E-ISSN: *1597-2496*
Print-ISSN: *3043-534X*

PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGIES AND THE LEGAL PROMOTION OF COOPERATIVE SOCIETIES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
This study investigated public relations strategies and the promotion of cooperative societies in Nigeria. Three research objectives were to examine the influence of community relations, corporate image branding, digital and social media engagement in the promotion of cooperative societies in Nigeria. A survey research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised 4,850 registered cooperative societies in Nigeria, from which a sample size of 485 cooperative societies was selected using purposive sampling technique. Data were collected using a structured instrument titled "Public Relations Strategies and Cooperative Promotion Questionnaire (PRSCPQ)." The instrument was validated by experts in Mass Communication and Cooperative Studies from the University of Calabar, and its reliability was established using the Cronbach Alpha method, yielding coefficients ranging from 0.76 to 0.84. Data were analyzed using simple linear regression analysis to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that community relations significantly influence the promotion of cooperative societies in Nigeria, corporate image branding significantly influences the promotion of cooperative societies in Nigeria, and digital and social media engagement significantly plays a role in the promotion of cooperative societies in Nigeria. The study concluded that effective public relations strategies provide valuable pathways for advancing cooperative society promotion in Nigeria. It was recommended that cooperative society management should invest in community engagement programmes, develop strong corporate branding strategies, and leverage digital platforms to enhance visibility, membership growth, and sustainable development of cooperative enterprises in Nigeria
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Keywords: Public Relations Strategies, Legal Promotion, Community Relations, Corporate Image Branding, Digital Media Engagement, Cooperative Societies.

1.1 Introduction
The promotion of cooperative societies is an important mechanism for economic empowerment, poverty reduction, financial inclusion and sustainable community development, particularly in developing economies where access to formal financial services remains limited (International Cooperative Alliance, 2021; World Bank, 2022). In Nigeria, cooperatives have contributed substantially to agricultural development, microfinance and consumer welfare. However, their

E-ISSN: *1597-2496*
Print-ISSN: *3043-534X*

sustainability and growth increasingly depend on effective public relations strategies capable of improving visibility, trust and stakeholder participation (Adeyeye, 2023; Okafor, 2022). Strategic communication has therefore become increasingly relevant to cooperative management.

Public relations within cooperative societies involves deliberately managing relationships with members, prospective members, government institutions and surrounding communities (Jefkins, 2021). With the expansion of digital communication, this function now extends beyond conventional community outreach to include branding, social media and other interactive communication channels (Smith, 2023). This development is particularly important because Nigerian cooperatives compete with commercial banks, microfinance institutions, fintech firms and informal savings groups for members and financial resources (Nwankwo, 2023).

Public relations strategies comprise planned activities designed to create and sustain mutual understanding between organisations and their publics (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2022). In cooperative societies, important dimensions include community relations, corporate image and digital/social media engagement. Community relations facilitates grassroots participation and social responsibility; corporate image supports identity and reputation; while digital engagement expands accessibility and interaction. Together, these activities can influence membership, loyalty and the achievement of cooperative objectives.

The Two-Way Symmetrical Model developed by Grunig and Hunt (1984) provides a useful foundation for understanding these relationships. The model stresses reciprocal communication, mutual understanding and stakeholder participation rather than one-directional persuasion. Applied to cooperatives, it suggests that members' expectations and community concerns should inform organisational decisions. Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 1984) similarly emphasises the importance of balancing the interests of groups that affect or are affected by organisational activities.

International evidence indicates that structured public relations can support cooperative development. Community relations has been associated with improved trust and member retention, while corporate branding can strengthen visibility and recruitment. Digital communication has also contributed to greater youth participation and financial engagement in cooperative organisations (Zeuli & Cropp, 2021; Borzaga & Galera, 2022; Kumar & Singh, 2023). Nevertheless, scholars caution that communication must remain authentic. Superficial community activities may generate distrust, while excessive commercial branding can weaken cooperative identity and values (Ketilson, 2021; Mazzarol, 2022).

Across Africa, cooperatives continue to experience difficulties involving public recognition, member education and generational membership transition (Develtere, Pollet, & Wanyama, 2023). Evidence from Kenya, Ghana and South Africa indicates that community relations, corporate branding and digital engagement can improve member satisfaction, institutional legitimacy, market access and youth participation (Oloo, 2022; Aryeetey & Udry, 2021; Philip, 2023). However, inadequate communication resources, weak digital infrastructure and limited professionalisation of public relations remain important constraints (Wanyama, Develtere, & Pollet, 2022).

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Print-ISSN: *3043-534X*

In Nigeria, cooperative development operates within the framework of the Nigerian Cooperative Societies Act (2004) and the National Cooperative Policy (2017), which emphasise member education, awareness, transparency and accountability. Despite this framework, many societies still depend heavily on informal word-of-mouth promotion rather than systematic communication programmes (Adegbite, 2023). Nigeria has more than 50,000 registered cooperatives operating in agriculture, housing, transport, consumer services and finance, although many remain inadequately capitalised and insufficiently visible (National Cooperative Financing Agency of Nigeria, 2023). Some societies have adopted community projects, branding and social media, but systematic evaluation of their promotional effectiveness remains limited.

Empirical studies reinforce the relevance of these strategies. Community relations has been linked with member trust and participation in Nigerian agricultural cooperatives, while corporate image and digital communication have enhanced credibility, engagement and governance participation in other African cooperative contexts (Idowu & Akinbode, 2022; Bekele & Tesfaye, 2023; Mwesigwa et al., 2021). This is particularly significant in Nigeria, where concerns about negative perceptions, governance problems and generational membership gaps can undermine cooperative development (Ogunbameru & Olomola, 2022).

Accordingly, community relations, corporate branding and digital engagement should be viewed as complementary components of cooperative promotion. While community relations strengthens grassroots legitimacy, digital communication expands reach and supports youth engagement. However, limited communication budgets, inadequate managerial expertise and competing operational demands can restrict their effective application (Adeyeye & Ojo, 2023). This study therefore examines public relations strategies and their role in promoting cooperative societies in Nigeria, with the aim of generating useful evidence for cooperative managers, policymakers and development practitioners seeking sustainable cooperative development.

The study draws attention to the relevance of promoting and communicating cooperative laws, regulations and statutes as complementary tools for the survival, effective governance and sustainable success of cooperative societies. A sound legal and regulatory framework provides the basis for registration, governance, membership rights and responsibilities, financial accountability, dispute resolution and other operational matters necessary for the orderly functioning of cooperatives. In Nigeria, the Nigerian Co-operative Societies Act provides for the registration and operation of cooperative societies and requires registered societies to operate in accordance with approved bye-laws covering issues such as membership, governance, funds and the rights and obligations of members (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004).

Promoting these legal provisions through effective public relations and member education can therefore improve awareness, compliance, transparency, and participation among cooperative stakeholders. This position is consistent with ILO Recommendation No. 193, which emphasises the need for supportive legal frameworks, cooperative education, information dissemination and access to public-relations services as part of policies for cooperative development (ILO, 2002). Thus, effective legal promotion can help members understand their rights and responsibilities, strengthen confidence in cooperative institutions, and support the achievement of cooperative objectives and the economic and social expectations of their members.

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Print-ISSN: *3043-534X*

1.2 Statement of Problem

The promotion of cooperative societies in Nigeria is essential for enhancing economic empowerment, financial inclusion, and community development. Despite their importance, many cooperative societies continue to experience challenges related to low visibility, weak public trust, limited membership growth, and poor stakeholder engagement. These challenges persist even with the existence of regulatory frameworks and the increasing need for cooperatives to compete with formal financial institutions and emerging fintech platforms. This situation raises concerns about the effectiveness of strategies currently used by cooperative societies to communicate their values, services, and benefits to the public.

Furthermore, the evolving communication environment, characterized by digital transformation and increased reliance on strategic public relations practices, demands that cooperative societies adopt more structured and innovative approaches to promotion. However, many cooperatives in Nigeria still rely heavily on traditional, informal communication methods such as word-of-mouth, with limited investment in community relations programmes, corporate image branding, and digital or social media engagement. This gap in the application of modern public relations strategies may hinder their ability to build credibility, attract new members, and sustain long-term growth in a highly competitive environment.

Although previous studies have highlighted the importance of communication and stakeholder engagement in organizational success, there is limited empirical evidence on how specific public relations strategies influence the promotion of cooperative societies in Nigeria. This lack of systematic investigation makes it difficult for cooperative managers and policymakers to identify and implement the most effective strategies for enhancing visibility, trust, and participation. It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to examine the influence of public relations strategies on the promotion of cooperative societies in Nigeria.

1.3 The objectives of the study

This study aimed to investigate public relations strategies and the promotion of cooperative societies in Nigeria. The study specifically intended to:

1. Examine the influence of community relations on the promotion of cooperative societies in Nigeria.
2. Determine the influence of corporate image branding on the promotion of cooperative societies in Nigeria.
3. Assess the role of social media engagement in the promotion of cooperative societies in Nigeria.

1.4 Research questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study

1. What is the influence of community relations on the promotion of cooperative societies in Nigeria?
2. What is the effect of corporate image branding on the promotion of cooperative societies in Nigeria?
3. What is the role of social media engagement towards the promotion of cooperative societies in Nigeria?

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Print-ISSN: *3043-534X*

1.5 Research hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested in the study:

1. Community relations do not significantly influence the promotion of cooperative societies in Nigeria.
2. Corporate image branding does not significantly influence the promotion of cooperative societies in Nigeria.
3. Social media engagement does not significantly influence the promotion of cooperative societies in Nigeria.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study examines the influence of public relations strategies on the promotion of cooperative societies in Nigeria. It focuses on three dimensions of public relations—community relations, corporate image branding, and digital/social media engagement—as the independent variables. The dependent variable, promotion of cooperative societies, is assessed through visibility, membership growth, stakeholder engagement, and overall organisational development.

The study covers registered cooperative societies across Nigeria, including agricultural, financial, consumer, and service-oriented cooperatives. It adopts a survey research design and relies on structured questionnaires administered to selected cooperative societies. Interviews, experiments, and other data collection methods are excluded. The study is also restricted to the identified public relations dimensions because of their relevance to contemporary communication practices. Consequently, the findings are applicable primarily to Nigerian cooperative societies and may not be directly generalisable to other sectors or countries with different institutional and socio-economic conditions.

1.7 Significance of the Study

The study contributes empirical evidence on how community relations, corporate image branding, and digital/social media engagement can support cooperative visibility, membership growth, and stakeholder trust. It therefore adds to academic discussions in mass communication, cooperative studies, and development studies, particularly in developing-country contexts.

For cooperative managers and leaders, the findings provide practical guidance on using structured public relations to strengthen credibility, stakeholder relationships, and competitive positioning. Policymakers, cooperative federations, and relevant government agencies may also use the findings to develop communication policies, capacity-building programmes, and strategies for sustainable cooperative development.

The study is further relevant to public relations and communication practitioners because it highlights the growing importance of digital and social media in cooperative promotion. It also provides a reference point for future researchers interested in related issues, including digital transformation, stakeholder engagement, and organisational sustainability within cooperative societies.

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Finally, the study draws attention to the relevance of cooperative laws and statutes, as concomitant tools for its survival and success, in order to meet the goals and expectations of its members.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Community Relations and the Promotion of Cooperative Societies

The reviewed literature generally identifies community relations as an important strategy for promoting cooperative societies through trust, legitimacy, public acceptance and stakeholder engagement. As people-centred organisations, cooperatives depend substantially on sustained relationships with members and host communities. Community-oriented programmes can therefore improve attractiveness, participation and retention (Zeuli & Cropp, 2021; Oloo, 2022).

A major area of agreement is that community relations strengthens public trust and stakeholder confidence. Community development, educational outreach and social responsibility initiatives have been associated with stronger member participation and loyalty. Idowu and Akinbode (2022) found that community engagement improved participation in Nigerian agricultural cooperatives, while Oloo (2022) linked active community relations with greater visibility, loyalty and repayment behaviour in Kenya.

Community relations also improves grassroots awareness and enables cooperatives to reach underserved populations through meetings, partnerships, outreach and social interventions. Develtere et al. (2023) emphasised that African cooperatives gain legitimacy when perceived as contributors to local development, while Adeyeye and Ojo (2023) associated community-based communication with improved visibility in Nigeria. It can also support long-term membership growth by demonstrating responsiveness to local financial, social and livelihood needs (Zeuli & Cropp, 2021; Idowu & Akinbode, 2023).

However, the literature differs on whether community relations alone can guarantee effective promotion. Ketilson (2021) cautions that symbolic or superficial engagement may generate scepticism where organisational performance and transparency are weak. Other studies similarly suggest that community relations may need to operate alongside branding and digital communication, particularly in attracting younger and urban populations (Adegbite, 2023; Philip, 2023). Its effectiveness is also affected by managerial competence, funding and communication planning (Wanyama et al., 2022; Okonkwo & Eze, 2022). Researchers further differ in whether its main outcomes are tangible—such as membership and financial participation—or intangible, including trust, goodwill and legitimacy.

2.2 Corporate Image Branding and the Promotion of Cooperative Societies

The literature largely agrees that corporate image branding contributes to cooperative promotion by creating a recognisable identity, communicating organisational values and projecting credibility. This is increasingly important because cooperatives compete with commercial banks, microfinance institutions and fintech organisations for public attention and membership (Borzaga & Galera, 2022; Nwankwo, 2023).

Branding can strengthen legitimacy and public confidence when cooperatives are perceived as organised, transparent and professionally managed. Aryeetey and Udry (2021) found that

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Print-ISSN: *3043-534X*

institutional reputation strengthened the legitimacy of cooperative financial organisations in Ghana, while Bekele and Tesfaye (2023) reported similar benefits for cooperative unions in Ethiopia. Branding can also differentiate cooperatives from competitors and improve visibility and member recruitment (Borzaga & Galera, 2022; Adegbite, 2023).

Beyond immediate recruitment, a strong corporate image can support partnerships, stakeholder confidence and organisational resilience. Harrison and Wicks (2022) associate stakeholder value with effective relationship and identity management, while Adeyeye and Ojo (2023) highlight the contribution of strategic communication to cooperative sustainability.

Despite these benefits, scholars caution that branding must remain consistent with cooperative principles. Mazzarol (2022) argues that excessive commercialisation may dilute values such as mutual assistance, democratic control and community orientation. There is also disagreement over whether branding alone can generate promotional success, since credibility, service quality, accountability and member satisfaction may determine whether the projected image is trusted (Ketilson, 2021). Researchers differ as well on whether branding has stronger effects on external stakeholders or internal members, and on how effectively resource-constrained cooperatives can sustain professional branding (Okonkwo & Eze, 2022; Adeyeye & Ojo, 2023).

2.3 Digital and Social Media Engagement and the Promotion of Cooperative Societies

The literature shows substantial agreement that digital and social media have become important tools for cooperative promotion. Websites, social media platforms and other digital channels can expand visibility, improve accessibility and communicate organisational information beyond local communities, making them particularly relevant to younger and urban audiences (Kumar & Singh, 2023; Philip, 2023).

Digital engagement also facilitates two-way stakeholder communication by enabling cooperatives to share information, educate members, obtain feedback and support participation. Mwesigwa et al. (2021) found that digital communication improved member engagement and governance participation in Ugandan savings cooperatives. Digital platforms are similarly viewed as useful for addressing intergenerational challenges by making cooperatives more accessible and attractive to younger populations (Kumar & Singh, 2023; Philip, 2023).

Nevertheless, scholars disagree about the extent to which digital engagement can independently promote cooperatives. Digital tools may amplify communication but cannot substitute for credible governance, quality services and organisational performance (Wanyama et al., 2022; Adeyeye & Ojo, 2023). Concerns also exist about unequal access because rural, older and digitally underserved populations may not benefit equally. Furthermore, while digital platforms can strengthen transparency and participation, their emphasis on visibility and image may encourage more commercial forms of communication that could weaken traditional cooperative identity (Mwesigwa et al., 2021; Smith, 2023). Researchers consequently differ on whether digital engagement has greater value for external promotion, internal participation, or both.

2.4 Concept of Legal Promotion

Legal promotion refers to deliberate communication and advocacy aimed at creating awareness and understanding of the laws, rights, responsibilities, regulations and institutional provisions

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governing an organisation. Within cooperative societies, it involves communicating registration requirements, membership rights and obligations, governance provisions, regulatory procedures and legal protections. As a public relations activity, it can strengthen transparency, compliance, trust and stakeholder participation.

In Nigeria, the Nigerian Co-operative Societies Act provides the legal framework for cooperative registration and operation, including provisions relating to membership, bye-laws, governance, disputes and other organisational matters (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). Legal promotion may therefore employ media relations, stakeholder engagement, public enlightenment, community meetings, publications and digital communication to improve understanding among members, prospective members, government agencies and other stakeholders.

The relevance of legal promotion is further supported by the International Labour Organization, which emphasises cooperative education, information dissemination and supportive measures for cooperative development (International Labour Organization, 2001). Accordingly, within this study, legal promotion is conceptualised as the strategic use of public relations communication to improve awareness, understanding, cooperation and observance of the legal framework governing statutorily registered cooperative societies in Nigeria.

3.0 Methodology

The study adopted a survey research design. The population of registered cooperative societies in Nigeria is 4,850 for the 2025/2026 fiscal year (National Cooperative Financing Agency of Nigeria, 2025). A purposive sampling technique was used to choose a sample of 10% (485) of cooperative societies, ensuring representation across cooperative types (agricultural, consumer, financial, and service cooperatives). The questionnaires utilized for data collection were termed "Public Relations Strategies and Cooperative Promotion Questionnaire (PRSCPQ)." The questionnaire was structured using the modified Likert 4-point rating scales ranging from strongly agree (SA = 4) to strongly disagree (SD = 1). Sections A, B, and C measured community relations activities, corporate image branding efforts, and digital and social media engagement, respectively. Section D assessed cooperative promotion outcomes. Experts in Mass Communication and Cooperative Studies from the University of Calabar validated the instruments for content and face validity. The Cronbach's Alpha method was used to establish reliability, yielding coefficients ranging from 0.76 to 0.84. The research hypotheses were tested using simple linear regression analysis at 0.05 level of significance.

4.0 Results

Research hypothesis one

To test hypothesis one, that community relations do not significantly influence the promotion of cooperative societies in Nigeria, a simple linear regression analysis was conducted. In this analysis, the independent variable was community relations, while the dependent variable was cooperative promotion. Both variables were measured on a continuous scale. As presented in Table 1, the results revealed a correlation coefficient of R = .734, indicating a strong positive relationship between community relations and cooperative promotion. The adjusted R-squared value (Adj. R^2 = .538) shows that 53.8% of the variation in cooperative promotion can be

E-ISSN: *1597-2496*
Print-ISSN: *3043-534X*

explained by community relations activities. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) produced an F-value of 562.847 with a significance level of p = .000, which is less than the 0.05 threshold. This indicates that the regression model is statistically significant. Consequently, the null hypothesis is rejected; therefore, community relations significantly influence the promotion of cooperative societies in Nigeria. The identified equation to understand this relationship was that cooperative promotion is equal to 10.247 + .678 (community relations). This finding implies that as community relations activities increase, cooperative promotion improves significantly.

TABLE 1: Simple regression analysis of the influence of community relations on the promotion of cooperative societies (N = 485)

Source of variation	SS	Df	MS	F-ratio	Sig.
Regression	4856.312	2	4856.312	562.847*	.000
Residual	4168.524	483	8.630		
Total	9024.836	484			
Model	B	Std error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	10.247	.524		19.555	.000
Community relations	.678	.029	.734	23.725	.000

*Significant at .05 levelR = .734 R^2 = .539 Adjusted R^2 = .538

Research hypothesis two

To test hypothesis two, which stated that corporate image branding does not significantly affect the promotion of cooperative societies in Nigeria, a simple linear regression analysis was employed. In this analysis, the independent variable was corporate image branding, while the dependent variable was cooperative promotion. Both variables were measured on a continuous scale. As presented in Table 2, the result showed a correlation coefficient (R = .691), indicating a strong positive relationship between corporate image branding and cooperative promotion. This means that as corporate image branding efforts increase, the level of cooperative promotion also increases. Additionally, the adjusted R-squared value (Adj. R^2 = .477) suggests that 47.7% of the variation in cooperative promotion can be explained by corporate image branding. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) yielded an F-value of 442.156 with a significance level of p = .000. Since the p-value is less than the conventional alpha level of .05, the null hypothesis is rejected; therefore, corporate image branding significantly affects the promotion of cooperative societies in Nigeria. The identified equation to understand this relationship was that cooperative promotion is equal to 11.836 + .624 (corporate image branding). Therefore, the study concludes that corporate image branding has a statistically significant effect on cooperative promotion in Nigeria.

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Print-ISSN: *3043-534X*

TABLE 2: Simple regression analysis of the effect of corporate image branding on the promotion of cooperative societies (N = 485)

Source of variation	SS	Df	MS	F-ratio	Sig.
Regression	4304.728	2	4304.728	442.156*	.000
Residual	4720.108	483	9.772		
Total	9024.836	484			
Model	B	Std error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	11.836	.612		19.340	.000
Corporate image branding	.624	.030	.691	21.028	.000

*Significant at .05 levelR = .691 R^2 = .477 Adjusted R^2 = .477

Research hypothesis three

To test hypothesis three, which stated that digital and social media engagement does not significantly play a role in the promotion of cooperative societies in Nigeria, a simple linear regression analysis was employed. In this analysis, the independent variable was digital and social media engagement, while the dependent variable was cooperative promotion. Both variables were measured on a continuous scale. As presented in Table 3, the result showed a correlation coefficient (R = .658), indicating a moderate to strong positive relationship between digital and social media engagement and cooperative promotion. This implies that as digital and social media engagement increases, cooperative promotion improves. Additionally, the adjusted R-squared value (Adj. R^2 = .432) shows that approximately 43.2% of the variance in cooperative promotion can be explained by digital and social media engagement. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) yielded an F-value of 367.825 with a significance level of p = .000. Since the p-value is less than the .05 significance threshold, the null hypothesis is rejected; therefore, digital and social media engagement significantly plays a role in the promotion of cooperative societies in Nigeria. The identified regression equation to describe this relationship is that cooperative promotion is equal to 12.458 + .596 (digital and social media engagement). Therefore, the study concludes that digital and social media engagement has a statistically significant role in cooperative promotion in Nigeria.

TABLE 3: Simple regression analysis of the role of digital and social media engagement in the promotion of cooperative societies (N = 485)

Source of variation	SS	Df	MS	F-ratio	Sig.
Regression	3898.456	1	3898.456	367.825*	.000
Residual	5126.380	483	10.614		
Total	9024.836	484			
Model	B	Std error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	12.458	.648		19.225	.000
Digital and social media engagement	.596	.031	.658	19.179	.000

*Significant at .05 levelR = .658 R^2 = .433 Adjusted R^2 = .432

4.2 Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study revealed that community relations significantly influence the promotion of cooperative societies in Nigeria. This suggests that cooperative societies that actively engage in community development projects, social responsibility initiatives, and

E-ISSN: *1597-2496*
Print-ISSN: *3043-534X*

grassroots relationship building achieve higher levels of promotion in terms of membership growth, public trust, and stakeholder support. This makes it easier to create sustainable cooperative enterprises that are embedded in their communities and responsive to local needs. The likely reason for this finding is that community relations activities generate goodwill, demonstrate cooperative values in action, and create personal connections that traditional marketing cannot achieve. This result agrees with the findings of Idowu and Akinbode (2023), who noted that community engagement programmes improve member trust and participation in Nigerian agricultural cooperatives. Similarly, Oloo (2022) reported that cooperative societies with active community relations achieved better loan recovery rates and member loyalty in Kenyan contexts.

The result from the second research hypothesis showed that corporate image branding significantly affects the promotion of cooperative societies in Nigeria. This means that when cooperative societies invest in professional branding, visual identity, reputation management, and consistent messaging, they achieve greater visibility, credibility, and competitive positioning in the financial services market. Cooperative managers agreed that strong corporate branding differentiates their societies from competitors, attracts quality members, and enhances legitimacy in the eyes of regulators and partners. The possible reason for this finding is that corporate image branding creates professional perception, communicates stability and trustworthiness, and helps cooperatives compete effectively with formal banking institutions. This finding is consistent with the work of Borzaga and Galera (2022), who found that corporate branding strategies enhanced cooperative visibility and member recruitment in Italian markets. Likewise, Aryeetey and Udry (2021) reported that image building improved the legitimacy and market position of cooperative financial institutions in Ghana.

The third finding revealed that digital and social media engagement significantly plays a role in the promotion of cooperative societies in Nigeria. This indicates that cooperatives that maintain active websites, social media presence, mobile applications, and digital communication channels achieve better promotion outcomes, particularly among younger demographics and urban populations. Cooperative leaders observed that digital engagement enables real-time communication, member education, and service delivery that transcend geographical limitations. The likely reason for this result is that digital and social media engagement meets contemporary communication preferences, enables cost-effective outreach, and facilitates interactive relationships with tech-savvy populations. This finding aligns with Kumar and Singh (2023), who reported that digital media strategies improved youth membership and financial participation in Indian cooperatives. Similarly, Philip (2023) found that digital communication enabled agricultural cooperatives to access wider markets and attract younger members in South Africa.

4.3 Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that public relations strategies play a significant role in promoting cooperative societies in Nigeria. The study established that community relations positively influence cooperative promotion by building grassroots trust, demonstrating social value, and creating authentic connections with stakeholders. The study further concluded that corporate image branding significantly affects cooperative promotion by

E-ISSN: *1597-2496*
Print-ISSN: *3043-534X*

enhancing visibility, credibility, and competitive differentiation in the financial services market. Additionally, the findings revealed that digital and social media engagement significantly contributes to cooperative promotion by enabling scale, accessibility, and engagement with younger demographics. These three strategic dimensions collectively determine the capacity of cooperative societies to achieve sustainable growth, member satisfaction, and social impact in Nigeria's dynamic economic environment.

4.4 Recommendations

1. Cooperative society management should invest in community relations programmes that demonstrate social responsibility, support local development initiatives, and build authentic grassroots relationships that enhance trust and member loyalty.
2. Cooperative societies should develop comprehensive corporate branding strategies that include professional visual identity, consistent messaging, reputation management protocols, and value-based positioning to differentiate themselves in competitive markets.
3. Cooperative leaders should prioritize digital transformation by establishing active social media presence, mobile-friendly websites, and digital communication channels that meet contemporary stakeholder preferences and enable scalable member engagement.
4. The National Cooperative Financing Agency of Nigeria (CFAN) and cooperative federations should provide training and resources to build public relations capacity among cooperative managers, emphasizing modern communication strategies and digital literacy.

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