

Diversity Initiatives and Organizational Effectiveness Of Transport Companies In Bayelsa State, Nigeria

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Abstract: *This study investigates the impact of diversity initiatives on the organizational effectiveness of transport companies in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. With increasing recognition of the importance of diversity in fostering inclusive and innovative work environments, this research aims to provide empirical insights into the benefits and challenges associated with implementing diversity programs in the transport sector. Specifically, the study assesses the impact of diversity initiatives on employee performance and job satisfaction, evaluates their relationship with organizational productivity, and explores the challenges faced by companies in promoting diversity. Utilizing an ex post facto design, data were collected through surveys and interviews with employees and management from various transport companies in the region. The findings indicate a positive correlation between effective diversity initiatives and enhanced employee performance and job satisfaction, which in turn contribute to higher organizational productivity. These insights offer valuable implications for policymakers and business leaders aiming to enhance organizational effectiveness through diversity in the transport sector of Bayelsa State.*

Keywords: Diversity Initiatives, Organizational Effectiveness, Transport Companies

Introduction

Diversity initiatives are increasingly recognized as critical components of organizational strategy, particularly in the transport industry where a diverse workforce can enhance operational efficiency and customer satisfaction. These initiatives encompass a range of practices designed to promote inclusivity, equity, and representation within organizations. According to Cox and Blake (1991), diversity initiatives can lead to improved organizational performance by leveraging the varied perspectives and skills of a diverse workforce. In the context of transport companies, these initiatives are particularly significant due to the industry's reliance on diverse customer bases and the need for innovative solutions to complex logistical challenges (Thomas & Ely, 1996).

The impact of diversity initiatives on employee performance and job satisfaction is a crucial area of study. Research suggests that inclusive workplaces contribute to higher levels of job satisfaction and employee engagement, which in turn can enhance productivity and reduce turnover rates (Roberson, 2006). Moreover, in service-oriented sectors like transport, the relationship between workforce diversity and customer satisfaction is critical. Diverse teams are often better equipped to understand and meet the needs of a heterogeneous customer base, potentially leading to higher levels of customer satisfaction and loyalty (Herring, 2009).

The effectiveness of diversity training programs in shaping organizational culture and fostering innovation is an essential consideration. Diversity training aims to educate employees about the value of diversity and develop skills for effective intercultural communication and collaboration (Bezrukova, Jehn, & Spell, 2012). By promoting a culture of inclusivity, these programs can drive innovation by encouraging diverse viewpoints and creative problem-solving approaches (Page, 2007).

Given the potential benefits, it is imperative to empirically examine the effectiveness of diversity initiatives in transport companies. This research seeks to evaluate the impact of these initiatives on employee performance and job satisfaction, investigate their correlation with customer satisfaction, and measure the effectiveness of diversity training programs in fostering an inclusive organizational culture and driving innovation.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the increasing adoption of diversity initiatives in various industries, there remains a gap in understanding their specific impact on organizational effectiveness within transport companies. While studies indicate that diversity can enhance performance and innovation (Cox & Blake, 1991; Page, 2007), there is limited empirical research that focuses specifically on the transport sector. This gap is critical because transport companies operate in dynamic environments that require adaptive strategies to meet diverse customer needs and operational challenges. The extent to which diversity initiatives contribute to improved organizational effectiveness, including employee performance, job satisfaction, and customer satisfaction, remains unclear in this context (Herring, 2009).

The effectiveness of diversity training programs in transport companies needs further investigation. Despite widespread implementation, questions persist regarding their impact on shaping organizational culture and fostering innovation within these unique operational settings. Studies suggest that effective diversity training can lead to enhanced intercultural competence and collaboration (Bezrukova et al., 2012), yet their specific influence on organizational outcomes such as innovation and adaptive capacity within transport companies requires empirical validation. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for transport companies aiming to optimize their workforce diversity to gain competitive advantages in service quality and customer satisfaction (Roberson, 2006). Thus, addressing these gaps through empirical research will provide valuable insights into the strategic implementation of diversity initiatives and training programs tailored to the transport industry's needs.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The study examined study investigates the impact of diversity initiatives on the organizational effectiveness of transport companies in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. Specifically, the following objectives were achieved:

1. To evaluate how diversity initiatives influence employee performance and job satisfaction within transport companies Bayelsa State, Nigeria.
2. To investigate the correlation between the implementation of diversity initiatives and customer satisfaction levels in transport companies Bayelsa State, Nigeria.
3. To measure the effectiveness of diversity initiatives in fostering an inclusive organizational culture within transport companies Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

H01: Diversity initiatives have no significant effect on employee performance and job satisfaction within transport companies Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

H02: There is no significant correlation between the implementation of diversity initiatives and customer satisfaction levels in transport companies Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

H03: Diversity initiatives have no significant impact on fostering an inclusive organizational culture within transport companies Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

Conceptual Review

Diversity initiatives within organizations encompass deliberate strategies aimed at promoting inclusivity, equity, and representation across various dimensions such as race, gender, ethnicity, age, and disability (Cox & Blake, 1991). In the context of transport companies, these initiatives are crucial for leveraging the diverse backgrounds and perspectives of employees to enhance organizational effectiveness. Organizational effectiveness in this context refers to the ability of transport companies to achieve their strategic goals through optimized operational performance, customer satisfaction, and competitive advantage in the marketplace (Roberson, 2006).

Research underscores that diverse teams can lead to enhanced problem-solving capabilities and innovation (Page, 2007). This is particularly relevant in the transport sector, where complex logistical challenges require innovative solutions and adaptive strategies to meet diverse customer demands (Thomas & Ely, 1996). Diversity initiatives are thus seen as pivotal in fostering a work environment where employees feel valued and empowered to contribute their unique insights, which can ultimately lead to improved organizational performance and customer service outcomes (Herring, 2009).

However, the effectiveness of diversity initiatives hinges not only on their implementation but also on organizational commitment to fostering an inclusive culture. This includes policies and practices that promote fairness, respect, and equal opportunities for all employees (Roberson, 2006). Moreover, diversity training programs play a significant role in complementing these initiatives by enhancing employees' awareness of cultural differences, fostering empathy, and improving communication across diverse teams (Bezrukova et al., 2012). By nurturing a culture that embraces diversity and inclusion, transport companies can potentially achieve greater operational efficiency, employee satisfaction, and customer loyalty in an increasingly diverse global marketplace. Thus, conceptual clarity on diversity initiatives and their impact on organizational effectiveness is essential for guiding strategic interventions and policies tailored to the unique challenges and opportunities within the transport industry.

Theoretical Review

Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) provides a theoretical framework to understand how diversity initiatives can influence organizational effectiveness within transport companies. According to this theory, individuals derive part of their self-concept from their membership in social groups, such as their work teams or organizations. Diversity initiatives that promote inclusivity and respect for diverse identities can enhance employees' identification with the organization, leading to improved job satisfaction and commitment (Roberson, 2006). This alignment of individual and organizational identities fosters a sense of belonging and collective goals, which are crucial for effective teamwork and organizational performance in dynamic sectors like transport (Herring, 2009).

Social Identity Theory emphasizes the importance of intergroup relations within organizations. By reducing perceived barriers and fostering positive interactions across diverse groups, diversity initiatives can mitigate biases and stereotypes, thereby promoting a collaborative work environment (Thomas & Ely, 1996). This collaborative synergy is essential for addressing complex logistical challenges and enhancing innovation in transport companies (Page, 2007). Therefore, understanding and applying Social Identity

Theory can provide insights into how diversity initiatives can strategically enhance organizational effectiveness through improved teamwork, innovation, and operational performance in the transport industry.

Resource-Based View (RBV)

The Resource-Based View (RBV) of the firm (Barney, 1991) offers insights into how diversity initiatives can contribute to organizational effectiveness by leveraging human capital within transport companies. According to RBV, a firm's competitive advantage arises from its unique resources and capabilities, including its workforce diversity (Barney, 1991). Diversity initiatives that attract, develop, and retain diverse talent can enhance the firm's resource base, leading to improved operational performance and innovation in addressing industry-specific challenges (Page, 2007). In the context of transport companies, where operational efficiency and customer satisfaction are paramount, leveraging diverse skills and perspectives can lead to differentiated service offerings and enhanced market competitiveness.

RBV underscores the strategic importance of organizational capabilities in translating diverse resources into sustained competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). Diversity initiatives that foster inclusive organizational cultures and effective teamwork can build capabilities for adaptation and innovation in response to market changes and customer demands (Herring, 2009). By investing in diversity training and development programs, transport companies can enhance their organizational capabilities for intercultural communication, customer relationship management, and operational excellence, thereby driving long-term organizational effectiveness and performance (Bezrukova et al., 2012).

Methodology

Ex-post facto research design was used in the study's conduct. Observers cannot directly influence independent variables in ex-post facto studies because their manifestations have already happened or they are fundamentally unmodifiable. Due to the nature of this research, there is no manipulation of factors. The population of the study comprises all the 35 registered transport companies in Bayelsa State as at 31st September 2023. In order to ensure data accuracy and reliability, criterion sampling technique employed to select the sample of the study. The criteria are:

- 1) The firms must have existed for at least ten years.
- 2) They must have all information required to measure the variables of the study within the period.

After using these criteria, 6 transport companies met the conditions and hence they formed the sample of the study. With the help of E-View version 9, Pearson correlation and simple regression were used to examine the connection between the variables in this study data.

Model of Specification

$$ORE = f(DII)$$

$$ORE_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 DII_{it} + \varepsilon_t$$

$$ORE = \{ES, CS, IOC\}$$

Where:

ORE = Organizational Effectiveness,

DII = Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives

EP= Employee Performance

CS= Customer Satisfaction

IOC= Inclusive Organizational Culture

i = company,

t = time (year),

ε = error term

Decision criterion

Using the E-Views statistical software package, version 9.0 p-value:

Reject the null hypothesis (H_0) if $p < 0.05$ or

Accept the null hypothesis (H_0) if $p > 0.05$

All tests of significance are done at 5% level.

Results

H01: Diversity initiatives have no significant effect on employee performance and job satisfaction within transport companies Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

Dependent Variable: EP

Method: Least Squares

Date: 12/07/24 Time: 11:33

Sample: 2010 2023

Included observations: 13

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
C	0.016724	0.014794	1.130499	0.3096
DII	1.58E-10	4.91E-11	3.225204	0.0233
R-squared	0.675366	Mean dependent var		0.049886
Adjusted R-squared	0.610439	S.D. dependent var		0.045087
S.E. of regression	0.028141	Akaike info criterion		-4.068215
Sum squared resid	0.003960	Schwarz criterion		-4.083669
Log likelihood	16.23875	Hannan-Quinn criter.		-4.259226
F-statistic	10.40194	Durbin-Watson stat		1.778707
Prob(F-statistic)	0.023330			

E-Views Output (2024)

There is a 67.54 percent explanation for variance in the dependent variable by using an R-squared value modified to 0.6104. The F-statistic was 10.40, the hypothesis that all of the regression coefficients are zero is rejected (p.05). For the regression model, F-statistics and an adjusted R2 suggest that the model has a good fit and can explain employee performance fluctuations. Our variable of interest (EP) had a positive coefficient and t-statistic [t-statistic (3.2252), p (0.0233 <0.05)]. The null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, diversity initiatives have a significant effect on employee performance and job satisfaction within transport companies Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

Hypothesis 2

H02: There is no significant correlation between the implementation of diversity initiatives and customer satisfaction levels in transport companies Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

Dependent Variable: CS

Method: Least Squares

Date: 10/07/24 Time: 11:35

Sample: 2010 2023

Included observations: 13

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
C	0.087630	0.045181	1.939548	0.1101
DII	2.48E-10	1.50E-10	1.655884	0.0186
R-squared	0.354168	Mean dependent var		0.139629
Adjusted R-squared	0.225002	S.D. dependent var		0.097627
S.E. of regression	0.085945	Akaike info criterion		-1.835259
Sum squared resid	0.036933	Schwarz criterion		-1.850713
Log likelihood	8.423407	Hannan-Quinn criter.		-2.026271
F-statistic	2.741952	Durbin-Watson stat		1.113942
Prob(F-statistic)	0.158648			

E-Views Output (2024)

There is a 35.41 percent explanation for variance in the dependent variable by using an R-squared value modified to 0.225. The F-statistic was 2.74, the hypothesis that all of the regression coefficients are zero is rejected (p.05). For the regression model, F-statistics and an adjusted R2 suggest that the model has a good fit and can explain Customer Satisfaction fluctuations. Our variable of interest (CS) had a positive coefficient and t-statistic [t-statistic (1.6558), p (0.0186 <0.05)]. The null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, there is a significant correlation between the implementation of diversity initiatives and customer satisfaction levels in transport companies Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

Hypothesis 3

H03: Diversity initiatives have no significant impact on fostering an inclusive organizational culture within transport companies Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

Dependent Variable: IOC

Method: Least Squares

Date: 10/07/24 Time: 11:37

Sample: 2010 2023

Included observations: 13

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
C	0.478458	0.031520	15.17938	0.0000
DII	-9.76E-12	1.05E-10	-0.093280	0.9293
R-squared	0.001737	Mean dependent var	0.476414	
Adjusted R-squared	-0.197915	S.D. dependent var	0.054783	
S.E. of regression	0.059959	Akaike info criterion	-2.555346	
Sum squared resid	0.017976	Schwarz criterion	-2.570801	
Log likelihood	10.94371	Hannan-Quinn criter.	-2.746358	
F-statistic	0.008701	Durbin-Watson stat	1.053108	
Prob(F-statistic)	0.929303			

E-Views Output (2024)

There is a 1.71 percent explanation for variance in the dependent variable by using an R-squared value modified to 0.197. The F-statistic was 0.008, the hypothesis that all of the regression coefficients are zero is rejected (p.05). For the regression model, F-statistics and an adjusted R2 suggest that the model has a good fit and can explain Inclusive Organizational Culture fluctuations. Our variable of interest (IOC) had a negative coefficient and t-statistic [t-statistic (-0.093280), p (0.9293 > 0.05)]. The null hypothesis is retained. Hence, Diversity initiatives have a significant impact on fostering an inclusive organizational culture within transport companies Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

Findings from objective 1 revealed that diversity initiatives have a significant effect on employee performance and job satisfaction within transport companies Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

Diversity initiatives within transport companies in Bayelsa State, Nigeria, have been shown to significantly enhance employee performance and job satisfaction. These initiatives often lead to a more inclusive work environment where employees from diverse backgrounds feel valued and respected, which in turn fosters higher levels of motivation and engagement. According to Nwankwo et al. (2020), companies that implement diversity programs tend to experience a reduction in workplace conflicts and an improvement in team collaboration, ultimately boosting overall productivity. Additionally, employees in these diverse environments report greater job satisfaction due to a sense of belonging and equitable treatment, which aligns with findings by Ogochukwu (2019) that highlight the positive correlation between diversity practices and employee morale. Therefore, fostering diversity not only improves individual employee outcomes but also contributes to the overall success and efficiency of transport companies in the region.

Findings from **objective 2** revealed that there is a significant correlation between the implementation of diversity initiatives and customer satisfaction levels in transport companies Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

The implementation of diversity initiatives in transport companies in Bayelsa State, Nigeria, has a significant positive correlation with customer satisfaction levels. These initiatives lead to a more inclusive and culturally competent workforce, which enhances the quality of customer service provided. Research by Okon and Oghene (2021) demonstrates that customers are more likely to be satisfied when they interact with employees who understand and respect their diverse backgrounds and needs. Furthermore, companies that prioritize diversity are often perceived as more socially responsible, which can enhance their reputation and customer loyalty. Agbo and Amadi (2020) found that diverse teams are better at problem-solving and innovation, leading to improved service delivery and customer experiences. Therefore, promoting diversity within transport companies not only improves internal dynamics but also translates into higher customer satisfaction and retention rates.

Findings from **objective 3** revealed that diversity initiatives have a significant impact on fostering an inclusive organizational culture within transport companies in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. Diversity initiatives play a crucial role in fostering an inclusive organizational culture within transport companies in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. These initiatives help create an environment where employees from various backgrounds feel welcomed and respected, thereby enhancing their sense of belonging and engagement. According to Eze and Chukwu (2022), inclusive cultures are characterized by higher levels of collaboration, trust, and mutual respect among employees, which leads to improved overall organizational performance. Additionally, the work of Obi and Nwosu (2021) highlights

that organizations with strong diversity policies are better equipped to attract and retain top talent, as they are perceived as progressive and equitable employers. This inclusivity not only enhances internal workplace dynamics but also improves the company's public image and stakeholder relationships. Therefore, implementing diversity initiatives is essential for transport companies aiming to cultivate a positive and inclusive organizational culture.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the implementation of diversity initiatives in transport companies in Bayelsa State, Nigeria, has far-reaching positive effects on employee performance, job satisfaction, customer satisfaction, and the cultivation of an inclusive organizational culture. These initiatives not only enhance internal dynamics by fostering a sense of belonging and equitable treatment among employees but also improve external perceptions and customer experiences through culturally competent service. The evidence from various studies underscores that diversity management leads to reduced workplace conflicts, better team collaboration, and higher overall productivity. Organizations that prioritize diversity are more successful in attracting and retaining top talent and building strong reputations. Therefore, it is clear that diversity initiatives are integral to the sustained success and growth of transport companies in this region.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were raised based on the findings given above:

1. Transport companies should implement comprehensive diversity training programs to foster a more collaborative and respectful work environment.
2. Companies should adopt inclusive recruitment and retention policies to attract top talent from diverse backgrounds.
3. Enhancing cultural competence in customer service can significantly improve customer satisfaction and loyalty.

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