



ENTREPRENEURIAL MARKETING SKILLS ACQUISITION FOR SELF-SUSTAINABILITY BY POSTGRADUATE BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS IN RIVERS STATE

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Abstract

The study ascertained the level of acquisition of entrepreneurial marketing skills by post-graduate business education students for self-sustainability in Rivers State. One research question was posed for the study and one hypothesis tested at 0.05 level of significance. The design of the study was descriptive survey. A total of 298 business education postgraduate students in two owned Rivers State universities made up the population. The population consisted of 44 postgraduate business education students in Rivers State University and 254 postgraduate business education students in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education in Rivers State. The instrument for the study was named: Entrepreneurial marketing Skills Acquisition Questionnaire (EMSAQ). Three experts validated the instrument and a reliability test using Cronbach Alpha method yielded a score of 0.86 for internal consistency. The Mean rating and standard deviation were used to answer the research question while t-test for large group mean was used to test the hypothesis level of significance at 0.05. The findings of the study revealed

that business education postgraduate students acquired moderate level of entrepreneurial marketing, skills for self-sustainability. The findings of the study also revealed that the postgraduate business education students in Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education did not differ significantly regarding the level of acquisition of entrepreneurial marketing skills for self-sustainability. Based on the findings, conclusion was made that entrepreneurial marketing skills acquired by postgraduate business education students affect their level of self-sustainability and the authors therefore recommended among others that there should be continuous training and retraining programme for business educators so as to update their knowledge and skills on the use of entrepreneurship skills in teaching entrepreneurship education. This will help business educators to be up-to-date with current entrepreneurial marketing skills that will promote students' self-sustainability in the operation of businesses. Furthermore, A mechanism should be provided that would regularly and properly checkmate teaching and learning of entrepreneurship education. This can be done by organizing practical entrepreneurship trainings for students in their areas of interest and administration of tests and examinations for effective evaluation.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial Marketing skills, Acquisition, Business education, Self-sustainability

INTRODUCTION

The inculcation of marketing skills is among the focus of business education. According to Gidado and Akaeze (2014), marketers conduct surveys leading to the identification of customer needs and want and develops products that would meet those needs and wants profitably. This implies that business education can promote entrepreneurship through making entrepreneurs to properly perform their entrepreneurial functions. This is because the knowledge of marketing would prompt a business education graduate student to make good use of the seven Ps of marketing namely: product, price, place, promotion, packaging, positioning and people. It is expected that this would lead to the development of sound product ideas which would be translated into acceptable products in the market. The acquisition and utilization of the right marketing skills will promote entrepreneurship by leading to the proper and acceptable pricing of products, making the product available at the right place and time as well as using the right promotional techniques to stimulate customers to buy the products (Gidado and Akaeze, 2014).

Marketing skills are important and essential skills which determines the very success or failure of a business. Marketing consists of all profitable human activities undertaken by firms towards the creation of goods and services. Marketing skills keep the

entrepreneurs informed, knowledgeable and confident as to determine the most efficient method of physical distribution of goods and services. Important marketing skills which the entrepreneur should possess to include: knowledge of seasonal fluctuation of goods, ability to determine the extent to which products will sell, ability to determine current trends in sales of products, ability to determine what customers need and shortage of such goods, knowledge of advertising, ability to determine and interpret factors which indicate extent of and strength of competition, and ability of raw materials for product and shortage of finished goods (Ezeani, 2012).

According to Ameh and Ezeahurukwe (2016), marketing involves research, product development, design and testing, and concentrates primarily on consumers or buyers. When consumer needs have been identified, marketing strategies are developed and designed to educate consumers about important product features with the aim of persuading them to buy the product, thereby bringing about consumer satisfaction. It is a function of moving goods from the producer to the consumers. In the opinion of Ezeani (2012), marketing involves identifying the needs of consumers, planning and developing products or services that satisfy those wants; and determining the best possible price to promote and distribute that products or services.

Marketing is a key entrepreneurial skill to develop. Oyerinde and Falana (2016) described marketing skills as requisite skills that involve thinking about how to reach the targeted audience for products and services produced by an entrepreneur. They further opined that any entrepreneur who acquires this skills will be able to sell such products for a profit. Marketing is an essential skill on which depends the success or failure of businesses. Similarly, Ademiluyi (2007) posited that the development of marketing skills offer the entrepreneur the unique strategy of success in business. The author further identified areas of marketing skills to include: salesmanship and negotiation; sales record keeping; sales promotion; stock keeping; pricing; advertising media; consumer behavior appreciation and transportation. The ability to deliver what people want to buy is an obvious requirement to run a business. However, many people do not understand how to market a business. Marketing led organizations always back the trend and tend to produce more revenue and profit than their competitors.

The business education graduate students are expected to develop marketing skills to enable them establish and manage their independent businesses successfully. It is an obvious fact that the world has become a global village where there is the interplay of the competing needs, demands and activities on a daily basis. No single individual has all it takes to move the engine of growth across the globe forward for the good of man in order for man and nations of

the world to avail themselves of the resources needed for growth. Business education graduate students require marketing skills in order to enable them identify their potential customers; persuade them to buy their products or services.

Gidado and Akaeze (2014) opined that the failures of many entrepreneurs are attributed to lack of the following marketing skills; marketing information skills, marketing research skills, data collection skills, methods and data interpretation skills, segmentation skills, strategic and planning skills, pricing mathematics skills, product development skills, advertising skills, personal selling skills and sales promotion skills.

In a related view, Oboreh (2011) identified the following marketing entrepreneurial skills: ability to capture and retain the attention of customers, ability to promote and sell organizational product, ability to analyze and demand and sell the products, ability to acquire effective sales habit, ability to acquire good sales habit, ability to carry out effective marketing and information research, ability to budget and forecast, ability to be self-reliant and self-sustainable and knowledge of seasonal fluctuation of goods. The ability of an entrepreneur to be successful largely depends on the entrepreneur's knowledge and skills to market his goods and services.

Skill acquisition is defined as the ability to be trained on a particular task or function (Mike, 2014). Mike emphasized that the importance of skill acquisition includes self-employment, diverse job opportunities, employment generation, effective function, and crime reduction. Idoko (2014) defined skill acquisition as the form of training by individuals or group of individuals that can lead to acquisition of knowledge for self-sustenance. It involves the training of people in different fields of trade under a legal agreement between the trainers and the trainees for certain duration and under certain conditions.

Ochiagha (1995) stated that skill acquisition is seen as the ability to do or perform an activity that is related to some meaningful exercise, work or job. Ochiagha maintained that for skills to be acquired, appropriate knowledge, attitudes, habit of thought and qualities of character are learnt to enable the acquirer develop intellectual, emotional and moral character which prepares the individual for a brighter future.

Similarly, Donli (2004) was of the view that skill acquisition is the manifestation of idea and knowledge through training which is geared towards instilling in individuals, the spirit of entrepreneurship needed for meaningful development. Donli stressed that if individuals are given the opportunity to acquire relevant skills needed for self-sustainability in the economy, it will promote their charisma in any work or business situation.

Equipping business education postgraduates students with different skills are means of taking corrective measure for the high level of unemployment. Without skill acquisition the

national goals of employment generation and self-sustainability cannot be realized hence corruption and violence will rise to high level.

Self-sustainability is defined as the social and economic ability of an individual, household or a community to meet essential needs (including protection, food, water, shelter, safety, health, business and education) in a sustainable manner and with dignity (Anukan, 2013). Ogbonna (2017) pointed that self-sustainability refers to dependence on one's abilities, judgment and resources to do whatever should be done. It is a state of being in which a person or an entrepreneur needs little or no help from or interaction with others.

An individual is said to be self-sustained when the individual can depend less on other people and family in the management of human and material resources. Citizens of a nation will be self-sustained when they have possible cause to access and utilize the essentials of life which includes good food, clothing, shelters, medications, transportations and functional education (Ofoye, 2015). For one to be sustainable, one must be enterprising, and one is enterprising when there is attributes of verbal skills for selling, dominating, leading, seeing oneself as a strong, masculine leader (Ugwuda, 2014). There are evidences from the developed societies that shows a positive relationship between entrepreneurial skill acquisition and self-sustainability (Agbeze, 2012).

Statement of the Problem

Business education graduates in Rivers State constantly face the problem of unemployment and the failure of businesses before their fifth year in operation as a result of lack of entrepreneurial marketing skill acquisition. It seems most disappointing and frustrating when an entrepreneur who has been long unemployed before starting his own business is forced out of business because of lack of entrepreneurial skills. Nigerian tertiary institutions continue to produce graduates that are barely self-sustainable in the operation of their businesses because of lack of high levels of entrepreneurial skills. With the teaching of entrepreneurship in business education across universities in Rivers State, business education graduates are expected to acquire entrepreneurial marketing skills. Despite this effort to empower business education graduates in Rivers State with entrepreneurial marketing skills, most operators of Small Scale Enterprises (SME) still seem to find it difficult to manage their businesses. Several studies has been conducted on entrepreneurial skill acquisition using different concepts and constructs. To the best of our knowledge, it appears that there is paucity of empirical research on the level of entrepreneurial marketing skills acquisition and how it influences self-sustainability of post graduate students in tertiary education. Against this

backdrop, this paper is designed to evaluate the level of acquisition of entrepreneurial marketing skills by post graduate business students for self-sustainability in Rivers State owned Universities.

Purpose of the Study

To ascertain the level of entrepreneurial marketing skills acquired by postgraduate business education students for self-sustainability in Rivers State.

Research Question

What is the level of acquisition of entrepreneurial marketing skills by postgraduate business education students for self-sustainability in Rivers State?

Research Hypothesis

The null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

HO₁: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of postgraduate business education students of Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education on the level of acquisition of entrepreneurial marketing skill for self-sustainability.

STUDY METHODOLOGY

The research approach adopted in this study is the non- experimental research type and it was designed based on the cross-sectional survey method which offers a wide coverage and permits generalizability of research findings. The study was carried out in Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, Rivers State. The design of the study was a sample survey. One research question guided the study and one hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

The population of the study was 298. The instrument for the study was named: Entrepreneurial marketing Skills Acquisition Questionnaire (EMSAQ). Three experts validated the instrument and a reliability test using Cronbach Alpha method which yielded a score of 0.86 for internal consistency.

The data collected were analysed using mean ratings and standard deviation for the research question and t-test for large group mean was used to test the hypothesis level of significance at 0.05. The decision rule was: if the calculated z-value was greater than critical value, the hypothesis was rejected and if the calculated z-value was less than the critical value, the hypothesis was accepted.

RESULTS

Research Question: What is the level of acquisition of entrepreneurial marketing skills by postgraduate business education students for self-sustainability in Rivers State?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation on the Level of Acquisition of Entrepreneurial Marketing Skills by Postgraduate Business Education Students for Self-Sustainability in Rivers State

s/n	Item Statement	(N=280)		
		Mean	SD	Remarks
1	Prepare and interpret financial statements	3.69	1.09	HL
2	Prepare payrolls and understand various deductions	3.45	1.24	ML
3	Process accounts payables and receivables	3.13	1.34	ML
4	Prepare the cashbook	3.86	1.19	HL
5	Prepare debtors and creditors' ledgers	3.31	1.39	ML
6	Keep accurate sales and purchases records	3.65	1.26	HL
7	Determine employee wages and benefits	3.27	1.25	ML
8	Prepare bank reconciliation statements	3.50	1.19	HL
9	Source for and obtain loan	3.41	1.09	ML
10	Knowledge of federal state, and local regulations, levies and taxes levied on business organization	3.71	1.27	HL
11	Knowledge of costing	3.64	1.14	HL
	Total Mean / SD	38.4	13.47	
	Grand Mean / SD	3.49	1.23	ML

In the table 1, out of the eleven items analysed, six items were ranked high level while the five items were ranked moderate level. The size items which were ranked high level include: prepare and interpret financial statements (Mean=3.69), prepare the cashbook (Mean=3.64),

keep accurate sales and purchases records (mean = 3.65) accurate sales and purchases records (mean = 3.65), prepare bank reconciliation statement (mean = 3.50), knowledge of federal state and local regulations, levies and taxes levied on business organization (mean = 3.71), knowledge of costing (mean = 3.64). The items ranked moderate level include: prepare payrolls and understand various deductions (mean = 3.45), process accounts payables and receivables (mean = 3.13), prepare debtors/creditors ledgers (mean = 3.31), determine employee wages and benefits (mean = 3.27), source for and obtain loan (mean = 3.41). The grand mean of 3.49 and standard deviation of 1.23 confirmed moderate levels of acquisition of entrepreneurial accounting skills by postgraduate business education students for self-sustainability.

Study Hypothesis

HO₁: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of postgraduate business education students of Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education on the level of acquisition of entrepreneurial marketing skill for self-sustainability.

Table 2: t-test Analysis of the Mean Responses of postgraduate Business Education Students in RSU and IAUE on the level of acquisition of entrepreneurial marketing skill for self-sustainability

Respondents	N	\bar{X}	SD	DF	Alpha	Z-cal	Z-crit	Decision
IAUE	236	3.43	1.21	278	0.05	0.45	1.96	Accepted
RSU	44	3.34	1.23					

t-cal (t-calculated), t-crit (t-critical).

Table 2 revealed that the t-calculated of 0.45 at 0.05 level of significance, while the t-critical value is 1.96. Since the calculated t-value of 0.45 is less than the t-critical value of 1.96, the null hypothesis is upheld. This means that postgraduate business education students in Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education do not differ significantly in their mean ratings of their level of acquisition of entrepreneurial marketing skill for self-sustainability.

DISCUSSION

From the result obtained in the analysis of data related to research question , the findings revealed that business education postgraduates students acquired moderate level of entrepreneurial marketing skills for self-sustainability and which include knowledge of seasonal

fluctuation of goods, ability to determine the extent to which products will sell, ability to determine current trends in sales of products, ability to determine what customers need and shortage of such goods, knowledge of advertising, ability to determine and interpret factors which indicate extent of strength and weakness of competitors, ability to capture and retain the attention of customers. The finding is in agreement with the view of Ezeani (2012) who opined that marketing skills are important and essential skill on which depends the very success or failure of a business. Ezeani posited that the important entrepreneurial marketing skills which the entrepreneur should possess to include: knowledge of seasonal fluctuation of goods, ability to determine the extent to which product will sell, ability to determine current trends in sales of products, ability to determine what customers need and shortage of such goods, knowledge of advertising, ability to determine and interpret factors which indicate extent of and strength competition, and ability of raw materials for product and shortage of finished goods. The finding also corroborates the view of Oyerinde and Falana (2016) who described marketing skills as requisite skills that involve thinking about how to reach the target audience for products and services produced by an entrepreneur. Oyerinde and Falana further stated that any entrepreneur who acquires these skills will be able to sell such products for a profit as marketing is an essential skill in which the success or failure of businesses depends on. Thus, business education graduate students are expected to develop marketing skills to enable them establish and manage independent businesses successfully. It is an obvious fact that the world has become a global village where there is the interplay of competing needs, demands and activities on a daily basis. No single individual has all it takes to move the engine of growth across the globe forward for the good of man in order for man and nations of the world to avail themselves of the resources needed for growth. Ademiluyi (2007) opined that the development of marketing skills offer the entrepreneur the unique strategy of success in business. Ademiluyi further identified areas of marketing skills to include: salesmanship and negotiation, sales record keeping, sales promotion, stock keeping, pricing, advertising media, consumer behaviour appreciation and transportation. The ability to deliver what people want to buy is an obvious requirement to run a business. Similarly, Gidado and Akaeze (2014) buttressed that the acquisition and utilization of the right marketing skills will promote entrepreneurship by leading to proper and acceptable pricing of products, making products available at the right place and time as well as using the right promotional techniques to stimulate customers to buy the products. Business education graduate students require marketing skills in order to enable them identify their potential customers and persuade them to buy their products or services.

Test of subsequent hypothesis revealed that there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of postgraduate business education students of Rivers State University and Ignatius

Ajuru University of Education on the level of acquisition of entrepreneurial marketing skills for self-sustainability. Following the responses of the respondents, the researcher is of the opinion that these inputs will enhance entrepreneurial marketing skills for self-sustainability.

CONCLUSION

Base on the findings obtained from the test of hypothesis, the authors concluded that Entrepreneurial marketing skills acquired by postgraduate business education students affect the student's level of self-sustainability. Remarkably, these skills are veritable tools that prepare business education graduates for the world of work and become self-sustainable as operators of business ventures. Lack or absence of these skills negatively affects graduates in embarking on business ventures.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. There should be continuous training and retraining programme for business educators so as to update their knowledge and skills on the use of entrepreneurship skills in teaching entrepreneurship education. This will help business educators to be up-to-date with current entrepreneurial skills that will promote students' self-sustainability in the operation of businesses
2. A mechanism should be provided that would regularly and properly checkmate teaching and learning of Entrepreneurship education. This can be done by organizing practical entrepreneurship trainings for students in their areas of interest and administration of tests and examinations for effective evaluation.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study was limited to investigating if there is a significant difference between the acquisition of entrepreneurial marketing skills and self-sustainability by postgraduate business education students in Rivers State. This researchers or authors never intended to investigate other post graduate students in universities outside Rivers State, hence the research findings, conclusion and generalization is only limited to the post graduate students in Rivers state owned universities. Further researchers could investigate the same constructs using post graduate students in other states to ascertain if similar results could be obtained.

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