

Utilization of e-Marketing Platforms amongst Households in Port-Harcourt Metropolis

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the extent of utilization of e-Marketing platforms amongst household in Port Harcourt metropolis. The research adopted a descriptive survey design. Three research questions and three hypotheses were posed to guide the study. The population for the study was made up of 25 fathers, 25 mothers and 50 children drawn from 25 households of various regions in Port Harcourt metropolis. Thus a total of 100 respondents were used for the study. The Instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled "Utilization of e-Marketing Platforms Questionnaire" (Ue-MPQ). The reliability of the research instrument was obtained using test-retest method; Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient of .75 was obtained. The instrument was validated by two experts from the department of business education, Rivers State University of Science and Technology. All 100 copies of the questionnaire were retrieved and analysed using mean for the research questions and analysis of variance (ANOVA) for the hypothesis at .05 level of significance. The results obtained indicated that children are the most users of e-Marketing platforms but generally the use of e-Marketing platforms by households in Port Harcourt metropolis is low and this is as a result of the challenges confronting its utilization. Thus, it is required that government, internet service providers and relevant stakeholders must synergize to create conducive atmosphere for usage of the various e-Marketing platforms.

Keywords: *Electronic Marketing, e-Marketing Platform, Information and Communication Technology.*

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has brought about positive and negative changes in the society. It has made the world a global village; Business, communication, research etc. are made easy through ICT platforms. Information has no restrictions and everyone is entitled to express his/her self through ICT. Information Technology is a computer-based technology for the storage, accessing, processing and communication of information. It involves devices to capture, process, store/retrieve information (Adeyemi and Mary, 2013). Accordingly, Ubulom, Enyiket and Onukwe (2011) assert that the emergence of information and communication technology (ICT) has totally revolutionalized the way we access, process, store, retrieve and disseminate information within organizations or across the globe. ICT has affected all human endeavours and certainly now part of our daily living. Modern day businesses are conducted and facilitated through the use of telephones, fax machines and computer communication networks through the internet. This phenomenon has given birth to the contemporary e-commerce, e-government, e-medicine, e-banking and e-education among others (Ajayi, and Ekundayo, 2009).

E-Marketing also known as Electronic Marketing entails the use of electronic devices/technology in all aspects of marketing activities that has to do with buying and

selling of goods and services. According to Asikhia (2009), Electronic marketing is more than just marketing carried out over the Internet. It involves the effective use of technology in all forms, in such a manner that it plays a supporting role, which is defined by business and marketing needs. The most important piece of technology in electronic marketing is probably not in the Internet; rather, it is more likely to be the database that holds valuable information about this most critical resource that a marketer needs (Abrahams, 2002). Hatem (2010) opined that Electronic Marketing (E-Marketing) is a new philosophy and a modern business practice involved with the marketing of goods, services, information and ideas via the Internet and other electronic means. Similarly, Gilmore, Gallagher and Henry (2007) explained e-Marketing as the means of deploying internet and related technologies along with other marketing tools in order to carry out the traditional marketing operations and activities, finding customer, communicating with them and delivering value to them. It is a system that creates conducive environment for both producers and consumers to effectively carry out transactions via application of technology. Activities such as sales, customer relations management, marketing research, analysis, planning and even payment of bills are easily executed with the aid of technological devices. In line with this, Olomu and Irefin (2015) asserts that e-Marketing involves establishing an electronic dialogue that provides individual customers access to information, and in turn, the use of interactive technologies which allows these customers to provide information to the business. They stressed further that e-Marketing can build on and enhance network marketing as customers and firms can be electronically networked (in the form of online communities, alliance partners, etc.). Thus, e-Marketing platforms can be viewed as technological enabled environment that facilitates buying and selling of goods/services with the aid of electronic devices and software's. Such device includes internet enabled computers, mobile phones, fax machines, point of sales (POS) machines, automated teller machines (ATM) etc and the most commonly used e-Marketing platforms includes Jumia.com, Konga.com, Dealdey.com, Jeafia.com and so on. It also involves the use of other social media networks such as Facebook and Whatsapp as these sites gives room for effective communication as required in the marketing environment. Business organisations exploring social media create presence for themselves on these sites and their customers can speak to them and they speak back thus, bringing their brand closer to the consumer (Nyekwere, Nnanyelugo & Chieme, 2014). However, this study will concentrate on internet marketing platforms. Internet marketing is conceptually different from other marketing channels and internet promotes a one to one communication between the seller and the end user with round the clock customer service (Shanthi & Kannaiah, 2015). Internet marketing explores the use of the above mentioned platforms for marketing activities via the use of internet enabled computers. Shanthi and Kannaiah (2015) assert that mostly the youngsters are attached to the online shopping and hence the elder people don't use online shopping much as compared to the younger ones. Aminu (2013) revealed that Nigerian consumers are not exploring the Internet to make purchase in the retail stores despite the rising population of the Internet users and the upsurge in the number of e-tailers in the country. This he credited to certain factors such as cultural barriers, infrastructure challenge, fraud and security concern, perceived risk and inadequate regulatory framework. Consequently, this study tends to investigate the extent of utilization of e-marketing platforms amongst households in Port-Harcourt metropolis.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to investigate the extent of utilization of e-marketing platforms amongst households in Port-Harcourt metropolis.

Specifically the study sought to determine:

1. The extent to which e-Marketing platforms are utilized in shopping amongst households in Port-Harcourt metropolis.
2. The extent to which e-Marketing platforms are utilized in sales activities amongst households in Port-Harcourt metropolis.
3. The extent to which the challenges in utilization of e-Marketing platforms affect its usage amongst households in Port-Harcourt metropolis.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions guided this study:

1. To what extent are e-Marketing platforms utilized in shopping amongst households in Port-Harcourt metropolis?
2. To what extent are e-Marketing platforms utilized in sales activities amongst households in Port-Harcourt metropolis?
3. To what extent do the challenges in utilization of e-Marketing platforms affect its usage amongst households in Port-Harcourt metropolis?

HYPOTHESES

The following null hypotheses were tested:

- H₀₁:** There is no significant difference in the mean responses of the three respondents group on the extent to which they utilize e-Marketing platforms in shopping in Port Harcourt metropolis.
- H₀₂:** There is no significant difference in the mean responses of the three respondents group on the extent to which they utilize e-Marketing platforms in sales activities in Port Harcourt metropolis.
- H₀₃:** There is no significant difference in the mean responses of the three respondents group on the extent to which the challenges in utilization of e-Marketing platforms affects their usage in Port Harcourt metropolis.

METHODOLOGY

The research designed used in conducting the study was descriptive survey. The target population for the study was the totality of residents in Port-Harcourt metropolis, which runs into hundreds of thousands. However, for reasons of feasibility, the sample was selected from five highly dense areas that make up Port-Harcourt which includes; Town/Borokiri, Ogbunabali/Amadi flat, D-Line/Mile One, Rumukalagbo/Elekahia and Waterline/GRA axis. Purposive sampling was applied in selecting 100 respondents from 25 households selected from the above mentioned areas; each household presented 4 respondents of a father, mother and two children. A total of 25 fathers, 25 mothers and 50 children made up the respondents.

Table1: Sample Distribution

S/N	AREAS COVERED	NO. OF HOUSEHOLDS	VARIABLES			NO. OF RESPONDENTS
			FATHER	MOTHER	CHILDREN	
1	Town/Borokiri	5	5	5	10	20
2	Ogbunabali/Amadi flat	5	5	5	10	20
3	D-Line/Mile One	5	5	5	10	20
4	Rumukalagbo/Elekahia	5	5	5	10	20
5	Waterline/GRA	5	5	5	10	20
TOTAL		25	25	25	50	100

The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled “Utilization of e-Marketing Platforms Questionnaire” (Ue-MPQ). The instrument provided response to the three research questions with 15 Items; Item 1-5 answering research question one, 6-10 answering research question two and 11-15 answering research question three in a 4-point rating scale weighted as “Very High Extent” (VHE) – 4 points, “High Extent” (HE) – 3 points, “Low Extent” (LE) – 2 points and “Very Low Extent” (VLE) – 1 point. To establish the validity of the instrument, the questionnaire was subjected to face validity by two experts from the Department of Business Education and one from Measurement and Evaluation all of Faculty of Technical and Science Education in Rivers State University of Science and Technology. To ensure the consistency of the instrument, the test-retest method of reliability at an interval of 14days was adopted. The Pearson product moment correlation was used to process the result. A reliability coefficient of .80 was obtained. The data analysis was done using the mean to analyze the research questions while analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test the hypothesis. The mean was obtained by the summation of all responses as assigned to a rating scale in an item divided by the total number of responses: $4+3+2+1/4 = 2.50$. The mean score of 2.50 and above was accepted, while those below 2.50 were rejected. The decision rule for the f-value is: If the f-calculated is greater than the f-critical, the null hypothesis is rejected but accepted if the f-calculated is less than f-critical at .05 level of significance, this is employed thus; $f = MSB/MSW$.

Table2: Administration and Retrieval of Instrument.

S/N	AREAS COVERED	NO. OF HOUSEHOLDS	NO. ADMINISTERED	NO. RETRIEVED
1	Town/Borokiri	5	20	20
2	Ogbunabali/Amadi flat	5	20	20
3	D-Line/Mile One	5	20	20
4	Rumukalagbo/Elekahia	5	20	20
5	Waterline/GRA	5	20	20
TOTAL			100	100

Results

Table 3: Mean Ratings on the extent of utilizing e-Marketing platforms in shopping in Port Harcourt metropolis.

S/N	STATEMENTS	FATHER (X1)	MOTHE R (X2)	CHILDRE N (X3)	TOTAL X1+X2+X3	MEAN	DECISION
1	My mobile phones and other electronics are bought online.	1.72	1.48	2.76	5.96	1.99	Rejected
2	My clothing's and shoe wares are bought online.	2.12	2.88	2.98	7.98	2.66	Accepted
3	I order and make purchase of books online.	2.52	1.96	2.52	7	2.33	Rejected

4	I shop for edibles online.	1.68	1.76	2.04	5.48	1.83	Rejected
5	I make payments for goods/services electronically.	2.56	2.75	3.12	8.43	2.81	Accepted
GRAND MEAN						2.32	Rejected

Source: Survey Data, 2016.

The responses of the respondents in Table 3 indicated that items 1, 3 and 4 with mean values of 1.99, 2.33 and 1.33 were rejected while items 2 and 5 with mean values of 2.66 and 2.56 were accepted. However, the grand mean of 2.32 indicates that the extent of utilizing e-Marketing platforms in shopping in Port Harcourt metropolis is low amongst households.

Table 4: Mean Ratings on the extent of utilizing e-Marketing platforms in sales activities in Port Harcourt metropolis.

S/N	STATEMENTS	FATHER (X1)	MOTHE R (X2)	CHILDRE N (X3)	TOTAL X1+X2+X3	MEAN	DECISION
6.	Sales of used mobile phones and other electronics are done online.	2.32	1.64	2.84	6.8	2.27	Rejected
7.	I use the internet for advertising.	2.64	2.52	2.98	8.14	2.71	Accepted
8.	I carry out marketing research and meet with potential buyers online.	2.52	2.04	2.92	7.48	2.49	Rejected
9.	I use the internet to improve my customer service skill.	2.56	1.92	3.06	7.54	2.51	Accepted
10	Payments from clients are received electronically.	2.84	2.6	3.14	8.58	2.86	Accepted
GRAND MEAN						2.57	Accepted

Source: Survey Data, 2016.

The responses of the respondents in Table 4 indicated that items 6 and 8 with mean values of 2.27 and 2.49 were rejected while items 7, 9 and 10 with mean values of 2.71, 2.51 and 2.86 were accepted. However, the grand mean of 2.57 indicates that the extent of utilizing e-Marketing platforms in sales activities in Port Harcourt metropolis is high amongst households.

Table 5: Mean Ratings on the extent to which the challenges in utilization of e-Marketing platforms affect its usage amongst households in Port-Harcourt metropolis

S/N	STATEMENTS	FATHER (X1)	MOTHE R (X2)	CHILDRE N (X3)	TOTAL X1+X2+X 3	MEAN	DECISION
11.	Poor power supply affects my ordering/offering of goods and services online.	3.24	3.00	3.44	9.68	3.23	Accepted
12.	Fear of e-Fraud makes me avoid online transactions.	2.76	3.36	1.94	8.06	2.69	Accepted
13.	Absence/high cost of internet facilities determines my participation online.	2.96	2.72	2.58	8.26	2.75	Accepted
14.	Fear of inferior, incorrectly selected and unsatisfactory delivery of goods deter me from online purchase.	2.84	3.16	1.92	7.92	2.64	Accepted
15.	Absence/Poor regulatory framework discourages me.	3.24	2.92	2.08	8.24	2.75	Accepted
GRAND MEAN						2.81	Accepted

Source: Survey Data, 2016.

The responses of the respondents in Table 5 indicated that all items 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15 with mean values of 3.32, 2.69, 2.75, 2.64 and 2.75 were accepted. Also, the grand mean of 2.81 indicates that the challenges in utilization of e-Marketing platforms affect its usage

amongst households in Port Harcourt metropolis.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in the mean responses of the three respondents group on the extent to which they utilize e-Marketing platforms in shopping in Port Harcourt metropolis.

Table 6: Summary of analysis of variance and test of significance data

Source of Variance	SS	DF	MS	L/Significance	F-CAL	F-CRIT	Decision
Between Groups	0.61	2	0.31	.05	0.42	3.15	Accepted
Within Groups	72.15	97	0.74				

Source: Survey Data, 2016.

Table 6 shows that at degree of freedom 2 and 97, the between groups variance score and within group variance score (between groups mean square and within group mean square) are 0.61 and 72.15 respectively. It is also seen that the calculated f-ratio is 0.42 and the f-critical is 3.15 at .05 level of significance. This therefore, indicates that the null hypothesis is accepted that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of the three respondents group on the extent to which they utilize e-Marketing platforms in shopping in Port Harcourt metropolis.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in the mean responses of the three respondents group on the extent to which they utilize e-Marketing platforms in sales activities in Port Harcourt metropolis.

Table 7: Summary of analysis of variance and test of significance data

Source of Variance	SS	DF	MS	L/Significance	F-CAL	F-CRIT	Decision
Between Groups	0.85	2	0.43	.05	0.48	3.15	Accepted
Within Groups	85.97	97	0.89				

Source: Survey Data, 2016.

Table 7 shows that at degree of freedom 2 and 97, the between groups variance score and within group variance score (between groups mean square and within group mean square) are 0.85 and 85.97 respectively. It is also seen that the calculated f-ratio is 0.48 and the f-critical is 3.15 at .05 level of significance. This therefore, indicates that the null hypothesis is accepted that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of the three respondents group on the extent to which they utilize e-Marketing platforms in sales activities in Port Harcourt metropolis.

Hypothesis 3

There is no significant difference in the mean responses of the three respondents group on the extent to which the challenges in utilization of e-Marketing platforms affects their usage in Port Harcourt metropolis.

Table 8: Summary of analysis of variance and test of significance data

Source of Variance	SS	DF	MS	L/Significance	F-CAL	F-CRIT	Decision
Between Groups	3.33	2	1.67	.05	1.61	3.15	Accepted
Within Groups	100.81	97	1.04				

Source: Survey Data, 2016.

Table 8 shows that at degree of freedom 2 and 97, the between groups variance score and within group variance score (between groups mean square and within group mean square) are 3.33 and 100.81 respectively. It is also seen that the calculated f-ratio is 1.61 and the f-critical is 3.15 at .05 level of significance. This therefore, indicates that the null hypothesis is accepted that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of the three respondents group on the extent to which the challenges in utilization of e-Marketing platforms affects their usage in Port Harcourt metropolis.

Discussion of Findings

One of the major findings of this study was that households in Port Harcourt metropolis are yet to fully utilize the e-Marketing platforms for sales and purchase of household items as a result of the challenges confronting its usage; this was clearly indicated in table 5 where the responses of the respondents indicated high ratings for all items 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15 with mean values of 3.32, 2.69, 2.75, 2.64 and 2.75. Thus, were all accepted. Also, with a grand mean of 2.81 it shows that the challenges in utilization of e-Marketing platforms affect its usage amongst households in Port Harcourt metropolis. The challenges as listed in the table includes poor power supply, fear of e-Fraud, absence/high cost of internet facilities, fear of inferior/incorrectly selected/unsatisfactory delivery of goods and absence/poor regulatory framework. This result is in line with Aminu (2013) who revealed that Nigerian consumers are not exploring the Internet to make purchase in the retail stores which he credited to certain factors such as cultural barriers, infrastructure challenge, fraud and security concern, perceived risk and inadequate regulatory framework. The study also revealed that Children are the most users of the e-Marketing platforms both in shopping and sales activities. This was indicated in table 4 and 5 where all items were rated high by the respondents (Children) except for item 4 which had a mean of 2.04. This result is in agreement with Shanthi and Kannaiah (2015) who revealed that mostly the youngsters are attached to the online shopping and hence the elder people don't use online shopping much as compared to the younger ones. However, it is also pertinent to note that children face challenges in terms of utilizing e-Marketing platforms; likewise fathers and mothers.

Conclusion

In view of the importance of the existing e-Marketing platforms and their efficiency in terms of information sharing amongst businesses; it is imperative that individuals utilize the available platforms for easy access to information relating to sales/purchase of goods. Consequently, e-Marketing platforms if properly utilized; is time saving and enables business owners and prospective clients share ideas, information and knowledge within the business world. However, the following conclusions were revealed that;

1. The challenges in utilization of e-Marketing platforms affect its usage in Port Harcourt metropolis.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of the three respondents group on the extent to which they utilize e-Marketing platforms in shopping in Port

Harcourt metropolis.

3. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of the three respondents group on the extent to which they utilize e-Marketing platforms in sales activities in Port Harcourt metropolis.
4. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of the three respondents group on the extent to which the challenges in utilization of e-Marketing platforms affects their usage in Port Harcourt metropolis.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made;

1. To dispel fear and apprehension amongst users of e-Marketing platforms; the federal government should make effort to enact relevant laws against cybercrime and other laws that will protect various users.
2. Government should liaise with internet service providers to subsidize internet services/ICT facilities and make it more affordable to users.
3. Individuals should acquire ICT skills to enable them explore the various e-Marketing platforms effectively.
4. Government should improve in electricity supply.

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