



ICT, Training and Effective Selling Skills in Marketing Education in Nigeria

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Abstract

The 21st century marketing environment is characterized by e-encounter. This phenomenon has tremendous implication for selling, which is now competitive than ever. It is important that sales personnel should acquire relevant skills like the use of computer-based multi-media and interface network connections and this requires training and retraining in order to excel in all e-permeated market environment. With the internet, people can access information, buy and sell in any part of the world by means of e-commerce. Without specific relevant skills acquired vigorously through training, sales personnel will be left behind the voyage of competition. This paper focused on training, and effective selling skills acquired through ICT which are important element in Marketing Education in Nigeria. It looked at the basic concepts and highlighted specific selling skills that sales personnel should acquire. As an empirical study, it had used the statistical tool of pearson product moment correlation analysis to ascertain the relationship between ICT training and retraining package in offering sellers the necessary selling skills for marketing. The following two hypotheses were formulated that: (1) There is no significant relationship between ICT training and retraining package in offering sellers the necessary selling skills in marketing. (2) There is no significant relationship between the use of ICT and marketing education in Nigeria. The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The findings were as follows: (i) Skills acquired through ICT for selling were valuable which motivated sellers to be more proactive and professional (ii) The use of ICT helped sales personnel to accept marketing education in the area of training and retraining (iii) Minority respondents, that is, twenty percent of sales personnel had initial problems of understanding the use of ICT therefore they did not see any relationship between ICT skills and sales. The study made some conclusion, and recommended that sales personnel should be exposed more to interface networking.

1. Introduction

Marketing and sales environment is rapidly changing reflecting changes brought about by Information Communication Technology (ICT). Management at any level must continually and consistently adapt the organization's marketing efforts to keep pace with observed changes. Such changes require management and staff training, and development of effective selling skills through education with the help of ICT.

Marketing education in Nigeria involves acquisition of selling and marketing skills with the help of ICT. It also deals with developing, training and retraining of marketers and sales personnel (professionals) for the purpose of meeting the changing demands of clients and customers in the market, and excelling in all e-permeated market environment for example e-sales.

The use of ICT is relevant and important to e-permeated market since ICT comprises technologies or electronics as radio, television, videos, computers, sensors, interface boxes, e-mail, internet, satellite connections, et cetera.

Nigeria Policy on Education (NPE)'s vigorous effort to respond to on-going changes in all aspect of life recognized that: since the publication of the first edition in 1977, the 2nd and 3rd editions were



published in 1981 and 1988 respectively in keeping with the dynamics of social change and the demand on education. This 4th edition (2004) necessitated by some policy innovations and changes, and the need to update the 3rd edition (1998) accordingly. These innovations and changes include ... introduction of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) into the school system. (NPE 2004)

2. Problem

The presence of ICT has brought about accelerated changes in the world of work, especially in the field of marketing. These changes come along with the attendant problem of enormous professional challenges to equip, train, and retrain the personnel in sales and marketing with modern skills. It is important to observe here that there must be harmony between marketing and selling skills for sales personnel and marketers to gain increase sells but some business organizations do independently not cooperate with each other in these areas.

3. Literature

Literature was reviewed based on the following issues as identified below:

- Marketing Education
- Training in marketing education
- Effective marketing and selling skills in marketing Education
- e-permeated market environment

3.1 Marketing Education

Marketing education involves two main concepts which are marketing and education, these are adaptability ability and creativity ability. Adaptability ability refers to the "ability to manage in a complex, interdependent world," while creativity ability refers to the "use of imagination to create new things" which involves taking some risk. (Tino and Browne, 2010:1). Marketing education in Nigeria involves functional literacy which means the ability of salesmen and marketers to separate meanings and express ideas in various technologies as regards marketing. It also involves motivation of learners and customers to learn with the help of ICTs like videos, television and multimedia computer software.

3.2 Training in Marketing Education

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has identified three definitional categories of "training". First, "Basic Education for All", second "Core Work Skill for All" and third "Lifelong learning for All". Training and retraining of marketing students is unavoidably the only way of tooling and retooling them as a calculated means of bracing up for the various challenges posed by dynamism in the 21st century. The illiterate of the 21st century", according to Futurist Alvin Toffler, "will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn." (Toffler, 1970)

Training according to Ebitu (2002:184) is "the systematic development of the knowledge, skills and attitudes required by an individual to perform adequately on a given task or job." This training is overwhelmingly necessary because of continuous changes in technology, machines, equipment, strategies and knowledge. Change in job function role is not left out. Ebitu further noted the objectives of such training by emphasizing that:

The primary objective of training in marketing is to impart knowledge and techniques to the participants so that the marketing function of the Organization can be properly carried out to enable it reach both its sales and profit targets as well as increase staff morale, lower the rate of employee turnover, lower selling cost and improved customer relations. The training programme may be handled internally by experienced Marketing officers or



contacted out to an agency firm with a thorough Supervision from the company.

3.3 Effective marketing and selling skills in marketing education

There must be harmony between marketing and selling skills to gain increase sells. This means that increase sells result from unity between and selling skills in pursuit of marketing and sales target. There are certain important marketing and sales processes in skill acquisition, each step is identified and discussed below. Marketing skills involving gaining attention of the clients or customers, building relationship when such attention is gained, discovering and identifying wants and needs of the clients, making presentation to conquer objections and resistance by the clients, gaining commitment from the clients or customers, delivering and distributing the products and services, following up/or monitoring and asking the clients for referrals. Selling skills involves strong communication skills of active listening and paying rapt attention, preparation by first understanding the client's needs and wants and moving forward.

3.4 e-permeated Market Environment

The 4ps (Product, Place, Promotion and Price) of marketing mix are the major elements that make up the market environment. The systematic interplay of these elements is of great interest to any business minded community. In simple terms, an e-permeated market environment is a digitalized or commercial empire of global dimension mid-wife by information communication technology (ICT). ICT tools include radio, television, computers, and internet. One defining feature of information communication technology is its ability to transcend time and space. Online advertisement/promotion, products/goods, prices and where/how to obtain the goods and services, may be accessed any time; 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (United Nation Development Programme). More so, sales or marketing trainers must be knowledgeable of the historical development, management philosophy and the firm's basic and commercial knowledge of their products or product line especially when selling industrial goods. It is needful and useful for a sales personnel or a marketer to have a working knowledge of competitors' products to identify their strengths and weaknesses in order for the company's sales force to formulate their unique selling point (USP). Accurate knowledge of the customer is tremendously needful.

4. Methodology

The researchers adopted the Ex-post facto research design. The study area was Cross River State of Nigeria. The sample of the study comprised 315 marketers and sales personnel in 5 banks, 3 insurance companies, and 5 confectionary companies.

5. Data Collection

Questionnaires were constructed, validated and distributed by the researchers, the completed ones were returned, subsequently collated and analysed.

6. Data Analysis

Each hypothesis was subjected to statistical analysis. In each case the hypothesis was stated in the null form.

6.1 Hypothesis One

There is no significant relationship between ICT training and retraining package in offering sellers the necessary selling skills in marketing. To test this hypothesis, the variables were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis. The result is presented in Table I below:



Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the Relationship between ICT training and retraining package
(n = 315)

Variables	Σx	Σx^2	Σxy	r
	Σy	Σy^2		
ICT Training	1221	2012	5304	0.52*
Retraining Package	1100	2059		

***Significant at 0.05 level; df = 313; critical r = 0.19**

In table 1 the data show that there is a significant relationship between the acquisition of ICT training by marketers and sales personnel and their exposure to retraining packages because the critical r of 0.19 is lower than the calculated r of 0.52. With this result, the null hypothesis is rejected.

6.2 Hypothesis Two

There is no significant relationship between the use of ICT and marketing education in Nigeria. To test this hypothesis, the variables were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis. The result is presented in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the Relationship between the use of ICT and marketing education
(n = 315)

Variables	Σx	Σx^2	Σxy	r
	Σy	Σy^2		
Use of ICT	1683	2115	8489	0.61*
Marketing education	1897	2873		

***Significant at 0.05 level; df = 313; critical r = 0.32**

In table 2 the data show that there is a significant relationship between the use of ICT and marketing education because the critical r of 0.32 is lower than the calculated r of 0.61. With this result, the null hypothesis is rejected.

7. Findings



The findings were as follows: (1) Skills acquired through ICT for selling were valuable which motivated sellers to be more proactive and professional. (2) The use of ICT helped marketers and sales personnel to accept marketing education in the area of training and retraining. (3) Minority respondents had initial problem of understanding the use of ICT.

8. Conclusion

This study appropriately handled the issues of acquisition of relevant ICT skills by marketers and sales personnel through training and retraining organised by their companies as a proactive measure of meeting up with the challenges of the 21st century. The issues discussed and analysed are timely and current, useful to marketing, sales and education environment and the public.

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