

Utilization of Indigenous Communication Strategies in Promoting Marketing Practices in Rural Communities in Nigeria

UTILISATION DES STRATÉGIES DE COMMUNICATION AUTOCHTONES DANS LA PROMOTION DES PRATIQUES COMMERCIALES DANS LES COLLECTIVITÉS RURALES AU NIGERIA

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Abstract: Nigerian governments, business organizations and business educators, through adult and extension education programmes have been trying to bring education and development to the door-steps of the rural dwellers. This paper examined the extent to which indigenous communication strategies are being utilized in promoting marketing practices in terms of advertising, sales promotion, public relations and publicity and personal selling in rural areas. The area of the study is Akpabuyo Local Government Area of Cross River State. 85 managers of small and medium Enterprises (SME) were used for the study. Four research questions guided the study. Findings revealed that managers of SME utilized indigenous communication strategies in their marketing practices. The integrate modern media and traditional communication strategies in marketing activities among others. It was recommended among others, that the SME managers should broaden their knowledge on the utilization of indigenous communication strategies for the promotion of marketing practices in rural communities in Nigeria.

Keywords: indigenous communication strategies; rural areas; Nigeria

Résumé: Grâce à des programmes de l'éducation des adultes et de l'extension, les gouvernements nigériens, les organisations commerciales et les éducateurs spécialisés en commerce ont essayé de rendre l'éducation et le développement à la portée de la population rurale. Ce document a examiné la mesure dans laquelle les stratégies de communication autochtones sont utilisées dans la promotion des pratiques commerciales en matière de publicité, promotion des ventes, relations publiques, publicité et vente personnelle dans les zones rurales. La zone visée par l'étude est la zone du gouvernement local d'Akpabuyo, dans l'état de Cross River. 85 gestionnaires de petites et moyennes entreprises (PME) ont été choisis pour l'étude. Quatre questions de recherche ont orienté l'étude. Les résultats ont révélé que les gestionnaires de PME ont utilisé des stratégies de communication autochtones dans leurs pratiques commerciales.

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Ils ont utilisé l'intégration des médias modernes et des stratégies de communication traditionnelles dans les activités de commercialisation entre autres. Il a recommandé que les dirigeants de PME doivent élargir leurs connaissances sur l'utilisation de stratégies de communication autochtones pour la promotion de pratiques commerciales dans les communautés rurales au Nigeria.

Mots-clés: stratégies de communication autochtones; collectivités rurales; Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Marketing and business practices have been facing changes as a result of challenges resulting from globalization, technological advances and deregulation. These have many implications for the attainment of optimum marketing management in Nigeria. As put by Mushengyezi (2003), the current discourse on globalization and technological advancement has many far reaching implications for many African countries' socio-economic and political development.

Many marketing organizations and manufacturing companies in Nigeria have been preoccupied with the dissemination and provision of information through education and training for themselves in order to enable them cope with the pace of changes in business and marketing practices. This is because they need to create awareness about the usefulness of their products and services among the consumers, especially the rural dwellers. This function of dissemination of information has been carried out by the marketing organizations through various means, involving both modern and indigenous methods. According to Obasi and Ebirim (2008) indigenous communication media such as drums, folklores, popular theatre, proverbs, (etc) were used for necessary interactions and programme promotions in local communities. According to them indigenous communication strategies are local media that exist within rural communities and are used for communication before the emergence of modern media.

These strategies which have links with indigenous knowledge of the local consumers could be very useful in promoting marketing activities in rural communities, especially as they are still very functional amongst the rural people in Nigeria. The consequences of globalization and information technology call for the promotion and utilization of indigenous communication strategies in addition to modern communication technology to enable easy attainment of modern marketing objectives.

To achieve marketing objectives and optimum marketing management effectively, there is need for effective communication process and channels at local level. Mbakogu (2004) saw communication as an indispensable socio-cultural tool for dispensing information that would boost the political, social, economic, cultural, scientific, educational, technological and agricultural development of any nation. Indigenous communication is an indispensable tool for creating marketing awareness among the rural consumers. It could be used for the purpose of advertising, sales promotion, public relations and publicity and personal selling. It is important therefore, that advertising managers, sales managers and marketing managers in different marketing companies be accustomed and acquainted with indigenous knowledge and indigenous communication strategies since rural dwellers constitute the majority of the consumers of their products and services. Being knowledgeable of these is one and applying them effectively is another. It also calls for the use of individuals who would assist to facilitate the action. According to Kotler and Keller (2006), companies can take several steps to stimulate personal influence channels to work on their behalf.

According to Meyer (2003), Weith watchers found that word of mouth referrals from a relationship with someone in the program had a huge impact on its business. It is important that manufacturers and marketers be aware that today indigenous communication strategies are at a risk of becoming ineffective because of fast pacing of economic, political and cultural changes as a result of intrusion of foreign technologies. Hence, revisiting indigenous communication strategies is important to enable rural consumers be engaged in finding solutions to their marketing and purchasing problems; by having access to information concerning goods and services they consume.

The emergence of these foreign technologies has kept the rural dwellers who still rely on indigenous communication for interaction in the dark. As revealed by Nabudere (1995), the predominance of new Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in the urban cities has led to the marginalization of large number of rural communicators. Indigenous communication is indeed part of the lives of the rural poor and their livelihood depends almost entirely on specific idea and knowledge essential for their survival. The

need to utilize indigenous communication strategies in marketing practices in rural communities cannot be over stressed. Messages disseminated through indigenous media are so attractive and entertaining that people unconsciously find themselves adopting new ideas related to farming techniques, family planning, marketing and business transactions, etc without losing meaning to the message, (Obasi and Ebirim, 2008). In fact given the characteristics of rural dwellers, it is arguable whether relying on modern information communication technologies can adequately enhance the achievement of marketing objectives in the rural settings. Most consumers complained against certain modern marketing communication tools as being misleading (O'Donohoe, 1995). This paper therefore examined the utilization of indigenous communication strategies in promoting marketing practices in rural communities in Nigeria.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The major purpose of the study is to examine the utilization of indigenous communication strategies in promoting marketing practices in Akpabuyo Local Government Area, Cross River State. Specially, the study ascertained:

1. The indigenous communication strategies used for advertising in Akpabuyo Local Government Area.
2. Indigenous communication strategies used for sales promotion in Akpabuyo Local Government Area.
3. Indigenous communication strategies used for public relations and publicity in Akpabuyo Local Government Area.
4. Indigenous communication strategies used for personal selling in Akpabuyo Local Government Area.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the indigenous communication strategies used for advertising by SME in Akpabuyo Local Government Area?
2. What are the indigenous communication strategies used for sales promotion by SME in their marketing practices in Akpabuyo Local Government Area?
3. What are the indigenous communication strategies used for public relations and publicity by SME in Akpabuyo Local Government Area?
4. What are the indigenous communication strategies used for personal selling by SME in Akpabuyo Local Government Area?

METHODOLOGY

A survey research design was adopted to ascertain the extent of utilizing indigenous communication strategies in promoting marketing practices in Akpabuyo Local Government Area. The area of study is Akpabuyo Local Government Area of Cross River State. A total of 85 managers of Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) formed the population for the study. No sample was used because the population size was manageable. Four point Likert-type structured questionnaire was used for data collection. Four research questions were formulated and analysed using mean scores. The acceptable level of mean score is 2.50 and above.

RESULTS

Table 1: Indigenous communication strategies utilized for advertising by SME in their marketing practices

S/n	Items	Mean score	Decision
1	Drums are used for advertising the companies' products and services	3.06	Utilized
2	Town criers are being employed to enhance advertising	3.00	Utilized
3	We adopt local proverbs in our advertisements	2.63	Utilized
4	Local songs are used for advertising	2.94	Utilized
5	Indigenous languages are used for advertising	3.22	Utilized

Table 1 above showed that managers of SME in Akpabuyo Local Government Area utilized all the identified indigenous communication strategies in advertising their goods and services. All the items in the table had score means above 2.50.

Table 2: Indigenous communication strategies utilized for sales promotion

S/n	Items	Mean score	Decision
1	Folklores are utilized for sales promotion by SME	2.86	Utilized
2	We make use of local theatre to introduce our new products	2.01	Not Utilized
3	Local languages are utilized to promote sales by SME	3.26	Utilized
4	Dramatization is used for promoting new goods and services	2.79	Utilized
5	We organize local dances/shows to promote sales	2.82	Utilized

Table 2 indicated that SME managers accepted utilizing all the above items except item 2 in promoting sales of their products. Only item 2 scored 2.01 which is below the accepted mean score of 2.50. Other items had mean score above the accepted level of mean score.

Table 3: Indigenous communication strategies utilized public relations and publicity by SME managers

S/n	Items	Mean score	Decision
1	Community relations through the influential people are used	3.05	Utilized
2	Local languages are used by the public relations officers	3.41	Utilized
3	We visit the consumers in their homes while companies' products are given as samples/gifts	2.76	Utilized
4	Age grades are used for public relations and publicity	2.84	Utilized
5	Town criers are being employed for publicity	3.11	Utilized
6	Local songs are used for publicity	3.25	Utilized

In table 3 above, it showed that all the items scored above the accepted level of mean score of 2.50, indicating that managers utilize all the indigenous communication strategies in their marketing practices in Akpabuyo Local Government Area.

Table 4: Indigenous communication strategies utilized for personal selling by SME managers

S/n	Items	Mean score	Decision
1	We organize age grade meetings for personal selling.	1.94	Not Utilized
2	Visiting consumers' homes was adopted for personal selling.	3.16	Utilized
3	Companies' products are given as samples/gifts to consumers.	3.00	Utilized
4	Village squares are used as strategic areas for personal selling.	2.87	Utilized
5	Rural youths are employed to enhance personal selling.	3.21	Utilized
6	Personal selling is most arranged during the community festivals	3.12	Utilized

The above table showed that managers of SME utilized most strategies identified above. But the managers seemed to disagree with the use of age-grade meetings for their personal selling as the item had mean score of 1.94 which is far below the accepted level of mean score. All other items were accepted by the managers as being utilized as they scored above accepted mean score of 2.50.

DISCUSSION

From the findings of this study, it was revealed that indigenous communication strategies had become indeed indispensable tools for promoting business and marketing practices in rural committees. The ultimate goal of every business organization is to ensure the satisfaction of its consumers. This it does through adequate production of high quality products and ensuring adequate creation of awareness about the usefulness of such products and services among the consumers.

Communication is required in every aspect and level of marketing both for the urban and rural dwellers. But for the rural dwellers meaningful communication strategies need be employed so as to attain the desired marketing goals.

This study revealed that managers of small and medium enterprises in Akpabuyo Local Government Area utilized indigenous communication strategies for promoting their marketing practices. In advertising their goods and services the managers accepted utilizing drums, town criers, local proverbs and songs including indigenous languages to promote marketing practices. This findings collaborated with that of Mbaogu (2004) who stated that people unconsciously adopt new ideas when indigenous strategies like drums, songs, drama and proverbs are used to communicate them. Obasi and Ebirim (2008) also maintained that when strategies that conform to a peoples culture and indigenous knowledge are used, there tend to be very positive response.

Furthermore, the study revealed that folklores local languages, dramas, local dances/shows were utilized for sales promotion. While influential people, visiting and using local languages, age grades, town criers and local songs were used as strategies for public relations and publicity. Also the managers were in agreement with the use of companies' products as gifts, visiting, using village squares, employing rural youths as well as arranging for personal selling during the community festivals as constituting strategies utilized for personal selling in the area under study. But disagreed with the use of age grade meetings as a strategy for personal selling. However, it was discovered that indigenous communication strategies were generally utilized by managers of SME in Akpabuyo Local Government Area. The study further revealed that the managers integrate these strategies as they did not use each of them in isolation. This conforms with Ketter (2004) who stated that marketing communication tools need to be integrated rather than permitting each to work in isolation. Realization of marketing objectives depends largely on the use of effective marketing communication strategies.

CONCLUSION

Indigenous communication strategies has been proved to be effective in the rural areas in promoting marketing practices. Despite the changes in business and marketing practices as a result of globalization, technological advances and deregulation. The managers of SME utilize them n the rural committees. For the need to have access to information and knowledge in the information age, it would be possible that indigenous and modern information tools become practical tools for promoting marketing activities in Nigerian rural communities without any adverse interference in their cultural belief.

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