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Investigating the Relationship between Customer Involvement Management and Marketing Performance in the Manufacturing Industry

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ABSTRACT

Enhancing marketing performance, and by extension, corporate performance is the reason for every marketing programme or action of all business organizations. However, the stark reality is that, it is not every marketing effort that enhances the chances of achieving this objective. Thus, efforts have always been expended to determine how exactly the marketing programmes and activities of the firm affect its marketing performance. This study investigated the relationship between CIM and marketing performance in the manufacturing industry, using customer satisfaction, new product success rate, market share and ROI as indicators of marketing performance. The study utilized data collected from eighty-seven (87) executives, comprising of sales, marketing, product, and R&D managers from thirty-four (34) manufacturing firms that are registered with the Rivers state branch of the Manufacturing Association of Nigeria (MAN). Data analyses was done using descriptive statistics while the hypotheses were tested using the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation (rho), relying on SPSS version 20.0. The study discovered that CIM is positively and significantly correlated with all the metrics of marketing performance considered in the study. The study therefore concluded that CIM is a viable strategy for driving marketing performance and recommends that firm which crave improved marketing performance should make CIM a part of their long term business strategy.

Keywords: Customer Involvement Management, Customer Satisfaction, Marketing Performance, Market Share, New Product Success Rate, ROI.

INTRODUCTION

The prevalence of competition in today's business environment has tasked business thinkers' innovativeness in exploring novel approaches to survival, growth, competitiveness and profitability. The truth in present day markets where stakeholders continually ask for greater value and competitors pose greater challenge is that firms must either "shape up" or "ship out". Modern business challenges require current business solutions; hence managers have approached innovation from various angles: from product to production and from processes to interactions. In the battle for survival in the present era of intense global competition, knowledgeable and demanding customers and activist shareholders (Ghosh & Mukherjee, 2006), the marketing function being the closest to the customers and competitors of the firm, has been saddled with the onerous task of creatively managing innovation projects and innovation itself. Marketing executives have thus sought novel and unique avenues of creating value for stakeholders and competitive edge for the firm.

The desire to improve marketing performance is the paramount push behind every marketing decision or activity, because the marketing performance of the firm which is instrumental to the corporate wellbeing of the business undertaking also determines the continued existence of the firm in the business landscape. Since business organizations exist to satisfy the socio-economic value requirement of stakeholders, they must always endeavour to determine the immediate and future

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needs of their consumers and adapt their organization to deliver those values. Involving the customers in the firm's programmes and processes offers one very unique platform for sensing the current and future value requirements of the customers.

To gain a sustainable competitive advantage in an industry therefore, firms must source ideas from their customers; and by involving the customer through the development of reliable, long-term relationships, sourcing such ideas is made easier. Customer involvement management (CIM) represents an advanced stage in the evolutionary development of customer relationship management (Iruka & Ateke, 2014). Thus, managers in many industries are trying to better manage their relationships with their customers, especially those that affect their production and marketing aspects; as this is believed to confer efficiency and competitive advantage on firms.

Marketing executives have no doubt come under immense pressure to demonstrate the prudence of their business actions on an ongoing basis; even as there have been calls for investigation into the link between various marketing efforts and financial outcomes (Bahadir et al, 2008), with a consequent increased demand for greater accountability on the part of marketing executives (Rao & Bharadwaj, 2008; Ambler, 2000). The demand for managers to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of their decisions has resulted in the development of several marketing performance measures to assess the impact of business decisions (Chendall & Langfield-Smith, 2007).

The increased interest in measuring marketing performance is premised on the conviction that it is only a healthy and successful firm that can fulfil the value requirements of its stakeholders. Thus, with a view to determining the core drivers of marketing performance, several studies have been conducted (Ateke, 2015; Ateke et al, 2015; Adejoke & Adekemi, 2012; Asiegbu et al, 2011; Mosahab et al, 2010; Ismail, 2009, etc.). In the current study however, effort is made to determine the relationship between customer involvement management and marketing performance in the manufacturing industry; and to guide the attainment of this objective, the following research hypotheses are formulated:

H_{O1}: There is no significant relationship between CIM and customer satisfaction in the manufacturing industry

H_{O2}: There is no significant relationship between CIM and new product rate success in the manufacturing industry

H_{O3}: There is no significant relationship between CIM and market share in the manufacturing industry

H_{O4}: There is no significant relationship between CIM and ROI in the manufacturing industry

LITERATURE REVIEW

Customer Involvement Management (CIM)

Contemporary consumers are enjoying extensive communication and collaboration with their service providers, and are increasingly being integrated into the value design, development and delivery processes of firms. The shift in paradigm from separate worlds of consumers and producers towards integrated activities and more active clients has become routine and resulted in intensified relationships with benefits for the firms and the consumers (Carbonell et al, 2009). CIM is believed to create necessary relationship, and assists in developing products that sustainably outperform competitors (Chien & Chen, 2010; Sharma et al, 2010). New successful business models are characterized by more tasks to be performed by the customers (Kloutch & Leker, 2011; Vivek et al, 2012). Hence, customer involvement management becomes a key element in innovative business models.

CIM is a planned and controlled activity of the firm wherein relevant platforms are created to determine the extent customers are incorporated into the firm's value creation and delivery process with a view to sourcing ideas from them (Iruka & Ateke, 2014). It is the interaction and/or collaboration between channel members and company personnel during the course of product development to actualize a commercial product (Ernst, 2004). CIM is a concept that takes customer orientation a step further than customer relationship management (Iruka & Ateke, 2014); and is about identifying and developing possibilities to make the customer a part of the business and product development process of the firm, such as design, marketing, sales, customer service, etc. (Rohrbeck et al, 2010).

CIM covers a broad range of activities by both the customer and the firm. The least intimate form of involvement consists of the customers providing unsolicited feedback or suggestions to the organizations; while at its most complex form, the customer takes on active roles such as contributing intellectually, financially or physically to the development and commercialization of technology (Iruka & Ateke, 2014). Integrating the customer in the innovation process is believed to be a powerful means to reduce uncertainty and failure rates and increases revenue from new products (Rohrbeck et al, 2010). However, the benefits of integrating the customer in the innovation process have to be weighed against the costs; even as the position of the customer has successfully changed over the last three decades from a passive recipient to an active co-designer in the creation of value (Ernst, 2004).

Pinegar (2000) dimensionalized customer involvement into four roles namely: coaching, partnering, advising and reporting. Coaching according to this author represents a limited form of involvement where the customers are not intimately involved with the company, but only provide comments and inputs into what a new technology can or should be. In partnering, the customer is engaged in the co-development of technologies and their specific applications. It is a level of involvement where the customer is intimately and actively involved with the firm from the very start of the project, and has a shared stake in ensuring the successful commercialization of the technology. In the advising role according to Pinegar (2000), the customer is not exclusively tied to the project, but participates to ensure that the new technology is able to serve their needs. In the reporting role, the customer give feedback on the benefits derived from the technology and the improvements anticipated.

Marketing Performance

Kotler and Armstrong (2010) define marketing as the process by which companies create value for customers and build strong relations in order to capture value from customers in return. In the view of AMA (2013), marketing is the activity, set of institutions and processes for creating communicating, delivering and exchanging offering that have value for customers, clients, partners and the society at large. In this paper however, marketing is defined as individual and organisational activities designed to create, communicate and deliver socio-economic value requirements for relevant stakeholders, and the management of innovation to remain competitive in dynamic business environment. This definition views the core of marketing as that of creating, communicating and delivering social and economic value to customers, employees, shareholders and other stakeholders, while continually updating the firm in line with emerging challenges and opportunities in the business environment. The many definitions of marketing (which do not necessarily negate one another) notwithstanding, the essence of the subject remain intact. Marketing is still no doubt the unique function of the business enterprise, and no prosperous business is possible without effective marketing (Miller, 2007).

Performance on the other hand is the action of performing a task or fulfilling an obligation. Wheeler and Hunger (2002) define performance simply as the end result of activity. It is behaviour evaluated in terms of its contributions to the goals and objectives of the organization (Johnston & Marshall, 2003; Dalrymple et al, 2004; Churchill & Peter, 1998; Fenwick & Amine, 1979) in Asiegbu et al (2011). Marketing performance is thus a measure of the extent to which the firm achieves its marketing objectives in relation to its marketing programmes and activities. It is a measure of contributions of an organization's marketing functions to its corporate goals and objectives (Jackson et al, 1989).

Improving marketing performance, and specifically the ability to pinpoint the drivers of marketing performance, is a major concern for marketing and other business executives. The ability to analyze performance across all activities and generate improved results defines the information nirvana marketers are looking for (Raab, 2009). As the pressure to improve performance increased and budgets come under closer scrutiny, organizations are now faced with finding new ways to make marketing activities more effective, efficient and yield higher marketing success.

The demand for marketing managers to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of marketing decisions has resulted in the development of several marketing performance measures to assess the impact of marketing decisions (Terblanche et al, 2013; Chendall & Langfield-Smith, 2007; Lehmann, 2004; Pont & Shaw, 2003). Although financial measures account for more than sixty-five per cent of performance measures used in marketing practice (Pont & Shaw, 2003), these seem to be inadequate for measuring important elements of marketing performance (Lehmann, 2004). Researchers have found that a combination of financial and non-financial measures have become essential to assessing marketing performance (Terblanche et al, 2013; O'Sullivan & Abela, 2007); they have also found that non-financial measures are better predictors of a company's long-term goals than financial measures (Chendall & Langfield-Smith, 2007).

Generally, a degree of consensus has been reached that the problem of performance measurement should be approached from both financial and non-financial perspectives (Terblanche et al, 2013). Obtaining a balance between the two perspectives is the key to greater respect for marketing managers in boardrooms, as well as better learning within the marketing department (Rust et al, 2004; Ambler, 2003). With a view to complementing the existing body of literature, the current study seeks to examine the connection between customer involvement management and marketing performance in the manufacturing industry. The study used customer satisfaction, new product success rate, market share and ROI as metrics of marketing performance. These metrics incorporate both financial and non-financial elements of marketing performance measurement.

Customer Satisfaction

Drucker (1954) assert that the principal purpose of a business is to create satisfied customers. In a competitive marketplace where businesses compete for customers, customer satisfaction is seen as a key differentiator, has increasingly become a key element of business strategy and has gained renewed attention within the context of the paradigm shift from transactional business relationships to relational business relationships (Rohrbeck et al, 2010). Customer satisfaction is indeed one of the most essential elements of marketing performance.

Customer satisfaction measures which are basically cognitive, affective and conative are very critical to any firm because customer satisfaction is a strong predictor of customer loyalty; retention and product repurchase (Smith, 2007); all of which are strong indicators of marketing performance. Customer satisfaction with a firm's product is often seen as the key to a company's success and long-term competiveness (Hennig-Thurau & Klee, 1997). As markets continue to shrink, companies are scrambling to boost customer satisfaction in order to keep their current customers rather than devoting additional resources to chase new ones. The suggestion that it costs five to eight times as much to get new customers than it is to maintain existing ones (White & Yanamandram, 2007; Colgate & Hedge, 2001; Colgate et al, 1996; Reichheld, 1996) is a major motivation for firms to track and how satisfied their customers are.

New Product Success Rate

A new product is any innovative offering from a firm that seeks to satisfy consumers' identified or latent need. The emphasis on new product development (NPD) literature has been on the importance of designing and developing new products and introducing them to the market for continuing business success (Bhuiyan, 2011). The pivotal role of NPD in firms' profitability, businesses continuity, economic growth, technological advancement, improved standard of living and employment is also documented (Bhuiyan, 2011; Ulrich & Eppinger, 2011; Cooper & Edgett, 2008; Cooper, 2001). In fact, in the fast-paced technology intensive contemporary business environment, firms' success may be tied to being the earliest to bring innovation to market.

New product success is a measure of the degree to which a new product is accepted by consumers, and the extent to which the product meets consumers' expectation. A new product is deemed successful if it is adopted by the target consumers, satisfies a need, can be sold profitably and survives in the market. New product success rate may thus be measured by the level of acceptance a new product enjoys, the profit it brings to the firm and its survival on the shelf. Achieving success in developing and introducing new products in a complex and evolving market is a much sought after capability of firms; as successful new products are essential for the long-term survival of firms. New product success rate is a viable measure of marketing performance in view of the fact that most new products introduced to markets do not return their cost of investment, resulting into wasted resources (Ulrich & Eppinger, 2011).

Market Share

Market share is a firm's sales as a percentage of the total sales by all the firms in a given market (Richard, 2009). It is the percentage of a market accounted for by a specific entity, and can be represented as a firm's sales revenue or as a firm's sales volume in a given market divided by the total volume sales in that market (Farris et al, 2010). According to Richard (2009), the measure of market share and the concept of prospects are important to companies because they indicate the additional business that a brand can win and how and when to obtain it. The merit of employing market share as a measure of marketing performance is that it is not easily affected by the state of the economy or changes in tax regime (Bell et al, 2008).

Market share is a pointer of business trend; it assists in assessing the extent to which consumers patronize a given product in the market environment, and is commonly used to explain the position of a firm in an industry (Gunasekaran et al, 2005). The relevance is usually that a better market share reflects better marketing performance. Firms improve their market share either by expanding into new markets or by poaching into competitors' share of the market. Firms closely monitor their market share for signs of change in the competitive landscape, in order to devise strategic or tactical action (Farris et al, 2010) to address them. Below a certain level of market share, a firm may be deemed unviable. In the same vain, trends in market share of individual products within a firm's product line could reflect opportunities or problems in the firm's future (Farris et al, 2010; Armstrong & Greene, 2007).

Return-on-Investment

ROI is a performance index used to determine how profitable an investment has been or to compare the profitability of different investments. It is used to measure the gains and losses generated on an investment, relative to the amount of resources invested. To calculate ROI, the benefit of an investment is divided by the cost of the investment; and the result expressed as a percentage or a ratio. ROI may also be conceived as the benefits that accrue to an investor for investing resource. To business firms, ROI is one way of considering profits in relation to capital invested, usually measured per period. A high ROI means the investment gains compare favourably to investment cost.

Return on investment may be calculated in terms other than financial gains. Social return on investment (SROI) for example, is a principles-based method for measuring non-financial value relative to resources invested, and can be used by a firm to assess impact on stakeholders, identify ways to improve performance, and enhance the performance of investments (Farris et al, 2010). ROI and related metrics provide a snapshot of profitability, adjusted for the size of the investment assets tied up in the enterprise; and is often compared to projected rates of return on money invested (Farris et al, 2010).

METHODOLOGY

The focus of this study is to investigate the nexus between CIM and marketing performance (MP) in the manufacturing industry. The research is descriptive in nature and adopts the use of quantitative approach in its methodology. A purposefully designed questionnaire was used as the instrument of inquiry and respondents were required to tick from 1-4 on a scale, where 1= Strongly Disagree; 2= Disagree; 3= Agree; 4= Strongly Agree. A total of one hundred and two (102) copies of questionnaire were administered to sales, marketing, product, and R&D managers of thirty-four (34) manufacturing firms registered with the Rivers chapter of the Manufacturing Association of Nigeria (MAN). Out of the one hundred and two (102) copies of questionnaire administered, only eighty-seven (87) copies, representing eighty-five per cent (85%) of the administered questionnaire were found usable in the final analysis. The study utilized the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation (rho) as the test statistic, relying on SPSS version 20.0.

RESULTS

Table1. *Correlation Analysis showing the Relationship between CIM and Customer Satisfaction*

Correlations

Type	Variables1	Statistics	CIM	Customer Satisfaction
Spearman's rho	CIM	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.882**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	87	87
	Customer Satisfaction	Correlation Coefficient	.882**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	87	87

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

Source: *SPSS Output of Data Analysis on the Relationship between CIM and Marketing Performance (2015)*

The test result as indicated on table 1 above shows a positive relationship between CIM and customer satisfaction in the manufacturing industry. The coefficient of 0.882** generated by the rho means that a very strong relationship exist between CIM and customer satisfaction. Based on this result, the null hypothesis is hereby rejected in favour of the alternate hypothesis. We therefore, posit that there is a significant relationship between CIM and customer satisfaction in the manufacturing industry.

Table2. *Correlation Analysis showing the Relationship between CIM and New Product Success Rate (NPSR)*

Correlations

Type	Variables1	Statistics	CIM	NPSR
Spearman's rho	CIM	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.812**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	87	87
	NPSR	Correlation Coefficient	.812**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	87	87

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

Source: *SPSS Output of Data Analysis on the Relationship between CIM and Marketing Performance (2015)*

In view of the correlation coefficient of 0.812** generated by the test of hypothesis as indicated on table 2 above, this study infer that a positive relationship exit between CIM and new product success rate (NPSR) in the manufacturing industry. The test score also means that the relationship between the variables is very strong. Based on this result, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis accepted. We therefore aver that there is a significant correlation between CIM and NPSR in the manufacturing industry.

Table3. *Correlation Analysis showing the Relationship between CIM and Market Share*

Correlations

Type	Variables1	Statistics	CIM	Market Share
Spearman's rho	CIM	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.695**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	87	87
	Market Share	Correlation Coefficient	.695**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	87	87

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

Source: *SPSS Output of Data Analysis on the Relationship between CIM and Marketing Performance (2015)*

From the SPSS output as indicated on the table above, the correlation coefficient of CIM and market share is 0.695. This means that there is a positive rank correlation between the variables. The score also indicate that the relationship between CIM and market share in the manufacturing industry is a strong one. Thus, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a significant correlation between CIM and market share in the manufacturing industry in Rivers State.

Table4. *Correlation Analysis showing the Relationship between CIM and ROI*

Correlations

Type	Variables1	Statistics	CIM	ROI
Spearman's rho	CIM	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.829**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	87	87
	ROI	Correlation Coefficient	.829**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	87	87

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

Source: *SPSS Output of Data Analysis on the Relationship between CIM and Marketing Performance (2015)*

The test result as indicated on the table above shows a positive connection between CIM and ROI in the manufacturing industry. The coefficient of 0.829** generated by the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation means that a very strong relationship exist between the variables. Based on this result, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis. We therefore posit that a significant relationship exists between CIM and ROI in the manufacturing industry.

DISCUSSION

Following the result of the test of hypotheses, this study found that CIM and marketing performance are positively and significantly correlated. The finding of this study largely cohere with findings from similar studies conducted earlier. For example, Iruka and Ateke (2014) found that coaching (a CIM practice) has a relationship with customer retention (a measure of marketing performance). The finding of this study also corroborates the position of Rohrbeck et al (2010) who states that integrating the customer in the innovation process is believed to be a powerful means to reduce failure rates and to increase revenue from new products.

This is so because making the customer a participant in the creation and delivery of value gives him not only a psychological boost, but also a sense of importance and self-worth which can affect the way he perceives the firm and its services (Iruka & Ateke, 2014). This position as held in Iruka and Ateke (2014) is shared with Pinegar (2000) and Dadfar (2009), albeit in industrial marketing; Johra and Mohammed (2012), in the banking sector in Bangladesh; and Rohrbeck et al, (2010) in the online environment.

Furthermore, it is believed that when a firm satisfies its customers, the customers are likely to be retained and with customer retention comes cross-selling opportunities that can potentially reduce the level of risk of new product failure. This position agrees with that of Enkel et al (2005) who aver that customer integration into the innovation process is about to become a best practice, especially the lead-user approach which has proven to be valuable when reducing discontinuous innovation's market risk.

Based on the test result, the discussion of finding and conclusion of this study, the model below is proposed:

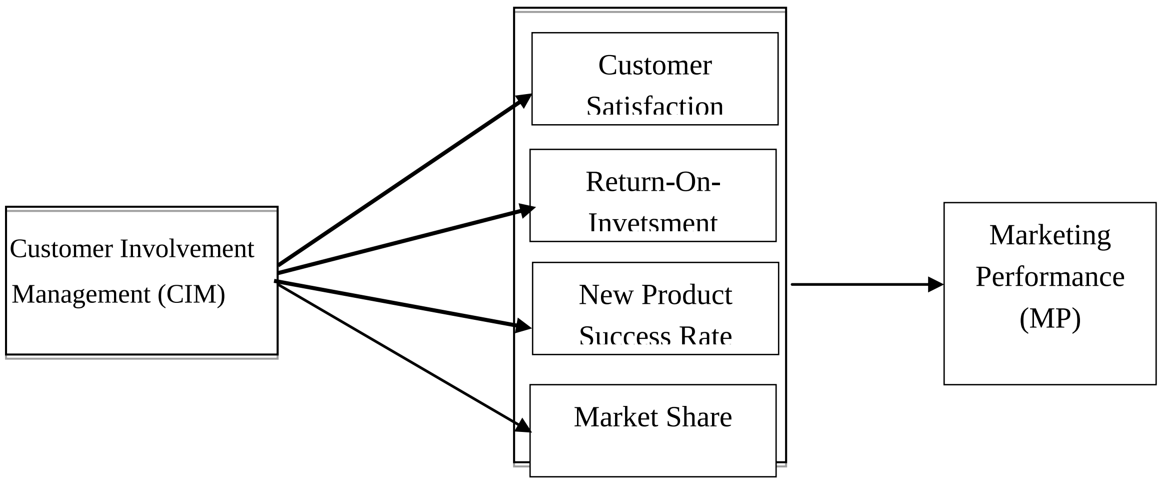

Fig1. *Conceptual model of the relationship between CIM and marketing performance*

Source: *Research Desk (2015)*

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

CIM and marketing performance are positively correlated. Thus, firms which seek improved marketing performance should look to CIM; as effective CIM has been found to be positively related with marketing performance. As organisations continue to create new products and develop new markets, harnessing external ideas through CIM, while also leveraging in-house R&D efforts offers a very viable option, since R&D has long been a costly and inexact process (Chesbrough, 2003; Thomke & Von Hippel, 2002).

CIM is increasingly being seen in management rhetoric as a means to tighten the feedback loop between the cycles of consumption and production (Gales & Mansour-Cole, 1995; Foxall, 1989). Underlying most such views is the assumption that customers are sources of information and of knowledge (Rohrbeck et al, 2010; Normann & Ramı´rez, 1994; Von Hippel, 1988) and that CIM can enhance product concept effectiveness (Brown & Eisenhardt, 1995).

Therefore, firms which crave enhanced marketing performance through customer satisfaction, new product success, market share, greater ROI and less marketing expenses must look to CIM, as customer participation in the value creation and delivery process confers all these benefits. Through effective CIM practices, firms will be able to source new product ideas that can culminate into value offering that effectively satisfy the needs and wants of the customers and contribute to the overall success of the business firm (Iruka & Ateke, 2014).

By participating in new product development, the customer can monitor the firm's fulfilment of the service contract (Larsson & Bowen, 1989). In this context, customers are led to believe that they are able to influence the firm to incorporate certain product features that have some special value for them (Kaulio, 1998). This believe drive the customer into a commitment with the firm which will ultimately lead to a long term relationship (Iruka & Ateke, 2014), which is a metric of marketing performance. Consequently, the study recommends that firms should exploit the potentials inherent in CIM to drive marketing performance, and also that firms which crave enhanced marketing performance through customer satisfaction, new product success, market share and greater ROI should make CIM a part their long term business strategy.

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