INFLUENCE OF MARKETING COMMUNICATION

ON MICRO-ENTERPRISE PERFORMANCE IN

KERICHO COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract

Past research has shown that marketing communication influences financial performance of firms never the less, scanty information is available on non- financial measures. This Study intends to empirically determine the relationship between marketing communication and performance of micro-enterprises; determine the marketing communication practices in Kericho County, Kenya. The study was grounded on integrated marketing communication theory. The study examined the postulated relationship using correlational design. The target population comprised of 5700 registered micro-enterprises in Kericho County, Kenya. Proportionate stratified random sampling method was applied to select 373 owner/managers. Data was collected using structured questionnaires. Pilot study of 20 randomly selected respondents was conducted in all the sub-counties. Cronbach Alpha coefficient at 0.7 threshold tested reliability giving reliability coefficients above the threshold value for all the scales used. Content validity was assessed through expert opinion. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and regression analysis. The findings indicated that marketing communication has a unique influence on performance (β=0.359, p=.000) and accounted for 12.9%. Using regression analysis, the results confirmed significant relationship. The study

concluded that marketing communication influences performance and recommended that the enterprises should enhance marketing communication strategies to achieve better performance.

Keywords: marketing communication, performance, marketing communication practices, micro-enterprises

INTRODUCTION

Marketing communications has grown in recent years because it has been seen to represent the voice by which companies can establish a dialogue with customers and other stakeholders about their product or service (Murangiri, 2014). Kitchen, Bringell, Li, & Jones, (2004) noted that the vital role of integrated marketing communication (IMC) is to build a close relationship with the customer. Therefore IMC is the result of aligning activities, procedures, messages, and goals in order to communicate with consistency and continuity within and across formal organizational boundaries (Christensen, Cornelissen, & Morsing, 2007). In view of this IMC is a holistic system of communication in which different techniques and tools can complement each other in the achievement of a company's marketing communication objectives (Gilmore, 2011).

Literature reveals that marketing communication has a positive relationship with performance. None-the-less empirical evidence largely relied on studies focusing on financial measures and limited studies measure non-financial performance. The measures of performance used were different in most studies such as Return on Assets (ROA), growth and sales performance. At the same time, scanty information is available on non- financial measures therefore the study addresses this gap.

There is evidence that the micro-enterprise sector provides growth in the economy. This growth has been steadily progressing form 67.5% (2010) to 83.4% (2014) (Republic of Kenya, 2014). This growth in the sector does not however reflect in the growth of the micro-enterprise largely due to their survival rates which, most of them fail to grow in to medium and large enterprises. This is largely attributed to financial constraints; social demands compete with business capital and managing employees (Tubey, 2010). At the same time, Ongolo and Awino (2013) point out that the sector contributes about 20% of the gross domestic product (GDP). The sector spreads across the 47 counties in Kenya contributing to the economy of every county including Kericho County.

Even though the sector is deemed instrumental in provision of economic growth and prosperity, such is not the case in Kericho County whose unemployment rate stood at 47% in 2009. Moreover 38% of the population is economically inactive and this figure rises as population grows (KICDP, 2013). The site provides a good platform for studying entrepreneurial orientation and firm performance to understand the dynamics of the county and to explain the disparity in county averages vis a vis nationwide averages. More so the site provides an important geographical space upon which the study will be conducted.

Statement of Problem

Previous arguments that marketing communication influences firm performance has focused on financial measures yet non-financial measures have not been examined to reach a comprehensive understanding of this relationship for micro-enterprises. Marketing communication has been practiced by micro-enterprises however how it relates to firm performance of micro enterprises remain unknown. In light of this, the study will extend the existing literature by proposing a conceptual framework that considers the relationship between marketing communication and performance of micro-enterprises.

Objective of study

i.   To determine the relationship between marketing communication and performance of micro-enterprises in Kericho County.

ii.   To determine the marketing communication practices employed by mirco-enterprise

Hypothesis of study

$H_0$1: Marketing communication has no significant relationship with performance of micro enterprises

LITERATURE REVIEW

Integrated Marketing Communications Theory

Integrated marketing communication (IMC) is described as business strategy which is used to get maximum positive impact on the business. The theory was coined in early 1990s by American Advertising Agencies Association (AAAA) as a comprehensive plan to further evaluate the strategic roles of a range of different communication disciplines. Contribution by Nowak & Phelps (1994) and Kitchen (2000) brought out the concept of IMC s coordinated marketing communication as the sum of all tools involved such as direct marketing, public relations and advertising, the goal of which to achieve the synergy of increasing brand image

and influences behavior response from the targeted customers. Egan (2007) argues that IMC focuses on customer that how greater values can be transferred to the customer which aims to make close relationship with the customer. Usually it is the combination of different promotion mix which is used in same way to produce seamless message to make maximum impact on the customer.

Further Egan (2007) explains that media, message consistency, design consistency, reinforcement and sales alignment are the components of IMC. According to Jones (2008) it is revolutionary step because of a whole culture of agencies, in-house departments, and consultants had grown up around the notion of separation for advertising, direct marketing, sales promotion, and public relations efforts, rather than the harmonious, customer-centered planning process that IMC requires. Integration has become an essential concept in marketing because technological advances have changed how business stakeholders interact.

Lovelock & Wirtz (2004) noted that the marketing communications mix includes advertising, personal selling, publishing, public relations, sales promotions, instructional materials and corporate designs. Customers need information about the features of the product, its price and how they can access it in order to make informed purchase decisions. This means that, having good effective communication channels add value to the product of the company as customers have confidence in their purchase (Poturi, 2008).

A constant brand message must be conveyed and tailored to how the customer interacts with specific media. The various communications mix elements are mutually reinforcing (Kotler & Keller 2005), creating synergies in uplifting the brand image of the service or product. However for these synergies to be realized, the communications mix must run through the most effective communication media. Marketing communications mix thus plays a critical role in creating awareness and arousing interest and desire of trial and ultimately purchase of the product/ service. It can contribute to the brand equity by crafting brand image and embedding the brand in the consumer's memory (Kotler, 2005).

Kitchen et al., (2004) notes that the vital role of IMC is to build a close relationship with the customer. Therefore IMC is the result of aligning activities, procedures, messages, and goals in order to communicate with consistency and continuity within and across formal organizational boundaries, (Christen et al., 2007). Message consistency is the crux of IMC argues Nowak & Phelps (1994). In view of this IMC is a holistic system of communication in which different techniques and tools can complement each other in the achievement of a company's marketing communication objectives (Low, 2000). Ventramay (2011) alludes that IMC plays an important role in building close customer relation, adds that there is a positive impact of IMC on the organizational performance. This view of IMC focuses on building

customer relationship however Eagle & Kitchen (2000) recognizes that IMC builds long term and not short-term results. Tsikirayi, Muchenje & Katsidzira (2012) found budgetary restrictions, poor product quality as barriers to successful implementation of IMC. This holistic approach of IMC whilst acknowledging the impediments to successful implementation to micro enterprises will guide the study in addressing how marketing communication can play a role in enhancing micro-enterprise performance.

Empirical review

Marketing Communication and Firm Performance

Empirical literature conducted in different sectors such as banking (Abubakar (2014), food manufacturing; Isamil, Hussain, Shah & Hussain.A, (2012) transport Onditi et. al., (2014) and telecommunications Mulra & Ndati (2013),   agree with this proposition which give strong relationship in their conclusions. However, empirical evidence relied on financial measures paying limited attention to non-financial measures. None-the-less different methodological approaches were employed in the studies as discussed in the ensuing paragraphs.

Abubakar (2014) observes that direct marketing has a significant impact on financial performance of a firm. This observation is made out of a case study investigation carried out in First Bank of Nigeria PLC, in which two aspects of marketing communication were studied in relation to Return on Assets (ROA) as a financial measure. Correlation analysis revealed that there is positive significant relationship between advertising and ROA (r = 0.840);   promotion had strong relationship with ROA (r =0.451).

Isamil, Hussain, Shah & Hussain, (2012) extends the above argument and holds that there is a positive relationship between promotional expenses and sales. This was concluded after conducting a case study in Procter and Gamble Company in which the objective was to evaluate the effect of marketing communication on sales performance. This established that the strong relationship r = 0.94 at p=.005 significant level. The study concludes that marketing communication helps the firm to establish good relationship with the customers and ensure its survival and attain long term objectives.

Further Odunlamai & Ofoegbu (2011) support the argument adding that there is need to manage the marketing communication system for efficient performance in a competitive environment. This conclusion was drawn from a case study conducted in Sunshine Company (Oyo State, Nigeria). Moreover, implementation of promotion as marketing communication helped the company increase sales performance. Other elements of the markeing communication mix have been examined and as such, Onditi et al., (2014) add that sales promotion, advertising and personal selling and direct marketing affect sales performance. This

was concluded in a census study of public service bus companies operating in Mombasa with a fleet of 10 buses. The study aimed to determine the effects marketing communication mix elements on sales performance. Descriptive research design was adopted and a total of 21 public service bus companies. However public relations was established to have a very low impact on the sales performance of business companies in Mombasa.

Murangiriri (2014) studied the role of marketing communication mix on performance of Micro Finance Institutions with an aim to establish the effect of promotion on performance of MFIs. The study adopted descriptive design with a sample size of 13 marketing managers was selected purposively. Results indicate that sales promotion had the highest influence on performance followed by publicity, advertisement; public relation however did not strongly have an association with performance of MFIs. Similarily, Mulra & Ndati (2013) investigated the IMC strategies used with MPESA money transfer services by Safaricom Limited. Case study design was adopted with a sample size of 48 respondents. The findings confirmed that Safaricom had used IMC strategies befitting their target market compared to its competition to diffuse information on the M-PESA innovation and thus the success of its adoption could be attributed to the unique IMC strategies.

Odunlamai & Ofoegbu (2011), and Isamil, Hussain, Shah& Hussain., (2012), argue that promotion and sales performance are positively related. In addition, Abubakar (2014) maintains that both advertising and promotion has strong relationship with sales. Notably these studies focused only on two aspects of marketing communication; promotion and advertising; how they influence sales performance whilst Onditi et al, (2014) and Murangiri (2014) indicate that public relations has a very low impact on sales. It is evident from literature that a number of studies have attempted to address the effect of marketing communication on firm performance using financial measures however there lacks empirical evidence on non-financial measures. Non-financial measures have been recommended for evaluation of performance for micro enterprises because it is significantly reliable as an alternative to objective measurement (Zukliffi, 2011).

Theoretical and empirical literature reveals that marketing communication has a positive relationship with performance. None-the-less empirical evidence largely relied on studies focusing on financial measures and limited studies measure non-financial performance. The measures of performance used were different in most studies such as Return on Assets (ROA), growth and sales performance. At the same time, the non-financial performance indicators have not been examined therefore the study addresses this gap.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research work adopted correlational design. Correlational studies display the relationships among variables by such techniques as cross-tabulation and correlations (Simon, 2011). The main purpose of a correlational study is to determine relationships between variables, and if a relationship exists, to determine a regression equation that could be used make predictions to a population.

The study was conducted in the six sub-counties of Kericho County with target population of study comprised a total of 5700 owner/managers of the micro-enterprises in Kericho County. These micro-enterprises are those registered at the County Revenue Office during 2013/2014 financial year. Specifically those micro- enterprises that employ 1-10 persons (Kericho County Revenue Office, 2015). The study employed both primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained directly from respondents using structured questionnaires. It involved creating new data collected from an existing source (Kothari, 2004). The respondents were the owner/managers of micro-enterprises in Kericho County.

Primary data obtained from field survey was used to draw conclusions on the objectives of the study. Secondary data was obtained from published reports from government and other relevant agencies which enable comparisons, affirmations and contradictions in the study during interpretation. The study adopted Yamane's formula of sample size with an error of 5% and with a confidence coefficient of 95% (Yamane 1967), the calculation yields 373 respondents.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where, n is the sample size, N is the population size, and e is the level of precision.

Therefore:

n = 5700

1+ 5700(0.05)^2

This yields 373 respondents for the study.

The study used proportionate stratified sampling technique to identify the 6 sub-counties in Kericho County; proportionate allocation of sample was considered to obtain the sample for every strata because the study covered a large geographical area.

A structured survey questionnaire was used to collect data from the owner/managers of Micro-enterprises in Kericho County. The questions on firm performance are adapted from Zulkiffli, & Perera, (2011) and marketing communication construct questions have been adapted from Schultz & Kitchen (1997) and Eagle & Kitchen (2000).

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Marketing Communication and Performance of Micro-enterprises in Kericho County

The objective of the study sought to determine whether a relationship existed between marketing communication and performance of micro-enterprises. The first step therefore entailed measuring the level of marketing communication among micro-enterprises in the county. In effect, various aspects under marketing and communication were assessed. The findings are presented using means and standard deviations as shown in table 1.

Table 1. Communication Tools among micro-enterprises in Kericho County

Statements	Mean	SD
mc-discounts	3.52	1.27
mc-face book	4.16	1.31
mc-free gifts	2.59	1.46
mc-having stands at events and festivals	4.48	1.00
mc-instagram	4.61	0.95
mc-leaflets	3.95	1.41
mc-magazine	4.66	0.77
mc-money off coupons	4.37	1.13
mc-news paper	4.72	0.68
mc-other online application	4.54	0.95
mc-outdoor	3.80	1.52
mc-product samples	4.12	1.40
mc-public relations	4.07	1.42
mc-radio advertising	4.30	1.24
mc-sales promotion	3.41	1.47
mc-telemarketing	4.31	1.16
mc-TV	4.64	0.95
mc-twitter	4.57	0.96
mc-web-based advertisement using enterprise-web	4.61	0.95
mc-what sup	4.32	1.27
mc-word of mouth	4.36	1.13
overall mean	4.19	0.63

From the findings as indicated in table 4.10, the slightly used communication tool were free gifts, sales promotion, and discounts, (M=2.59, SD=1.46), (3.41, SD=1.47), and (M=3.52, SD=1.27)respectively, followed by leaflets/ promotional literature and outdoor signature (M=3.95, SD=1.41) and (M=3.80, SD=1.52). The least employed methods were use of

magazines, (M=4.66, SD=0.77), TV (M=4.64, STD=0.99), and web based advertisement using enterprise website (M=4.61, SD=0.95). The overall level of use of marketing communication tools among the micro-enterprises was 4.19 and standard deviation of 0.63. These findings imply that the micro-enterprises practice the use of marketing communication tools even though to a very low extent.

In addition to these findings, the study sought to identify the marketing communication activities used among the micro-enterprises in Kericho County. Various aspects of marketing communication activities were therefore measured. These were among others, consistency of the information provided, incorporation of data sources into communication planning, outsourcing, investment in creative marketing among other aspects. The findings are presented in table 2 using means and standard deviations.

Table 2. Marketing Activities use by micro-enterprises in Kericho County

Statements on marketing activities among micro-enterprises	Mean	SD
Our business's advertising , PR, direct marketing and sales promotion all present the same clear consistent message to our target audience	3.39	1.01
Our business incorporates data sources into communication planning	3.08	1.16
We need to outsource some marketing communication to specialists	2.87	1.02
Our business decisions on marketing communication are based on increasing our competitiveness in the market	3.42	1.07
We do not invest in creative marketing communications for our business	3.09	1.12
We consider marketing communication to be statistically important for our business	3.33	1.11
Our business uses marketing communications to provide information about our products	3.32	1.11
Our business uses marketing communications to stimulate demand	3.30	1.06
Our business uses marketing communications to differentiate the product/service from competition	3.47	0.88
Our business uses marketing communications to combat competitive promotional efforts	3.35	0.87
Our business uses marketing communications to retain loyal customers	3.49	1.01
Our business uses marketing communications to identify prospects and new customers	3.62	0.96
Our business uses marketing communications to encourage product trial	3.47	0.98
Our business uses marketing communications to reduce sales fluctuations	3.39	1.01
Overall marketing communication activities	3.08	1.16

The findings on marketing communication activities are presented as shown in table 2. It is clear that micro-enterprises' advertising, PR, direct marketing and sales promotion rarely present the same clear consistent message to the enterprises' target audience as indicated by a mean of 3.39 and a standard deviation of 1.10. Furthermore, the businesses were not found to use marketing communication to identify prospects and new customers (M=3.62, SD=0.96), use marketing communication to encourage new product trials and use marketing communication to differentiate products (M=3.47) with standard deviations of 0.98 and 0.88 respectively. In addition, MC was not considered statistically significant and the micro-enterprises did not use marketing communications to provide information about their products as indicated by means of 3.33 and 3.32 respectively. However, there was need to outsource some marketing communication to specialists (M=2.87, SD=1.02). In general, these findings show that micro-enterprises do not rely on marketing communication to drive their businesses.

The study therefore sought to determine whether a relationship existed between marketing communication tools and performance of micro-enterprises in Kericho county Kenya. Simple linear regression model was also employed, which was used to test the null hypothesis that "H_0: Marketing communication has no significant relationship with performance of micro-enterprises in Kericho County". In effect to this, the findings on the effect of marketing communication are presented as shown in table 3 using regression coefficients.

Table 3. Effect of Marketing Communication on Performance of Micro-enterprises in Kericho County

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.865	.128		22.448	.000
	Marketing communication	.307	.042	.359	7.221	.000
a. Dependent Variable: overall performance						

From the findings as indicated in table 3, it emerged that marketing communication has a unique influence on performance of micro-enterprises (β=0.359, p=.000). This implies that there is a relationship between marketing communication and micro-enterprise performance. As a result, marketing communication has an influence on their performance. One more implication is that as one unit standard deviation of 1.05 changes in marketing communication, 0.359 standard deviation units in performance of micro-enterprises changes. It can be concluded that there is a relationship between marketing communication and performance of micro-enterprises in Kericho County. Therefore, marketing communication has an influence on the performance of

these enterprises. The study therefore determined the summary model results on the influence of marketing communication on performance of micro-enterprises as shown in table 4.

Table 4. Model Summary Results on Marketing Communications

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.359[a]	.129	.126	.96597	.129	52.141	1	353	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Marketing Communication

From the findings in table 4, it is clear that marketing communication explains 12.9% change in performance of micro-enterprises [$F(1, 353)=52.141$, $p=.000$]. This implies that a variance in performance of micro-enterprises is as a result of change in marketing communications and therefore it has an influence of performance of micro-enterprises. These findings when looked at in terms of correlation, are almost similar to those of Abubakar (2014) who discovered a positive significant relationship between advertising and Return on assets ($r =0.840$); and also promotion had strong relationship with Return on assets ($r =0.451$). His findings on effect of marketing communication on sales performance established a strong relationship $r = 0.94$ at $p=.005$ significant level. However, his studies slightly explained a large percentage change when the r value is squared which is not at large variance with the present findings, which though use more variables. Others studies have also established a positive relationship though using different variables. It can be concluded that there is a relationship between marketing communication and performance of micro-enterprises in Kericho County.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the study reports a significant relationship between marketing communication and performance of micro-enterprises in Kericho County. Even though marketing tools were slightly employed to achieve their marketing communication, the study recommends that the enterprises improve on their marketing communication activities to enhance performance.

The study relied on cross-sectional data survey where the respondents were asked to assess viewpoints on the item in the instrument. But some factors of marketing communication and performance are known to be strategic and dynamic in nature. Therefore, a longitudinal study would be more preferable as it could provide a better perspective of the effect of entrepreneurial orientation on the firm performance in Kenya.

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