

MARKET INTELLIGENCE AND CUSTOMER ACQUISITION OF TELECOMMUNICATION FIRMS IN RIVERS STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to analyze market intelligence and Customer Acquisition in Telecommunication Firms in Rivers State. A Correlative study design was used. The methodology adopted was Correlative study design to collect both primary and secondary data was used, a structured questionnaire with open and close-ended questions were used to gather information. The population of the study consists of four telecommunication firms operating in Port Harcourt. The sampling technique used was the census sampling techniques to select 24 managers' four telecommunication firms in Rivers State. Secondary and Primary data was utilized in this study. Secondary data was obtained from reviewing text books, publications. Primary data was gathered with the aid of questionnaires. A total of 24 copies questionnaire were distributed with 17 being answered correctly and fully. Data was analyzed using percentage, tables and Spearman Rank Order Correlation techniques and with Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was used to test the nine hypotheses. The findings revealed market Intelligence has positive relationship between Customer Acquisition in Telecommunication Firms in Rivers State. It was therefore recommended that Telecommunication firms in Rivers State should emphasize on building a positive Marketing Intelligence to meet customer's expectation and offer more benefits to customer. Managers and supporting organizations should not only focus exclusively on either technological intelligence or process innovation, but should give due emphasis on the combined and synergetic approach to get the maximum firm performances benefits from these capabilities.

Keywords: Market Intelligence, Customer Acquisition, Organization, Performance

INTRODUCTION

Market Intelligence is the information relevant to a company's markets, gathered and analyzed specifically for the purpose of accurate and confident decision-making in determining market opportunity, market penetration strategy, and market development metrics, Iyamu & Nemutanzhela, (2011). In simple terms, market intelligence is information that is gathered for the purpose of making business decisions. Marketing intelligence is everyday information about development in the marketing environment that helps managers prepare and adjust marketing plans, Mahjabin, Nader, Niloufar & Said (2017). The marketing intelligence system determines the intelligence needed, collect it by searching the environment and delivers it to marketing manager who need it. Marketing intelligence comes from many sources much intelligence is from the company's personnel executives, engineers and scientist, purchasing agents and the sales force, McGonagle, and Vella, C.M. (2002). Marketing intelligence as Igbaekemen(2014) explained is everyday information about development in the marketing environment that helps managers prepare and adjust marketing plans. The marketing intelligence system determines the intelligence needed and collecting same by searching the environment and deliver to the marketing manager who needs it. Marketing intelligence comes from diverse sources such as: the company's personnel executives, engineers and scientist, purchasing agents and the sales force. But, company people are often busy and fail to pass on important function. The Company must sell its people on their importance as intelligence gathers, to spot new development and urge them to report intelligence back to the organization. Technology intelligence, understood synonymously as business and competitive intelligence, is a young management discipline - in literature as well as in industry. Technology intelligence (TI) is defined as "the capture and delivery of technological information as part of the process whereby an organisation develops an awareness of technology threats and

opportunities" (Kerr et al., 2006, p.75). TI responds to a broad set of decision-making needs (from strategic to operational), as it helps a firm become aware of important developments in technologies (Kerr et al., 2006). Amongst other activities, TI could support innovation processes and, for instance, enable the identification of prospective partners with interesting technological knowledge (Mortara et al., 2010), or could be used to identify technology commercialisation opportunities (Rohrbeck, 2007). The technology intelligence as a conceptual outline and methodological management, has several schools of thought. To Savioz (2004), the definition of technology intelligence is framed mainly in two schools of thought.

Research Hypothesis

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between Market Intelligence and Customer Acquisition telecommunication firms in Rivers State.

Market intelligence

Sometimes, in wide networking companies, the intelligence information is usually contracted to external agents or suppliers and at the extreme level 'hidden hackers' to break and capture for the company all relevant information from their competitors for their effective utilization. However, marketing intelligence as an organizational strategy can perfectly work for a company as well against the company. Therefore Maltz and Kohli (2006) defined marketing intelligence as a set of procedures designed to obtain information and data about changes in the marketing environment to implement an organisation's marketing activities successfully. It is a system that collects the intelligence, organizations must act fast and take every necessary step towards protecting themselves from the snooping of competitors needed for creative segmentation and significant moves in the marketing environment (Tahmasebifard, 2018). Lee (2015) described as a dynamic process of intelligence gathering for supporting the market stance and values an organisation upholds concerning the overall business environment, thereby allowing managers to make effective decisions. According to Wright and Calof (2016), marketing intelligence is a strategic tool for competitive advantage that provides business executives with updates about the markets they currently serve and will potentially serve. Also, marketing intelligence thus relates to the current and potential market position and covers such interests and key stakeholders like customers, competitors, and markets regulators. Therefore, marketing intelligence refers to the provision of support for companies with targeted information that gives it a better understanding of what is happening in the market or competitive environment (Al-weshah, 2017).

Competitive intelligence

According to Ben Gilad and Leonard Fuld, 2014 competitive intelligence (CI) is the action of ethically and legally gathering, analyzing, and communicating information about third party players in one's competitive arena - from competitors, to suppliers, customers, influencing parties, regulators, distributors, potential new competitors, and so forth, to be used by companies in their planning and decision making. The process of collecting, storing, analyzing and communicating this market intelligence is today an institutionalized process in most large companies. Competitive intelligence is the result of a company's efforts to gather and analyze information about its industry, business environment, competitors, and competitive products and services. **Competitive intelligence (CI)** is the systematic collection and analysis of information from multiple sources, and a coordinated CI program. It is the action of defining, gathering, analyzing, and distributing intelligence about products, customers, competitors, and any aspect of the environment needed to support executives and managers in strategic decision making for an organization.

Product intelligence

Product intelligence is the process of gathering, analyzing, and acting on data related to how customers use your products. It relies on combining product data and operational data to drive product development and improve product experiences. This additional data means your analyses

are based on a more complete picture of how customers interact with your product, and you can uncover new insights you would not have surfaced from product user data alone. Product intelligence software helps teams use their customer data to build great product experiences. As every traditional business accelerates investments in digital transformation and more of our lives are spent using digital products, there has been a big shift in the relationship between consumers and the creators who build products for us all.

Product intelligence is a response to these shifts—changes in how we interact with products, and how companies are competing to retain, delight, and engage customers. It is also about changes in how cross-functional teams access, make sense of, and act on complex behavioral data. Product intelligence is defined as an automated system for gathering and analyzing intelligence about the performance of a product being designed and manufactured, such that this data is automatically fed back to the product managers and engineers designing the product, to assist them in the development of the next iteration or version of that product. The goal of product intelligence is to accelerate the rate of product innovation, thereby making the product and its owners more competitive and increasing customer satisfaction. Product intelligence is often applied to electronic products, but it is not necessarily limited to electronic products.

Customer Acquisition as a measure of Organizational Performance

Customers are assets that need to be acquired before they can be managed for profit (Levitt 1986). Customer acquisition has emerged as one of the most challenging issues in business because of the value expected from carrying out the customer acquisition in organizations. Customer acquisition has become an important business process because it touches the most important assets of all organizations, which is the customer. Customers nowadays are highly educated, well-aware, more focused and influenced by the global market of the internet (Alryalat et al., 2008). In this way, customer acquisition has become a key source for organizations to enhance their competitive advantage. Consequently, they have started to recognize the importance of knowing their customers better to provide online information services due to the rapid change in the business environment, featuring strong competition as a result of the increasing importance of using the Internet to conduct business. Customer acquisition is about defining the needs that have to be fulfilled in order to gain new customers. Customer Acquisition focuses on using different available techniques to establish a new relationship with prospect customers. It builds up its major efforts on employing different marketing communication tools that can help in the process of acquiring new customers to the company. Furthermore, Customer Acquisition is important where the organization recognizes unidentified consumers as customers who are identifiable by gathering information about them through diverse communication channels (Park and Kim, 2003). Also, a customer acquisition objective is to obtain more profitable prospective customers. Customer Acquisition is essential where a company attempts to convert customers into profitable ones (Ganapathy et al., 2004). Moreover, acquisition of customers refers to the need of organizations to find new customers for their Products; this means they are required to develop strategies to attract potential customers (Berndt et al., 2005).

Customer acquisition concentrates on employing distinct accessible approach to bring about a new relationship with prospect customers. It exerts its very important exertion on adopting distinctive marketing communication tools to assist in the process of new customer acquisition to the organization. Customer acquisitions address the need of a company to locate new customers for their products. This implies that they are challenged to develop strategies to attract potential customers (Berndt, Herbst & Lindie, 2005). An enormous volume of studies identifying and describing customer acquisition have accumulated, imaging distinct perspectives and issues. Customer acquisition is necessary for every companies that start creating a business, expanding their business, products and services, and it is effective in situation where the switching cost is relatively low and repeat purchases are rare. In acquiring customers it is essential for organization to choose the right customers to serve before decide how they can best acquire them. This is particularly important as it is a fact that organization will not be able to serve all customers in every way. Hence, organizations

nowadays decide to segment their customers and focus more on customers that they can acquire, satisfy best and bring profitability (Jobber, 2010). After deciding which segment of customers to target, it is necessary for organization to understand the consumers first. There are three concepts that need to be recognized. Firstly, needs which refer to basic human requirements, in airline case; this can be in a form of necessity to go overseas by airline service. While, wants are the alternative form of needs that are molded by culture and individuality, again in airline case, this would be the desire to have convenience, comfortable and prestigious airline service. Thirdly, wants that are supported by ability to pay is often called demand. It is critical to understand these three concepts which can be seen in the work of Burton, Kotler and Keller (2009) because it is difficult to provide service with better value that lead to successful customer acquisition, if the organization itself does not know what are the customers' needs and wants which will not create strong demand. Thomas (2001), "the customer acquisition process is part of the customer-firm relationship that begins with the consumers' first interaction with the firm and proceeds through the first purchase until the first repeat purchase" (p. 262). Customer acquisition is a phenomenon which a lot of companies have to deal with, but attracting new customers and developing sustainable relationships is a lot more difficult for larger as well as smaller firms. Customer acquisition is especially necessary for organizations to prevent themselves from losing the continuity of their business which is important to realize sustainable growth. For instance, in business markets there are relatively few customers, so the loss of even one customer can have serious consequences (Blythe, 2009).

Resource-Based View

The resource-based view (RBV) considers that all kinds of stable internal tangible and intangible assets are sources for the organization strategy and performance (Penrose, 1959, Daft, 1983; Wernerfelt, 1984; Barney, 1991; Barney, et al. 2001). The RBV suggests that a firm will sustain its competitive advantage through internal resources (Barney, 1991; Grant, 1991) and the external environment will play a minor role. Barney (1991) discussed four empirical indicators of stable resources which allow competitive advantage to be sustained: value, rareness, imperfectly imitable and non substitutable. These characteristics can classify the internal resources of a firm as unique and therefore a possible source of differentiation and competitive advantage.

According to APQC (2003, p.25-26) "the resource-based view of an organization emphasizes the uniqueness of each organization's strategy" and therefore, internal resources would represent the main sources of profitability. According to Mintzberg, et al. (1987, p.276) the resource-based theory in strategic management was initially suggested by Wernerfelt (1984), who discussed how a resource-based perspective granted a competitive advantage. Wernerfelt (1984) described a resource as "anything which could be thought of as a strength or weakness of a given firm". An extension of the RBV, based on the unique idea of managing resources, can be seen with Grant (1991, p.136), who introduced the capabilities. He argued that "the firm is essentially a pool of resources and capabilities, and these resources and capabilities are the primary determinants of its strategy" (Grant, 1991, p.133).

Empirical Review

(Ameri, 2009) studied the relationship between Technology intelligence and organization agility. The results showed that there was a significant positive relationship between organizational agility and its components in terms of demographic characteristics expect for field studies. Moreover, there were a significant positive relationship between intelligence and its components and organizational agility in administration. The results of his study showed that there was a significant difference between line and staff units regarding to organizational intelligence. Furthermore, there was a significant difference between line and staff units of Sepah Bank in terms of strategic vision, belief in common destiny, the index of unity and consensus, morale, assessing the knowledge and attitude of managers in relation to the employees' performance. It also indicated that there was a significant difference in both line and staff units based on the desire of the personnel changes. (Bagherzadeh and Debar, 2010) investigated the relationship between organizational intelligence and

organizational agility. The results of his study showed that there was a significant positive correlation between organizational intelligence and organizational agility. Also, there were significant relationships between some dimensions of intelligence including common fate, desire for change, unity and consensus, morale, knowledge application, and performance pressure with organizational agility but he could not find any significant relationship between organizational agility and strategic vision (Khodadadi, Kashef, Ameri & Kashki, 2013).

(Lefter, Prejmerean, and Vasilache, 2008) studied the organizational intelligence of Romanian companies in which human was the main capital. The results showed that only 13 percent of employees in small firms did not recognize this concept. However, the results of data analysis showed that organizational intelligence was in the average or high level. Then, the components of intelligence were identified based on Albrecht's view (2002, 2003). (Chakir and Ada, 2008) investigated the role of training at the workplaces to develop organizational intelligence in Turkey. The results tended to differ substantially in intelligence before and after the workshop. There was not a significant difference in the efficiency of communication among colleagues.

Chuwiruch's study (Chuwiruch et al, 2010), is titled, "Marketing intelligence and Marketing Performance: A Conceptual Framework." In the era of globalization, companies are facing rapid changes in accordance with the clients' needs and the nature of the markets. In order to improve the competitive advantage and performance, companies need to come up with new strategies to attract more customers. This paper presents innovation and marketing strategy as effective ways to sort out environmental changing aspects. It also refers to the new methods applied on a variety of markets to improve marketing results and increase the performance of marketing strategies. In an interview with the marketing mix, five innovation and marketing strategy dimensions have been presented: internet/marketing and focus (Place/Promotion), relationship/marketing focus (Promotion), orientation/customers whom participated in the process of creation (Product/Price), extended marketing alternative (Product/Price) and the cooperation of marketing concern (Place/Promotion). Innovation and marketing strategy ability to innovate is a dynamic one. The dynamic capabilities hypothesis was used to clarify the connection between marketing innovation strategy and outcome variables, which are: brands, trust and customer loyalty, marketing image, and performance. This paper concludes that the marketing strategy of innovation will help to create a positive commercial movement for companies to increase profits and level of performance, and should be able to confirm this in practice. Finally, the abstract model offers a view on relations between innovation and marketing strategy related to structures.

Research Design

The research design is survey method.

Population of the Study

Population of a study represents the total groups of items which a researcher desire to study and about which he plans to generalize his findings (Baridam, 2001). The target population of the study was made up of four telecommunication firms operating in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. They include MTN nig, 9Mobile, Airtel and Globalcom.

Sample Size Determination

Since the population of the study comprises of four telecommunication firms operating in Port Harcourt. However six senior managers of General manager, Advertising Manager and marketing managers and three Supervisors were drawn from each of this firms of the sample frame. Therefore the sample Size be $6 \times 4 = 24$

Sample Distribution

Name of company	Manager
MTN	6
AIRTEL	6
9 mobile	6
Globacom	6
TOTAL	24

Methods of Data Analysis

The responses gathered from the questionnaire were collected and scored for analysis using frequency counts and then analyzed with the mean to answer the research questions. While hypothesis test were Spearman Ranking Order Correlation were used for the hypotheses testing. The formula for the test statistics is given as:

$$r = 1 - \frac{6 \sum d^2}{(n^3 - n)}$$

where,

Where $\sum d$ = sum of the squared differences in the ranking of the n = number of subject being ranked.

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between Market Intelligence and Customer Acquisition of telecommunication firms in Port Harcourt.

From the result in the table above, the correlation coefficient shows that there is a positive relationship between Market Intelligence and Customer Acquisition. The *correlation coefficient* 0.798 confirms the magnitude and strength of this relationship and it is statistically significant at p 0.000 < 0.05. The correlation coefficient represents a high correlation between the variables. Therefore, based on empirical findings the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate accepted. Thus, there is a significant relationship between Market Intelligence and Customer Acquisition of telecommunication firms in Port Harcourt.

CONCLUSION

This study looked at Marketing Intelligence and Customer Acquisition of Telecommunication firms in Rivers State. All the relationships were strongly, moderately significant positive related. It is evident that from the study that Marketing Intelligence when emphasized in the trading relationships, will lead to repeated purchases hence consumer loyalty.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The study further recommends that of Telecommunication firms in Rivers State should emphasize on building a positive Marketing Intelligence to meet customer's expectation and offer more benefits to customer.
2. Firms should endeavor to focus on identify their customers expressed needs that guide them in developing products and services.
3. Finally the study recommends that firms ensure customer satisfaction as it is a good predictor of future purchase behaviour, an indication of behavioural loyalty of the customer.

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