

ASSESSMENT OF THE APPLICATION OF MARKETING CONCEPT TOWARDS IMPROVED STANDARD OF LIVING FOR THE POOR IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *The study undertook a situation analysis of the application of Marketing Concept as a tool for improving the standard of living of the poor in Nigeria. This was motivated by the continued report of massive poverty amongst the populace. The specific objective sought was to: determine the effect of marketing concept on the provision of infrastructural facilities to the citizens; and the effect of application of marketing concept on the creation of employment for the teeming youths in the country. Survey research design was employed. The sample size of the study was 400 and the cluster sampling technique was adopted in the study. The findings of the study were that: The level of application of marketing concept was not significant for citizens' awareness of the poverty alleviation programmes in South-South, Nigeria; and also was not significant for the creation of employment for the poor in South-South, Nigeria. It was then recommended that government and relevant agencies should employ marketing concept researches, principles and practices in determining the actual needs of the people and in meeting them adequately.*

KEYWORDS: Marketing Concept, Standard of Living, Poor Citizens, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria, customer satisfaction is increasingly becoming the basic ground for commercial and non-commercial organisations' survival. In order to be successful, most organizations are recognising that they must be customer-focused, customer-driven, customer-centred and customer-oriented. However, customers' needs and expectations are ever changing, and this demands greater innovation on the part of the organisations to keep pace with the changing expectations (Willington 2005:112; Omenazu, 2010; Onah, 2007; Bhasin, 2010). Therefore, implementing customer satisfaction philosophy means identifying customers' needs and expectations, and, finally, measuring their perceptions (Stenbery, 2007:83). Also, knowing the needs of the customers make it easier to anticipate the ideal set of products and or

services that will satisfy them in order to avoid losing the customers (Assad, 2007; Nowak, 2010; Phau and Cheong, 2009). As it is with products and services marketing, so it is with social-marketing programmes.

However, it is argued that most government poverty alleviation social marketing programmes in Nigeria do not consider the views of the poor in their designs and implementations in line with marketing concept philosophy (Punch, 2012; Rahila & Abbass, 2012). According to Graham (1993), programmes of planned social change such as poverty alleviation rarely seek the needs and wants of the consumer or the target market. It is usually the views of those in positions of power, influence and sometimes knowledge, who know what is best for the target market or what the target market really needs or want, or ought to want. In such programmes, efforts are redoubled to make the target market better understand what is good or best for them. This has been the case with the implementation of many skills acquisition and poverty alleviation programmes in Nigeria, none of which sought the opinion of the masses as to what they really want and how they want it (Akindiya, 2013).

Even in the social-marketing of laudable programmes like immunisation, anti-smoking, waste disposal, Planned Parenthood, anti-self-medication and the rest, the situation is still the same. In recognition of this fact, Lauffer (1984) posits that in not-for-profit organizations, many social workers begin with the assumption that their products, and the services provided are in the best interests of the public. They assume that there is a need for the services provided, simply because they are convinced that they are good for the people (Khalid, 2012).

Statement of the Problem

Using poverty indicators such as literacy level, access to safe water, nutrition, infant and maternal mortality, and the number of people living on less than \$1 a day, Nigeria is found to rank among the 25 poorest nations in the world below Kenya, Ghana and Zambia (Khalid, 2012; World Bank, 2002). This is in spite of all the efforts and resources devoted for many years to fighting poverty by successive governments in Nigeria, with the support of richer nations and international development institutions. This unsatisfactory results call for a re-examination of policies and practices of poverty eradication in Nigeria.

There have been numerous poverty alleviation programmes in the country, in the past, some also aimed at creating jobs as well as bringing about economic and national development, among other objectives. However, most of these programs produced unsatisfactory or not so satisfactory results and failed largely to win public interest in them. Hence, poverty in Nigeria first measured in 1980 by the Federal Office of Statistics (FOS), was 27.2 per cent of the population, or 18 million people. By 1985, the Federal Office of Statistics estimated that about 46 per cent of Nigerians live below poverty level. This dropped to 43 per cent by 1992 according to the Federal Office of Statistics. The poverty rate surged to 66 per cent in a 1996 survey and the total number of poor nearly quadrupled, to 67 million (UNDP 1986). By 2012, the poverty estimate was put at 70 per cent, or 90 million people. Perhaps 40 per cent of these people are the "core' poor", so impoverished that they cannot meet their basic food needs, and indeed, the stunting rate for young Nigerian children, a measure of chronic nutritional deprivation and food insecurity, stands at 42 per cent (NICEF, 2003).

The poverty syndrome is apparently more concentrated in the rural than in the urban areas of the country. The number of rural poor, according to a 1999 World Bank Report, was roughly twice that of the urban poor. Of the extremely poor, 85 per cent live in the rural areas and more than two-thirds lived on farms. The distribution of poverty is also inequitable on a geographic basis. A 1997 National Consumer Survey indicated that the average family expenditure per month for the country was N4,058.00 or about \$25 by today's exchange rate conversion and no part of the country is exempt from poverty (World Bank, 2001).

It is the belief of some commentators that the application of marketing concept in the implementation of those poverty alleviation programmes and projects would have made a significant difference in positive ways. They are of the view that government agencies and private organizations and all types of exchanges whether business or social are bound to benefit immensely from marketing concept application (Foxall, 1989). To this school of thought belong Mitchell and Agenmonmen (1984) who in their study in Nigeria showed that although managers understand the tenets of the marketing concept and indeed accept its logic, they have not implemented it.

To buttress the point, Onah (1977), asserted that the application of marketing concept helps to increase and improve the living standard of the citizens under any economic system using the measuring tool of the Gross National Product (GNP). The standard of living can be measured by the purchasing power of individuals within a community. Etuk (2009) also noted that improved living condition of the people is appropriately measured by increase in productivity per head which is considered as the real per capita growth rate and is a distinctive characteristic of economic progress or growth made possible through a boost from marketing concepts. When implemented, however, marketing concept this school of thought argues would play a significant role in eradicating poverty in the land. Hence, the motivation for this study, to appraise the veracity or otherwise of the claim.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study included:

- i. To determine the level of application of marketing concept and citizens' awareness of the poverty alleviation programmes in South-South, Nigeria.
- ii. To determine the extent of application of marketing concept and the creation of employment for the poor in South-South, Nigeria.

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested in the study:

- i. Ho: The level of application of marketing concept was not significant for citizens' awareness of the poverty alleviation programmes in South-South, Nigeria.
- ii. Ho: The level of application of marketing concept was not significant for the creation of employment for the poor in South-South, Nigeria.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Poverty in Nigeria: A Review

Abdullahi (2009), notes that both the quantitative and qualitative measurements attest to the growing incidence and depth of poverty in Nigeria. Nigeria's proportion of the poor has doubled over the last two decades, during which time the country received \$3,000billion in oil and gas revenue, which never reflected in the standard of living index of majority of the people (Oyemorni, 2003). The poverty levels by zones as at 2008 shows that South-South has 35.1%; South East 26.7%; South West 43.0%; North Central 67.0%; North East 72.2% and North West has 71.2% (World Bank, 2002). According to (Tersoo, 2013), it has been known in Nigeria that every government embarks on one form of poverty reduction programme or the other. However what has remained an issue is the weak impact it has on the poor who are the target beneficiaries. Despite the plethora of poverty reduction programmes put in place by the federal government to fight poverty over the years, one begins to wonder why poverty is still on the increase. Are the poor who are the actual targets of these programmes really benefitting from them; and if not what is responsible for the inefficiency of these programmes? The perceptions of the poor about poverty reduction programmes have been that of ineffectiveness and irrelevance in their lives as government poverty reduction efforts contributes little to their struggle to survive. Mbaegbu (2008) added that one of the goals of economic development strategy pursued by successive Nigeria governments has been the reduction of poverty through dolling out of money, distribution of machinery and equipment amongst others to the poor. A good number of these poverty reduction policies over the years have failed to adopt sound strategy of developing local entrepreneurs through entrepreneurial skills and wealth creation processes which increases purchasing power and demand for goods and services. The laudable objectives are usually overwhelmed by corruption which has become so pervasive and deep-rooted that it is now self-perpetuating and therefore would require multifaceted approaches in eliminating the causal factors (Aliyu, 2002).

The Causes of Poverty in Nigeria

According to Khalid (2012), the main causes of poverty in Nigeria are unemployment, ignorance, poor governance, corruption, high inflation, environmental degradation, high population growth, among others. The South-South region of Nigeria, also called the Niger Delta region falls within the area being ravaged by poverty due to environmental degradation arising from years of oil exploration and exploitation and the consequent environmental hazards. The people are mainly fish farmers, but oil pollution has killed most of the aquatic lives that were the mainstay of their livelihood.

Specifically, in rural areas, where 85 per cent of Nigeria's poor reside, the major cause of poverty has been identified as the use of outmoded and inefficient systems in agriculture and craft. Other contributory factors to low income in rural areas, according to Abubakar (2005), include inadequate infrastructure, lack of credit and marketing facilities, unfavourable rural institutions especially in respect of land tenure; ignorance; illiteracy and cultural and institutional rigidities. Lack of viable non-farm employment opportunities in the rural sector thereby leading to over-crowding on the land and under-employment of labour and poor

income from their farm produces are also major causes of poverty amongst the people (Williams, 1984).

Apart from the above, the unemployment situation in the country which became manifest in the early 1980s has assumed a crisis proportion since the 1990s, thus, worsened the level of poverty. All these have led to increased youths' restiveness, militancy and community agitations against the government and oil companies operating in the South-South region of Nigeria, so, calling to question the impact of the various governmental poverty alleviation programmes on the people, which this study was concerned with.

Reasons for the Failure of the Poverty Alleviation Programmes

Many of the poverty alleviation programmes in Nigeria failed for several reasons, among which is the use of wrong approaches. Those who design the programmes did not involve the poor who are the prospective beneficiaries. It is believed that the target group should have been involved during the planning and designing stages. That is, a 'bottom-top' rather than 'top-bottom' approach should have been used to determine the needs of the poor (Rahila, 2012; Khalid, 2012).

Other reasons for the failure of poverty alleviation programmes includes their adhoc nature, poor design and execution. Wrong location of poverty alleviation projects also lead to failure in achieving the set objectives. Designers and planners often make the mistake of sitting projects in places of their own choice without recourse to their appropriateness in view of the population which may be served by such projects. These choices were often informed by personal interests in terms of religions, politics, ethnicity or social inclination.

Application of Marketing Concept in Poverty Alleviation Programmes

The marketing concept requires that the producer should do an analysis of the needs of potential customers and then make decisions designed to satisfy these needs (Esu, 2010). It is a business philosophy which emphasizes the achievement of an organization's short and long term goals through the satisfaction of the consumer and the harmonization and integration of all marketing activities as well as organizational efforts in this direction (Agbonifoh et al., 2007). Since the marketing concept focuses on identifying the needs of customers and integration of all activities towards the satisfaction of those identified needs, it is only when a poverty alleviation programme is in consonance with its philosophy that it will help achieve long-run economic goals of any government which is citizens' satisfaction and happiness.

Unfortunately, however, here in Nigeria social marketing programmes like the various poverty alleviation initiatives rarely seek the needs and wants of the consumers (citizens) either during the policy formulations or during the implementation. The government adopt a take-it-or-leave-it attitude to the citizens. It is, therefore, often being hijacked by the affluent, those in positions of power, influence and authority, while those to whom they are meant for are not even aware of their existence, and when they know, find it difficult to access. This is notwithstanding the position of Onah (2007), that the application of marketing concept helps to increase and improve the living standard of the citizens under any economic system using the measuring tool of the Gross National Product (GNP) or the purchasing power of individuals within a community.

METHODOLOGY

The researchers adopted survey design for the study. The area of study was 3 selected States from the core Niger-Delta area in the South-South region of Nigeria. They are: Bayelsa, Rivers and Akwa-Ibom States respectively. The population of the study was people up to the voting age of 18 years or above, totalling 4,560,398 persons. The Taro Yamane's formula for known populations was used to determine the sample size of 400, at 5% margin of error and 95% level of confidence. The main instrument for data collection was structured questionnaire. Purposive sampling method was used in administering the questionnaire. Content validity method was used to validate the instrument, while test-retest method was used to confirm the reliability. Chi-square (χ^2) test was used for the data analysis.

Data Presentation and Analyses

400 questionnaire copies were distributed. 352 or 88% were returned and found useful for further analysis.

Table 1: Respondents' views on the level of application of marketing concept and citizens' awareness of the poverty alleviation programmes in South-South, Nigeria

S/N	Option	Frequency	Percentage
1	Strongly agree	78	22.16%
2	Agree	70	19.88%
3	Undecided	67	19.03%
4	Disagree	71	20.17%
5	Strongly disagree	66	18.75%
	Total	352	100

Source: Field Survey, 2012.

Table 1 above reveals that 22.16% of the respondents strongly agreed that the level of application of marketing concept and citizens' awareness of the poverty alleviation programmes in South-South, Nigeria was significant. 19.88% of the respondents equally agreed. 19.03% were undecided, 20.17% disagreed, while 18.75% of the respondents strongly disagreed. See figure 1 below for a pictorial view:

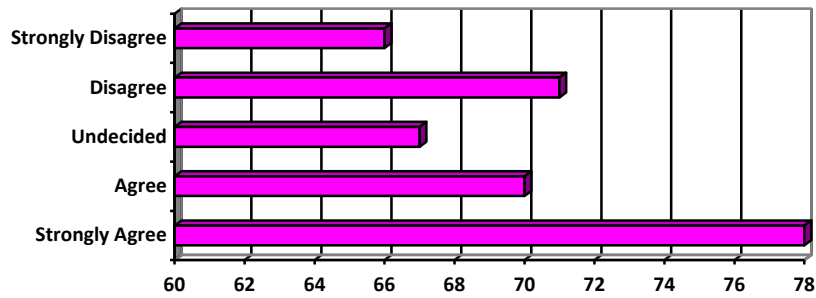


Fig. 1: Level of application of marketing concept and citizens' awareness of the poverty alleviation programmes.

Table 2: Respondents' views on the extent of application of marketing concept and the creation of employment for the poor in South-South, Nigeria

S/N	Option	Frequency	Percentage
1	Strongly agree	72	20.45%
2	Agree	70	19.89%
3	Undecided	69	19.60%
4	Disagree	75	21.31%
5	Strongly disagree	66	18.75%
	Total	352	100

Source: Field Survey, 2012.

Table 2 above reveals that 20.45% of the respondents strongly agreed that the extent of application of marketing concept and the creation of employment for the poor in South-South, Nigeria was significant. 19.89% of the respondents equally agreed. 19.60% were undecided, 21.31% disagreed, while 18.75% of the respondents strongly disagreed. See this on figure 2 graph:

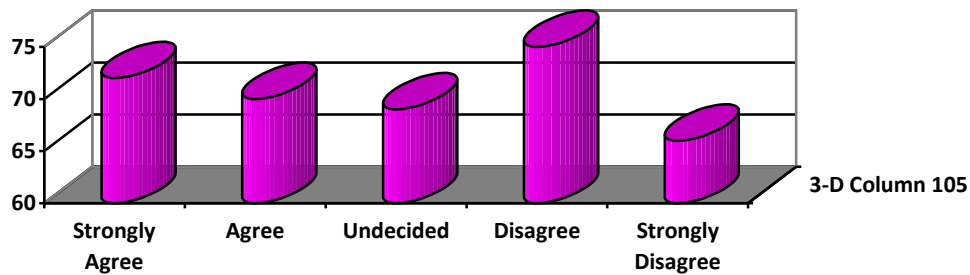


Fig. 2: Extent of application of marketing concept and the creation of employment for the poor.

Test of Hypothesis One

Ho: The level of application of marketing concept was not significant for citizens' awareness of the poverty alleviation programmes in South-South, Nigeria.

Hi: The level of application of marketing concept was significant for citizens' awareness of the poverty alleviation programmes in South-South, Nigeria.

Data from table 1 was used in testing this hypothesis.

Test Statistics = Chi-Square (X^2)

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{O - E}{E}$$

$$\text{Expected Frequency} = \frac{\sum \text{Observed Frequency}}{\text{Number of Observations}}$$

$$= \frac{72 + 70 + 69 + 75 + 66}{5} = 70.40$$

Degree of Freedom = 4. Hence, Critical Chi-Square at 5% Margin of Error = 9.49

Data Analysis Table

o	e	o-e	(o-e)²	(o-e)²/e
78	70	8	64	0.91
70	70	0	0	0
67	70	-3	9	0.13
71	70	1	1	0.014
66	70	-4	16	0.23
Total				1.283

$$X^2_{cal} = 1.283$$

$$X^2_{tab} = 9.49$$

Decision:

Since calculated value 1.283 is less than critical or table value 9.49, we accept the null hypothesis which states that: The level of application of marketing concept was not significant for citizens' awareness of the poverty alleviation programmes in South-South, Nigeria.

Test of Hypothesis Two

Ho: The level of application of marketing concept was not significant for the creation of employment for the poor in South-South, Nigeria.

Hi: The level of application of marketing concept was significant for the creation of employment for the poor in South-South, Nigeria.

Data from table 1 was used in testing this hypothesis.

Test Statistics = Chi-Square (X^2)

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{O - E}{E}$$

$$\text{Expected Frequency} = \frac{\sum \text{Observed Frequency}}{\text{Number of Observations}}$$

Degree of Freedom = 4. Hence, Critical Chi-Square at 5% Margin of Error = 9.49

$$= \frac{72 + 70 + 69 + 75 + 66}{5} = 70.40$$

Degree of Freedom = 4. Hence, Critical Chi-Square at 5% Margin of Error = 9.49

Data Analysis Table

o	e	o-e	(o-e)²	(o-e)²/e
72	70	2	4	0.057
70	71	-1	1	0.014
69	70	-1	1	0.014
75	71	4	16	0.23
66	70	-4	16	0.23
Total				0.545

$$X^2_{\text{cal}} = 0.545$$

$$X^2_{\text{tab}} = 9.49$$

Decision:

Since calculated value 0.545 is less than critical or table value 9.49, we accept the null hypothesis which states that: The level of application of marketing concept was not significant for the creation of employment for the poor in South-South, Nigeria.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Result number one of this study reveals that the level of application of marketing concept was not significant for citizens' awareness of the poverty alleviation programmes in South-South, Nigeria. This lends credence to the stand of Rahila (2012) and Khalid (2012) that those who designed the programmes did not involve the poor who are the prospective beneficiaries during the planning and designing stages, through the overwhelming use of a 'top-bottom' approach. This invariably leads to the wrong location of poverty alleviation projects in major cities that are remote to majority of the poor who reside in rural areas.

It is still this non-application of marketing concept philosophy of first identifying what the target publics need and want, before delivering it to them, that culminates into the designers and implementers of the poverty alleviation projects in the country into siting projects in places that suites their whims and caprices rather than where the poor could be found in their majority. These choices according to Aliyu (2002) and Akindiya (2013), are often motivated by personal primordial and pecuniary interests and other times by religious, political, ethnic or social inclinations. These facts were also corroborated by Punch Newspaper (2012) and Mbaegbu (2008).

Result number two of this study also reveals that the level of application of marketing concept was not significant for the creation of employment for the poor in South-South, Nigeria. This is not a surprise at all, mindful of the high rate of youths' unemployment in the country today and the consequent security backlashes (Lewu, 2012; Oyemomi, 2003; World Bank, 2002). It is supported by the views of Alfa et al (2014), that the high level of poverty in Nigeria, which has attained an endemic nature, has become worrisome to all due to the security consequences. In fact, the fate of the programmes has been that of poor, callous, haphazard implementation and abandonment majorly as a result of perennial political instability as well as bad governance. There is empirical evidence to show that widespread poverty has harmful effect on any society. Hence, something drastic needs to be done about it in Nigeria. No doubt, making employment opportunities available to the citizens will greatly reduce poverty, which will in turn make it possible for the citizens to have access to basic social services such as primary health care, family planning, balanced nutrition, primary education and many more, thereby turning the minds of many off crime and social violence.

CONCLUSION

The marketing concept which emphasizes the satisfaction of the target publics or consumers is very relevant to economic development in any country, especially poverty alleviation programmes as revealed in this study. This is because, it helps to rightly ascertain the needs

and wants of the citizens through research, which consequently enhances more efficient allocation of resources and the proper siting of governments' projects. This invariably helps to reduce the incidence of poverty in the economy and pent-up aggressions and violence. The effective allocation of resources to the essential areas will also boost employment generation which will in turn enhance the standard of living and quality of life of the citizens, thus, engender a climate of peace and social order that is very necessary for economic development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Mindful of the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Marketing Concept researches should be used to determine the opinion, needs and wants of citizens of the country before the launching of any poverty alleviation programme or project for them.
- ii. The poor citizens must also be carried along in the implementations of poverty alleviation programmes in the country through community-based organisations (CBOs) and grassroots associations that are easily reachable and accessible to them.
- iii. The siting of poverty alleviation projects, facilities and infrastructure in the country should be made more ruralised than urbanised, since majority of the poor live in rural areas. This will reduce the incidence of dehumanising poverty in the rural areas of the country.
- iv. The establishment of industries should be based on the marketing Concept researches conducted, and must be geared towards curbing the high rate of unemployment in the country.
- v. The poverty alleviation programmes should also be geared towards skills-acquisition in order to arm the army of unemployed youths with better skills for self-employment and entrepreneurship.

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