Journal of Resources Development and Management
ISSN 2422-8397 An International Peer-reviewed Journal
Vol.10, 2015

HUMAN RESOURCE INTEGRATION AND MARKETING PERFORMANCE IN THE TELECOMMUNICATION INDUSTRY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
The purpose of this explanatory research is to evaluate the association between human resource integration and marketing performance in the telecommunication industry in Nigeria. This study used a structured questionnaire to elicit responses from respondents from the Telecommunication firms in Nigeria. Returned copies of questionnaire were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics was used to determine the mean and standard deviation of the distribution, while the Spearman rank order correlation co-efficient was used to ascertain the associations between the human resource integration and the dimensions of marketing performance in the telecommunication firms in Nigeria. The results of the study reported herein, shows that human resource integration associates with marketing performance in the Nigeria Telecommunication firms. It is the recommendation of this paper that managers of Nigerian Telecommunication firms should strengthen their practice of human resource Integration strategy as a paradigm shift from the isolated functional dependence. The study reported in this paper can be carried out in other industry; and also, in other culture to ascertain whether the same, similar or different outcomes can be achieved.

Introduction

The telecommunication facilities in Nigeria are handled by Nigerian communications commission (NCC), which is a parastatal in the ministry of communications. It was established by Decree No. 75 of 1992, which deregulated the telecommunications industry in Nigeria and is charged with the responsibility of regulating private telecommunications services, promoting fair competition as well as facilitating entry into the telecommunications market (TechTalkAfrica.com, 2013). Accordingly, the major players in the telecommunication industry in Nigeria are MTN Nigeria, Airtel, Globacom and Etisalat,(TechTalkAfrica.com, 2013), operating on the 900/1800 MHz (Megahertz) spectrum.

However, the telecommunication industry in Nigeria is confronted with various operational challenges to power and run the existing base of over 20,000 telecom towers (kumar, 2012). In his argument, Kumar (2012) notes that Nigeria is one of the countries with the lowest levels of grid power availability–at an average of 5 hours of availability per day. He went further to argue that the country's MNOs and tower companies are forced to shift to alternate sources for primary and backup power, with diesel generators being the default choice for backup power at the moment. This has in effect distorted efficient service delivery and hence impacting on the marketing performance of the firms in this industry. Thus, this study will examine the impact of human resources integration and marketing performance in telecommunication firms in Nigeria. The next section discusses the concept of human integration.

The Concept of Human Resources Integration

The human resources (HR) of an organization is viewed as the major organization driver in the global competitive race, the quality and competences of the HR profile of an organization determines its success potential. A typical business organization requires an array of resources in pursuit of its corporate objectives. The mobilization and deployment of these resources - human, financial and material - in the right resource-mix, gives the organization leverage towards the desired end (Inyang, 2010). However, of these resources, there is a growing realization that people are the most potent and central and constitutes an organizations primary source of competitive advantage (Bal, 2011a; Inyang, 2010). Porter (1985) suggests that the unique talents among employees, including flexibility, innovation, superior performance, high productivity and personal customer service, are ways employees provide a critical ingredient in developing a firm's competitive position.

It becomes trite to state that the effective management and integration of HR whose main contributions to the organization are talents and intelligence (Chiavenats, 2001), is critical to the success of an organization (Barney and Wright, 1998; Jackson, *et al* 2003; Akhter *et al*, 2008).
In the literature, HR is described as personal management, concerned with providing staff support in the organization by some scholars (Quest, 1989). Yet others are of the opinion that human resources management is a natural development of personnel management practices in the face of economic and business environment

evolution (Amstrong, 1989 and 2004; Fayana, 2002). This people-centric-management discipline is dynamic in its content and practices justifying its current status as strategic human resources management (SHMR). In this regard, Bacher and Husehid (2006: 899) see HR architecture as being "composed of systems, practices, competencies and employee performance behaviours that reflect the development and management of the firm's strategic human capital." This view is important in an organization's search for strategic relevance because managing people as an organization's primary asset has inspired HRM to become increasingly more effective at developing programs and policies that leverage talent to align with organizational competencies and at executing organizational strategy (Ruona and Gibson, 2004).

Indeed, it is important to note that in our search for strategy to improve marketing performance of organizations, firms can't operate without people because knowledge and intellectual capital will be the determining factors in organizational success in the 21st century (Hulbert, 2003). All our activities in the organization revolve around people making HRM a critical input in the delivery of value to stakeholders.

Creating shareholder and customer value are the commitments toward the operationalization of total integrated marketing. And this can only be achieved through people (Hulbert *et al,* 2003). It is increasingly difficult nowadays to think of any competitive marketing advantage that does not fundamentally depend on people. In an effective organization, everybody markets, which is the whole idea of total integrated marketing, (Hulbert *et al*, 2003), The role of marketing therefore, as a philosophy and as a process and in the design of TIM will be to recruit marketers that do not only possess outstanding skills and knowledge, but those that can work effectively across the boundaries of traditional functions in the organization. In fact, Rucci *et al* (1998) state that the time is ripe, if not down-right overdue, for building positive and value creating relationship between executives (who work in marketing departments, if they still exist) concerned with people called customers, and executives (commonly located in human resources management departments) concerned with people called employees. To have a better company to work, buy from and a better place to invest in the employee-customer-profit chain. Interestingly, full integration of marketing and personal function has been advocated for long because they are concerned with the two sides of the same people issue (Glessman and McAfee, 1992).
In this regard, there has been consistent and growing consensus that effective management of human capital is critical to an organization's success (Barney and Wright, 1998; Jackson *et al*, 2003; Akhtar *et al*, 2008) and especially SHRM is evolving as a new approach to the management of people, and specifically focusing on integrating the human capital to business strategy to enhance organizational competitiveness (Neihaus, 1995).

Achieving competitive edge entails the generation of greater profit through sales volume. This is what marketing integration with human resources accomplishes. The organization in using people, the organizations workforce, gain sustained competitive advantage. Thus available theoretical positions, though limited, suggest the improvement of marketing performance through marketing integration with human resource management, HRM. And if HRI enhances organizations competitiveness and success, we are therefore interested in investigating the position of this perspective in the Nigeria context. The concept of marketing performance is discussed next.

The concept of marketing performance
The dependent variable of this study is marketing performance which in our view is predicted by human resources integration. It is a construct that helps to determine the well-being and status of firm and requires a multidimensional scale in its measurement because it involves multidiscipline and cross functional aspects of the organization (Nwokah, 2006). Performance measurement is described as a process of organizational processes and applications designed to optimize the execution of business strategy (Nwokah, 2006). The essence of this excursive is to check on the outcome of strategy implementation and appraisal to identify areas of improvements.

There are scholarly opinions in the evaluation of marketing performance. Nwokah and Maclayton (2006) suggest that marketing performance is the achievement of financial and operational business goals. Marketing performance helps to determine the status of an organization as compared to its competitors. Several indicators are used in knowing the performance status of a firm. Business achievements or attributes are identified as strong financial result satisfied customers and employees, high levels of individual initiative, productivity and innovation, aligned performance measurement and reward systems. Slater and Naver (1994) used ROI, sales growth and market share in the evaluation of market performance.

In their work, Nwokah and Maclayton (2006) argued that the current marketing performance is operationalized by 12 items notably, sales growth, customer retention, ROI, market share, getting important and valuable information, ability to obtain bank, ability to obtain better terms in loan, ability to obtain governmental approval, shorten the time for governmental approval, contact with important persons, ability to secure local resources (electricity, human resources) and lastly motivating employees. These away of suggested indicators leave the issue of performance measures open ended. The Nigerian Telecommunication industry is ridden with competition. This study therefore used market share and sales growth as marketing performance metrics in the Nigeria telecommunication industry.

Marketing Performance is a construct that helps to determine the status of an organization as compared to its competitors. Performance is defined as the act of performing; of doing some things; using knowledge as distinguished from merely possessing it, and any recognized achievement (Oxford Dictionary, 2000). Epstein, (2004) suggests that performance can refer to either the 'ends' (results) or the 'means' (actions) that produced the ends. Profit, which is an ends performance, is seen as historic in nature because it occurs before being reported. Slater and Naver, (1994) used Return on Investment (ROI), sales growth and market share as measures of marketing Performance. Equally, Yan et al (2000) suggest that a current marketing performance measures includes 12 items viz; sales growth, customer retention, return on investment, market share, getting important and valuable information, ability to obtain loan, ability to obtain governmental approval, contact with important persons, ability to secure local resources and motivation. From the long list above, it appears there is no agreement or end to marketing performance indicators. However, suffice it to say that Marketing Performance can be finance-based (profits): market-based (market share) or a combination of these. In the same vein Venkatramen *et al*, (1986) opine that business performance is the achievement of financial and operational business goals. In line with these views, we are considering organizational profits and market share as indicators of business performance in the TIM construct of Nigeria Telecommunication Industry because, ultimately, market share and profit seem to be prime indicators of organizational success and performance.

Sales growth

Sales growth is described as a very strong indicator of marketing and thereby marketing performance. The competitiveness of business organizations are evaluated by the rate of sales growth. Innovations or inventions impact on profits positively via sales growth. Sales growth therefore is particularly a meaningful indicator of the financial performance of a firm (Nwokah, 2008). Sales growth is achieved by annual addition to previous sales figures. Precisely, the amount of a company derives from sales compared to a previous, corresponding period of time in which the latter sales exceed the former. However this increment may or may not be equally. In a general note how, it indicates a relative measure of changes in sales over recorded periods. These periods are either affected by price or volume or both. Other controllable or uncontrollable factors may affect variation in sales figures e.g. seasonal variations, income level, quality, changes in taste, changes in technology, company's values etc.

Market Share

Market share is the percentage or proportion of the total available market or market segment that is being served by a company. McGrath and Micheal (2007:46) argued that "market share is a subset of a market formed by the supply/demand equilibrium for the marketer's specific offering and the level or incidence of market access created by the marketer's distribution channels for that offering and the level of incidence of market recognition (awareness) of a given marketer and/or that marketer's distribution channels as a source of supply for the said offering." Market share is indeed the share of the industry's market potential that is retained by a firm in that industry. It is expressed by the proportion of the market that the firm is able to capture (Neely, 1998). It equally expresses the company's sales revenue realized from that market, or as a company's unit sales volume (in a market) divided by total volume of units sold in that market stated as:

$$\text{Market Share} = \frac{\text{Firm's Sales}}{\text{Total Market Share}}$$

Market share is adjudged one of the best measures of marketing performance because it abstracts from industry-wide micro-environmental variables (Nwokah and Maclayton, 2006). Other measures include economies of scale, ROI, ROA, profit, sales growth, reputation and increased bargaining power.

While retaining customers, Mack (1996) suggests three ways to follow in increasing market share viz: tailor products, prices and packaging for major customer segments; the management structure of the organization must change so that regional executives play a larger role in responding to local markets and major customer segments; and separate brand families when distribution models are deployed to serve specific segments of the markets. Market share as a measure of marketing performance is achieved mostly through customer satisfaction and retention. For this to happen, Mack (1996) suggests the following; reinforced customer loyalty by making present customer feel they are part of the business, providing a focal point of differentiation and thus giving prospective customers a reason to choose their brand; optimizing media presence so that the effect of our total communication programmes are greater, and finally brand image should motivate the company and stakeholders.

The overview of the Nigeria telecommunication is discussed next.

Telecommunication

Nowadays, it is no longer news that access to and the effectiveness of telecommunication infrastructure enhances marketing performance. On a micro level, firms are known to have leveraged on telecommunications to build global business empires and at the national level there is a causal link between good telecommunication and economic growth. Telecommunication is the science and technology of sending and receiving information such as sound, visual images or computer data over long distances through the use of electrical, radio, or light signals, using electronic devices to encode the information as signals and to decode the signals as information (the American Heritage Science Dictionary 2009). It also means communication between parties at a distance from one another especially by the use of telephone. The telecom solution expert (2009) defines it as the transmission of information, as words, sounds, or images, usually over great distances, in the form of electromagnetic signals, as by telegraph, telephone, radio, or television. This capability of transmitting or communicating at a distance has made telecommunication an imperative for successful business operation. It is indispensable in negotiating and acquiring inbound resources and moving outbound goods and services. A business needs to communicate with all its publics for different purposes and reasons to remain relevant. The next section discusses the methods and findings of this study.

The study

This explanatory study adopted a correlational type of investigation to ascertain the association between human resources integration and marketing performance in a non-contrived setting. The unit of analysis was the different units/departments of all the telecommunication firms in Nigeria. This cross-sectional survey had a minimal interference with the process of the study (Bryman and Bell, 2003, Nwokah and Ahiauzu, 2008).

The study sample is made up of the major Global System for Mobil communication(GSM) network providers operating on the 900/1800 MHz spectrum, viz; MTN Nigeria, Globacom, Etisalat, and Airtel, (Jidaw.com, 2009; TalkTechAfrica.com, 2013). According to the Front Desk Officer at NCC, these major companies have spectrum specific frequencies and enjoy separate dialing, large market base, different services, and wider reach which in all provide them with distinctive competitive edge. Other minor operators use Code Division Multiple Access, (CDMAs), which employs engineering technique known as Multiplex,(that allows a group of firms to run signals using common channels) in serving their Niches. Bearing in mind that not all category of workers of these major companies are intellectually and officially qualified to understand and attend to the research instrument because some of the issues require knowledge of strategic decisions, the sample elements comprised all the managers or units heads of the 28 departments/basic work units, of the four (4) major and functional telecommunication companies in Nigeria.

In this study structured questionnaire was used as the source of the primary data. The preference for this method is hinged on the survey design of this study. Copies of questionnaire were therefore distributed to the 28 units/ department heads of the four, (4) major telecommunication firms. The unit/department heads are deemed appropriate because of the strategic content of the instrument which could only be responded to by the unit heads because of their positions in the firms.

Reliability

The study instrument was adapted from Paiva *et al*, (2009), Dominique *et al* (2010) and Monagh (2009). For domestication, the instrument was further subjected to test through academic scrutiny and pilot study. The instrument was further subjected to reliability test with the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0 with a thresh hold of 0.7 Cronbach Alpha set by Nunally's (1978). Table 1 shows the reliability results of the variables

Table 1 Reliability test of sales integration and marketing performance.

Human Resource Integration	0.783
Sales Growth	0.765
Market Share	0.744

Source: SPSS 20.0 outputs based on 2014 field survey data

As can be seen in Table 1, all the dimensions used in this study are reliable and thus, are used for further statistical analysis.

Findings with Descriptive Statistics
The descriptive analysis of human resources integration is expressed in five items questions. The descriptive study of the five items is discussed next.

Table 2 Human Resources Integration.

S/N	Items	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	The structure of my firm construes human resources as a separate function	4.85	0.37
2	Human resources management responsibilities are pertinent in achieving marketing goals	4.85	0.37
3	The quality and competencies of the human resources profile impacts directly on marketing's fortune.	4.85	0.37
4	Marketing's sustenance of competitive edge is dependent on unique talents of staff that constitute its human resources	4.85	0.37
5	The interface and integration of H.R (talents and intelligence) and marketing is crucial for effective marketing performance.	4.95	0.22

As can be seen in Table 2, the result of the descriptive analysis on human resources integration based on responses from the five items on the research instrument indicates that respondents are aware of the existence of a human resource department and the role it plays in accomplishing marketing objectives with the mean score of 4.85. Respondents were of the opinion that Human Resources management responsibilities are pertinent in achieving marketing goals and this account for a mean score of 4.85. Statistics result on the third item indicates that the quality and competencies of the human resources profile impacts directly on marketing's fortune. This accounts for the high mean score of 4.85 of this item. Item four has a high mean score of 4.85 which is indicative of respondents' consensus that Marketing's sustenance of competitive edge is dependent on unique talents of staff that constitute its human resources. Respondents agreed on the fifth item the interface and integration of H.R (talents and intelligence) and marketing is crucial for effective marketing performance. The very high mean score of 4.95 authenticates this perspective.

Association between Human Resource Integration and Marketing Performance
Table 3 Shows the Spearman Rank Order Coefficient Matrix for the association between Human Resource Integration and marketing Performance. The table contains the result of the statistical test of significance (p-value) that enabled us to answer the research question and make generalization on the study population.

Table 3 Association between Human Resource Integration and Marketing Performance

Correlations

			Human Resource Integration	Market Share	Sales Growth
Spearman's rho	Human Resource Integration	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.471*	.686**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.036	.001
		N	20	20	20
	Market Share	Correlation Coefficient	.471*	1.000	.479*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.036	.	.033
		N	20	20	20
	Sales Growth	Correlation Coefficient	.686**	.479*	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.033	.
		N	20	20	20

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Survey Data, 2014 and SPSS version 17 statistical output.

The result contained in table 3 shows that there is a significant relationship between Human Resource Integration and market share and sales growth.

Human Resource Integration and Market Share (rho = 0.471, 0.036 < 0.05).

In the same vein Human Resource Integration is significantly associated with sales growth (rho: 0.686, p = 0.001 < 0.05). Therefore, there is in existence a significant association between Human Resource Integration and the measures of marketing Performance at 0.05 level of significance based on the adoption of a 95% confidence interval. On the basis of this, we therefore accept the alternate hypotheses and state that:

There is a significant association between Human Resource Integration and Market Share.

There is a significant association between Human Resource Integration and Sales Growth.

The result of the Spearman Rank Order Correlation analysis in table 3 shows a statistical and significant positive association between Human Resource Integration and all the two measures of marketing Performance namely: market share and sales growth. The result shows a significant association between Human Resource Integration and Market Share, (r= 0.471, P = 0.036 < 0.005). The correlation represents a moderate correlation which implies substantial association. This implies that Human Resource is a valued asset and resource that leads to the achievement of greater marketing Performance that leads to increment in market share.

Table 3 equally shows a statistically significant association between Human Resource Integration and Sales growth (r = .686, P = .001 < 0.05). The correlation coefficient represents a moderate relationship which implies a substantial association by our scale. In specific terms, it means that human resource integration enhances sales growth. Human resource is inevitable in all enterprise activities such that its integration with marketing will expectedly lead to greater satisfaction for the consumers and thus sales growth. The stock of Human Resource Profile at the disposition of an organization working in collaboration with marketing offers greater potential in enhancing marketing performance. This study found that:

1. The telecommunication companies in Nigeria fully appreciate that the integration of the Human Resource of the organization with marketing brings about cooperation and collaboration which leads to growth in number of customers that patronize the organization.
2. The telecommunication companies in Nigeria fully appreciate that with the collaboration, communication and cooperation between marketing and Human Resource of the organization customers' needs and expectations are better served which translates into sales growth.

Discussion

Significant and Positive Association between Human Resource Integration and Marketing Performance

This study founds a moderate and positive association between Human Resource Integration Strategy and Marketing Performance as practiced by the managers of Telecommunication firms in Nigeria. This finding reflects the practical reality and theoretical postulations considering the pivotal role and place of Human Resource profile of any business.

The human resources of any firm are viewed as the major organization driver in the global competitive race. Inyang (2010) observes that the mobilization and deployment of an array of resources- human, financial and material in the right resource-mix, gives the organization leverage towards the desired end. However, of these resources, there is a growing realization that people are the most potent and central and constitutes an organization primary source of competitive advantage (Bal, 2011a; Inyang, 2010). This implies that managers of Nigerian Telecommunication firms work with the required resource-mix and right personnel profile to achieve marketing performance. Achieving this success through market share increases, sustenance and sales growth to improve our marketing performance, managers of Nigerian Telecommunication firms do contend with people side of the enterprise knowing that knowledge and intellectual capital will be the determining factors in organizational success of the 21st century (Hulbert, et al 2003).

The marketing/human resource interface is critical since their activities are people-centred, and creating customer and shareholder value are the commitments towards the operationalization of Total Integrated Marketing. These days it is increasingly difficult to think of achieving market share and sales growth, which constitutes marketing advantage, without people-based structures (Hulbert, et al 2003). The theoretical position that is espoused by this empirical finding suggests that the critical marketing factor essential in surviving competition and boosting marketing performance lies in its optimal choice of marketers that do not only possess outstanding skills and knowledge, but those that can work effectively across the boundaries of traditional functions in the organization.

Therefore the managers of Telecommunication outfits have recognized that not much can be achieved without proper blend of the Human Resource component and in the right profile. This is a long standing reality which has been advocated because full integration of marketing and personnel implies the two sides of the same people issue (Nwokah and Ahiauzu, 2010). This people issue is the dominant resource in the telecommunication industry where more of services are rendered. It therefore means that human resource integration strategy is critical in the achievement of marketing performance metrics, market share and sales growth, as study outcomes. It implies that the management of the human capital has become critical to an organization's business success (Barney and Wright, 1998; Jackson et al, 2003). The human resource profile must therefore be forced into the business strategy to enhance operational competitiveness (Nachmais, 1995). This is what the telecommunication firms' managers have appreciated because it is what marketing integration with human resources accomplishes. The use of people, the organization's workforce, to gain sustained competitive advantage by market share increases and sales growth. We therefore conclude that:

1. As the managers of Nigerian Telecommunication firms adopt and practice Human Resource Integration Strategy, their market share potential is significantly increased.
2. As the managers of Nigerian Telecommunication firms adopt and practice Human Resource Integration strategy their ability to make more sales is significantly increased.

Recommendation/ Suggestion for further study

The cardinal purpose of this study was to empirically ascertain the association between human resources Integration and Marketing Performance in the Nigerian Telecommunication industry.

Pursuant to this research data were appropriately gathered, hypotheses tested, findings made, conclusions drawn and implications stated. Based on these, this study recommends that the managers of Nigerian Telecommunication firms should strengthen their practice of human resources Integration Strategy as a paradigm shift from the isolated functional dependence. The marketing- human resources interface facilitates the consummation of marketing performance metrics. This study can be carried out in other industry; and also, in other culture to ascertain whether the same, similar or different outcomes can be achieved.

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