

Marketing Skills and Service Delivery of Entrepreneurs: The Need for Effective Communication among Small Scale Business Operators in Akwa IBOM State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study accessed the need for effectual communication among small scale business operators in Akwa Ibom State in relation to service delivery and marketing skills. The population of the study comprised all the 16,304 small scale business operators' registered with Akwa Ibom State branch office of Corporate Affairs Commission. 250 respondents were picked from the mentioned population by a random sampling method. The instrument used for data collection was questionnaire. The instrument was validated by two experts in Test and Measurement. Data from 250 completed questionnaires was subjected Independent t-test analysis. The result proved communicating ability of the entrepreneurs has a relative effect on the service delivery among small scale and business operators in Akwa Ibom State. good marketing skills and communication will help the entrepreneur to deliver quality service to his customers. The study suggested the entrepreneurship education to be incorporated in the schools curriculum to educate the students and encourage them to could acquire marketing skills for better performances in the self-employment businesses. Seminars and workshops should be organized for these business operators.

Keywords: Marketing Skills; Service Delivery; Entrepreneurs; Communication; Business Operators

Introduction

Marketing is communicating the value of a product, service or brand to customers, for the purpose of promoting or selling that product, service, or brand. The management process through which goods and services move from concept to the customer Mbakwe, (2004).

Organizations in Nigeria service-oriented industry today is faced with severe competition in the global financial markets. This gives rise to the need to survive and the desire to sustain their existence. As such, organizations become more conscious of their relationship with their present and potential customers.

The service oriented industries globally are currently undergoing a radical transformation owing to the growing effects of liberalization, privatization and globalization measures or policies introduced by the economies of the world towards the end of the last century and most especially in the areas of telecommunication, tourism, hospitality, insurance, banking ,educational, transportation, healthcare as well as entertainment. This has given rise to rigid and severe competitions among major businesses in the world. In most developing countries like Nigeria, about 60% of the workforce are employed in these service oriented sector that include retailing and wholesaling, tourism and hospitality industries, educational institutions, medical and hospital services, recreation and entertainment industries, financial services as well as communication and construction industries to mention just few (McColl; Callaghan & Palmer, 1998).

Due to the severity of this competition Organizations are sensitive to their customers satisfaction (Osanlou, 2007). These high level competition, expectations and changing technological and business prepositions make the entrepreneurs to think

more of the appropriate marketing approaches that can deliver satisfactions to customers because operating successfully in this environment require one having the right type of personnel in the right atmosphere and mind to survive and create a sustainable competitive advantages through quality services that will ultimately aid the survival of these organizations.. Ravichandran, Prabhakaran & Kumar (2010), opined that the level of service quality offered will determine customer satisfaction and attitudinal loyalty. Customer satisfaction is one of the important outcomes that serve to link processes culminating purchases and consumption with post purchase phenomena such as repeat purchase, brand loyalty and attitude change. In order to sustain the impetus of customer loyalty and company survival, banking organizations continually seek to acquire, retain and increase business bearing in mind the cost of losing customers. Studies have proven poor service delivery to cause a staggering erosion of a company customer base because customers are evolving; the traditional shopper has been joined by the digitally oriented, multichannel customer, social media sites and online research are also accelerating personal selling activities (Robinson & Brown, 2012). According to conventional wisdom, a dissatisfied customer might tell 10 people of a negative experience; today social media enables that same customer to reach thousands with a few keystroke.

Therefore, necessary steps are to be taken by organizations to address these challenges that might possibly derail the futuristic projections of management of banking industries and any model or approaches to be adopted must accommodate and address all these challenges. Achieving these utmost tasks and objectives now depend primarily on organizations desire to deliver quality

services and experience to meet with ultimate expectation of the targeted customers.

Regrettably, there has been total oversight on the essentials of marketing skills by entrepreneurs in business organization who are expected to maximize opportunity in their business activities. Diverse explanations have been put forward by many scholars in the field of management and entrepreneurship for this apparent low reflection of marketing skills in service delivery by entrepreneurs. It is against the background that this research work is conducted to examine the impact of marketing skills and service delivery of entrepreneurs in Akwa Ibom State.

Communication Skills and Service Delivery of Entrepreneur

Communication is a magic word. People have sought to characterize good management as good communication performance. Communication is a vital part of every transaction. According to this philosophy, effective manager is only important in the abilities to receive, store, analyze, reshuffle, and redistribute information (Fred, 2009). The four main components in the communication model are the source, the message, the channel and the receiver. Since the elements are always present in communication act, this simple conception of communication is often referred to as the S-M-C-R's Model (Jebert in Fred, 2009)

Communication serves a major role to transmit policy and orders from top to bottom and back to get the suggestions, opinions, views, reactions and feelings of all members of the organizations. Communication can be used to develop cohesiveness and commitment among members of staff by breaking down barriers, bringing about understanding and developing individual and group action.

The marketer should make extensive use of oral and written forms of communication to be supplemented by informal communication when necessary. The marketer has to establish as guiding principles, openness and trust. Openness here refers to giving information the staff needs in order to get work done.

In the words of Nseobot, (2019) entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship has become an important part of every modern society today with the implication that government today actively work to improve the preconditions for entrepreneurship. The entrepreneur should establish both the formal and information channels of communication in the organization to get task accomplished. According to Park (2002), formal channel of communication refers to interactions that are sanctioned by the organization and have information on relevant issues which should be announced in bulletins, staff meetings and annual general meetings. Informal channels refer to interactions on organization issues at coffee-break time or through notes sent round to staff so that the office administrative manager can disseminate information

The communication from the marketer should be full of consideration which indicated friendship, mutual trust and respect. This pattern of communication is bound to encourage free flow of information that results in staff and management effectiveness in the organization.

Communication is therefore a necessary tool for the achievement of the organization objectives. Bratton and Gold (1999) viewed communication simply as the process by which information is exchanged between a sender and a receiver. Communication is defined by Byars and Rue (1984) as the transfer of information that is meaningful to those involved. Communication here would mean an individual's ability to effectively use both verbal and non-verbal codes in both

written and oral expressions. Communication allows both entrepreneurs and stakeholders to arrive at a common ground for negotiation of pros and cons of the venture. It is necessary for the stakeholders to get complete understanding of forthcoming venture in its totality. Further it allows the entrepreneur to validate that understanding or to correct it, and this, in turn, will decide the outcome of the relationship and that of the venture. There are three main areas in which the role of communication can be seen in deciding the entrepreneurial success i.e. convincing investors, effective leadership and attracting new clients. Undoubtedly, for turning an innovative idea into business venture, the prerequisite is capital.

In short she/he needs to convince the investors that they are investing in a profitable venture. Secondly she/he would need to elevate himself/herself to the level of being a charismatic leader to be able to organize a team. People participate in a venture if they understand the vision and idea behind it. One of the most essential traits of a charismatic leader is his/her ability to communicate. Finally for a success, sustenance and the growth of a business venture an ever expanding clientele is indispensable. An entrepreneur needs to learn to communicate with market. There are several communication channels available to modern entrepreneurs.

In order to survive in a rapidly changing environment and obtain a competitive edge, entrepreneur's need to grasp the vital role of communication in all of this. If communication in an organization is bad, the organization is likely to under-perform. If it is good, however, the performance and overall effectiveness will also be good.

Wallace (2004) points out that the type of medium chosen by the manager may depend on the richness or effectiveness of the medium, the cost and efficiency, the symbolism and also whether there is some

equivocality in the message being sent. Some of the channels are discussed below:

Memorandums

Memos postulate for concise messages to be transmitted. This form of channel enhances cross-sectional transmission of information within the organization (Wallace, 2004).

Interview

This is a communication dialogue between two or more employees or customers as the event may arise deliberating on issues with the aim of providing a positive outcome. Sometimes management and concerned people of the organization resort to an interview or conversation to exchange their views on different issues (Wallace, 2004).

Report

A report is a medium for giving an account on an executed event within the organization. A report contains information based on investigation that is sent to the authority concerned. It is an excellent means of internal communication (Wallace, 2004).

Notice Board

This kind of medium is used to send formal messages to employees in an organization. It is usually time-bound and attractive and should be placed where customers make assembly (Wallace, 2004).

Face to Face Discussion

This is a direct form of communicating with customers. Executive officers and employees may get engaged discussions and interchange views regarding a current situation of the organization. This channel of communicating may be regular or irregular depending on the situation (Wallace, 2004).

Questionnaire and Survey

This form of channel is used to solicit information about customer's attitude, morale and relationship between management and subordinates etc. It may be collected through the use of questionnaire and surveys (Wallace, 2004).

Complaint and Suggestion Boxes

This is also another form or channel for sending information directly to an organization since the device is always placed at the office premises. It is used to collect complaints, feedbacks, comments, suggestions and recommendations of services in an organization to improve on quality delivery (Wallace, 2004).

Posters

This is mostly an outdoor display channel of information. Posters are used to communicate various norms, rules principles and ideas of an organization to make its employees aware and up-to-date (Wallace, 2004).

Purpose of the Study

To examine the effect of communication skill of entrepreneurs on service delivery among small scale business operators in Akwa Ibom State.

Research Question

What is the effect of communication skill of entrepreneurs on service delivery among small scale business operators in Akwa Ibom State?

Hypothesis

There is no significant effect of communication skill of entrepreneurs on service delivery among small scale business operators in Akwa Ibom State.

METHOD

Research Design

Survey design was adopted in the study. This design was appropriate in the study because according to Osuala, (2005), survey research focuses on people, the vital facts of the people and their beliefs, opinions, attitudes, motivation and behaviour.

Area of the Study

The study was conducted in the Akwa Ibom State of South South geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised all the 16,304 small scale business operators'

registered with Akwa Ibom State branch office of Corporate Affairs Commission.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The researcher used a purposive sampling technique to sample 250 entrepreneurs from the three senatorial district of Akwa Ibom State.

Instrumentation

Research instrument used for data collection was questionnaire. The instrument was a questionnaire titled "Marketing Skills and Service Delivery of Entrepreneurs Questionnaire" (MSSDEQ).

Validation of the Instrument

The questionnaire items were subjected to validation by 2 experts in the Department of Statistics, University of Calabar, Calabar.

Reliability of the Instrument:

Cronbach alpha reliability index was used to determine the reliability coefficient of the instrument. Using the test-retest method, the instruments were administered twice to fifty (50) respondents that were not part of the study with two weeks interval between each administration. The reliability coefficient for the questionnaire and business studies achievement test ranged from 0.74 to 0.94, which showed that the instruments were highly reliable.

Administration of Instrument

The instrument was administered personally by the researcher to the respondents. This personal administration of questionnaire helped to minimise loss of questionnaire. The respondents were given enough time to complete the questionnaire before they were collected for analysis.

Method of Data Analysis

Data collected were processed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). A research question was answered using (mean) descriptive statistics; while one hypothesis was also tested using the T-test analysis at 0.05.

Research Question One: What is the effect of communication skill of entrepreneurs on

service delivery among small scale business operators in Akwa Ibom State?

Table I: Descriptive Analysis of the effect of communication skill of entrepreneurs on service delivery among small scale business operators in Akwa Ibom State

Variable	N	X	SD	Mean Difference
Positive	196	43.86	27.26	
				3.73*
Negative	54	31.30	24.12	

***Remarkable difference.**

Source: Field Survey

The above table I present descriptive analysis of the effect of communication skill of entrepreneurs on service delivery among small scale business operators in Akwa Ibom State. From the analysis it was observed that there was high influence of communication skills (43.86) than their counterpart with low influence of (31.30), with the mean difference of 3.37. The result therefore means that communicating skills of entrepreneurs has remarkable influence of service delivery among business operators in Akwa Ibom State.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis One: There is no significant effect of communication skill of entrepreneurs on service delivery among small scale business operators in Akwa Ibom State.

TABLE II: Independent t-test analysis of the effect of communication skill of entrepreneurs on service delivery among small scale business operators in Akwa Ibom State

Variable	N	\bar{X}	SD	t _{cal}	t _{crit}
Positive	196	43.86	27.26	3.73	1.96
Negative	54	31.30	24.12		

*Significant at 0.05 level; df= 248; N= 250

Table II presents the obtained t-value as 3.73. This value was greater than critical t-value (1.96) at 0.05 level of significant with 248 degree of freedom. This observation indicates that there is positive different in communication skill of entrepreneurs on service delivery among small scale business operators in Akwa Ibom State. Hence, null hypothesis one which assumed no significant difference was rejected.

Discussion of the Finding

The first hypothesis which stated that there is no significant effect of communication skill of entrepreneurs on service delivery among small scale business operators in Akwa Ibom State was rejected. The obtained t-value 3.73 was greater than critical t-value 1.96 at 0.05 level with 248 degree of freedom. This result implies that there significant different in communication skill of entrepreneurs on service delivery among small scale business operators in Akwa Ibom State. The significance of the result is in agreement with the opinion of Park (2002), formal channel of communication refers to interactions that are sanctioned by the organization and have information on relevant issues which should be announced in bulletins, staff meetings and annual general meetings. Informal channels refer to interactions on organization issues at coffee-

break time or through notes sent round to staff so that the office administrative manager can disseminate information and take prompt action as problems arise. The significance of the result caused the null hypothesis to be rejected while the alternative one was accepted.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the data analysis of the study, the study therefore concluded that communication ability of the entrepreneurs has a proportional effect on the service delivery among small scale and business operators in Akwa Ibom State. Acquisition of good marketing skills like communication by small scale business operators through entrepreneurship education will enable them plan and improve their service delivery to their customers. Customer's satisfaction is a key element in marketing. The business operators will develop sharp-focused strategies that help them to begin to carefully assess the competitive environment for success in their business endeavour. The study however, recommends that, that entrepreneurship education should be included in the curriculum of secondary and post secondary education so that the school leavers and graduates could acquire marketing skills for better performances in the self-employment businesses. Seminars and workshops should be organized for these self-employed. Thus we know, will help them to acquire the needed marketing skills for greater effectiveness in their business operations.

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