

PROMOTING TRADE FAIR ACTIVITIES IN NIGERIA: THE MISSING LINK

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Abstract: The philosophy of marketing as the interface between an organisation and the outside world, particularly its customers, implies that all marketing activities are destined to communicate something to someone, somewhere. Trade fair provide good forum for manufacturers, exporters and businesses to advertise their products and services to the world at large. Understanding why people don't attend trade fair activities has proven to be one of the challenging issues in contemporary times. Despite the effort made by Nigerian Association of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture (NACCIMA) to organize trade fairs, Nigerian traders are showing no interest in participating in trade fairs activities. The objective of this study therefore is to investigate and determine the level of awareness and participation of business sectors in trade fair activities in Nigeria and to awaken the business sectors and the general public consciousness and direct organizers on trade fair activities. In order to measure the significance of the difference in the perceived attendance to trade fair among participants in Kaduna state and federal capital territory Abuja Nigeria, sample of 250 respondents were drawn, an interview was conducted and questionnaires were distributed using a simple random sampling techniques. Chi-square analysis was applied to the data obtained from the respondents. The findings show that the business sectors are aware of the trade fair activities, but more effort need to be made to increase the attendance. The study revealed that there is an urgent need for attention and emphasis in future policies formulation and implementation in the area of organizing the trade fair particularly in the area of marketing communication. It further recommended that organizers and participants of trade fair should re-orient their concept from the old style forum for the sale and purchase of wares to devising ways of transferring technological know-how to those interested in updating their ways and means of producing goods and services.

Key words: Trade fair, marketing communication, organizers, business sectors, participants.

Introduction:

A lot of approaches had been proffered on how to revitalize an economy through trade fair. There are certain organizational factors which exist that may enhance or impede the implementation of this business philosophy (Kohli and Jaworski, 1995, Achumba 2000) Wood and Bhuian (1993) posit that the degree of market orientation in any given organisation depends on the presence or absence of specific senior management characteristics, organizational characteristics and external factors.

The organization of trade fair is therefore, in consonance with the ongoing effort to reconstruct the Nigerian economy and attain self reliance. Trade fair or at times called trade shows are general knowledge worldwide, as effective avenues for fruitful economic interaction. They provide good forum for manufacturers, exporters and businesses to advertise their products and services to the world at large. It came about, when the country was in search of trading partners and in need of viable market for exchanging goods and services, e.g. food materials (Stuff) clothing materials, temporary and permanent commodities.

In Nigeria, it was formally Lagos, Enugu and Kaduna trade fair, but now extended to Joint Domestic trade fair, and state trade fair. This is important because some processing machinery suppliers, agricultural machinery dealers, earth construction equipment suppliers, security gadgets dealers, equipment suppliers etc seized the opportunity to expose their capability to the outside world. But Nigeria traders are showing no interest in participating in trade fairs. Daily trust (2011:14) A further emphasis on a similar problem was observed in This Day (2012:7) that there is no permanent complex for trade fair activity.

He emphasized the need for Nigerians to take advantage of the trade fair to display their products.

Despite the effort being made by Nigerian Association of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture (NACCIMA) to organize trade fairs, Nigerians traders are showing no interest in participating in trade fairs. This is because there is a difference between service delivery and what is communicated about the service to participants. This gap need to be addressed. This study hopes to contribute in this regard.

- ❖ Will there be any correlation between organisation and attendance of trade fair?
- ❖ Are these business sectors satisfy with the organisation of trade fair activities?
- ❖ Will promotion activities increase the awareness about trade fair activities?

This paper intend to provide answer to these questions.

- The objective of this paper is therefore, to investigate and determine the level of conception and participation of business sectors in trade fair activities in Nigeria. It will help to awaken the business sectors and the public consciousness among Nigerians and also to direct policy makers on trade fair activity.
- Identify the missing prerequisite to trade fair attendance that made it not to have significant impact on Nigerian business sectors.

The research work is predicated upon conceived hypothesis which state that:-

There is no significance difference in the perceived attendance to trade fair among participants.

The paper is structured into five sections, following this introduction is section two, is a conceptual clarification and literature review/theoretical framework which provide more insight into issues related to trade fair. Section three explains the means through which the data were collected. These data were presented and analysed in section four. Chi-square method was used in testing the formulated hypothesis. Through the findings from the research, summary and conclusions were drawn and recommendation offered in section five.

Literature Review

A positive attitude towards marketing is posited to encourage a market orientation. Managers who view marketing as undesirable are less likely to embrace the marketing concept (Lovelock and Weinberg 1984).

Witness to adapt and change marketing programmes on the basis of analysis of consumer and market trend is a hallmark of market – oriented firms. Kohli and Jaworski (1990) affirm that a positive attitude towards change has been linked consistently to individuals willing to innovate. Hence top managers openness to new ideas and acceptance of the view that change is a critical component to an organizational success are likely to facilitate a market orientation.

Marketing Communication:

The organizers of any event need to communicate to the public about their ideologies, agenda etc. so as to gain their support and attain the event or function. The communication function in business deals with exchanging information internally with the members or organizers, as well as with external members such as the public, media, business sectors or the media and pressure groups with an intent to inform, persuade, remind, or reinforce (Harris, 2001; Kotler and Keller 2006). To do this effectively, integrated marketing communication techniques, namely advertising, sales promotion, publicity, personal sales and direct marketing must be utilized by government agency to enlighten the public, business sectors or participants in the most visible and widely use techniques (Kotler and Keller, 2006). Iyengar and Prior (1999) affirm that commercial advertising in the Mass Media is pervasive and inescapable. This is because it is a strong determinant of sales and brand loyalty (Kotler and Keller, 2006).

Advertising, sales promotion and public relations are the non-personal, Mass Communications components of a company's promotional mix. It consist of all the activities involved in presenting to an audience a non personal, sponsor identified , paid for message about a product or organisation. Most advertising budget are spent on television, newspapers and direct mail. Other frequently used media are radio, magazines, and out of home displays. The internet is increasing in importance as an advertising medium which the organizers of trade fair can use to enlighten the public about their activities.

A major task in developing a campaign is to select the advertising media, the general type, the particular category, and the specific vehicle. The choice should be based on the characteristics of the medium, which determine how effectively it conveys the message, its ability to reach the target audience. Each of the media that carry advertising has characteristics that makes it more or less suitable for a particular advertising objective.

For example; *The use of Government Billboard Advertising* :- Availability of functional public utilities such as pipe born water, health facilities, School and Electricity etc are often advertized to the public via billboard. Similarly, government programs, flag of ceremony, occasions, value re-orientation, project commissioning, vision and aspirations are advertized via billboards.

Billboard is the oldest form of advertising. According to Chunawalu and Sethia (2006), the world billboard has its origin in the playbill posted outside the theater. They further state that after automobiles came in and the road network became increasingly extensive, the outdoor posters at the roadside became a useful medium for advertising, otherwise called out of home media or advertising consist of posters of various sizes, and painted, mental and illuminated – signs displayed on outdoor sites (Jekkins 2000). The modern outdoor media include outdoor advertising in several forms-such as posters, billboards, hoardings; non-standardized signs, such as roadside signs, highway advertising and transit advertising, placed on public and private transit vehicles, and at rail, bus and air terminals (Chunawalla and Sethra, 2006).

Wikipedia (2010) defines billboard advertising as a large outdoor advertising structure (a billing board), typically found in high traffic areas such as alongside busy roads. However, not all billboards are used for advertising product and services. Non-profit groups and government agencies also use them to communicate with the public. Therefore, the organizers of trade fair can use billboards to communicate to the public or participants about the trade fair activity.

The Concept of Entrepreneurship:

An understanding of the concept and practice of entrepreneurship by the organizers of trade fair will enable potential entrepreneurs to overcome the fear of taking the risk of creating something new and investing their time and effort in innovation in order to grow and sustain their new ventures so as to reap enormous rewards associated with entrepreneurship as an independent minded owner- manager who typically makes critical decisions Moris and Paul (1987) have conceptualized entrepreneurship at the firm level, Consequently Stevenson, Roberts and Grousheck (1985), defining entrepreneurship as a firm phenomenon Stated that “it is an organizations willingness to encourage and support creatively, flexibility and risk taking and to strive for organizational renewal through the pursuit of new ventures and opportunities”. Ginberg (1985) in the same view confirms that entrepreneurial organisations are typically more aggressive in handling competitors, stress research, and development, appreciate rapid or steady growth over stability and conscientiously seek unusual or novel solutions to problems. Peter Drucker (1974, 1980, 1985) all confirm that high levels of organizational entrepreneurship and high level of market orientation represent responses to an increasingly complex and turbulent environment. Other studies (Hansher 1986) have noted that organisations with entrepreneurial orientation tend to value information and tend to view information evaluation as part of larger process of meeting the needs of their customers. This can be done through effective marketing communication. It can also help the small business to be more competitive, share risks, move faster into new markets and consume resources. (Wagner and Hoegl, 2006). Such firms also stand good chances to generate knowledge-sharing business, complementary resource endowments and relationship assets (Ulaga, W. 2001).

Specialist in Organizing Trade Fair:

Trade fair provide good forum for manufacturers, exporters and business to advertise their products and services to the world at large. The organisation of trade fair need to be handled by specialist. Walker and Rueker (1987) explain specialization as the extent to which tasks are divided into unique elements that requires specific knowledge to accomplish. Tay and Morgan (2002) affirm that specialization and market orientation of the firm are positively linked for two reasons:-

- i. Specialization affords the firm a more finely grained view of its market by focusing specialists attention on more specific aspects of the market environment.
- ii. Specialization fosters more access to knowledgeable marketers, thereby enabling the firm to respond more effectively to market changes. Although earlier work by Kohli and Jawoski (1993) argue that specialization may be related negatively to firm’s innovative behaviour, the preponderance of evidence supports the paradigm that more specialized organizations are more adaptive (Tay and Morgan, 2002); (Walker and Ruckert, 1987).

In this regard specialists and experience people are needed to further plan, promote, and encourage participant to the trade fair.

Factors to be considered in organizing trade fair:-

- i. Site of Trade Fair:- This is very important, the site should be a larger space which the participants will occupy for their activities (Exhibition of their product and services). Enough space and good site could always lead to successful and enjoyable trade fair.
- ii. Cost of implementation:- To organize a trade fair it needs large amount of capital. Infact, where there is no enough capital is better for one to wait till when there is enough capital than to enter into it and fail.
- iii. State of economy:- the trade fair will bleeze and be successful, profitable in goods and sound economy, where people will posses money to buy and sell their product and services successfully. But in a bad or depressed economy, the opposite is always the case.

Objective of Trade fair:

- i. To promote and enhance investment in all aspect of the economy of the state through awareness of the abundant natural resources.
- ii. To promote, encourage and expose the non-oil export.
- iii. To provide easy access to research findings, new technology and idea.
- iv. To call for maximum utilization of domestic resources e.g. arable land, mineral and human resources.
- v. To attract investors to the state or country.
- vi. To promote all aspect of economic sector through local, national and international.
- vii. To promote and encourage the development of industrial input.

Uses and Benefits of Trade Fair:

- i. The government uses the avenue to explain policies to business communities living in the hosting state or country.
- ii. It is use to lay a sound foundation for economic growth of a particular states or nation thus generate revenue for hosting state or country.
- iii. The participant can expose their goods and services to the whole world and exploit new market and link.
- iv. It offers opportunity, of exposing the economic potentials of a particular state or country both physical and investment opportunity.

Type/Form of Trade Fair:

There are different types of trade fair:

- i. Domestic Trade Fair:- This is a kind of trade within a state, or a country.
- ii. Joint Domestic Trade Fair:- This comprises of different state like two or more state.
- iii. International Trade Fair:- This is where we have more than one country coming to trade fair together in a particular place e.g. Canada, Japan, Sudan, Ghana, South Africa, Britain, etc. come together in a particular place. (Lagos or Kaduna).

Since the world is changing, people in it are changing, so activities and business procedures, business worlds are attracting new mode of transaction. People want to be aware of new product and services, technology change, business opportunity, promotional strategies to adapt, in which these can always be identified with trade fair.

Preparing for a Trade Fair:

Any trade fair decision is the willingness to plan fully well in advance of the event, including making sure that all participating personnel are comprehensively briefed to handle the event for its duration (Donald 2001).

Inadequate preparation, even down to stand lighting and decoration or a shortage of support material is going to detract from the performance and pull at the event. Preparation might also mean co-ordinating the trade fair with the selling effort, making sure that organizers and sales representatives invites customers to visit the stand.

Factors to consider before deciding to attend trade fair:

- Type of visitors and previous attendance patterns.
- Participation by main competitors
- Advice from agents, trade and local representative
- Trade fair organizers and independent assessment of previous events.

- The promotion and organisation of the event.
 - The expected cost to be incurred and the objectives to be realized from the event.
- This is because trade fair take place in a neutral location over a clearly defined period of time. It is important enough to draw in decision makers and people within an industry who might otherwise be difficult to see. People are there because they want to be, and for the purpose of gathering information and making contacts. The atmosphere can be vibrant, busy and fun, heightening the excitement and stimulation. All of this adds to the visitors' sense of enjoyment and fulfillment.

The show provide an organisation with an opportunity to launch or test market new product, enables it to set up working demonstration of products. The event also allows participant to be present alongside major competitors, learning of new developments and trends and even making comparisons. Taking time to visit other stands can provide a wealth of information that sales representatives would not necessarily pick up in their day – to – day operations.

Research Methodology

This paper attempts to examine the level of awareness and participation of business sectors in trade fair activities in Nigeria. A simple random technique was used to distribute questionnaire to a population of 300 business sectors. Out of which A sample of 250 respondents were drawn from a selected business organisations, in Abuja and Kaduna State, Nigeria.

This means that a 250 survey questionnaires were returned out of the 300 that were distributed. The questionnaire and interviewed were the instruments mostly used to collect data from the sampled respondents. But the observation as a technique was adopted to assist in providing supplementary information that are useful as it goes well with the interview guides.

Result and Discussion

Chi – square analysis was applied to the data obtained from the respondents. Chi-square analysis to measure the significance of the difference in the perceived attendance to trade fair among participant.

X	F	F	(f – f)	(f – f) ²	X ² = (f – f) ² / f1
Strongly agreed	431	321.8	109.2	11924.6	37.05
Agreed	440	321.8	118.2	13971.24	43.42
Indifferent	98	321.8	-223.8	50086.44	155.65
Disagreed	347	321.8	25.2	635.04	1.97
Strongly disagreed	293	321.8	-28.2	829.44	2.57
Total	1609	1609			240.67

The general chi-square hypothesis is that the theoretical value and computed value (observed distribution) is zero. When there is a difference, the value of the computed value must be interpreted in terms of the chi – square distribution table in order to establish the level of significance of the difference. Note, the theoretical value, which is 321.8, is higher than 240.6, which is the computed value.

In this case, a test for the level of significance from the chi-square table was done to see whether the differences in the responses from the various groups are significant differences or due to chance.

X² value = 240.6; degree of freedom = 5 – 1 = 4

X² at 99 at 4 d.f = 13.277;

X² at .95 at 4 d.f = 9.488

240.6 > 13.277 > 9.488 this tells us that the difference between the actual and theoretical distribution is significant and not due to chance.

Discussion of Findings:

The study investigate the level of awareness and participation of business sectors in trade fair activities in Nigeria with a view to awaken their consciousness and direct policy makers on trade fair activities. The chi-square test shows that there are significant differences in the perceived attendance among participants. On the average, the awareness about trade fair activities is there, however, more effort need to be made in terms of inculcating features that will increase the attendance.

Conclusion:

Small and medium enterprises are a veritable tool that can be used to boost and improve the country's economy. People need to be aware of new product and services, technology change, business opportunity, promotional strategies to adapt, in which these can always be identified with trade fair. There is an urgent need for attention and emphasis in future policies formulation and implementation in the area of organizing the trade fair, particularly in the area of marketing communication. Policy readjustment and continuation is therefore necessary to take care of needs of the business sectors and to increase their attention to participate in trade fair.

Recommendations:

- i. The study established that awareness level of business sector need to be increase to participate in trade fair activities.
- ii. The inability of the organizers to ensure that business sectors were significantly able to access market information knowledge does not support the goal of organizing trade fair. This failure to educate business sectors as to the actual functioning of properly established trade fair implied that the benefits of trade fair are yet to be fully realized.
- iii. Based on research findings, it is obvious that billboards have become a major medium through which business sectors communicate with their target audience. This medium of communication is particularly effective for image building because it provides high repeat exposure and it is relatively cheaper than TV, radio, newspaper and magazine advertisements.
- iv. It is also evident that the more apparent is the market orientation of organizers of trade fair, the higher will be the attendance level. In view of this, it implies that government can train specific senior management and at the same time adapt the entrepreneur skills with the aim of enhancing the market orientation and improving or sustaining attendance.
- v. Overseas enterprises should be encourage to utilize such opportunities to explore joint-venture agreements with Nigerian entrepreneurs for the establishment of local industries.
- vi. The organizers and participants of international trade fair should re-oriented their concept from that of the old style forum for the sale and purchase of wares to that of an instrument for not only acquainting participants with the latest and most relevant technology but also devising ways and means of transferring technological know-how to those interested in updating their ways and means of producing goods or delivery services.
- vii. To our foreign enterprises, rather than concentrating the interest on the disposal of their hardware, they should seek to build into their agreement with local entrepreneurs and investors positive programmes for the effective transfer of relevant technology. They would in so doing demonstrate that they see their interest in the Nigerian economy not a short term adventure but as a long term association.
- viii. lastly, the issue of power supply has become a matter of serious concern to operators in the manufacturing sector, for the business sector to operate at the optimum, government must address the challenges facing the country like insecurity, good roads, portable water etc.

In every trade fair, the idea is for groups to show what they have to offer or to seek goods or services to meet their needs. The success of trade fair depends on the considerable support of all Nigerian farmers, inventors or industrialist who will take full advantage provided by the trade fair to update their inventory of equipment, technology and information, with a view to achieving a more efficient and increased production of goods and services.

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