Effect Of Integrated Marketing Communications Mix (IMCM) On The Performance Of Small And Medium Enterprises (SMEs) In Benue State Nigeria

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Abstract

Integrated marketing communication mix strategy is said to produce seamless message to make maximum impact on the customer and ensure the objective of the business has been acknowledge by a good number of writers and business operators. However, many writers have alleged that Small and Medium Enterprises do not appreciate the critical role played by the marketing communications mix in getting their products and services to the market and making the potential customers aware of these products and services, the quality and benefits of the offerings. This study examines the impact of integrated marketing communications mix (IMCM) marketing tool in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria. A cross-sectional survey design was put in place for the study. The unit of analysis was organizations while the owner/managers of SMEs were the respondents. Systematic, simple random and snowbell sampling techniques were employed to collect the needed data for the study from primary sources. A sample size of 401 SMEs covering all sectors that exist in the study area was drawn from a population of 1,101 SMEs. Descriptive and Inferential statistics were used to empirically and statistically analyze the data collected for the study with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 20. Regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses. The study revealed that majority of SMEs do not emphasise the need for marketing communications’ let alone integrated communications marketing mix to their employees. Findings from the study revealed that a little or no integrated communication is employed by SMEs in Nigeria, let alone a proper integrated marketing communications mix programme. The paper concludes that SMEs should place emphasis on marketing communication because an optimal mix of marketing communications tools gets a product’s message and brand image to the consumer. Based on the findings of this study, the paper recommend (among others) that a deliberate programme of training and development for management of SMEs and that SMEs should always employ management who have the proper knowledge and skills to plan and implement the company’s marketing communications mix.

Keywords: Small to medium Enterprises (SMEs); Integrated Marketing Communications Mix (IMCM);

1.0 Introduction

In today’s business environment that is innovative and knowledge based, technology driven, characterized by intensified global competition, dynamic change and increasing uncertainty, the need for organizations to become relevant to their customers and other stakeholders, survive and grow has rekindled the need to employ appropriate marketing communication strategies to ensure long term organizational performance development and competitiveness. Beside, the reputation of any company is built through (among other strategies) active, effective and timely communication (externally and externally) and quality products or services which are created or supported by marketing efforts (Itodo, 2016). Marketing communication, the means through which companies initiate and interchange with customers and other stakeholders about various company issues, including their products and service offerings is central to business success in today’s fast moving competitive markets just as measuring marketing’s performance is critical to managing it effectively. The effectiveness of businesses however reside in their ability to adopt and utilize philosophies, strategies and activities associated with the marketing concept capable of winning competition and enhancing high performance. For marketing communication to drive performance, it must also represent a broad range of practices based on marketing principles (Ghouri, Khan, Malik and Razzaq, 2011). Zaefarian, (2014) suggest that sound
and appropriate marketing communication practices are an important contributor to small business business performance.

Marketing communications activities are viewed by White, (1999) as playing an important role in the building and maintenance of strong brands. Keller, (2010) holds that businesses must understand what various marketing communication options have to offer and how to best combine these to optimize their marketing communication programs. When marketing communication is planned in a way that it combines and evaluate strategic role of different communication discipline to get the clarity, consistency and greater impact then Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) is said to be in place. Percy et al. (2001) opine that planning and execution of marketing communications is required to enhance higher levels of business performance.

For Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), the capability to put in place appropriate marketing communication practices has long been deemed a key strategic differentiator and means of achieving high and sustained performance and leverage over competitors. SMEs serve as source of employment generation, innovation, competition, economic dynamism which ultimately lead to poverty alleviation, national growth and economic development. Due to their significant role in creation of new jobs, rise in GDP, entrepreneurship and innovation etc, these classes of enterprises are recognized as the drivers of socio-economic growth, both in developed and developing economies.

Small and medium-sized enterprises play a vital role in the economic growth of countries (Akers, 2012). Consequently, their performance is closely associated with the performance of the nation and should be investigated. Most academic research debating the impact of IMC practices in business operations practice is concentrated on quantitative analysis or case-studies limited to larger companies (Low, 2000) . Only a small quantum of empirical research on IMC practice within SMEs can be readily found in literature (Fam, 2001). This paper tries to fill this gap. The aim is to empirically describe IMC practice in SMEs,

**Statement of the Problem**

The importance of SMEs in economic development of Developed and Developing nations is globally acknowledged (Itodo, 2015). However, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) informs that 80% of small businesses die within seven years of its establishment. Among the factors responsible for these untimely close-ups include inability of business to effectively communicate to their customers and other stake holders. Therefore, in dealing with small and medium enterprises, Keelson, (2014) opine that effective marketing communication needs to be considered. As Ediri (2014) opines, SMEs can only maintain such a position when a good number of strategies including the marketing communication are put in place at the right time and in the right proportion to exert positive effect on performance.

Although some studies have been conducted on the effect of marketing communication mix on the performance of SMEs (Mba and Emerti, 2014), most of them studies were done outside the study area many years ago with mixed findings. With changes in business environment, globalization, technology, customer relations etc, there is need to conduct a similar research that keeps trends with development that reflect the reality of the present time. This study therefore, seeks to ascertain the actual effect of marketing communication mix on the performance of SMEs in Makurdi metropolis of Benue state in Nigeria. Therefore, based on the inconsistencies and controversies from findings of previous similar studies such as Junde, (2014), Ediri (2014) hence, this study addressed the core research question of the effect of marketing communication on the performance of SMEs in Makurdi metropolis of Benue state, Nigeria.
Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to analyze the effect of marketing communication mix practice on the performance of small and medium scale enterprises in Nigerian economy. Specifically, the study examines the impact of integrated marketing communications mix (IMCM) marketing tool in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria with a case study taken from Makurdi metropolis.

Research Questions

This study focused on the effect of integrated marketing communication mix (IMCM) Practices on performance of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in Makurdi Metropolis of Benue State, Nigeria. Accordingly, the following specific research question is posited:

i. To what extent does integrated marketing communication mix (IMCM) effect the performance of SMEs in Makurdi Metropolis?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses is formulated for this research work;

H₀: Integrated marketing communication mix (IMCM) has no effect on the performance of SMEs in Makurdi Metropolis.

Scope of the Study

The scope of this study covers Small and Medium scale Enterprises in Makurdi metropolis in Benue state of Nigeria. Nigeria is a country with a population of about one hundred and seventy (170) million people (NPC, 2014) and constitutes an important part of the world economy, especially on the African continent where it accounts for a substantial part of the business activities. The country has the largest economy in Africa and may be rightly described as the economic, social, and political summary of the West African sub-region (Chinedu, 2013). For numerous limiting factors, the study is confined to Makurdi metropolis of Benue state, in the central geopolitical zone of the country. The study area covers a geographic area of 25 kilometers radius with a population of over 1,100 SMEs (Benue State Ministry of Commerce and Industries, 2014). The scope of the study variables for this study includes SMEs performance as the dependent variables while integrated marketing communication is the independent variable.

The choice of the study area is informed by the increasing growth of business activities in general and SMEs in particular in the entire Makurdi metropolis of Benue state, Nigeria, which may be attributed to the emergence of the state as the food basket of the nation, the conducive and secured business environment in the area as well as the proximity of the area to the nation’s federal capital, Abuja. Besides, the study area occupies a centrally located position in the country, has a large population and is cosmopolitan in nature.

Nevertheless, this restriction will neither diminish nor negatively affect the content and purpose of study in any way as the level and concentration of SMEs existing in the study area is well comparable to those existing in other parts of the country (Ediri, 2014). Furthermore, there is abundant presence of SMEs operators in the area although, majority are still unregulated. Only few SMEs scattered in the study area are under the regulatory guidelines and supervision of the control authorities at the time of study. The concentration of SMEs in the study area can also be linked to the higher literacy rate existing in this part of the country.

As this study relates to the activities of small and medium firms, firms outside the scope of SMEs definition were eliminated from this study. In order to assess the effect of entrepreneurial marketing practices on the performance of SMEs, efforts were made to see that firms in the sample originates from the study area and operate on a full-time basis. The study decided to eliminate small and medium firms without legal status from the sampling frame to deliberately ensure realistic...
research findings. The population of this study therefore covers 401 SMEs in the study area. It covers a period of 3 years (from 2012 - 2014) and has a ratio of 80:20 in favour of the Small business enterprises.

2.0 Literature Review And Conceptual Clarification

Marketing communications

Marketing communications have been defined as the process of presenting an integrated set of stimuli to a target market with the aim of raising a desired set of responses within that target market and setting up channels to receive, interpret and act on messages from the market to modify present company messages and identify new communication opportunities (Lancaster & Reynolds, 2004). Obviously, marketing communications as a sender and receiver of market -related messages, a company can influence customers to buy its brands in order to make profit and at the same time it can stay in touch with its market so that it can adjust to changing market conditions and take advantage of new communication opportunities.

Marketing communications function within a marketing framework and is known traditionally as the promotional element of the four Ps of marketing (product, price, place, and promotion) (Harris, 1991). The author adds that the paramount goals of marketing communication are: to reach a defined audience so as to affect its behavior by informing, persuading and reminding; to acquire new customer for brands by building awareness and encouraging trials; to maintain a brand’s current customer base by reinforcing their purchase behavior through the provision of additional information about the brands’ benefits; and lastly, building and reinforcing relationships with customers, prospect, and other important stakeholders.

As Keller, (2010) opine, marketing communications represent the voice by which companies can establish a dialogue with customers and other stakeholders, about their product/service offerings and/or other company issues. The importance of marketing communications has grown in recent years for several reasons. The emergence of IT and audience fragmentation have fundamentally changed the marketing communication environment (Schultz, 1999; Low, 2000). The multiplication of ways to reach consumers, through traditional and non-traditional media, have forced organizations to move away from a mass communications model and to cope with an increasing number of marketing communication options (Kotler et al., 2005).

Kanibira, Saydanb & Narte (2014) identified the aims of marketing communication as generally to support sales, to create product and brand awareness, to develop and corporate image and to shape the attitudes and behaviours of the target audience. In a similar submission, Kotler, Wong, Saunders, & Armstrong, (2015) state that it is through marketing communications that firms attempt to, directly or indirectly, inform, persuade and remind consumers, regarding the products and brands that they sell. Marketing communication can be carried out via different individual marketing mix variables. However, when the programmes and activities of diverse marketing mix elements are combined in a communication process, the exercise is referred to as Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC). The integration of marketing communications is the result of aligning activities, procedures, messages, and goals in order to communicate with consistency and continuity within and across formal organizational boundaries (Duncan and Caywood, 1996; Christensen et al., 2007).

Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC)

Integrated marketing communication is a business strategy which is used to get maximum positive impact on the business. Usually it is the combination of different promotion mix which is used in same way to produce seamless message to make maximum impact on the customer.
Schultz (1993) defines IMC as a view of marketing communication planning that combines and evaluates the strategic role of different communication disciplines to gain clarity, uniformity and greater impact.

Integrated marketing communication (IMC) is considered an attempt to integrate and synthesize its promotional mix, which includes advertising, sales promotion, public relations, personal selling, and event and direct marketing (Polyorat, 2014). Many authors, such as Keller (2001), stress that marketing communications denote the means through which companies can initiate an interchange with customers and other stakeholders about various company issues, including their products and service offerings. Saeed, Naeem, Bilal & Naz (2013) point out that IMC correlates with some positive results, such as customer satisfaction, greater profitability, increased sales and cost savings, as well as brand loyalty and awareness, positive brand image, and unique brand association. It has nonetheless been indicated that the measuring of the effectiveness of a communication mix is neglected, along with analysis of the effect of using a specific marketing communication activity on different business performance determinants (Mumel, Hocevar & Snoj, 2007).

Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) is a term that emerged in the late 20th century regarding application of consistent brand messaging across myriad marketing channels. IMC was developed mainly to address the need for businesses to offer clients more than just standard advertising. The concept makes definite sense so much so that trainee in the field may get amaze what all the confusion is about. IMC recommends that businesses focus at the customer first his or her preferences, buying patterns, media exposure, and other factors and then customer is exposed to the products that fits its need through mix of communication methods which the customer find more attractive and credible. According to Young and Aitken, (2007) it is revolutionary step because of a whole culture of agencies, in-house departments, and consultants had grown up around the notion of separation for advertising, direct marketing, sales promotion, and public relations efforts, rather than the harmonious, customer-centered planning process that IMC requires. Integration has become an essential concept in marketing because technological advances have changed how business stakeholders interact. Marketing theory that was established during the discipline’s formative years has been overtaken by the complexities of real-time, multimodal, multi directional communication.

The need for Integrated Marketing Communications

The need for integrated marketing communications has been clearly emphasized by many writers. Kotler (2005) highlights that consumers receive so much information from marketers and screen out a good deal of it, it is important for marketers to devise communications that offer consistent messages about their products and are placed in media that consumers in the target market are likely to use. The answer to the screening effect is the adoption of the concept of integrated marketing communications, whereby the company carefully integrates and coordinates its many communications channels to deliver a clear, consistent, and compelling message about the organization and its products. The author maintain that IMC is intended to build a strong brand identity in the marketplace by tying together and reinforcing all your images and messages in a consistent and positive way at all contact points.

Today however, many companies are adopting the concept of integrated marketing communications (Kotler, 2005). Under this concept, the company carefully integrates and coordinates its many communications channels to deliver a clear, consistent, and compelling message about the organization and its products. As one marketing executive puts it, IMC builds a strong brand identity in the marketplace by tying together and reinforcing all your images. IMC means that all your corporate messages, positioning and images, and identity are coordinated across all marketing communications venues (Reid, 2003).
Marketing Communications Mix

Kotler (2005) defines marketing communications mix as the "Promotion" of the marketing Ps (Product, price, promotion and placement, people, process and physical evidence) and covers every method and medium of communicating with a target audience. He points out that, in many ways, the marketing communications mix is the heart of a marketing strategy around which everything else in sales and marketing is predicated. In line with this, McClure and Dal Cin, (2006) posits that promotion appears as an issue of how to create an optimal mix of marketing communications tools in order to get a product’s message and brand from the producer to the consumer. He further says, if business consists of creating value and creating customers, marketing communications covers exactly how to create customers by taking the value message to the market. Marketing communications mix plays a critical role in informing consumers about products and services, including where they can be purchased and in creating favourable images and perceptions (Kotler, 2005).

Integrated Marketing Communication Mix Elements

Raman and Naik, (2005) opine that communications mix elements includes advertising, personal selling, publicity, public relations, sales promotions, instructional materials, and corporate design. Customers need information about the features of the product, its price and how they can access it in order to make informed purchase decisions. This means that, having good effective communication channels adds value to the product of the company as customers have confidence in their purchase (Potluri, 2008). Marketing communications affect the formation of brand, the brand image and consequently brand equity (Biedenbach and Marell, 2009). Naik & Raman (2003) advocates the creation of synergies across media to produce additional uplift. This can be achieved through an appropriate marketing communications media mix. A constant brand message must be conveyed and tailored to how the consumer interacts with specific media. The various communications mix elements are mutually reinforcing (Kotler, 2005), creating synergies in uplifting the brand image of the service or product. However, for these synergies to be realised, the communications mix must be run through the most effective communications media. This is reflected Delozier’s (2006) statement that all elements of the marketing mix must be effectively communicated through relevant channels of information.

In a similar submission, McCarthy (1998) defines the Marketing communications mix as the specific mix of advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, public relations, and direct marketing, a company uses to pursue its marketing objectives. The integrated marketing communications mix is a comprehensive marketing communication plan that combines and evaluates a variety of strategic communication disciplines – general advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, direct marketing, public relations, sponsorships and others, to provide clarity, consistency and maximum communication impact (Du Plessis, Jooste and Strydom, 2005). Kotler (2006) adds that the mix also includes product styling and prices, the package’s shape and colour, the salesperson’s manner and dress and the place’s décor.

Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs)

Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) are a wide variety and heterogeneous group of enterprises and a very important business segment that provides national socioeconomic
development both for developed and developing markets and economies. They embody diverse kinds of sophistication, skills, capital, growth orientation and are found in both formal and informal sectors (Eniola, 2015), may be owned by individuals, groups, corporate organizations and government and their owners may or may not be poor (Naelati, and SobrotulIllmi, 2014). These classes of enterprises are found in a wide variety of industries and operate in very different markets (rural, urban, local, national, and international) and social environments (Ediri, 2014) and are drivers of economic growth as they contribute greatly to economic development of both developed and developing nations in diverse ways including reducing unemployment (among many others) even though they are usually characterized by lack of adequate resources, owner/manager operation, flexibility and low-tech involvement (Shehu, 2014).

The important roles SMEs play in the economy of every nation has continued to be crucial in diversifying the sources of national income, in improving the competitiveness and economic development and in contributing to the flexibility and resilience of the economies. Such roles include: entrepreneurship, innovation, productivity, competition, job creation, diversification, earning, and growth in many economies of the world (Gilmore, Galbraith & Mulvenna 2013). It has even been argued (Itodo, 2015) that SMEs make up the largest business sector in every world economy and contribute to the development of the society through the redistribution of political power arising from the ownership of small and medium scale businesses by more people in a country. In addition, these classes of enterprises offer consumers a greater opportunity for choice by operating in fragmented or niche markets which larger firms either cannot economically enter or are reluctant to enter because of unattractive risk-return consideration. The dynamic role played by SMEs in many economies of the world insures them as engines through which the growth objectives of countries can be achieved (Gyong, 2014).

Despite their unique contribution to economic development of many nations, SMEs suffer greatly from a universally accepted definition. This is in spite of Eniola, Entebang, and Sakariyau’s (2015) submission that a proper definition of SMEs is important to distinguish between the different categories of the production units in terms of factors like: number of employees, the value of fixed assets, production capacity, basic characteristics of the inputs, level of technology used, capital employed, management characteristics, etc. But arriving at a definition of small and medium scale enterprises that will attract a common global acceptance has till date eluded stakeholders, researchers and practitioners in that area. The definitions in use at any point in time depend on the purposes those definitions are required to serve and the policies which govern the SME sector at that time (Ediri, 2014). However, the three parameters generally applied by most countries, singly or in combination are: capital investment on plant and machinery; number of workers employed; and volume of production. In spite of the degree of definitional problem, there exists a high level of consensus agreement on the role and importance of SMEs especially the SMEs sub-sector for economic growth and development.

This study adapt the definition and classification of SMEs as provided by SMEDAN that SMEs is any small business that is legal and operates on a full time basis in the study area with a staff strength of between 11 to 49 staff for small business with asset base of 1 to 50 million naira excluding land and buildings, while the Medium scale business is a legal business that operates on a full time basis in the study area with a staff strength of between 49 and 199 and asset base of between 50 to less than 500 million naira excluding land and buildings. This study believes that whichever way the definition of SMEs is put forth, SMEs is the annexation of resources and the overall contribution to the economic well being of developing nations across the globe.

**Empirical studies on Marketing Communications Mix and performance of SMEs**

Marketing theory development in SMEs has been somewhat limited and often relies on the application of classical marketing models used in big businesses to smaller businesses (Chaston and
Mangles, 2002). Kotler et al. (2005) opine that for small firms formalized marketing techniques (and also marketing communications techniques) can be adopted and adapted to resources available with relative success. In practice, the approach SMEs have to marketing, including marketing communications programs, is likely to be more haphazard, informal, unstructured, spontaneous and reactive and conform to the industry environment than in a large business context (Gilmore et al., 2001).

Longenecker et al. (2003) develop a marketing communication theory for small businesses that is almost identical to larger firm theory found in mainstream literature. There are only a few potential differentiators that derive from the marketing constraints of small firms, as described by Carson (1990): limited resources, specialist expertise of the owner-managers and limited impact on the marketplace. The first differentiator regards the importance of personal communication activities. In fact, special emphasis is given to personal communications and personal contact networks when businesses have a limited number of customers and the product or service offered has a high value for the customer. Personal communications by small firms frequently means communication by the owner/manager/entrepreneur himself/herself.

But Itodo (2015) notes that despite the affirmed positive effects of IMCM on business performance, SMEs by their very nature are usually small in size, family owned, and are subject to both internal and external bottlenecks that hamper their development (Meier, 1993) and the implementation of IMCM. These classes of enterprises most often lack qualified and competent personnel, funding and technological competitiveness (Tilley and Tonge, 2003) to run functions that support the effective planning, initiation and the implementation of promotional programmes. In Nigeria, the lack of competence and appreciation for promotion is confirmed by Ogechukwu and Latinwo (2010) who noted lack of understanding the need for, and the manner of application of the marketing concept. Most of the small business players think promotion is for large businesses, which do it because they are big, whereas the reverse is true.

3.0 METHODOLOGY
Research Design

The survey method was employed for this study. The method is considered more appropriate to realize the goal of the research exercise. The choice of the survey method is consistent with Hair, Money, Samuel & Pages’ (2007) submission that such a method is usually interested in the assessment of the characteristics of the population of study. The survey research design also helps to evaluate the implications and interrelationship of the dependent and independent variables of the study (Chinedu, 2013).

Study Area and Population

The area of coverage for this study is Makurdi metropolis in Benue state in Nigeria. The population of this study consisted of the entire Small businesses from all sectors that operate in the study area. Most of the Small businesses existing in the study area operate as family/sole proprietorship businesses and are generally classified into commercial, industrial and agricultural categories depending on their activities. They firms numbered about 70 and because of their small number, all of them were slated for study. Study Questionnaires were issued to all the firms however, only 97.14% returned theirs. The number was therefore considered very adequate for any study.

Source and instrument for Data collection

Data needed for this study was collected from the primary sources which Valos and Bednall, (2010) defined as data collected and assembled for a research project at hand while the questionnaire was the instrument used to collect the primary data. Moody, (2012) defines questionnaire as any written instrument that produces respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react either by writing out their answers or selecting from amongst existing answers.
Unit and method of data analysis

Unit of analysis represents who or what is being studied in a given research. Social science research have the following kinds of unit of analysis as individual, organization and group (Adrian, 2004). The unit of analysis for this study is the organization, and the owners/managers of small businesses studied are the respondents. The decision to use owners/managers for this study is supported by previous similar studies that also used owner managers (E.g Aliyu, 2014). The study hypotheses were tested at 0.05% with the aid of regression statistical tool

4.0 TEST AND DISCUSSION OF STUDY HYPOTHESIS

Percentages descriptive statistics are used for the analysis of the research questions while the hypotheses testing were done with Regression analysis. The Statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) was employed to run the analysis. The study hypotheses were tested at 0.05 % level of significance. The decision rule was to reject the null hypothesis for test with probability estimate is lower than 5% (0.05) and conclude that they are statistically significant. Otherwise, we accept 0.05 (when probability estimates are above and conclude that there is no overall statistically significance).

\[ H_0: \text{integrated marketing communication mix (IMCM) and its implementation by SMEs in Makurdi Metropolis of Benue state, Nigeria.} \]

Table 1: IMCM and its implementation by SMEs in Makurdi Metropolis of Benue state, Nigeria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>12.911</td>
<td>4.083</td>
<td>.738</td>
<td>.465</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMCM</td>
<td>.184</td>
<td>.637</td>
<td>-174</td>
<td>-1.137</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ a \text{ Dependent Variable: PRF} \]

SPSS 20.0 Output for this study, (2016)

Using Standard error to test the study hypotheses, the decision rule is as follows;

*If the standard error of \( b_i \) \( [S (b_i) > 1/2b_i] \) we accept the null hypothesis, that is, we accept that the estimate \( b_i \) is not statistically significant at the 5% level of significance.*

*If the standard error of \( b_i \) \( [S (b_i) < 1/2b_i] \) we reject the null hypothesis, in other words, that is, we accept that the estimate \( b_i \) is statistically significant at the 5% level of significance.*

SMEs = 12.911 + 0.608 IMCM

Going by the study’s model specification as shown below,

SMEs = 12.911 - 0.174 IMCM

\[ S(b_i): = 0.637 \]

\[ P-value: = 0.026 \]

From the regression equation above we have,

\[ b_2 = -0.174 \]

Standard deviation of \( b_2 = 0.637 \)

\[ H_0: b_2 = 0 \]

\[ H_0: b_2 = 0 \]

\[ \frac{1}{2} b_1 \text{ equals} \]

Using the standard error test, \( S (b_2) > 1/2b_2 \) above, 0.637 > -0.087 and based on the result of the analysis presented above, we have no option than to accept the null hypothesis sine the estimate \( b_2 \) is
The study results point to a weak implementation of marketing communication mix by SMEs in the study area. This result shows that IMCM in the SMEs studied was based on the decisions of the SMEs managers as there is no deliberate communications programme which involved the organization in a holistic fashion since the study shows that little effort is put into implementing communications mix by SMEs. The findings of this study contradicts findings by Ka-Mann and Gerald, (2005) who state that marketing communications play a critical role in informing consumers about products and services, including where they can be purchased and in creating favorable images and perceptions.

The findings are however in line with Said’s (2000) observation that there is a lack of proper marketing practices and pursuit for market knowledge and information in SMEs.

5.0 Conclusion And Recommendations

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper is to discover and empirically test the gap between the theory and practice of the effect of integrated marketing communications mix (IMCM) in small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Marketing communications represent the voice by which companies can establish a dialogue with customers and other stakeholders, about their product/service offerings and/or other company issues (Keller, 2001). IMCM gives positive impact with successful promotional integration especially when implemented at the right time, in the right proportion and with proper process. It gives positive impact as brand equity, brand awareness, profitability and changing attitude of consumer. But all the factors which are influencing the IMC should be managed properly. IMC strategy should be made considering different aspects which might leave negative impact. Expanding the concept of IMC tells us about its impact, factors influencing it and what are barriers. To get the effective impact barriers should be removed by managing the influencing factors. SMEs should place emphasis on IMCM because an optimal mix of marketing communications tools gets a product’s message and brand image to the consumer. If SMEs are not promoting their products, this negatively affects brand building.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made as the way forward.

i) Government and other stake holders in SMEs should put in place deliberate programme of training and development through organizing regular marketing workshops and seminars for management of SMEs to ensure that they understand what is, and the importance of IMCM. Similarly, SMEs managers should ensure that their staffs who are responsible for marketing issues for the organization are also trained.

ii) SMEs should employ staff who have the proper know-how and skills to plan and implement the company’s marketing communications mix. They should also regularly adjust to the requirements of the market which are always dynamic and should be flexible enough to change their operational strategies in relation to the changes in the market place by ensuring effective planning and allocation of resources for the implementation of marketing activities.

References


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