

Marketing Skills Needed by Self-Employed Building Craftsmen Inblockmoulding Industries That are Acquirable through Entrepreneurship Education in Enugu Urban

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Abstract

Skill acquisition is to get new knowledge and expertise, which are needed and relevant for self-employed persons to provide products and services to customers at affordable prices with profits. Marketing Skills are necessary skills that involve such activities as advertising, presenting and selling of products and providing services to customers in the best possible way for profit purposes. Entrepreneurship education is a crucial tool for solving the problem of unemployment and unemployables. Self-employed building craftsmen blockmoulders are persons with specialized skills in the building trades who are engaged in self-employed activities for improving their living standard and economic development. The purpose of the study was to determine the marketing skills acquirable through entrepreneurship education by self-employed building craftsmen for economic development. The area of the study was Enugu Urban where 90 self-employed building craftsmen were identified and used. A research question with 17 questionnaire items guided the study. The mean was used to analyze data. The result of the study showed that self-employed building craftsmen blockmoulders needed to acquire marketing skills in order to set clear market goals, determine customers' needs, choose the markets to serve, determine correct prizes, determine effective sales promotion strategies, introduction new products into the market, determine sales volumes, seasonal market fluctuations and maintain good credit management. Conclusions were drawn on the vital roles marketing skills could play in the self-employment activities of building craftsmen which are acquirable through entrepreneurship education. Recommendations were also made that entrepreneurship education should be included in the technical college curriculum for marketing skills acquisition; and that seminars and workshops should be organized by employment development agencies in the state through which marketing skills could be taught to self-employed building craftsmen and that government should adequately fund entrepreneurship education at technical level so that its impact could be felt within the society as the products engage in self-employment.

Keywords: Marketing Skills, Building Craftsmen, Self-employed, Entrepreneurship Education, Blockmoulders, Economic Growth and National Development.

1. Introduction

Marketing is the activity of presenting, advertising and selling a company's product in the best possible way. The sole aim of marketing is to ensure that the products or services required by the customers or consumers are made available at affordable prices with good profit margins. The implication of acquiring marketing skills is that the self-employed building craftsman becomes well equipped to determine the customer's needs and devise how best the needs would be met; judiciously select the market to serve; identifies the possible advantages at his disposal so as to compete favourably with other competitors and even have an edge over others. The self-employed building craftsman needs to know what his markets are, the location of the market, and plan for effective customer and products service, correctly price his products in order to make profit. Moreover, he must needs to reach the greatest number of customers through effective sales and distribution channels, and be able to carry out good advertising of his products with efficient sales promotion. The achievement of these goals is dependent on the entrepreneurial marketing skills acquired by the building craftsmen entrepreneurs.

1.1 Review of Related Literature

Building craftsmen entrepreneurs are skilled people that are self-employed in the production of concrete products and blocks for the building construction industry. They engage in this venture as self-reliant persons and for economic empowerment. According to Onoh (2011) self-employment is seizing available opportunities to generate activities that could be realized for self development and profit making. It is a fulfillment of a desire for an enterprise that could afford a comfortable life, promote goodwill, enhance leadership qualities, and consolidate gains. The importance of the role of craftsmen in the building construction industry is such that it cannot be neglected if appreciable progress must be made in the industry (Onoh, 2006). Building craftsmen are graduates of technical colleges, who have not been educated in the art and tenets of entrepreneurship process. Naude (1999) observed that entrepreneurship is the unquantifiable force, which brings together labour and

capital and assumes the risks of production and distribution of the products to meet the needs of the customers. Acquisition of marketing skills will further elevate self-employed building craftsmen as well as expand their enterprises from a position of low value or status to one of high value and recognition. It will stimulate and enhance creative and innovative abilities in the production and distribution of concrete blocks and allied products. Nwachukwu (2005) observed that every entrepreneur must have a target market which is a fairly homogenous group of customers to which he wishes to capture. Nwachukwu further noted that it is the duty of the entrepreneur to design the best way of reaching the group through customer's services, high quality goods, convenient packages, lower prices and personal solicitation or intensive advertising.

Entrepreneurs employ the process of gathering data relating to both human and material resources needed for starting a business venture and for its sustenance. An entrepreneur is a risk taker or bearer who braves uncertainties to achieve his goals. Onoh (2006) posited that the process of entrepreneurship is the willingness and ability of people seeking out investment opportunities in an environment and be able to establish and run an enterprise successfully. The choice of the package which the entrepreneur uses in order to satisfy the target market is called the marketing mix (Nwachukwu, 2005). It is the combination of the features of a project, its price, the way it is advertised and where it is sold, each of which a company or outfit can adjust to persuade people to buy the product. Many products are known to have failed in achieving its goal because the entrepreneur failed to use a good marketing mix aimed at a particular market, which skill the self-employed building craftsman can acquire through entrepreneurship education. Moreover, there has to be a good product line in place, which is influenced by customers' preferences in the market place, the creative ability of the entrepreneur, the drive and motivations, financial strength, employees capabilities, the complement of the products and others.

Identification of a good marketing mix is essential for effective marketing. It is only one who had acquired marketing skills that can understand the importance of marketing mix. Furthermore, great emphasis is placed on the four "Ps" making up the marketing mix and they are: product, place, promotion and price and their inter-relationships. An entrepreneur in manufacturing activities such as the craftsman blockmoulder must possess the ability to decide how many different sizes of blocks, concrete poles, grades and shapes of other particular items should be produced according to the customers' needs. Again, to compete favourably with others, one has to be different by having different product lines that can push others out of the competition. The Self-employed Craftsmen Blockmoulders must know that to satisfy the customers, quality and strength of the products are of major concern. The craftsman building entrepreneur analyses whether he has the financial muscle to bear the cost of diversifying the products, surveys ways of customizing the products to make it unique, determines how the products stack up against rivals since business is not a game that warmly welcomes new players. As a matter of fact, existing firms in the market usually try to crush new corners that attempt to penetrate "their" market (Osuala, 2004).

1.1.1 Statement of Problem

Craftsmen are essential human resources required by a nation for effective sustenance of economic growth and national development. They occupy a central position in the skilled personal hierarchy of the building industry such that no other group would be able to replace them successfully. Self-employed Craftsmen in the block moulding industry entrepreneurs are persons with determination to provide the building industry the required goods and services thus involving themselves in marketing activities in varying degrees. Craftsmen blockmoulding entrepreneur are highly skilled in the building construction trade with little or no idea of marketing issues. This is a problem that these craftsmen were not responsible for since there was no entrepreneurship education programme incorporated into their curriculum during their period of skill acquisition in their technical colleges. As self-employed persons involved in the marketing processes, there is the need for craftsmen blockmoulders to acquire market skills that will enhance their performance in the provision of goods and services to their customers in the building construction industries. Entrepreneurship education will help them master particular features of products, understand the markets and how to satisfactorily serve them, correct pricing of their products, advertising and promotion strategies, good distribution networks, companies challenges and hoe to win them with how to use marketing mix to their best advantage. The problem therefore is the inability of self-employed craftsmen blockmoulders to key in into the business of marketing their goods and service to their customers with satisfactory good margin of profitability, growth and sustainability.

2. Methodology

The purpose of the study was to determine the marketing skills acquirable through entrepreneurship education by self-employed building craftsmen for economic and social development. One research question was posed in line with the purpose of the study. The study adopted a descriptive survey design and was carried out in Enugu Urban of Enugu State where a lot of building construction activities were on the increase. The instrument used was a structured questionnaire with 10 items. It was composed of a five point Likert type scale with items ratings as

Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree and Strongly Disagree with scale values of 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. The instrument was administered directly to the craftsmen in different locations in the urban by the researcher and collected on the spot on their completion. The population was 90 self-employed blockmolders craftsmen building identified within the area of study. No sampling was done as the identified population was within reach and they were all studied. The data collected were analyzed by computing the mean scores for each of the items. The decision rule was therefore based on the lower limit of the mean thus: Strongly Agreed 4.50 - 5.00; Agreed 3.50 – 4.49; Undecided 2.50 – 3.49; Disagreed 1.50 – 2.49; Strongly Disagreed below 1.50. it means therefore that any mean score above 3.50 was considered as agreed while any item with mean score below 3.50 was considered as disagreed.

3. Results

Research Question 1

What are the marketing skills need of self-employed building craftsmen blockmolders that are acquirable through entrepreneurship education for economic growth and stability?

Table 1: Mean response of the respondents on the marketing skills needed by self-employed building craftsmen blockmolders that are acquirable through entrepreneurship education in Enugu Urban.

S/N	Marketing Skills Required	X̄	Decision
1.	Ability to set market goals.	4.40	Agreed
2.	Skills to determine the customers' needs.	4.31	Agreed
3.	Ability to choose the markets to serve.	4.29	Agreed
4.	Ability to identify advantages over other competitors.	4.23	Agreed
5.	Ability to determine reasonable prices for the right products.	4.22	Agreed
6.	Competency in serving the greatest possible number of customers.	4.13	Agreed
7.	Ability to demonstrate effective sales promotion /advertising	4.14	Agreed
8.	Ability to determine why existing products are selling well or poorly.	4.22	Agreed
9.	Ability to determine when to introduce new products, which the customers need.	4.28	Agreed
10.	Skills to determine when to allow reasonable credit facilities to trusted customers.	4.30	Agreed
11.	Competency to set strategic plans to serve the identified market.	4.16	Agreed
12.	Ability to anticipate seasonal market fluctuations.	4.30	Agreed
13.	Ability to provide for seasonal market fluctuations.	4.10	Agreed
14.	Ability to know when poor quality services affect sales volume.	4.35	Agreed
15.	Ability to use good marketing mix	4.38	Agreed
16.	Ability to maintain effective distribution network.	4.42	Agreed
17.	Ability to understand the interrelationships with products, place, price and promotion.	4.29	Agreed
	Grand Mean	4.27	Agreed

Table 1 show that the respondents agreed to all the 17 items in the instrument seeking for marketing skills needed by self-employed building craftsmen blockmolders. The grand mean of 4.27 show that the need is a crucial are to this group of self-employed persons.

3.1 Research Findings

It was found that the acquisition of marketing skills through entrepreneurship education by self-employed building craftsmen blockmolders is a dire need for their economic growth and social stability. Findings of the study showed that the marketing skills that were acquirable as were identified in the study include skills in setting clear market goals; determine and meet the needs of customers; choose the markets to serve; identify business advantages over other competitors; determine reasonable prices for the products; determine the volume of market to serve; demonstrate effective sales promotion; determine why existing products are selling well or poorly; determine when to introduce new products that the customers need; determine when to give credit facilities to trusted customers; anticipating seasonal market fluctuation and make adequate provisions on how to survive and determine when quality of products are responsible for decline in sales volume. Furthermore, it was found that using good marketing mix, maintaining effective distribution networks and good understanding of the interrelationship between product, place, price and promotion will greatly assist the self-employed building craftsmen in achieving his mission goals with profitability.

3.1.1 Discussion of Results/Findings

Marketing skills need of Self-employed Building Craftsmen Blockmolders that are acquirable through entrepreneurship education include ability to set clear market goals, ability to determine and meet the needs of the customers; skills in choosing the market to serve; analyze the competitors weaknesses and strategize to have advantages over them; determine reasonable prices for the products and the volume of the markets to serve; determining effective sales promotion strategies; develop the ability to know why there is poor sales and when to

introduce new products in the markets; skills in determining seasonal fluctuations and when to give credit facilities to trusted customers; determine when the sales volume is low as well as introduce new products which the customers need; determine trusted customers that can be given credit facilities; determine seasonal market fluctuations and make adequate provisions to remain stable and determine when low sales volume is as a result of poor quality products. The respondents totally agreed to all the items in the instrument. It has a grand mean of 4.27 showing complete agreement.

The integration of all these as used by the entrepreneur to meet the customer's needs is the marketing mix. According to Nwachukwu (2005) an entrepreneur must use product planning, pricing decisions, distribution channels and promotional strategies as elements of marketing mix to reach the target market. Osuala (2004) observed that customers and their needs are the foundation of every business venture. Business goals are the target, which the establishment wants to reach within a clearly stated, realistic, measurable and challenging period. Onoh (2006) noted that strategies are the action the organization plans to take to accomplish its goals. Strategies give consistency to the entrepreneur's actions. With the acquisition of marketing skills by these craftsmen, they will also be able to create contingency plans that will help them adjust to changing situations in the business. Contingency or emergency plans allow the self-employed blockmoulders-craftsmen to react quickly to sudden changes especially in the cost of raw materials and prices of the products. Again, acquiring marketing skills will enhance the Blockmoulding Craftsmen's ability to effectively control the enterprise.

Controlling according to Osuala (2004) involves making corrective adjustments to courses of action created by the plans derived from the goals. Control actually involves four elements: maintain standards of performance, measuring actual performance, comparing actual performance against the expected performance and taking actions to improve on the existing standards or to reward performance for improvement. Acquiring marketing skills by these craftsmen will further sharpen their strategic business planning abilities. Planning is setting in order things that one wants to achieve especially things that have been considered in detail in advance. (Onoh, 2010). It is also a systematic method for the effective and efficient management of the business. It includes the craftsmen's satisfied by formulating and selecting alternatives strategies and sources of action to realize or achieve the goal. Planning identifies and analyzes strength, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (challenges). This is also known as SWOT analysis that enables one to set priorities in order to put available resources to best use (Osuala, 2004). Planning involves constant measurement of progress against goals and the implementation of strategies and action programmes. The self-employed building craftsmen will understand that these alter in the light of new challenges and must be capable of adjusting in line with current issues.

3.1.2 Conclusion

Acquisition of marketing skills by building craftsmen entrepreneurs blockmoulders through entrepreneurship education will enable them plan and improve their service delivery to their customers. Customer's satisfaction is a key element in marketing. The craftsmen will develop sharp-focused strategies that help them to begin to carefully assess the competitive environment for success in their business endeavour; develop the ability to analyze the market which they plan to serve as a fundamental step in determining success of their business; develop ability to determine reasonable prices for product and services, carryout effective sales promotion and distribution channels strategies, manage seasonal fluctuations and credit facilities, use marketing mix to be ahead of his competitors.

3.1.3 Recommendations

The following recommendations were made from the findings of the study:

- (1) That entrepreneurship education should be included in the curriculum of technical colleges so that the graduates could acquire marketing skills for better performances in the self-employment businesses.
- (2) That seminars and workshops should be organized for these self-employed building craftsmen where they could acquire the needed marketing skills for greater effectiveness in their enterprises.
- (3) That government should adequately fund entrepreneurship education so that its impact could be positively felt in the way self-employed building craftsmen conduct their businesses.

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