

PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF THE PUBLIC ENLIGHTENMENT PROGRAMMES OF FEDERAL ROAD SAFETY CORPS (FRSC): A SURVEY OF MOTORISTS IN IMO STATE

MACAULEY Samuel Uche

Department of Mass Communication, Federal Polytechnic Nekede, Owerri

macaulaysamuel@fpno.edu.ng

Abstract

*This study was aimed at assessing the public perception of public enlightenment programmes of federal road safety using motorists in Imo State. The study was anchored on the social cognitive theory. The study derived a sample size of 399 from a population of 857,298 using the Australian sample size calculator. Multi-stage sampling technique was used. Questionnaire was used for data collection. Findings revealed that, 45.5% of motorist in Imo State were highly exposed to the public enlightenment programme of the FRSC. Further analysis revealed that **32.8% of the motorists were of the view that seminars in motor packs was the programme that has more effect on them; at an average mean score of 2.9, motorists in Imo State are being influenced by the public enlightenment programme of the FRSC; at an average mean score of 2.9, motorists see the public enlightenment programme of FRSC to be effective and the perception of motorist about the image of the FRSC is not negative.** The study recommend that; FRSC should endeavour to improve in exposing the public to their public enlightenment programmes; FRSC should improve on other public enlightenment programme that can bring out desired change on motorist behaviour on Imo State; FRSC should keep up with the positive influence it public enlightenment programme has on the motorists; due to the effectiveness of the public enlightenment programme, FRSC should expand the programme to other media, especially, the new media and the FRSC should continue its public enlightenment programme in order to keep the good image motorist has about it.*

Keywords: Public Perception, Public Enlightenment Programmes, Federal Road Safety Corps, and Motorists

Introduction

The actions and programmes of organizations have the tendency of telling on its image. If the organization engages in positive and pro-active programmes/actions/activities, there is a tendency that they will have good image before the public. On the other hand, if the organization engages in negative, anti-people and non-popular activities and programmes, there is also a tendency that they are likely to have a negative image from their negative actions/programmes (Waszkiewicz-Raviv, 2014). The Federal Road Safety Corps is one of those organizations whose dos and don'ts can go a long way to affect its public image before the people.

Onuka and Akinyeme (2012) noted that the challenges on the highway is occasioned by the Nigerian road users. The situation is so terrible that the rate of indiscipline is on the high side. Little wonder, the cases of accidents on daily basis. Yakassai (1997) went further to note that the Nigeria road is dominated by the combination of inexperienced, drunk and over confident drivers who were unconcerned about the lives of other road users as well as theirs. He went further to note that majority of the road users do not know more than the rudiment of moving a vehicle and using its horn. The consequences of all these is the high rate of accident in the country.

Uzuegbu-Wilson (2016) observed that the road accidents occasioned by these reckless drivers lead to death and disability as well as financial cost to both society and individual involved. Although, he noted that the causes of accidents are not just limited to human errors or driver negligence but that the highways are arguably very dangerous. This no doubt has made Nigeria to rank high in World Health Organization (WHO) written of countries with road traffic accidents. It is in the quest to correct these issues that the FRSC was established in 1988.

In recent times, the FRSC has engaged in several enlightenment programmes targeted at shaping the attitude of road users, influencing the minds of motorists positively, ensuring the development and sustenance of a responsible driving populace, imparting appropriate road safety norms in drivers, pedestrians, children, youths, cyclists, etc, preservation of lives and property, building a new generation of safety compliant drivers and pedestrians. These enlightenment programmes are carried out in form of rallies at motor parks, dramas and music, motorized public enlightenment campaign/carnival, routine operations (engaging offenders during operational activities), road safety clubs and special marshals (Olagunju, 2017).

According to Gibe (2012), these campaigns carried out by the FRSC, the highways have not been completely free from day to day hazards and accidents induced by human errors. There are cases where motorists will carry “overload”, use old tyres, drink while driving, driving without headlight and other safety requirements, nonchalant attitude towards the use of seat belts and a host of other non-safe practice motorists engage in. To curtail these negative practices from motorists, the FRSC are, in most cases, forced to enforce the right attitude in motorists. It is in the process of these enforcement that the Road Safety Corps are seen as been overbearing on the public. These overbearing impression in the mind of the people is what determines the type of image they have about the road safety corps.

Studies by Bamidele, Adebimpe and Adewole (2011) and Ucheobi (2020) have shown that the unprofessional conduct of members of Road Safety Corps has further accelerated the negative image that the corps is bedevilled with. Some of the unprofessional conduct of the corps officers includes overloading of the patrol van and unofficial use of the patrol van, sleeping on duty, collecting of bribes from offenders, fighting with road users, video chatting while on official duty, wearing of long hairs and makeup and other forms of indecent actions/activities. Most of these activities can be handled internally by the organization. But to elicit the very best from the public, the force has continued to enlighten the masses for safer roads.

It is against this backdrop that the researcher sought to examine the influence of public enlightenment programmes of federal road safety on the image of the commission, with focus on motorists in Imo State.

Statement of the Problem

WHO (2009) notes that on annual basis, 32,000 people are killed on Nigerian roads. This implies that on the average 87 persons die on daily bases in the country; by implication the country is losing 3 persons per hour through road accidents. This situation shows the sorry state of Nigerian roads. Little wonder WHO (2009) predicts that disabilities occasioned by road accidents will be the third most traumatic problem in the world. With this nature of accidents and the number of deaths, one can only but imagine the need for public enlightenment campaigns for road users.

Osita (2011) notes that the FRSC has spent over 7 billion naira on public enlightenment programmes between 1988 to 2010. He added that the World Bank in 2011 gave the sum of 1.5 billion naira to the FRSC to further improve their effectiveness, logistics and public campaigns. Despite all these monetary contributions and expenditure, the FRSC in 2011 noted that about 456 billion naira is lost to road traffic accident. With this assertion from the FRSC, one can only but imagine how the campaigns of FRSC are taken by the public/motorist. Could it be that the activities of the FRSC do not allow the public or motorist to have faith in their campaigns or that the campaigns do not have positive influence on the image the motorists have towards FRSC/organization.

This study therefore, sought to examine the influence public enlightenment programmes of the FRSC on its image before motorists.

Research Questions

1. Which of the FRSC enlightenment programme has much effect on the desired change on motorist behaviour?
2. To what extent has the FRSC public enlightenment programme influenced motorist behaviour in Imo State?
3. What is the perception of motorists about the effectiveness of the FRSC public enlightenment programme in Imo State?
4. What is the opinion of motorist on the image of the FRSC based on the public enlightenment programmes of the corporation?

Literature Review

FRSC Public Enlightenment Programmes

According to Ipingbemi (2008) and Osita (2010), public enlightenment programmes of FRSC are road safety precautions put in place to bring about reduction in high road traffic accidents in Lagos, Ogun, Ondo and Oyo states and Nigeria in general. Globally, all public enlightenment programmes regardless of its forms and methods, basically centres on strict adherence to road traffic rules and regulations, target at protecting passengers, the vehicle, pedestrians, commercial drivers and other road users (Holder, 2001; Hill, 2008).

The onus of the FRSC public campaign involves thorough discussions on road traffic laws and Highway Code, comprehension of road signs and traffic signals. Other cardinal principles of the FRSC public

campaigns centre on knowledge of one's responsibilities while driving, respect for other road users, respect for traffic control officers and their directives, and finally encouraging concern for the safety of all road users and proficiency in driving. It is traffic education deficiencies that have been responsible for the road transport problems in Nigeria (Oni, 2000 and 2002; Oladimeji and Onyema, 2011).

Various radio and television lectures on road safety precautions, as well as, jingles cum newspaper advertisements form the bulk of the corps' enlightenment via mass media. Other innovative varieties include public enlightenment programmes at motor parks, churches, mosques, and community gatherings. According to Eke, Etubu and Nwosu (2000), most of the FRSC activities are done in conjunction with public or private organised sector, especially with the banking and manufacturing industries like Nigerian Breweries, Dunlop PLC and First Bank PLC, Diamond Bank PLC, and Chevron.

Regardless of its form and method, they are meant to reduce road crashes to about 50 percent by 2015 and by 2020 make Nigeria the 20th safest country in the world (Osita, 2008 and 2011). Adeniji (2000) further emphasises that the road safety campaign is important to lift the profile of a road safety problem, say speeding, as a legal or criminal issue and to make commercial drivers aware of the risk of prosecution. For example, the publicity about the number of deaths and injuries caused by speeding, combined with information about how low speed reduces the number of deaths and injuries, may change attitudes to speeding or make low speed limits and stiff penalties for infringements more acceptable. Similarly, Kessides (2006) opines that the link with law enforcement is essential: the fear of being caught and penalised for traffic offenses appear to be a more powerful motive for reducing speed than the fear of being involved in a crash.

Understanding Perception

Perception is the way you think about something. Clauseus (2014) noted that perception helps us to understand, event, issues and the difference between reality and illusion. He noted the task of human perception is to amplify and strengthen sensory input to be able to perceive, orientate and act very quickly, specifically and efficiently.

According to Lumen (n.d), perception refers to the way sensory information is organized, interpreted and consciously experienced. It involves both bottom-up and top-down processing. In this case, bottom-up processing refers to the fact that perceptions are built from sensory input. This means that we build perception based on what comes into the body or what the human person is exposed to. In other words, as events affect any of the five senses, perception is built. On the other hand, the top-down processing refers to the way we interpret these sensations based on the available knowledge we possess or the experiences we have. This means that perception is aided by the knowledge already in the individual as well as the experiences he has had all his life. All these factors add together to produce a unified form of perception towards a given issue (Lumen, n.d.).

As it concerns the FRSC, people build perception either from the bottom-top or the top-bottom processes. From the bottom-top perspective, perception is built when people are exposed to public campaigns coming from the FRSC.

Empirical Review

Nnaji (2012) evaluated the corporate communication strategies of FRSC in building its image. The study made use of questionnaire as the research instrument. Using simple percentages and frequency distribution tables in analyzing the data, the study found out that majority of the respondents know about the corporate communication strategies of the FRSC to include; ember month rallies seminars and workshops, servicom units but that more than half of the respondents do not know about the FRSC Facebook page. The study further revealed that poor implementation of these corporate communication strategies and corruption among FRSC officials undermines the effectiveness of these strategies. The findings also indicated that corporate communication is a veritable tool to build the image of FRSC, if it is well imbibed by the staff, will create confidence in its services to the public.

Olusegun (2018) analyzed ICT utilization in the operations of FRSC in South-west, Nigeria. It adopted a quantitative research approach conducted in a cross-sectional design with the use of structured questionnaire to collect primary data from the FRSC staff operating in south-western Nigeria. Multi-stage sampling technique was employed to select 323 FRSC staff from Ondo, Oyo and Osun States, Nigeria. In addition, the findings of the regression analysis revealed that ICT utilization has a positive effect on the operations of FRSC.

Uzuegbu-Wilson (2016) conducted a study on Auto-Mobile Accident Control and Nigeria Federal Road Safety Corps: A Critical Analysis of the Commercial Drivers' Experience. Data collected was analyzed using

Considering the fact that the population of Imo State is large, the researcher adopted the multistage sampling technique. This technique requires the use of stages to break down the sampling. First, the researcher divided the population into three clusters, according to the three existing senatorial district in the state.

Secondly, the researcher selected two local governments from each of these senatorial districts, mainly the metropolitan cities, having FRSC office in it. The Local Government Areas selected, alongside with other stages are presented in the table below:

Table 1: Sampling procedure.

State of Focus	Senatorial Districts	Local Government selected	No. of respondents selected per L.G.A	Total no. of respondent per senatorial districts
Imo	Imo – North	Onuimo LGA and Okigwe L.GA	66.5 X 2	133
	Imo – West	Orlu and Orsu LGA	66.5 X 2	133
	Imo – East	Owerri North LGA and Owerri-Municipal LGA	66.5 X 2	133
Total	3	6	399	399

The research instrument for this study was the questionnaire, which Ohaja (2003:84) and Ndagi (1999:64), have affirmed as an instrument for the collection of data in enquiries that use the survey method.

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

The researcher distributed 400 copies of the questionnaire out of the copies distributed, 399 copies amounting to 99.8% were returned and analysed, while 1 copying amounting to 0.3% was not returned. The retrieved copies were analysed using percentage analysis and Likert scale. For easy understanding of the mean analysis in Likert scale, the cluster analysis pattern was adopted.

Psychographic Data

This aspect of the data analysis is targeted at the research questions raised in the study. In essence, the researcher will present the data according to the research questions in the study. Also, cluster analysis was used in presenting the data on a Likert scale aspect of the study.

Research Question One: To what extent are motorist exposed to the FRSC enlightenment programme?

Table 3: Respondents level of exposure to FRSC enlightenment programme?

Option	Frequency	Percent
Very High Extent	181	45.4
High Extent	138	34.5
Moderate	50	12.5
Low Extent	20	5.0
Very Low Extent	10	2.5
Total	399	100

Source: Field survey, 2021

Table 4 shows that 181 respondents representing 45.4% said that their level of exposure is very high. If this is added to the 34.6% of the people that said they have high exposure to the FRSC Enlightenment Programme, it will show that the level of exposure to the FRSC enlightenment programme in Imo State is very high.

Research Question Two: Which of the FRSC enlightenment programme has much effect on the desired

change on motorist behaviour?

Table 4: Respondents responses on the major FRSC programme that has much effect on them

Options	Frequency	Percent
Seminar in Packs	131	32.8
Rally	101	25.3
Media Programmes	48	12
Road checks and discussion	119	29.8
Total	399	100

Source: Field survey, 2021

Table 5 above showed that 32.8% of the respondents opined that seminar in packs by the FRSC is the programme that had the high effect on them. This is not unconnected to the fact that most of the commercial drivers are waiting their turn while listening to these seminars. In most cases, they are encouraged to suspend transport activities for some time just for the seminar programme to run.

Research Question Three: What is the influence of FRSC public enlightenment programme on the behaviour of motorist in Imo State?

Table 6: Response of respondents on the influence of FRSC public enlightenment programme (N=399)

Option	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
I now use seat belt while driving	97	187	72	43	2.8	Accepted
I don't use phone and text while driving	252	54	29	64	3.3	Accepted
I avoid over speeding	84	91	76	178	2.4	Rejected
I do not engage in dangerous overtaking	187	72	43	97	2.9	Accepted
Average Mean					2.9	Accepted

Source: Field survey, 2021

Decision rule: Given that the benchmark of a 4-point Likert scale for decision is 2.5, it means that if the calculated mean is 2.5-4.0, then the item in question is accepted. However, if the calculated mean is 1-2.4, then the item in question is rejected.

Analysis of data from table 6 above indicates that at an average mean of 2.9, motorists in Imo State are influenced by the public enlightenment programme of the FRSC. The implication of this finding is that the public enlightenment programme of the FRSC do not really fall on deaf ears as motorist are beginning to have a change in character in the way they use the road.

Research Question Four: What is the perception of motorists about the effectiveness of the FRSC public enlightenment programme in Imo State?

Table 7: Respondents views on the effectiveness of the FRSC public enlightenment programme (N=399)

Option	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
I think the FRSC enlightenment programmes are effective	227	88	64	20	3.3	Accepted
They use language that communicates the ideas directly	197	97	33	72	3.1	Accepted
Their approach to enlightenment is not aggressive	30	80	92	197	1.9	Rejected
I think they are not effective	208	95	56	40	3.2	Accepted
Average Mean					2.9	Accepted

Source: Field survey, 2021

Decision rule: Given that the benchmark of a 4-point Likert scale for decision is 2.5, it means that if the calculated mean is 2.5-4.0, then the item in question is accepted. However, if the calculated mean is 1-2.4, then the item in question is rejected.

Table 7 above indicated that at an average mean of 2.9 motorists in Imo State see the FRSC public enlightenment programmes to be very effective. This implies that the corps is running the programme in a way that actually gets to the road users.

Research Question Five: What is the opinion of motorist on the image of the FRSC based on the public enlightenment programmes of the corps?

Table 8: Respondents view on the image of the FRSC based on their public enlightenment programme (N=399)

Option	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
The FRSC is a wicked corps with heartless men	205	67	36	41	2.8	Accepted
The FRSC is a diligent corps with hardworking professionals	90	98	106	105	2.4	Rejected
Average Mean					2.8	Accepted

Source: Field survey, 2021

Decision rule: Given that the benchmark of a 4-point Likert scale for decision is 2.5, it means that if the calculated mean is 2.5-4.0, then the item in question is accepted. However, if the calculated mean is 1-2.4, then the item in question is rejected.

Table 8 above indicated that at a mean average of 2.6, the views of motorist in Imo State towards FRSC image as a result of their public enlightenment programme were not negative. This implies that the public enlightenment programmes of the FRSC have improved the image of the FRSC.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The Extent of Motorist Exposure to FRSC public Enlightenment Programme

Analysis in respect to research question one revealed that 45.5% of motorist in Imo State were highly exposed to the public enlightenment programme of the FRSC. If this level of exposure is added to the percentage of those who were exposed to these programmes, one would realised that the extent of exposure to the programmes were above average. This implies that the extent of motorist exposure to FRSC programmes is very high. This finding is in line with that of Nnaji (2012) who noted that motorists are aware and knowledge about the public enlightenment programmes of the FRSC in Enugu State. This means that knowledge of the programme is not a problem for motorist in the country.

The FRSC public enlightenment programme that has much effect on motorist

Data analysis indicated that 32.8% of the motorist, who happened to be the highest percentage, were of the view that seminars in motor packs was the programme that has more effect on them. This implies that the seminar approach gave the motorists more avenue to understand the programme of the FRSC and may help predispose them to making the desired change. However, this finding is different from that of Olusegun (2018) who found that the use of Information Communication Technology has more effect on motorist in South-western, Nigeria. The findings of Olusegun have more praise for the ICT engagement of FRSC, but my own findings showed that seminar is more effective.

The influence of FRSC public enlightenment programme on the behaviour of motorist in Imo State

Analysis of data revealed that at an average mean of 2.9, motorists in Imo State are being influenced by the public enlightenment programme of the FRSC. This implies that some of the desired changes expected to manifest in their practice. These character include the use of seat belt, none use of cell phone while driving, avoidance of over-speeding, etc. This finding is in conformity with that of Uzuegbu-Wilson (2016) who found out that the public enlightenment programmes of the FRSC do induce motorists and road users to have

positive change in attitude.

The perception of motorists about the effectiveness of the FRSC public enlightenment programme in Imo State

Further analysis in respect to research question four showed a mean average of 2.9 indicating that motorists see the public enlightenment programme of FRSC to be effective. In fact, when asked if they think that the enlightenment programme was effective? The mean of 3.3 indicated that the motorists perceive the programmes of FRSC to be very effective.

This finding is best explained by the Theory of Reasoned Action which shows that individuals consider behaviour's consequences before performing the particular behaviour which as a result, intention is an important factor in determining behaviour and behavioural change. Also, the social cognitive theory which emphasises the learner having knowledge, motivation, outcome expectancy and self-efficacy.

The opinion of motorists on the image of the FRSC based on their public enlightenment programme

In answering research question five, motorist perception of the image of the FRSC vis-à-vis the public enlightenment programme, analysis revealed a mean average of 2.8, indicating that the perception of motorist about the image of the FRSC is not negative. Motorists had positive image of the FRSC as a result of their public enlightenment programme. However, when asked about the attitude and conduct of some officers of the corps, the mean of 2.8 indicated that motorist do not like the attitude of some corps officers of the FRSC. This finding is best explained by the elaborate likelihood model which shows how people tend to change their opinion on issues or people through the nature of information they are exposed to. This mean that if they are persuaded enough through informed communication that is of benefit to them, there is a tendency that their attitude will change and their image of the people behind the communication will improve. Also, the image restoration theory this is because when an organisation is accused of wrongdoing and thereby seen in a bad image communication becomes the primary tool for salvaging such image.

Conclusion

Given that 45.5% of the motorists in Imo state are highly exposed to FRSC public enlightenment programme, it is safe to conclude that they are motorists in Imo State are exposed to FRSC public enlightenment programmes. As in the case of this study, data analysis revealed that seminar approach gave the motorists more avenues to understand the programme of the FRSC and may help predispose them to making the desired change. The finding of this study indicated that at an average mean of 2.9 respondents in Imo State are being influenced by the public enlightenment programme of the FRSC, meaning that some of the desired changes such as using of seat belt, none use of cell phone while driving, avoidance of over-speeding and many more. Furthermore, data analysis revealed that at an average mean of 2.8 respondents in Imo State which means that the perception of FRSC is positive.

In conclusion, the study avows that FRSC public enlightenment programme has positively impact the behaviour of motorists in Imo state.

Recommendations

- FRSC should endeavour to improve in level of exposure of their public enlightenment programme
- FRSC should improve on other public enlightenment programme that can effect desired change on motorist behaviour on Imo State
- FRSC should keep up with the positive influence it public enlightenment programme has on the motorists
- Due to the effectiveness of the public enlightenment programme, FRSC should expand the programme to other media especially the new media
- The FRSC should continue it public enlightenment programme in order to keep the good image motorist has about them

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