



E-MARKETING ADOPTION BY SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES (SMEs) IN SOUTH EASTERN STATES OF NIGERIA

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Abstract

Electronic marketing has become a popular marketing tool in the modern world. A number of organizations from small to large size firms have implemented or are about to implement e-marketing to attract and retain their customers in the competitive business environment. The purpose of the study is to explore the perception of e-marketing adoption by small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in South Eastern States of Nigeria. Two research questions guided the study. Two null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. Survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study consisted of 1,846 SMEs (owners/managers) in the area. Stratified random sampling technique was used for the study. A sample of 1,473 SMEs managers were randomly selected using stratified random sampling. A structured questionnaire was used for data collection. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions. Z-test was used to test the null hypotheses. Finding of the study indicated that SMES in South Eastern Nigeria utilize e-advertising and e-purchasing marketing applications in their operations to a low extent. The results also showed that there was a significant difference in the mean ratings of SMEs managers on the extent they utilize e-advertising and e-purchasing marketing applications in their business operations based on gender. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended among others that small and medium enterprises in South Eastern Nigeria that have not adopted any form of e-marketing should make immediate effort to begin the adoption in order to satisfy the demands of their customers and to keep pace with the current global marketing practice. This would improve their productivity and reduce the high mortality rate of SMEs.

Keywords: E-marketing, small and medium scale enterprises, e-advertising and e-purchasing.

Introduction

Owing to the low growth rate of global economies, high unemployment and an unsatisfactorily high level of poverty in countries, the creation of the small and medium sized business sector plays a critical role in economic growth. Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are increasingly recognized as important drivers of socio-economic development all over the world (Kazungu, Ndiege Mchopa, & Moshi, 2014). Their importance can be viewed in aspects such as productivity, innovation and employment creation, income generation and distribution, poverty alleviation, training, including labour absorption, ground for the development and upgrading entrepreneurship skills, and are important vehicles for promoting forward and backward linkages in geographically and economically diverse sectors of the economy in many countries. This makes them regarded as backbone of global economic growth (Adelaji, 2012).

While their contributions to the country's development are generally acknowledged, SMEs almost all over the world are facing many obstacles that limit their sustainability. One of the critical obstacles is the adoption to electronic marketing (e-marketing) to facilitate their operational activities. SMEs in developing countries are having doubts on e-marketing adoption as they perceive very high development costs and do not understand how e-marketing can enhance their business performance and sustainability. It is evident that small business failure can result from either a lack of marketing, or poor marketing practice (Kazungu, Panga & Mchopa, 2015), this leave them to be more vulnerable to competitive threat. SME's and e-marketing are simultaneously increasingly becoming part of economies of both developing and developed countries (Geoffrey and Ferrel, 2008).

The adoption of e-marketing can positively influence business profitability (Matikiti, Afolabi & Smith, 2012). It plays an important role in innovation, advancement and sustainable development worldwide and thus SMEs who are keen in adopting e-marketing have achieved above average business (Njau & Karugu, 2014). Electronic marketing is one of the rapidly growing forms of digital marketing in many developed economies. E-marketing is essentially any marketing activity that is conducted online through the use of internet technologies (Strauss & Frost, 2009). E-Marketing can be viewed as a modern business practice associated with buying and selling goods, services, information and ideas via the internet and other electronic means. It comprises not only advertising that is shown on websites, but also other kinds of online activities like email and social networking (Chaffey, 2007).

Every aspect of internet marketing is digital, meaning that it is electronic information that is transmitted on a computer or similar device, though naturally it can tie in with traditional offline advertising and sales too. The adoption of e-marketing enables businesses to promote their products and services to the public through e-advertisements, banner advertisements, e-mails and mobile phone competitions, e-purchasing among others. Businesses are also better able effectively to serve global markets and to distribute goods and services to customers globally through e-marketing adoption. The adoption and utilization of electronic marketing decision are made by the business owner and the manager. Successful companies that embrace internet technologies are often those whose owners take on the role as innovation champion. Small and medium scale enterprises owner should perceive e-marketing as an important function for their business (Ramsey, Ibbotson, Bell, & Gary, 2003). A number of factors influencing adoption of e-marketing have to do with male and female of different work experience. Kim, Lehto and Marrison (2007) affirmed that gender differences are noticed in information processing and decision making in terms of internet usage. In support of this, Wolin and Korgaonkar (2003) stated that male exhibits more positive attitudes towards innovation usage than female.

Statement of the Problem

Electronic marketing helps in changing the way SMEs operate in this era of globalization by changing business structure and increasing competitive advantage for businesses. Adoption of electronic marketing has the potential to contribute to the exponential growth of the SME sector. However, despite the importance of e-marketing on business performance, most SMEs do not use it (Mutua Oteyo & Njeru, 2013), thus SMEs have not strap up internet potential as compared to larger enterprises that enjoy better market access. There are many SMEs operating in the South Eastern States of Nigeria, but there is no significant evidence that they are powering development in the area as expected because of their low productivity. This situation has been of great concern to the government, citizenry, operators, practitioners and the organized private sector groups. It is evident that small business failure can result from either a lack of marketing, or poor marketing practice. The problem of this study therefore is to determine the extent of adoption of e-marketing by small and medium scale enterprises in South Eastern States of Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The major purpose of the study was to determine the e-marketing adoption by SMEs in South Eastern States of Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to determine the extent to which the SMEs adopt:

1. e-advertising in their operations.
2. e-purchasing in their operations.

Research Questions

The following research question guided the study:

1. To what extent do SMEs adopt e-advertising in their operations?
2. To what extent do SMEs adopt e-purchasing in their operation?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. Male and female SME managers do not differ significantly in their mean ratings on the extent to which SME managers adopt e-advertising in their operations.
2. Male and female SME managers do not differ significantly in their mean ratings on the extent to which SME managers adopt e-purchasing in their operations.

Review of Related Literature

Electronic Marketing

Electronic Marketing (E-Marketing) can be viewed as a new philosophy and a modern business practice involved with the marketing of goods, services, information and ideas via the Internet and other electronic means. By reviewing the relevant literature it is noticed that definitions of electronic marketing (E-Marketing) vary according to each author's point of view, background and specialization. Smith and Chaffey (2007) defined e-marketing as achieving marketing objectives through applying digital technologies. Strauss and Frost (2009) defined it as the use of electronic data and applications for planning and executing the conception, distribution and pricing of ideas, goods and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational goals. Hoffman and Novak in Kazungu, Panga and Mchopa (2015) defined e-marketing as a wide range of supply chain business activities and relationship management via online (selling, ordering, payments, home shopping/banking, purchasing online, communication) with the aim of improving market efficiency in dealings with suppliers and clients.

E-marketing is the process of marketing a brand using the internet (Salehi, 2012), it encompasses all the activities a business conducts through the Worldwide Web (WWW) with the aim of attracting new business, retaining current business and developing its brand identity (Teo & Pain, 2005). The term e-marketing, internet marketing, and online marketing are frequently interchanged and can be considered synonymous. Electronic marketing refers to a set of powerful tools and methodologies used for promoting products and services through the internet. E-marketing is ideal for SMEs as it focus on drawing the attention of customers (Bakeman & Hanson, 2012). Thus, e-marketing fosters drawing customers towards SMEs, as deeper audience engagement is possible. In other parts of the world, SMEs have been slower to adopt e-marketing as a distributive channel. The e-marketing strategy variables can be used to create brand awareness, promote offers, provide information, and provide interaction opportunities with consumers and a means to engage with customers (Bakeman & Hanson, 2012).

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)

The SME's nomenclature is used to mean Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise. It sometimes referred to as Micro Small and Medium Enterprise (MSMEs) (URT, 2003). The European Commission defines "small and medium enterprises are companies that employ less than 250 staffs and have annual turnover not exceeding Euro 50 million or an annual balance sheet total not exceeding Euro 43 million (European Commission, 2006). In Nigeria, the central bank of Nigeria (2006) in its credit guidelines classified small scale business as a business with an annual income/asset of less half a million naira (N500, 000). Furthermore, the federal government small scale industry development plan 1998 defined a small scale business in Nigeria as any manufacturing process or service industry with a capital not exceeding N 150,000 in manufacturing and equipment alone. The small scale industries Association of Nigeria (2008) defined small scale business as one having

investment (i.e. capital, land, building and equipment of up to (pre- SAP Value) including (2005) defined it as an enterprise that cost not centre for Management Development (2002) defined small scale industry as, a manufacturing, processing, or servicing industry involved in production, and employing up to 50 full-time workers.

In addition, the Small Scale Industries Association of Nigeria (2008) defined small scale business as one having investment (that is, capital, land, building and equipment) of up N60, 000 (pre-SAP Value) including working capital to set up business. Similarly, the Federal Ministry of Industries (2005) defined it as an enterprise that cost not more than N500, 000 including working capital to set up. In the United States, the Small Business Administration (2012) defines a small business as one that is independently owned and operated, is not dominant in its field, and meets employment or sales standard developed by the agency. In every economy, the SMEs are recognized as the most reliable vehicle of socio-economic growth. The impact of SMEs on any economy according to Alade (2004) is so great that no country can move forward economically and industrially without a strong SMEs sub-sector.

One of the major marketing problems facing small business enterprises in Nigeria is lack of usage of e-marketing applications (Barclays, 2003). Most Nigerian small business owners equate 'marketing' to 'selling' and this is reflected in their various dysfunctional business behavior against customer satisfaction and business orientation. They lack the knowledge and skills of basic marketing such as marketing research, market segmentation and market planning and control, which result to poor quality products, unawareness of competition, poor promotion, poor distribution, and poor pricing methods. They are also not marketing and market-focused. Baker (2012) identified lack of e-marketing orientation and utilization as the major factor for small business failure. Most Nigerian small manufacturer, to a high extent, depend on imported equipment and raw materials for their operations. With the over-devaluation naira, vis-à-vis other foreign currencies, they are not finding it easier to secure these items abroad.

They therefore resort to poor locally produced alternatives. The result is usually poor quality products. This may be one of the factors responsible for Nigerian consumers' unquenching appetite for imported goods, even though many of these foreign goods are equally of poor quality especially those coming from Asian and far East countries. The internet could offer SMEs real business benefits and opportunities to improve efficiency, reduce costs and increase productivity and profits (Levy, Powell & Worrall 2005). The DTI (2007) survey shows how SMEs can utilize the internet to improve their business through the use of e-mail and web. E-mail offers a fast, inexpensive way of SMEs to communicate both internally and externally. SMEs can send e-mail to numerous people simultaneously, and location is never a barrier. The use of web gives small and medium enterprises access to business information and it allows SMEs to promote and sell their products and services to the global audience. Customers can browse through small and medium enterprises catalogue, e-mail enquiries, and place orders online. It is a real opportunity for small and medium enterprises to compete in a global market as it offers low operating cost, the ability to do business round the clock and the chance to foster better customer relationship.

E-advertising

Broadgroup (2009), defined e-advertising as the placement of electronic messages on a website or in e-mail in order to generate interest/preference for a product or service and provide the means to contact the advertiser for information to make a purchase. E-advertising is a unique application in that it can provide a one-tool process from introduction of a product to close of sale (Schnuemann, 2009). Brodie (2003), posited that e-advertising allows a company to develop a tool capable of effecting sales transaction by offering a "click here" button, that ensures consumers need never get out of their chairs. Online advertising is a form of promotion that uses the internet and World Wide Web to deliver marketing messages to large audience. The growth of this particular medium attracts advertisers as a more productive source to alert consumers (Wakolbanger, 2009). Online advertisements offer various forms of animation. In its most common use, the term online advertising comprises all sorts of banner, e-mail, in-game and keyboard advertising including in platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and MySpace (Pattison, 2011).

Web related advertising has a variety of ways to publicize and reach a niche audience to focus its attention to a specific group. Research has proven that online advertising has given results and is growing small and medium enterprises business revenue (Wakolbinger, 2009). One major benefits of online advertising to small and medium enterprises is the immediate publishing of information and content that is not limited by geography or time (Thillmany, 2012). Another benefit of online

advertising as identified by Pattison (2011) is that it allows for the customization of advertisements, including content and posted websites. For example, Adwords, Yahoo Search Marketing and Google AdSense which enables advertisement to be shown on relevant web pages or alongside search results.

E-purchasing

Electronic purchasing is the business-to-business, business-to-consumer or business-to-government purchase and sale of supplies through the internet and other information and technology system, such as electronic interchange and enterprise resource planning (Baily, 2008). Chenery (2004) explained that e-purchasing value chain consists of indent management, e-tendering, e-auctioning, vendor management, catalogue management, purchase order integration, order status, shipment notice, e-payment and contract management. Daniel (2005) observed that indent management is the workflow involved in the preparation of tenders which is optional and allows individual purchasing departments to define their indenting process. Software are written programs, procedures, rules and associated documentation pertaining to the operation of a computer system that are stored in read/write memory (Kilby & Tumer, 2003).

According to Lyson (2006), e-purchasing is the combined use of information and communication technology through electronic means to enhance external and internal purchasing and supply management processes. In the emerging digital era, most businesses are utilizing e-purchasing for more efficient, predictable, transparent and secure management of their supply chains (Afshar & Nawaser, 2010). E-purchasing systems provide up-to-date information on the statue of buyer's needs, it also allows the establishment of an agreement with a seller to automatically ship materials when a buyer's stock reaches a low point (Berrill, 2004). This also applies to solicitation phase where buyers can track incoming offers prior to supplier selection. Electronic purchasing provides predictability as sellers know what to expect and can review an order's progress often in real time. According to Afshar and Nawaser (2010), the benefits of e-purchasing to the SMEs include: time savings in re-inputting orders; reduction in errors examples, from re-inputting returns, deliveries; reduced transaction costs and cycle time; holding less stock as a result of more efficient communication with customers, that is, real time sale adat; information for use in forecasting; improved supplier performance by sharing supplier measurement information and faster payment.

Methodology

The design of the study was a descriptive survey design because it involved gathering opinions from managers of SMEs in South Eastern States of Nigeria on their extent of adoption of e-marketing in their operations. The study was carried out in the South Eastern geo-political zone of Nigeria. The population of the study consisted of 1,849 owners/managers of SMEs in South Eastern Nigeria that have their businesses registered with the National Association of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (NASME, 2013). A sample of 1,473 respondents was selected using stratified random sampling techniques based on the States. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire which was constructed on a 5-point rating scale with response options of Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Undecided (UD), Low Extent (LE) and Very Low Extent (VLE) to which values 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively were assigned for all the items in the sections.

The face and content validation of the instrument was done by three experts selected from different departments and fields. The observations and suggestions of the experts were put into consideration in the final draft of the instrument. To determine the internal consistency of the instrument, a reliability estimate test was conducted by administering copies of the instrument to 20 managers of SMEs in Port-Harcourt, Rivers State. Their responses were collected and data analyzed using Cronbach Alpha. A coefficient of 0.98 was obtained which is considered reliable for the study. The data for the study was collected through direct contact approach. Out of 1,473 copies of the questionnaires distributed, 1,445 were returned. The arithmetic mean and standard deviation were used to analyze data in respect of the research questions. Z-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. A null hypothesis was accepted at 0.05 level of significance when the calculated value of z was equal to or less than the critical value of z; otherwise, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Results

Research Question 1

To what extent do SMEs adopt e-advertising in their operations?
 The analysis in respect of the research question 1 is shown on Table 1.

Table1: respondents mean ratings on the extent SMEs adopt e-advertising in their operations

S/NO	e-advertising	Mean	SD	Decision
1.	Floating advertisement electronically	1.91	.40	Low Extent
2.	Expanding advertisement electronically	2.26	.49	Low Extent
3.	Polite advertisement electronically	2.18	.43	Low Extent
4.	Wallpaper advertisement	2.07	.42	Low Extent
5.	Trick banner	1.84	.37	Low Extent
6.	Pop-up	2.02	.41	Low Extent
7.	Pop-under	2.14	.43	Low Extent
8.	Video advertisement	2.06	.42	Low Extent
9.	Map advertisement electronically	1.52	.29	Low Extent
10.	Mobil advertisement	1.56	.34	Low Extent
11.	Supersticial electronic advertisement	1.88	.39	Low Extent
12.	Interstitial electronic advertisement			
		1.98	.41	Low Extent
Grand Mean		1.95		Low Extent

Data presented in Table 1 reveals that the mean scores of the respondents ranged from 1.52 to 2.26. With the grand mean score of 1.95, it implies that SMEs managers in South Eastern states adopt e-advertisement at a low extent in their operations. There was homogeneity in respondents’ opinion indicating greater consensus of opinion.

Research Question 2

To what extent do SMEs adopt e-purchasing in their operations?
 The analysis in respect of the research question 1 is shown on Table 2.

Table2: respondents mean ratings on the extent SMEs adopt e-purchasing in their operations

S/NO	e-advertising	Mean	SD	Decision
1.	e-requisitioning	2.01	.40	Low Extent
2.	e-sourcing	2.26	.50	Low Extent
3.	e-tendering	2.18	.44	Low Extent
4.	e-indent management	2.07	.44	Low Extent
5.	e-auctioning	2.05	.43	Low Extent
6.	e-purchasing order	2.02	.41	Low Extent
7.	e-approval management	2.14	.46	Low Extent
8.	e-payment	2.06	.43	Low Extent
9.	e-budgeting	1.92	.38	Low Extent
10.	e-receiving	1.56	.35	Low Extent
11.	e-inventory	2.08	.45	Low Extent
12.	e-shipment notice	1.98	.42	Low Extent
Grand Mean		2.03		Low Extent

Data presented in Table 2 reveals that the mean score of respondents ranged from 1.92 to 2.26, with the grand mean score of 2.03. With the grand mean of 2.03, it implies that SMEs managers adopt e-purchasing to a low extent in their operations. There was homogeneity in respondents’ opinion indicating greater consensus of opinion.

Hypothesis 1

Male and female SME managers do not differ significantly in their mean ratings on the extent to which SME manager adopt e-advertising applications in their operations.

Table 3: z-test of respondents' mean ratings on the extent SMEs adopt e-advertising in their operations based on gender

e-advertising	N	\bar{X}	SD	df	z-cal	z-crit	Decision
Male	990	2.76	1.01	1443	3.52	1.96	Significant
Female	455	2.97	1.12				

Table 3 reveals that at 0.05 level of significance and 1443 df the calculated z 3.52 is greater than the critical z 1.96. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected, this implies that there is significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female SMEs managers on the extent they adopt e-advertising in their operations.

Hypothesis 2

Male and female SME managers do not differ significantly in their mean ratings on the extent to which SME manager adopt e-purchasing applications in their operations.

Table 4: z-test of respondents' mean ratings on the extent SMEs adopt e-purchasing in their operations based on gender

e-purchasing	N	\bar{X}	SD	df	z-cal	z-crit	Decision
Male	990	2.57	1.11	1443	7.32	1.96	Significant
Female	455	3.02	1.04				

Table 4 shows that at 0.05 level of significance and 1443 df the calculated z 7.32 is greater than the critical z 1.96. Therefore, the second null hypothesis is rejected this implies that there is significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female SMEs managers on the extent they adopt e-purchasing in their operations.

Discussion of Findings

The study revealed that SMES in South Eastern Nigeria utilize e-advertising marketing applications in their operations to a low extent. The grand mean of 1.95 implies that the number of respondent that adopt e-advertising is low. This finding is in accord with Zulunga (2011) who noted that in most developing countries SMEs have not reaped the dividends of e-advertising as a result of its low level of utilization. Testing of the first hypothesis revealed that male and female SMEs managers differ significantly in their mean ratings on the extent they adopt e-advertising in their operations. Therefore, it followed that the null hypothesis is not accepted.

The result of the analysis of the data relating to the second research question reveals that e-purchasing are also under utilized by SMEs in South Eastern states of Nigeria. The grand mean of 2.03 implies that the adoption of e-purchasing is low. Supporting this finding, Rosen (2001) asserted that the rate of adoption of e-purchasing in most developing countries is still low because of fear of insecurity in SMEs business owners. Testing of the second hypothesis indicated that male and female SMEs managers differ significantly in their mean ratings on the extent they adopt e-purchasing in their operations. Therefore, it followed that the null hypothesis is not accepted.

Conclusion

In the light of the findings of this study, the following conclusions were drawn: the extent of adoption of e-advertising and e-purchasing applications in South Eastern Nigeria is low. There was a significant difference between the mean ratings of SMEs managers on their adoption of e-advertising and e-purchasing as a result of gender. Adoption of e-marketing by small business enterprise can change both the shape and nature of its business all over the world. Because the increase usage of the Internet and other electronic marketing channels in electronic transactions might create not only a lot of opportunists for small business enterprises but also can eliminate a lot of its threats.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Small and medium enterprises in South Eastern Nigeria that have not adopted any form of e-marketing should make immediate effort to begin the adoption in order to satisfy the demands of their customers and to keep pace with the current global marketing practice. This would improve their productivity and reduce the high mortality rate of SMEs.
2. Federal and States government intervention is important to achieve her desire to use SMEs as a fulcrum to create employment and reduce poverty. The government through its agencies like SMEDAN and Federal Ministry of Industry can organize intervention programmes in the area of internet operation for owners of SMEs and their staff.

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