
Market Forces and Marketing Performance of Leather Products Manufacturers in Abia State, Nigeria

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Abstract: *Marketing performance refers to the effectiveness of marketing efforts in achieving business success, particularly of the Leather Products Manufacturers in Nigeria. Of the thirty-six States of Nigeria, Abia State was selected for this study because of the huge commercial activities orchestrated by the beehive of small and medium scale enterprises in the State. The study adopted survey research design which involves the use of structured questionnaire with four-point Likert scale format to elicit responses from the selected members of Leather Products Manufacturers Association of Abia State (LEPMAAS) sized 233,819. The Taro Yamane formula was used to compute the sample size of 399. Using Cronbach's Alpha technique, the reliability coefficient of 0.961 was determined, reflecting high degree of internal consistency of the research instrument. Logit regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses. The findings of the study revealed that market forces not only relate to but influence the marketing performance of the Leather Products Manufacturers in Abia State. The study posited significant contributions of the various marketing techniques deployed by the Leather firms to marketing performance and non-significant role of distribution technique due to the use of traditional supply chain.*

Keywords: Marketing performance, Leather products, Market forces, Marketing Techniques.

INTRODUCTION

The leather products industry originated from the traditional crafts of artisans in the northern part of Nigeria. Due to its economic potentials, the colonial government set up centers with modern techniques to process hides/skins into leather. The post-independence era witnessed government policies aimed at boosting the leather industry which placed Nigeria on the map of Africa as one of the largest producers of leather. The Nigerian leather industry is an amalgam of ancient tradition

Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development UK and modern craftsmanship. The leather products industry in Abia State started with the use of animal hides and skins by the indigenous people to produce basic items such as footwear, belts, shoes, caps, and clothing, among others.

Sequel to Nigeria's independence in 1960, Aba emerged as a commercial hub of the South Eastern region. The ingenuity and entrepreneurial spirit of the people led to the establishment of numerous workshops to produce the famous "Aba-made" goods. These products are durable, affordable and popular in the West African countries. In Abia State, most of the leather products firms operate as small and medium scale industries (Manala, 2022). The leather industry in Aba grew in geometrical progression in the 1970s and 1980s and even extended to other parts of the State, because of the increasing demand for Aba-made leather goods. The Ariaria international market became the center for the manufacture and sale of leather products. The artisans in Aba possess the ability to replicate famous designs of quality leather products to enhance the export potential of Aba-made bags, shoes, belts and other accessories.

At the moment, the leather products industry has catalyzed the nation's economy, particularly Abia State, by attracting businesses from every nook and cranny of Nigeria and neighboring West African countries, culminating into heightened economic activities with the accompanying revenues. According to Huynh, (2021), the leather industry enhances economic growth through value-addition by transforming raw materials (hides/ skins) into finished products. The leather industry contributes to the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and offers opportunities for employment, skill acquisitions, and the development of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)(Neeraj,2016). The technological advancement of Abia State is enhanced as the industry adopts modern tools and machinery for the processing and production of leather products. The social impact of the Abia leather industry is poverty alleviation and provision of means of livelihood to families, including fostering community pride and identity can hardly be dismissed in a sentence.

Ernest, (2023) posited that the biggest leather markets in Nigeria are found in Abia, Anambra, Kano, and Lagos States. In view of the immense contributions of the leather industry to the nation's economy, any activity that affects the marketing performance of the industry deserves attention. Since market forces drive the economy by influencing the prices of goods and services, as well as the demand. Businesses should be aware of these forces, understand how they affect customers, and be ready to adapt to changes. But marketing practices that focus on meeting customer needs profitably may provide good insights into the leather industry operation.

Agu,*et al.* (2024) argued that marketing consists of individual and organizational activities designed to sense and serve the consumer's needs, facilitate and expedite exchanges to achieve

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individual and organizational goals through consumer needs satisfaction. While it is vital to identify the market acceptability of leather products, it is also needful to assess the interference of market forces on the effectiveness of the marketing efforts of the Leather Products Manufacturers. Darem, (2020) identified competition, consumer preferences, technological advancements, economic growth, and government regulations as the market forces that interfere with the progress of marketing in an industry. The forces affect the prices and quantity of goods/services, while influencing supply and demand in the marketplace. Magnus (2021) opined that good marketing strategy has the ability to increase marketing performance irrespective of the forces in the market. The effectiveness of the marketing efforts of the Leather Products Manufacturers in Abia State in achieving business success in the face of the prevailing market forces, is what this study attempts to address, among others.

Statement of the Problem

The leather products industry in Nigeria, especially Abia State is a credible source of livelihood to many families. This fact highlights the importance of the leather industry in the economy. The challenges of the leather industry in Abia State include raw material availability, market forces which includes competition, economic, and technological factors. Ofurum, (2020) suggested an implementation of a cluster model to address the myriad of challenges faced by these artisans and provide an enabling environment to facilitate the growth and development of the leather products industry in Abia State.

The cluster model has the potential to affect market competition by increasing productivity of businesses in the cluster, drive innovation in the field and stimulate new trades. At the moment, the artificial cluster of the leather products manufacturers at Ariaria zone of Aba which was originally a residential area lacks infrastructures that support production and marketing. The irregular supply of quality hides and skins leads to fluctuations in production and delays in meeting the delivery schedules for finished products. The presence of cheap synthetic or vegan leather has intensified competition in the leather products market. The absence of technological devices such as automated cutting and stitching machines due to high costs affects production efficiency. The artisans deploy ancient tools such as knives, scissors, kerosene stoves, etc, in production, which can compromise the quality standards of the finished products. The leather market is subjected to demand fluctuations arising from fashion trends, consumer preferences and economic conditions such as inflation, exchange rate volatility and these factors may impinge on marketing performance. The understanding of the market forces prevalent in the leather products industry is helpful in planning marketing strategies to manage the uncontrollable market situations. The

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identification of the effects of the market forces, and how to mitigate the adversities to improve the marketing performance of the leather products manufacturers provoked this study.

Objective of the Study.

The broad objective of the study is to evaluate marketing performance of Leather Products Manufacturers in Abiastate, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to determine:

- a) the extent to which market forces influence marketing performance of Leather Products Manufacturers in Abia State.
- b) the extent to which marketing techniques contribute to the marketing performance of Leather Products Manufacturers in Abia State.

Research Questions The following research questions guided the study:

- a). To what extent has market forces influenced the marketing performance of the Leather Products Manufacturers?
- b) To what extent has marketing techniques contributed to the marketing performance of the Leather Products Manufacturers?

Research Hypotheses

The research hypotheses were formulated in null form.

H₀₁: Market forces have no significant influence on the marketing performance of Leather Products Manufacturers.

H₀₂: Marketing techniques have no significant contributions to the marketing performance of Leather Products Manufacturers.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE.

Conceptual Review

Marketing performance analyses increase customer engagement by providing insights into what content, channels, and messages engage the audience. This permits businesses to tailor their marketing energies to better meet customer needs and preferences, leading to higher engagement and loyalty. In today's fast evolving business landscape, marketing performance analysis of an industry has become requisite tool for businesses desiring to gain a competitive edge. By analyzing vast amounts of data, businesses can uncover valuable insights and make informed decisions that lead to better outcomes and improved marketing performance. Arpit(2023) said that marketing performance assessment involves the collection, measurement, and interpretation of data related

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to various marketing activities and campaigns. It provides organizations with the ability to assess the effectiveness of their marketing strategies, understand customer behavior, and identify areas for improvement. By leveraging on marketing performance assessment, leather products manufacturers can fine-tune their marketing efforts, optimize advertising expenses, and enhance customer engagement. This improves the return on investment (ROI), leads to stronger customer relationships, boost sales, and drive sustainable growth of the leather industry (John, 2023). Barabbas (2018) posited that marketing performance analysis is a crucial component of any successful marketing strategy.

Marketing performance as an important component of organizational activity has been attracting increasing attention from both scholars and practitioners. According to Johansson *et al.* (2008), marketing performance refers to how well a firm does in its business environment. It represents the successes of a firm in the market characterized by its ability to create acceptable outcomes and actions (Islam *et al.*, 2018). Marketing performance measurement entails tracking, forecasting and controlling important variables to examine whether a business is meeting its marketing objectives or not. It constitutes critical means of assessing and improving the success of business enterprises and industries.

Factors Affecting Marketing Performance

Ebele,(2023) revealed that factors affecting marketing programs in an industry are market forces factors. The forces are international transaction, speculation and expectation, supply and demand. Market Trends are akin to market forces. Market trends are what allow traders and investors to earn profits. Whether on a short- or long-term time frame, in an overall trending market or a ranging environment, the flow from one price to another is what creates profits and losses. Anasama (2023) observed five major market trends that can affect marketing in any industry. These factors cause both long-term trends and short-term fluctuations. These factors are international trade, inflation, technological advancement, and competition and consumer preference.

International trade allows countries to expand their markets and access goods and services that otherwise may not have been available domestically. As a result of international trade, the market is more competitive. This ultimately results in more competitive pricing and cheaper products (Anasama 2023). Many countries promote economic growth by integrating into the world developmental programs, and poverty reduction schemes. The integration has raised living standards around the world and most developing countries that shared in this prosperity program experienced dramatic rise in incomes(Zsolt *et al.*, 2012). Elias, *et. el.*, (2018) opined that the flow

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of funds between countries impacts the strength of a country's economy and its currency. The more money is leaving a country, the weaker the country's economy and currency. The countries that predominantly export, whether physical goods or services, are continually bringing money into their treasuries. This money can then be reinvested to stimulate the financial markets within those countries and these activities constitute the international transactions.

Inflation leads to persistent increase in the prices of goods and services in the economy. The purchasing power of money diminishes as the cost of living rises over time. It measures the rate of increase in price over a specified period. With increase in cost of finished products, viz, shoes, bags, caps, etc, the Leather Products Manufacturers spend more money on advertising, marketing, and incidental expenses. Inflation is a noiseless thief that takes business profits. The consequence of inflation is decreased profit margins, culminating into stiff challenges and inability to stay competitive in the market (Huynh, 2021). It is a factor that pulls and pushes demand and supply of every industry (Amadi 2019). According to Dona, (2020), the visible impacts of inflation on businesses include loss of purchasing power, higher interest rates, higher prices for goods/services, and economic decline.

Technology revolutionized business systems by providing new and innovative ways of reaching and engaging customers. Technology enhances product value to the extent of meeting and exceeding customers' expectation (Onwumere&Ozioma 2015). Mbadiwe (2012) considered the impact of technological advancement, relevant options and channels, firms utilize to satisfy and communicate with prospective and existing consumers. As technology brings innovation, it impacts the production and marketing of leather products in different ways, including product enhancement and the means of informing consumers (Onwumere&Ozioma 2015).

Competition as a determinant of market forces leads to decreased visibility (Agara,2021). With many companies vying for consumers' attention, to stand out and get noticed in the marketplace can be challenging. Competition decreases visibility, lowers sales, and reduces profit margins of the Leather Products Manufacturers. When competition is fierce, the leather firms are forced to reduce prices to stay competitive. Magwa (2018) posited that excess competition in the market causes saturation as customers stop leveraging on their purchasing power. The implication is that the demand for the products or services declines, resulting in some parties losing. The leather industry faces the challenge of down-sizing staff due to bankruptcy. The affected workers and their families suffer both financial and emotional traumas. On the positive side, Agara (2021) stated the advantages of competition to consumers. With more people buying the leather products, the manufacturers are encouraged to produce more goods and stimulate economic growth. Fierce Competition may lead to decrease in the prices of leather products.

Marketing techniques influence marketing performance. The combination of marketing tools and methodologies used to achieve marketing objectives include product, price, promotion and place. Cole *et.al* (2019) explained that rightful application of promotion, product improvement, right price, availability of product at a convenient place and relationship marketing enhance marketing efforts.

Theoretical Review

Market Theory and Price System

Market theory and Price System were published in 1963 by Professor Israel M. Kirzner. Market theory postulates that society consists of individuals seeking to act to improve their positions. The theory provides a platform for the analysis of leather products market system. The theory states that acts of individual participants in the market are perceived as taken in consequence of definite acts. The theory postulates that market phenomena do not emerge haphazardly in a vacuum because they are uniquely determined by market forces. It assumes that the events in a market at any time should be ascribed to what has happened in the past, and to what is anticipated in the future. The leather products market system could be examined to discover chains of causes and effects of the market forces as well as determine the degree of success which the system has achieved business goals based on its marketing efforts.

Market theory elucidates the principles that guide market operations, buyers and sellers' behaviors, price mechanism, resource allocation, income distribution, global trade and government policies. The implications of market theory to the Leather Products Manufacturers activities are analyzed in line with the aforementioned perspectives. The market theory states that consumers dictate what is produced and leather product manufacturers respond to their demand, resulting in a market that reflects consumer tastes and preferences. The strategy encourages innovations and product varieties designed to meet the needs of consumers. The marketplace signal to producers and consumers is price. Increase in demand leads to price rise which encourages more supplies and any decrease in demand causes price drop. The manufacturers cut down on supplies to stabilize prices. The price mechanism creates stable market conditions, capable of influencing more investments in the leather industry. Market theory further postulates that in a market engulfed in fierce competition, there is efficient allocation of resources and prices reflect the true worth of goods and services on sale. The implication is that the leather products market can regulate itself with less of government intervention and still achieve business success. Market theory assumes that rewards to individuals are based on productivity. But markets can create unequal income

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distribution due to disproportionate advantages where some are gaining at the expense of others. In the leather products industry comprising small and medium-scale industry, the unequal income distribution may result in huge economic disparities, necessitating government intervention to create more equitable distribution of wealth.

Market theory advocates open markets, free trade and minimal intervention of government in the leather business. The involvement of the Leather Products Manufacturers in the global trade leads to economic growth and development but with negative consequences of environmental degradation, and labor exploitation. Market theory provides platforms for governments to design economic policies such as setting interest rates, taxes on leather products and welfare packages for staff aimed at stabilizing the economy.

Empirical Review

Contributions of Leather Products to Economic Growth

The leather industry can contribute to the growth of an economy through employment generation, export earnings, value addition, linkages with other sectors, innovation and technology, infrastructure development and tax revenue (Chima, 2019). In developing countries, the leather industry constitutes an important source of employment, particularly for those who are unskilled or semi-skilled. Omisakin,(2019) estimated that the leather processing sector in Nigeria employs over 750,000 workers with about 500,000 workers in the finished leather goods sector. Neeraj, (2016) researched on the role of leather industries in the development of Indian economy. He discovered that leather manufacturing sector makes significant contribution towards economic growth, balanced regional development, employment generation and overall poverty reduction. The study report revealed that leather industry in India is bestowed with an affluence of raw materials as the country is endowed with 21% of world cattle/buffalo and 11% of world goat/sheep population. In addition to the country's natural endowment are the strengths of skilled manpower, innovative technology, increasing industry compliance to international environmental standards, and the dedicated support of the allied industries. The research showed that leather industry is providing job to about 2.5 million people, with about 30% women and 70% from the weaker sections of the society.

The policybrief of the Nigerian Economic Summit Group (2017),stated that one of the leading sectors in Nigeria, driving national output is leather industry. The industry generates 65% employment, and is capable of creating 50% export opportunities with improvement in value-addition of the raw materials. According to the policy brief of the Economic Summit Group Nigeria has the largest resource of goatskin and kidskin in Africa, representing 46% and 18% of the total

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market share in West Africa and Africa. Cheteet, *al.*, (2013) emphasized the need for value addition in Nigeria's leather supply chain to upgrade its position in the regional and global leather markets with varying implications on intra- and inter-trade, backward integration, employment generation, industrial deepening, increased productivity and international trade. Competitiveness. Gimbaet. *al.*, (2023) reviewed the impact of leather and leather products in Nigerian economy and concluded that agriculture supports leather production through rearing of animals for the supply of raw materials. The leather products such as bags, footwear, belt and others accessories added values to Nigerian economic growth and business development. The finished leather products encourage self-reliance, and enterprises creation which stimulates economic development.

Marketing Performance Appraisal

When a firm has set specific marketing objectives, it could use marketing performance appraisal to weigh the outcomes of the objectives. Yusuf, (2018) expressed that reviewing the results of marketing activities of a firm would throw light on what works and what does not work in the organization. According to Sogo (2021), for marketing performance appraisal to be impactful, the organization must set goal-oriented marketing parameters for review during the appraisal. The implication is that marketing appraisal cycle needs to focus on setting, reviewing and reassessing the key objectives of the organization's marketing plan. Anyawu, (2015) posited that the objectives of marketing performance appraisal should impose time limits with realistic, specific and measurable goals. The goals must meet certain criteria to enable employees and managers know what they are capable of doing independently to uphold the organization's efforts to achieving business success. In his contribution, Gaba, (2021) stated that measuring marketing performance would provide insights into the effectiveness of campaigns, help optimize strategies, allocate resources efficiently, and drive better return on investment (ROI), and business growth. Every marketing tactics has specific metrics available to reach organizational marketing goals. Fala, (2014) opined that defining the right metrics to measure a particular marketing objective would determine the tools a marketer uses for performance appraisal.

According to Basil, (2017) marketing performance measurement should be a logical extension of the planning and budgeting exercise that happens before a company's fiscal year. Zeni (2018) stated other reasons companies evaluate marketing performance to include; monitoring marketing's progress in line with its annual goals, determining the areas of the marketing mix(product, price, place, and promotion) that need improvement, assessing if company goods and services meet customer needs and stakeholder expectations. Beso (2021) listed marketing performance metrics as profit margin, sales volume, /annual sales growth, customer retention rate, lead conversion rate, customer acquisition cost, customer satisfaction, market shares, return on

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investment, return on asset and position of products in the market. Marketing performance metrics or key performance indicators (KPIs) are useful to both marketing professionals and non-marketing executives. Oko and Kalu (2014) conducted a research on marketing performance management of selected small and medium scale enterprises in Nigeria. The study showed that small and medium scale enterprises constitute over 70% of the industrial sector of Nigeria. Unfortunately, these firms, based on estimation of performance do not contribute significantly to the macro development of the society. This poor level of contribution may be attributed to paucity in the adoption of marketing management principles and techniques. The study reported that small and medium scale enterprises in Nigeria should invest in personnel training, particularly in the area of marketing performance management. The knowledge would reposition marketing for efficiency and effectiveness, to make contributions to corporate success and macro-economic development. For effectiveness and sustainability, Oko and Kalu (2014) recommended the use of non-financial metrics to appraise marketing performance of an organization on short term basis. However, for the purpose of maintaining a balance, a marketer may use a combination of financial and non-financial metrics to appraise marketing performance.

METHODOLOGY

Abia State of Nigeria was selected for the study because of the huge commercial activities orchestrated by the beehive of small and medium scale enterprises in the State. The three senatorial zones of Abia State, namely Abia North, Abia Central and Abia South, constituted the area of study. The towns selected from the zones for the purpose of this study are Ohafia, Umuahia and Aba. The study adopted survey research design which involves the use of questionnaire to solicit information from a group of respondents randomly selected from the population. The members of the Leather Products Manufacturers Association of Abia State (LEPMAAS) are the respondents with population size of 233,819. The Taro Yamane formula was used to compute the sample size of 399. A structured questionnaire containing four-point Likert Scale was used to elicit responses from the selected members of LEPMAAS in Abia State. Using Cronbach's Alpha technique, the reliability coefficient of 0.961 was determined, reflecting high degree of internal consistency of the research instrument. Descriptive analysis was used to analyze objective one while Logit regression analyses was used to test hypotheses two and three.

Methods of Data Analysis Descriptive analysis was used to achieve objective (a), while objective (b) and (c) were analyzed using Logit regressions.

Model Specification

The model used to ascertain the broad objective of the study is thus stated. Regression analysis

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was adopted in testing hypotheses b, and c. Using logit regression analysis data to ascertain market forces affecting marketing performance or dependent variable (Y) to the independent variables (X), the model is specified as follows:

$$\Pr(Y=1/X_1, X_2, X_3, \dots, X_k) \dots \dots \dots (2)$$

Where

Using logit regression analysis data to ascertain market techniques that affects marketing performance or dependent variable (Y) to the independent variables (X), the logit regression model is specified as follows

$$\Pr (Y=1/X_1, X_2, X_3, \dots, X_k, \dots \dots \dots (3)$$

Where, Y = Market Shares (number of customers)

X1= Product innovation (diff. products)

X2= Price strategies

X3= Promotion strategy

X4= Distribution

X5= Relationship marketing

X6= Experience

ei = error term

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSES OF DATA

Table 1. Distribution of questionnaires

Respondents	No. of Questionnaires Distributed	No. of Questionnaires Returned	No. of Questionnaire not returned	Percentage
Abia South	290	157	133	74
Abia Central	70	36	34	17
Abia North	39	17	22	09
Total	399	210	189	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 1 shows that 399 questionnaires were administered to the target respondents, viz, shoe (foot wears), belt and bag makers & other skilled leather users. The return rate was as follows; 157

Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development UK questionnaires (74%),36 (17%), and 17(09%) from Abia South, Central, and North respectively while189 (47%) questionnaires were not returned by the respondents.

Table 2: Distribution of literacy levels/years of experience of the Leather Products Manufacturers.

	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Education			
Primary	32	15	
SSCE	65	31	
ND	34	16	
HND	23	11	
B.sc & above	56	27	
Total	210	100	
Years of experience			
1 – 5	50	24	
6 – 10	67	32	
11 – 15	34	16	
16 – 20	25	12	
21 – 25	15	7	
26 – 30	8	4	12
31& above	11	5	
Total	210	100	

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 2 shows that the highest educational qualifications of the respondents was secondary school certificate (31%), followed by university degree (27%), national diploma (16%), primary school(15%), and higher diploma(11%) certificates. In terms of experience, 32% of the respondents have acquired about 6 to 10 years' experience in the Leather firms, 24%, 16%, and 12% indicated 1 to 5, 11 to 15, and 16 to 20 years' experience respectively while others were between 4 to 7 years.

Table 3: Ordinary Least Square (OLS) estimates of the influence of market forces on marketing performance of Leather Products Manufacturers.

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Variables	Coefficient	Std. Error	T-values
Constant	561.108	98.212	4.113***
CT	.742	.191	-3.905***
IT	.840	.517	3.504**
IF	.432	.302	-2.183*
TA	.712	.612	4.012***
F-ratio	4.213***		
Adjusted R ²	.231		
R ²	.685		

Source: Field survey, 2024**Annotation:** *** Significant at 1%, ** Significant at 5%, * Significant at 10%.

(CT=Competition; IT=international Trade; IF = Inflation; TA=Technological advancement)

Table 4: Logit regression analysis of the contributions of marketing techniques to marketing performance of Leather Products Manufacturers.

Marketing techniques (Variables)	Coefficient	Std. error	z-statistic	Prob.
Product innovation	0.312	0.022	3.613***	0.000
Pricing Strategy	0.341	0.041	2.932**	0.004
Promotion Strategy	0.774	0.249	2.243***	0.000
Distribution (Place)	1.321	0.342	0.412	0.328
Relationship marketing	0.041	0.034	1.767*	0.035
Constant	7.312	1.541	2.652***	0.000
R ²	0.634			
LR – statistic	16.463			

Source: Field survey data: 2024**Annotation:** ***; ** and * represents 1%, 5% and 10% significance levels.

ANALYSES OF DATA

Test of hypotheses.

Hypothesis one

H₀₁:Market forces have no significant influence on the marketing performance of Leather Products Manufacturers.

In Table 4, the F- ratio of (4.213), statistically significant at 1% level indicates high probability for all regressions and this implies high goodness of fit of the regression line. International trade

Publication of the European Centre for Research Training and Development UK and technological advancement were statistically significant to marketing performance at 1%, 5% with t-values of 3.504 and 4.012 respectively. Competition was statistical significant at 1% with a t-value of -3.905 while inflation was statistical significant at 1% with a t-value of -2.183. The result of the analysis reveals that international trade and technological advancement positively affect marketing performance while competition and inflation negatively affect marketing performance of the Leather Products Manufacturing Firms. Table 3 shows the Logit regression model of $R^2 = 0.685$, which implies the total variation in the dependent variable (marketing performance) is caused by changes in the independent variables (market forces i.e., international trade, competition, technological advancement and inflation). The null hypothesis (H_{01}) is therefore rejected and the conclusion is that market forces have significant influence on the marketing performance of Leather Products Manufacturers.

Hypothesis two

H₀₂: Marketing techniques have no significant contributions to the marketing performance of Leather Products Manufacturers.

Table 4 shows the Logit regression analysis of the contributions of marketing techniques to marketing performance of Leather Products Manufacturers. Product innovation was statistically significant at 1% with value of Z-statistics at 3.613 ($P=0.000$). At 5% level of significance, pricing strategy reported Z-value of 2.932 ($P=0.004$) and promotion strategy was statistically significant at 1% with Z-value of 2.243 ($P=0.000$). Relationship marketing was statistically significant at 10%, with Z-values of 1.767 ($P=0.035$) while distribution (place) was statistically insignificant with Z-value of 0.412 ($P=0.328$). The McFadden R^2 of 0.634 reveals high variance between the independent variables of marketing techniques and marketing performance of 0.63.4% as the difference of 36.6% in performance may be accounted for by other variables not included in the model. The null hypothesis (H_{02}) is therefore not accepted and the implication is that marketing techniques (product innovation, pricing strategy, promotion strategy, relationship marketing) contribute significantly to the marketing performance of Leather Products Manufacturers.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS.

The return rate of the administered questionnaires was 53% due to time constraints and respondents' apathy. The findings reveal that majority of the respondents were holders of Senior School Certificates, followed by holders of degree and diploma certificates. The implication is that the respondents are literate and well informed coupled with many years of experience most of them have acquired in the leather industry. The information from the respondents is therefore germane and authenticates the findings of the study. The years of experience suggest that the

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existence of the Leather Industry in Abia State has run into decades, with continuous entry and exit of participants.

The result of hypothesis one analysis concluded that market forces had strong influence on marketing performance of the Leather Product Manufacturers. The technological advancement and international trade exert positive influence on marketing performance of the Leather Products Manufacturers. Advancement in technology leads to uplifting of leather products quality to global standard and increase in digital platforms to create brand awareness and boost customer traffic. International trade enhances brand recognition and expansion of the market for leather products through global digital reach. It leads to diverse supply chains, increases availability of leather products and reduces lead times to enhance marketing performance. The market forces of competition and inflation exert negative influence on the marketing performance of the Leather Products Manufacturers. Competition creates opportunity for customer switching, difficulty in building customer loyalty, brand dilution and copycat marketing. Instead of developing unique brands, the Leather firms may focus on copying competitors' strategies. This reactive strategy weakens the competitive edge and marketing performance of the Leather Products Manufacturers. Inflation reduces the purchasing power of customers, increases costs of marketing leather products, creates price sensitive customers, and leads to stagnation in the development of leather products brands and makes marketplace transactions uncertain. This result corroborates Daniel (2014) opinion that inflation has the capacity to reduce level of patronage of small and medium scale industries. Suffice to assert that marketing performance of Leather Products Manufacturers is eroded during inflationary periods.

The hypothesis two analysis results confirmed the assertion that marketing techniques, (product innovation, pricing strategy, promotion strategy, and relationship marketing) significantly contribute to the marketing performance of Leather Product Manufacturers. Product innovation enables the Leather Products Manufacturers to maintain market relevance (stand out in the market), develop strong brand reputation, drive differentiation, increase customer engagement and stimulate market growth. This aligns with the opinion of Onwumere (2015), that no matter where innovation takes place in a product, it has the capacity to enhance marketing performance of small and medium scale industries. Pricing strategy has the capacity to stimulate sales, generate revenue, and influence customer perceptions, market positioning and the dynamics of competition in the leather industry. The pricing strategy of the Leather Products Manufacturers therefore has significant contributions to marketing performance. Promotion strategy contributes wholesomely to the marketing success of the Leather Products Manufacturers. It creates brand awareness, stimulates sales growth, communicates value proposition, influences customer behavior and provides competitive edge for leather products brand in the marketplace. Applying varieties of

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promotional tools such as advertising, personal selling, sales promotion and publicity improves customer reach and the engagement of leather products users. Relationship marketing focuses on building long-term relationships with leather products customers. It repairs trust deficit, fosters customer loyalty and retention, increases lifetime value of leather products customers, improves brand advocacy and reduces costs of marketing the products. According to Onwuasoanya (2014), relationship marketing has tendencies of eliciting word of mouth promotion that retains and brings new customers to firms. It enhances a sustainable marketing performance of Leather Products Manufacturers. The distribution technique of Leather Products Manufacturers showed non-significant contribution to their marketing performance. The reason is the adherence of the Leather Products Manufacturers to the less flexible traditional supply chain, flowing from order placement, order processing, production process, warehousing, and distribution to delivery. The Leather firms mostly manufacture the leather footwear, bags, belts, clothings and other accessories based on order placement from the customers who after the production process take responsibility for the delivery of the products from the warehouse. The modern distribution technique of digital supply chains which leads to high marketing performance appears un-accessible to these leather products manufacturing firms due to limited knowledge and exposures.

Implications of the Study

The study presents a paradigm shift by the Leather Products Manufacturers from the traditional supply chain cycle prone to varying lead times and less flexibility to modern digital supply chains with high performance rating.

CONCLUSION

Marketing strategy is cardinal to the operations of every leather products manufacturer. The influences of the market forces should be factored in every marketing plan to take advantage of the market situations. A good combination of the marketing mix variables would enhance the success of the industry's marketing performance, irrespective of costs implications. Relationship marketing has shown the potential of attracting new customers and retaining existing ones. The opinion expressed by (Ibeko, 2016) that rendering services to a customer remains the key and two edged sword of marketing strategies, corroborates the significance of relationship marketing. The market forces of competition and inflation exert negative influences while technological advancement and international trade have positive impact on the

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performance of the leather industry. Product innovation, price strategy, promotional strategy, and relationship marketing positively contribute to marketing performance of the Leather Products Manufacturers. The adoption of these marketing strategies would assuredly increase the number of customers of leather product manufacturing firms in the industry. For a successful marketing performance to be achieved during inflationary periods, the Leather Products Manufacturers should maintain focus on value proposition to sustain customer loyalty and minimize customer switching.

Recommendations

. Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are necessary;

- a) Leather Products Manufacturers should adopt different marketing strategies such as product innovation, pricing techniques, relationship marketing and maintain various promotional approaches to enhance marketing performance.
- b) Government should formulate policies that would reduce inflation to single digit as to facilitate the economic survival of the leather industry, among others.
- c) Leather Products Manufacturers should embrace modern technology to raise the quality of the finished goods to international standard, fit for the global market.
- d) The Abia State Government should designate an area for the leather industry, equipped with infrastructures for production and marketing of quality leather footwear, bags, belts, clothing and upholstery materials, acceptable in international markets.
- e) To enhance a seamless application of the marketing techniques amidst the market forces, regular workshops and seminal lectures should be organized for the members of the Leather Products Manufacturers Association by the state government.

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