figure 7. Participant Responses on how positive the training has affected their relationship with Nigerian Breweries Plc.

RQ4: what are the identified challenges and lessons in the youth empowerment as tool in community Relations Strategy?

A question was put to participants on the aspects of the programme they enjoyed most. The results show that the majority of the participants enjoyed the practical/demonstrations 50%, while 30.6% enjoyed the practical, surprisingly, Brewery visit had the lowest percent 1.2%. This is despite the enthusiasm expressed over the visit by the participants Figure 8.

The training, the teaching and the practical aspects of projects. Also, In the course of executing this project, we identified the following challenges:

i. There are high expectations from the host community of Ubachima in their relationship with the Nigerian Breweries Plc.

ii. The host community of Nigerian Breweries Plc., (Ubachima) is highly aware and active publics in their demand for a better deal from the company.

iii. There has been some level of distrust and frosty relationship between the host community of Ubachima and the Nigerian Breweries Plc. These sometimes, according to our investigations, led to some skirmishes by the youths of the community against Nigerian Breweries Plc. Awommama.

iv. Winning the interest, the support and the trust of a host community is most

Q9

Figure 8. Participants responses on what they enjoyed most about the programme/

challenging aspect of community relations. It needed a systematic approach to actions and reactions from the community by Nigerian Breweries Plc. This is exemplified in the just concluded skills acquisition project, which had increased the approval rating and image of the company in the community.

Therefore, a sustainable and mutual approach should be devised in mitigating host – community - Nigerian Breweries Plc crises instead of a fire-bridge or knee jerk approach that are usually palliatives in nature, lacking in long term solutions to frosty relationships between the Nigerian brewery Plc. Also, The costs of the project, especially, the funding of the training and start – up kits were grossly inadequate. For instance, there was no budgetary allocation for transportation for facilitators who were basically coming from the state capital, (Owerri) every day. The costs for some items in the start – up kits were high for some skills, especially, landscaping, baking and solar installation. To this effect, some of the items couldn't be provided. However, there were improvisations of some of the items where possible.

However, these challenges did not largely affect, negatively, the results of these preliminary findings.

Nigerian Breweries –Host Community Problems

Hostility relationship seems to define the host community –co

mpany operation in recent times (Nworgu, 2018). There are issues of either high expectation from the companies operating in communities in Nigeria or, constant neglect of the host communities by companies as the case may be (Nworgu, 2006). Nigerian Breweries seem to enjoy relative peace in her host communities except for a few flash points, including the skmirshes by youths of Ubachima, in Awommama, where the company has the plant for 33 larger beer, Hi- malt and some of other brands. Such skmirshes come in from excessive demands and high expectations from the host community leading misunderstanding and protests by some youths from time to time [13]. Earlier in 2019, the company conducted an assessment of the needs of the host community in Awo-omamma and came to a realisation that youth empowerment as a critical area of investment in the community may lead to better and mutual relationship between her and the host community.The essence of the programme was to engage the youths, who are the future and target publics in a vocational skills acquisition in order to enable them create value and support livelihood. This study focused on the community relations strategy based on the of skills acquisition programme as possible solution to host community-Nigerian Breweries crises of confidence. The impact of programme is revealed in this study, using preliminary impact assessment. The result shows that the programme is capable of mitigating the incessant csires between the host community youths and the Brewery. Such programme worked better trough stakeholders' participation from

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inception to implementation.The essence of the programme was to change the community and the opinion, attitude and relationship between the host community and the youths through opinon swing. [7] This was effectively achieved based on the study results.

Managing Nigerian Breweries-Host Community Crisis: Empowerment Option

Nigerian Breweries Plc is a beer and malt drink company established over decades in Nigeria. The company's expansion policy led to the acquisition of consolidated Breweries Plc, Awomama with additional seven brands added into the Nigerian Breweries Port-folio. (Business Day, December 2019). The Nigeria's 190 million population with an average age of youths under 30 years and an expected 410 million population growth 2050 makes. Nigerian Beer and beverages market, a going sector despite the economic downturn in recent times To this end, Nigerian Breweries Plc has remained a leader in the beer and beverages industry, with a market share of 55/60% (Business day, Dec, 2, 2019). Despite the increase in operating cost, the company realized that keeping the host-community, maintaining peaceful co-existence (Mohmad, 2017) and engaging the most active members of the host communities, (the youths), can grantee sustained operations (Googin 1997). Hence, in line with the company's slogan of winning with Nigeria, she initiated a community relations programme for Awomamma host community tagged. "Partnership for growth" aimed at vocational skills acquisition and with start-up kits. The extent to which this programme has engendered host community-Nigerian Breweries Plc mutual interests, is seen by the present positive relationship between the two parties as indicated by the study results.

The high level of youth unemployment and restiveness should be of concern to everybody because of the negative impact on society and business operations [26] This is because unemployment increases crime, prostitution and hostility in business operational base. The essence of the Nigerian Breweries Plc partnership for growth project in Awommama was to engage the youths of the host community of Ubachima in skills that are not only enduring but sustaining and viable. The challenges of skill acquisition for host community relations. The primary aim of the programme was to work with the community through social investments. The project harnessed zeal, energy, drive and age advantage of the participants& trainees. However, One of the outstanding issues we encountered was the fact that, at beginning, some of the youths (trainees) were resisting the fact that they were going to be given start-up kits (equipment) instead of cash. This became a re-occurring issue throughout the project. To them, the project should be organized like poverty alleviation programmes, where, government agencies just give them cash. But through persuasion and explanations (Frankental 2001), we were able to make them see the project as not only unique but an opportunity to teach them how to fish instead of giving them fish".

The second outstanding issue that came up during the graduation ceremony where the trainees in solar installation and landscaping & interlocking initially rejected their start-up equipment because they were not as massive as those of the baking, make-up and soap making trainees. However, they were later persuaded to accept their kit because that is the basic requirements for the start-up in their chosen skills. This is in line with thinking tht persuasion can be necessary in dealing with host communities (Desatnik 2000, Mohamad, 2017).

Third issue has to do with the fact that at end of a rigorous selection process and with the earlier intention of having 15 persons per village based on equal opportunities to every village, some villages due to their sizes were either under represented or over-represented. The youth leaders explained the situation based on the number of youths available in each village as at the time of the programme and, also based on the fact that there are small and big villages, naturally by population. Hence, the smaller villages could not fill their quota and this was filled by the bigger villages. As has been argued by [27] carrying the stakeholders along is key in community relationship programme/project.

Conclusion

An evaluation of the impact of the youth empowerment programme implemented by Nigerian Breweries in Awo-Omamma from the perspective of the beneficiaries would provide insight on the effectiveness of the programme and support any assertion by the company on its strategies to community relations. (Interview with the Corporate Affairs , South-East, South- South, Nigerian Breweries Plc.) The outcome of the study will help companies to reconstruct stakeholder engagement process for corporate organizations and support community needs assessment to ensure successful implementation of projects that meet the expectations of the beneficiaries. The study provided a significant contribution to address the gap in studies on community relations beyond the activities of some industries and stimulate interest in researches focusing on community relations practices in the manufacturing industry. Interviews with community youth leaders indicate, an appreciative instances of the host community to the skills programmes.

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