

Corporate Advertising and Public Perception of Oil Companies

(A Case Study of Shell & Chevron in Niger Delta Region of Delta State)

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Abstract:- This study examines corporate advertising and the perception of host communities of oil companies with relations to their CSR strategies in creating a beneficial mutual relationship with host communities in the Niger Delta Region. Qualitative approach was used by engaging respondents with interviews techniques to arrive at the findings. 200 copies of questionnaires were distributed with a total of 174 returned. An overview of the concept of CSR, CSR practices in the Niger Delta host communities understanding and interpretation of their relationship with oil companies and perception of oil companies CSR practices are presented. The findings of this study shows that oil companies engage in corporate advertising thorough CSR. That the impact of oil companies CSR strategies are more negative than positive. That the perception of host communities towards oil companies is that oil companies are using CSR to cover up with their irresponsibility. And finally, the possibilities of corporate advertising creating a mutual beneficial relationship between oil companies and host communities in the Niger Delta Region.

Keywords:- Corporate Advertising, Public Perception , Multinational Companies, Niger Delta , Host Communities.

I. INTRODUCTION

Corporate advertising is an advertisement for an advertisement for a company or organization that tries to visualize, solve problems or communicate with a specific audience, including company employees in matters relating to the company is important. One of the most important aspects of long term planning in any organization is to show a positive image and maintain a good reputation. Through a good PR this can be achieved. The positive perception of the general public; especially this main public (the main domicile) of the organization is of paramount importance. Public perceptions are essential for an organization to address crises inside and outside the organization (Yeygel S. & Yakin M. (2007). A company that poorly manages its image or ignores its reputation is prone to many problems (Kahveci, 2015). That is why maintaining a good reputation is very essential to companies.

It has been known for decades that companies' image and identity provide competitive advantages to their technological know-how.

With a good perception from the host communities, a company's image is protected in times of crisis; this in return accelerates business growth for both the host communities and oil companies as a result of the beneficial relationship maintained by both parties. Take for instance the operations of oil companies in the Niger Delta Regions: Growing global demand for crude oil points to the strategic importance of the Niger Delta. The never ending conflict between companies and host communities in has had a the region negative impact on crude oil prices on international market and has inflicted significant costs on the Nigerian government, oil companies and host communities (Ogula, 2012).

Over the years, oil companies have practiced corporate advertising by employing Community Social Responsibility activities (CSR).

However, it is evident that oil companies in the region have been practicing CSR in the wrong. Instead of interacting with host communities to know their areas of expressed needs, they rather think for the communities, this act of the oil companies has cost them nothing but more trouble (Ben. U. Nwanne, 2017).

Instead of providing relief materials to host communities after an oil spill and engaging in corporate philanthropy by constructing bad drainage system (most times these projects are never completed) or issuing scholarships without employing benefactors upon completion of their study e.t.c. These and many other factors have led to the relentless attacks on oil companies operating in the region. This however indicates that previous CSR practices have left a gap in the Niger Delta that requires further investigation into factors influencing the perceptions and expectations of the CSR host community (Ogula, 2012). An understanding of the expectation of host communities over the years towards development in the Niger Delta region from oil companies operating in the region will help oil companies understand the perceptions of host communities about them. Hence, this paper examines corporate advertising and public perception of oil companies.

II. BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Niger Delta is a region that produces Nigeria's vast oil wealth. The area is about 70,000km² of land with a population of about 20 million people, 25% of which lives in the rural areas while the remainder in the urban cities. (Ite, 2004, Ite 2007, princess k. Nwaneka 2011). Having a total of 9 states, the region as the major source of Nigeria's oil wealth is ironically very poor and underdeveloped (Ite 2004, Princess. K. N 2011). The people in the region are faced with oil pollution problems, environmental degradation, poverty etc. As a result of oil exploration and exploitation activities by oil companies, the existence and survival of the inhabitants is under threat (Ebon, 2019). Presently, the region is best known as a place where oil exploration and exploitation takes place by the agents of western economic powers. The region also has hydrocarbon fields and natural gas reserves accounting for about 98% of crude oil exports, more than 80% of annual government revenue and 70% budget expenditure for the Nigerian economy. Crude oil from the region gives Nigerian government about \$20 million a day(Oludoro and Oludoro, 2012)

In the early 1988s, the business of oil exploration an explanation was open to private companies otherwise private business man in Nigeria which was duely endorsed by the federal government. The discovery of oil in Niger Delta raised high hopes and expectations indigenes because they saw it as an for the development of the region. Hence the discovery of oil in the region was a welcome development for the indigenes. So accepting oil companies to carryout their exploration an explanation activities in the region wasn't a difficult decision for the host communities⁶ to make as they see it as an opportunity to bring in the long awaited development in the region (Saiyou, 2006). However these high hopes were brought to nothing when the reverse began to happen. The irony of the oil situation was that itinstead of bringing development,host communities witnessed more environmental degradation, lost of their livelihood as a result of pollution of their river/waters and even lands. Fishes were dying and migrating away from the polluted waters and the lands were nolonger fertile for agriculture etc. The air also was no longer safe as a result of the flaring of gas during the extraction activity of crude oil. (Asakitikpi & Oyeloran, 1999). The hardship experienced by the indigenes of the host communities lead to crisis in the region between host communities and the oil companies. Between 2000 and 2007, the degree of violence in the Niger Delta region was at its peak. Over 33 cases of kidnappings were recorded with over 200 expatriates oil workers as the main victims(Africa master web, 2007). pipeline vandalization wasn't left out as about 12,770 cases were recoded between 2000 and 2007(Nwanko & Ezeobi, 2008). Besides exercising violent demonstration to let out their cries and pains, as time went on the people of the Niger Delta used more civilized strategies like peaceful(sometimes violent) demonstration, protest and petitioning of oil companies to let known their pains and disappointment from the oil companies.

Though oil companies made claims and are still claiming to be practicing effective community relations activity by investing a lot in the development process of their host communities, the host communities does not see things comments from the same perspective as the oil companies does. The host communities are saying that oil companies have not done enough for them compared to what the oil companies are gaining from them. Host communities considers the efforts of oil companies as doing what the oil companies owe them for using their lands, even though they are not doing well enough or even perfect. The host communities have also accused the oil companies of carrying out their community social responsibilities without proper consultations with them. This obvious reasons have lead to the concern of this study which borders on how corporate advertising can be used to influence a positive perception of oil companies like Shell and Chevron by their host communities. This is because the researcher believes that with good corporate advertising practice there can be mutual understanding between host communities and the oil companies.

The arrival of oil and gas companies in Nigeria gave birth to an unpredicted conflicts between the oil company and their host communities in area such as oil extractions, politics and distribution of revenue acquired in the process of oil exploration. The poor communication pattern between the oil companies and their host communities is the major cause of the unending conflict. Host communities have continuously accused oil companies of not seeking their opinion in terms of needs and demands before embarking on their corporate communication process and corporate social responsibility (CSR) (Nwagbara & Brown 2014). Over the years of operations, it seems oil companies seems to have been applying the wrong community relations strategies (CRS) in bide to resolve the unprecedented conflict. The importance peaceful coexistence between oil companies and host communities can not be undermined because the country depends on the revenue accrued from oil in the Niger Delta Region as major means of sustenance in terms of economic growth and national development. (The unrepresented Nations and peoples organization [UNPO], 2018). Affirmingly, Idemudia and Ite (2006) believes that as a result of the wrong cooperate community relation (CCR) strategies been applied by oil companies is the reason oil companies and host communities are still in one form of conflict or the other. This not withstanding have given oil companies such as SPDC (Shell) and Chevron among others the negative perception which host communities have of them. In order to clear this negative perception by the oil companies such as SPDC (Shell) and Chevron e.t.c. there is need for oil companies to involve more in cooperate advertising which they have fail to apply in the time passed. That is why this study is been done to seek a lasting solution to the conflict between SPDC (Shell), Chevron and their host communities by streaming the place of cooperate advertising in a bide to create a positive perception of SPDC

(Shell) and Chevron by the host communities. In other words, the study term to seek the place of cooperate advertising in creating positive perception of SPDC (Shell) and Chevron which will help create conducive beneficial working environment for both SPDC (Shell) and Chevron with their host communities in the Niger Delta

Religion of Gbaramatu Kingdom and Ogulagha Kingdom both in Delta State. The specific objective of this study is to determine if SPDC (Shell) and Chevron embark on corporate advertising in a bid to create positive perception of its major stakeholders.

III. ISSUE UNDER REVIEW

The rise of the oil industry in Nigeria resulted in costs and benefits to society. However, it is the balance between these costs and benefits that is likely to inform society's perception of oil companies (Newsom, 2011). Oil companies are accused of neglecting the problems and needs of society, falling behind in their work, contracting and not being socially responsible (Effiong, 2010). Communities were marginalized and permanently excluded for years after suffering a total loss of petroleum products (Orubu et. al., 2004). The continued neglect of host communities by the oil companies soon gave raise to the negative perceptions host communities have of the oil company leading for misunderstanding and eventually conflict (Odera et. al., 2018). (Victor, Tarilate et. al., 2021) also noted that host communities took protesting and other forms of refusal asking the oil companies to leave their community believing that MNCs nothing but pain and hardship to the communities while referring to themselves as landlord and oil companies tenant, host communities believed that as usual as expected of all tenants to leave the rented property when they are no longer satisfied with exploiting the oil in the region (Victor, Tarilate, et. al., 2021). This view is not far from that held by (Aghalino, 2012; Perouse de Montelos, 2014; Okolie – Osemene and Tor, 2012) that the perceptions of host communities towards oil companies are more negative than positive, believing that what ought to be a natural blessing from God to them has become a curse to them because of the inhuman treatment mounted on them by oil companies. Oil companies operations in the region has brought associated violence, environmental degradation, insecurity and the loss of cultural values including livestock, land e.t.c. As a result, the Niger Delta population can no longer carry out their traditional occupations such as fishing and agricultural, there is the need of urgent intervention of the government and the oil companies to stimulate economic activities in the region (Ogula, 2012) however, according to Nzeadibe et. al. (2015) good communication during crisis will give a positive vibe to the already existing negative perception of host communities towards the oil companies.

➤ *Theoretical Framework: The Basic Need Model*

The Basic Needs needs model states that the internal development of a country is automatically created when the basic needs of all members of society are met in the areas of nutrition, health, education, housing and employment. The basic needs approach which happens to be one of the main approaches to measuring absolute poverty in developing countries. Attempts to determine the absolute minimum resources required for long-term physical well-being, usually in terms of consumer goods. Then the poverty line is defined as the amount of income needed to meet these needs. The basic needs model was introduced by the World Employment Conference of the International Labor Organization in 1976. ``Perhaps the highlight of the 1976 World Employment Conference was WEP, which it proposed to satisfy basic human needs as the primary objective of national and international development policy. This model has been endorsed by governments, workers', employers' and different organizations around the world.

The traditional list of urgent 'basic needs' is food (including water), shelter and clothing.[3] Many modern lists emphasize minimum levels of consumption of 'basic needs', not only food, water, clothing and shelter, but also sanitation, education and health care. However every organization uses whatever list that best suit their objectives.

➤ *Criticism of the Basic Need Model*

First, there is a tendency for some individuals to combine both the basic needs approach and the New International Economic Order (NIEO) to say that basic needs are the only real or new elements in the NIEO. This is why many developing countries see NIEO as the pinnacle of their demands for global economic restructuring as a diversionary tactic from NIEO's opponents, with the poverty reduction is too easy. Such an approach tends to ignores class and group conflict thereby underestimating the scale of structural and institutional changes required to attack poverty. others have argued that the failure of the basic necessities approach is evidenced by the fact that very few countries have adopted it. It is first worth mentioning that almost all development work stemming from the dominant trend in the Western economy is characterized by a lack of interpretation of economic analysis as class and group conflict. This assessment emphasizes the fundamental importance of structural change and public participation in a strategy designed to meet the basic needs of the poor. A widespread criticism of the basic needs approach is that it is entirely consumption oriented. This means that it represents "social welfare" in an underdeveloped state and is therefore prejudiced against economic growth. For this critique of some developing countries and socialist countries, the basic needs strategy will perpetuate economic backwardness. The model is also generally criticized for its lack of scientific activity.. It is also against the new international economic order, which eliminates class and group conflicts and creates the impression that the reduction of poverty is such an easy task.

IV. RESEARCH METHODS

The study is a qualitative study that combines primary and secondary data collected through a questionnaire, additional interviews, focus group and documentary evidence in four host communities. The four host communities are the Ikokodiagbene community and Benikurukuru community (both in Gbaramatu Kingdom) and Ogulagha community (both in Ogulagha kingdom). While Shell operates in the shores of Ogulagha kingdom, Chevron is operational in the shores of Gbaramatu kingdom. Host communities were selected using host community criteria as well as proximity to oil exploration activities. The respondents consisted to key informants identified during the questionnaires, youth and women leaders, politicians and leaders with useful information due to previous interface with oil companies or their distinct locations in selected host communities the reason for the separation was the avoidance of male domination as is the case in most African traditions.

➤ *Data Presentation*

Table 1: Response rate from administration of questionnaires

No. Administered	No. of Response	Percentage
200	174	87%

Using $RR = \frac{r}{q} \times 100/1$, Table 1 shows that the questionnaire papers were distributed to 200 responded of which 174 copies were correctly responded to leading to the response rate of 87%. The response rate for the I study is excellent judging by Yamane's formula (kijpredarborisuthi, 2003).

Table 2: Frequency Analysis if Shell embark on corporate advertising through CSR (Community Social Responsibility)

Respondents Opinion	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	30	17%
No	65	37%
Sometimes	79	46%
TOTAL	174	100%

Source: Field work 2022.

Table 2 shows frequency analysis if SPDC/Chevron embark on corporate image making through corporate advertising. From the table above it is evident that SPDC /Chevron only embark on corporate advertising sometimes and they do this through community social relations and community social responsibilities activities. summing up the responses from questionnaires of SPDC and Chevron, a total of 79 respondents making 46% of the total 174 questionnaire returned states that SPDC/Chevron embark on corporate advertising "SOMETIMES". While 65 respondents making 37% of the total 174 questionnaires returned says "NO". And 30 respondents making 17% of the total 174 questionnaire to return state "YES".

Table 3: Frequency table showing host communities perceptions on SPDC (Shell) and Chevron influence on host communities

	Respondents Opinion	No. of Respondents	Percentage
	Positive	56	32%
	Negative	118	68%
	TOTAL	174	100%

Source: Field work 2022.

Frequency table showing communities' perceptions on SPDC/Chevron on the positive influence of SPDC/Chevron on their host Communities. 82 respondents making 47% of the total 174 questionnaires that was return states that respondents "DISAGREED" to the claims of shell and Chevron of bringing positive influence otherwise development to their host Communities. Only 58 respondents make it 37% of the total 174 questionnaires return actually "AGREED" that SPDC/Chevron have actually made positive influence on their host Communities while 34 respondent making 20% of the total 174 question you have return "STRONGLY AGREED" that SPDC/Chevron actually have a positive influence on their host communities. This responses get to show that the perception of host Communities towards SPDC/Chevron is more negative than positive.

The analysis and interpretation gbtained from respondents shows that 17% of the Host community are of the opinion that SPDC/Chevron embark on corporate advertising while 37% of the respondents said that SPDC/Chevron does not embark on corporate advertising while 46% of the respondents are not sure whether SPDC/Chevron embark on corporate advertising or not. This gets to show that the level at which SPDC/Chevron practiced corporate advertising is very low which id detrimental to creating a reputable image and goodwill of any organization.

The analysis and interpretation of the responses from respondents shows that 32% of the respondents are of the view that their perception of SPDC/Chevron's operation in the community is more of positive while 68% have more of a negative perception of SPDC/Chevron's operation in their community. This gets to show that the impact SPDC/Chevron have made on the Host community is more negative than positive and this is the cause of the continuous conflict between MNCs and their host communities.

➤ *Oil Companies Engage In Corporate Advertisement Through Csr:*

The emergence of CSR programs in Nigeria dates back to the 1960s and 1970s when the first group of multinational oil companies began exploration and production of oil in the Niger Delta Region. Royal/Dutch Shell Company then was operating under the Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria, began commercial production of oil in the Niger Delta in 1958 (Ukeje, 2004; Victor Tarilate 2021). SPDC had an exclusive monopoly on oil exploration and production for some time

before other multinational oil companies were granted a license to explore for oil in Nigeria's onshore and offshore fields. These multinational company includes: (MENI) 1955, now NPN, Texas Overseas Nigeria Petroleum Company Unlimited in 1961, Amoseas in 1961, Gulf Oil Company (now Chevron) in 1961, (SAFRAP) in 1962, but was later changed to ELF Nigeria Limited in 1974), (Teneco) 1962, (AGIP) in 1962, (ENI) in 1964, Philips Oil Company in 1964 and Pan Ocean Oil Corporation in 1972 (Ite, Aniefiok E., et. al., 2013). The emergence of these oil companies brought about different forms of exploration activities such as test drilling, construction of new flow stations, oil pipelines, platforms, jetties e.t.c. In order to gain easy entrance into the host communities and also create a conducive working environment for its staff, oil companies soon began CSR activities such as building of schools, healthcare facilities, awarding of scholarship, constructions of roads, rural water supply, cash gift donations to support community's cultural activities, agricultural programs among other philanthropic gestures. However, despite all these and more oil companies have done for their host communities, there is still continuous aggression of host communities towards the oil companies operating in the region. This unending aggression of host communities depicts two things: (1) Either the oil companies are only business minded, hence they are thinking for the host communities instead of seeking the opinion of community members on areas of their most expressed needs (Ben U. Nwanne 2017) or (2) That just like the economist said, human wants are insatiable (Adam Smith).

In other words, it is almost impossible for companies who have the sole aim of making profit to satisfy all the desires and needs of the people in one fell swoop.

These community relations activities practiced by oil companies show that indeed oil companies engage in corporate advertising but not the traditional advertising done of different media channels but they engage in corporate advertising through CSR activities in the host communities.

➤ *The Impact of Corporate Advertising on Host Communities*

In general, despite huge investments in community development programs, host communities and observers viewed CSR practices in oil rich regions simply as actions taken to protect a company's reputation or to act in a way that seemed to be socially responsible (Ogula, 2012). Oil companies have incorporated CSR methods into corporate strategies as a result of increasing aggression against oil companies. As a result of the inability of Shell and Chevron to meet up with the needs and demands of host communities at the most appropriate time has led to more aggression of the host communities. Take for instance, Shell and Chevron is found of providing relief materials whenever there is oil spill and these relief materials are only distributed after the host communities have suffered severe loss leading to massive protest (which is usually violent and aggressive). Even the schools that have been built are not viable due to lack of teachers, hospitals have been run down due

to lack of medical staff, poor sanitation system due to poor road construction, graduates of scholarships offered by oil companies may not work in the same company that issued the scholarship in the opinion of Shell and Chevron, these graduates are not eligible. In other cases, graduates including scholarship recipients are contracted full time, or retained as contractors to either Shell or Chevron and are often employed as minimal staff. These and many other reasons led to the host communities to conclude that Shell and Chevron had hurt them more than they had blessed them.

Earlier, due to poor practice of CSR by Shell and Chevron (which is usually trade oriented), host communities undertook more violent actions such as the kidnapping of Shell and Chevron personnel's operating in the region but recently as a result of education and civilization, the host communities have resulted to more civil actions such as a protest and petitioning the oil companies. Ogunlaga Kingdom Youths petitioned Shell before the House of Representatives on October 25, 2017. The community in its petition stated that SPDC started its hydrocarbon exploration and production activities in the kingdom for over 49 years ago and they built and commissioned the Forcados Oil terminal on its land on 27th September, 1971 has always neglected it.

OKYC claimed in their petition that Shell oil facilities and four other oil companies produce 260,000 barrels of oil per day, about 15% of 1.8 million barrels of the daily oil output of the country. While most of the 4MSCF gas produced daily was ignited by six point fires in the country, only smaller volumes are used to generate electricity at the port of Forcados (Vanguard 30, October 2017). These and many other reasons led to host communities to conclude that the oil companies had hurt them more than they had blessed them.

Findings in the course of this work show that Shell and Chevron had more negative impact on the host communities than the positive impacts. That is, if Shell and Chevron had done good CSR oil producing communities would have been the most developed among other communities and states in the country.

➤ *Perception Of Host Communities*

Basically, five key factors influences and shape perceptions in the host community of the oil companies. First, the diverse socio-cultural values that the host communities understand and interpret with the oil company inform their views and shape perceptions about the oil company. For instance, the landlord – tenant class as explained earlier implies that the host community views oil companies' CSR contributions as a sign of gratitude for leasing the land from which crude oil is extracted and acceptance of the fact that host communities are major legitimate stakeholders in their operations.

Secondly, the experience issues and differences in the experience of host communities shaped the idea of the community. This is most evident in the differences observed between the communities surveyed. This distinction has demonstrated how oil companies are trusted by a community that recognizes their shared responsibility. The experiences of host community (whether positive or negative) seem to stimulate similar actions and perceptions among members of the host communities (Victor, Tarilate, 2021). For example, the 2021 in Gbaramatu Kingdom there occurred an oil spill. The people immediately called Chevron's attention intimating Chevron of the unexpected hardship the oil spill had caused the affected communities. Chevron however denied the spill was caused by their facilities. This denial led to a protest by the Gbaramatu Kingdom Youth Council (GYC) and in the process the GYC President issued a statement which the neighboring ethnic group (the Itsekiri people) believed was a direct threat to war by the people of Gbaramatu Kingdom against the Itsekiri people. It took prominent leaders like Godspower Gbenekama (the speaker of Gbaramatu Kingdom) to calm the misunderstanding between the two ethnic groups by calling for peace. Due to the differences between the two ethnic groups, Chevron kept silent about the leak and its damage and the issue came to a standstill. Chevron's silence gave the impression that Chevron used propaganda as a public relations tool to inciting a neighboring ethnic group against Gbaramatu people to evade responsibility for its negligence.

The third factor influencing the perception of host communities according to Victor Tarilate (2021) is the CSR strategy used by oil companies and the performance of CSR strategy used by oil companies and the performance of CSR initiatives as perceived by the host community members. Since development is human centered PR professionals must interact with the people to find out what they need the most (Ben U. Nwanne 2017).

After knowing the most pressing need of the host community, oil companies should carry out to the later end instead of stopping half way like they have been doing for the past.

The fourth factor that influences the perception of the host communities is the behaviour and attitude of oil company employees. As much as possible, oil companies staff should not be pushy when interacting with members of the host community.

To the extent possible, employees should not interfere with them through language, equanimity and general behaviour (Ben U. Nwanne 2017). Most staff of Shell and Chevron are guilty of this act. Speaking from the experience of host community, members of Ogunlaga Kingdom in the past members of the host community have easy access into the Forcados Terminal but presently accessing the terminal that is situated in their own kingdom poses a lot of threat to members

of the host communities because of restrictions imposed by staff and management of SPDC.

The fifth factor that shapes the perception of host communities is the age group. While the majority of older people in host communities who are usually members of the traditional council seems to have positive attitudes towards oil companies. This is also evident on how the petition against SPDC by OKYC died a natural death after SPDC representatives engage the council of traditional rulers including chiefs of Ogunlaga kingdom. Haven had a closed door meeting with the elders of the kingdom SPDC refuse appearing to answer their case at the House of Representative after the sitting was adjourned several times and that was how the matter ended without any positive result.

V. DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

The study looks at corporate advertising and public perception of SPDC (Shell) and Chevron in their host communities. The findings of this study shows that SPDC (Shell) and Chevron have not been enjoying cordial relationship with host communities that is why there is serious conflicts of interest between host communities and oil companies on CSR issues, which explains why despite significant investments by oil companies in social programs, relations between oil companies and host communities in the oil sector remains largely insatiable. This findings affirms the Victor, Tarilate 2021.

The poor flow of communication between host communities and oil companies creates an important space for misunderstandings and misinformation. Open and honest communication will reduce the spread of rumors and inaccuracies about the perceived negative consequences of oil companies (Idemudia, 2007). A good relationship is based on effective communication. It is important to note that companies cannot live without consultation and dialogue with communities (Chindo, 2011). The findings on this work shows that SPDC/Chevron does not have a good communication link between them and the host communities and this is the reason for the misperception and conflicts all the time. Therefore with the right communication and a better CSR strategy a mutual beneficial relationship between host communities and Shell/Chevron and other oil companies is attainable.

Data from the survey shows that SPDC (Shell) and Chevron has been relying on communications with the Big Fish of the communities while neglecting the complains and lamentations of the sub-sets in the communities. While the Big fish (usually made up of Royal fathers, politicians and influential people in the communities), usually walk away with big bags to sort their personal needs. The sub-set (usually the grassroots) are left to suffer the hardship brought about the decision reached by the oil companies and the Big fish in the community.

Findings also show that most times, it is these ‘Big fish’ that mobilize the sub-set to agitate against oil companies when they have exhausted the contents on the brown envelop and the big bags given to them while neglecting the major developmental projects on the region that will better the lives of everybody in the entire community. The survey shows that majorly of the respondents identified communication with traditional leaders as the only channel of reaching out to the entire community and most times such communications ends at the top without reaching the grassroots. Also that the communication between SPDC and Chevron and host communities is once in a while.

Data from the survey gathered also revealed that SPDC and Chevron does not respond to host communities cry for help as timely as possible, that oil companies only responds to the call for help whenever they feel like and this is one of the major cause of the negative perception host communities have on SPDC and Chevron.

The finds from the study also shows that SPDC and Chevron have not been carrying out their right CRS activities. That is why the CRS have not been positive influence to their host communities and that influences the negative perception of SPDC and Chevron by host communities.

VI. CONCLUSION

The perceptions of host communities towards oil companies is more negative than positive as they feel oil companies has brought them a curse rather than a blessing due to social and environmental crisis, poverty and the impact of social and environmental degradation among other factors contributed to the negative perception of oil companies by the host communities in the Niger Delta Region. Oil companies are held accountable for the negative impact of oil exploration because people consider valuables (such as land and rulers) of cultural, emotional and spiritual value damaged. Another possible explanation for the negative perception of the oil company is the perception of members of the host communities that the companies pursue their CSR programs solely for self interest and not to protect the interest of the host communities. Any effort to promote lasting harmonious relationship cannot be achieved without efforts to change community perception. For oil companies to exist in the Niger Delta region, they must try to change perceptions in order to build profitable relationship with the host communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Research have shown that the conflict between oil companies and host communities seems to be unending despite the huge amount of money invested on host communities by the oil companies this study therefore recommends as follows:

1) since previous and current research stipulates that the perceptions of host communities to oil company companies

is more negative than positive, and corporate advertising helps to build a good and reputable image for an organization and its publics, SPDC/Chevron including all the oil companies and multinational companies should invest more on corporate advertising they must ensure that good consultation is carried out before planning and implementing any of their community relations plans. This will enhance development in host communities of the Niger Delta region and also foster a good reputation for oil companies.

- 2) Effective communication paves way for mutual understanding which in turn leads to good decision making. Therefore, it is recommended that SPDC/Chevron including other oil companies and multinational companies should create a good community relation plan that will be communicated to the host communities in the Niger Delta Region before planning and implementing any community relations plan or developmental project it. Also a SPDC/Chevron ensure they listen to the complaints of their host communities this will foster a more beneficial and conducive working environment for both oil companies and the host communities.

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