

Humancentric Marketing Techniques as Determinant of Marketing Performance of Non-Alcoholic Beverages Firms in Imo State Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between Humancentric marketing techniques as determinant of Marketing performance in non-alcoholic beverage firms operating in Imo State, Nigeria. The objective of the study is to assess the impact of design thinking on the effectiveness of Marketing strategies employed by these firms. A descriptive survey design was used, and the sample comprised the management and staff of Coca-Cola Bottling Company and Dubic Breweries Limited in Imo State, Nigeria. Data was collected through a structured questionnaire, and Marketing performance was measured based on the yearly turnover of the non-alcoholic beverage firms. The research questions were analyzed using frequency counts and percentages, while the hypotheses were tested using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation. The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between design thinking and Marketing effectiveness, indicating that effective design thinking can contribute to attracting and retaining customers, impressing customers, and establishing strong relationships. These findings highlight the importance of Humancentric marketing techniques in enhancing the profitability and stability of non-alcoholic beverage firms. The study recommends that non-alcoholic beverage firms in the region focus on defining their brand effectively and incorporating design thinking strategies to improve their Marketing performance and gain a competitive edge in the market.

Background to the Study

Marketing is not just a basic function; it encompasses the entire business seen from the perspective of its end result, which is the customer's point of view (Ryu et al., 2014). Dating back to the days of Adam and Eve, marketing has been practiced in various forms and has now become the most crucial function in the business world. It is the business function responsible for identifying unmet needs and desires, assessing their significance, determining the target market that the organization can best serve, selecting appropriate products, services, and programs to cater to these markets, and encouraging everyone in the organization to prioritize and serve the customer (Kotler & Armstrong, 2011). Marketing is the force that utilizes a nation's industrial capacity to meet the material wants of society, ultimately raising the standard of living for its people.

Marketing should not be narrowly perceived as the task of finding clever ways to sell products. Many people confuse marketing with its sub-functions, such as advertising and selling (Huang & Hoang, 2014). Authentic marketing is not merely about selling what is produced; it is about understanding customer needs and creating solutions that deliver satisfaction to customers, generate profit for producers, and benefit all stakeholders (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010). Market is achieved by providing customer satisfaction through product innovation, quality, and exceptional service. Without these elements, no amount of advertising, sales promotion, or salesmanship can compensate.

The Nigerian marketing system's origin can be traced back to the development of the country's economy. The history of Nigeria cannot be fully understood without considering both its economic and marketing sectors. According to Uzoka (2015), Nigeria is an African country with a landmass of approximately 941,849 square kilometers and a population of over 163 million people (NPC, 2011). It consists of 36 states, the Federal Capital Territory, and about 774 local governments. Nigeria's landscape ranges from rainforests in the south to Sahel Savannah in the north, with a tropical climate and abundant natural resources, including solid minerals, oil, and gas. Nigeria is classified as a third-world country, indicating that the production and distribution of goods and services are still undergoing developmental processes.

The marketing system, on the other hand, encompasses all the exchanges that occur within a society, along with the facilitating institutions (Ubanagu & Ndubisi, 2012). It comprises the core marketing system and the public marketing system, which include local companies, suppliers, intermediaries, competitors, customers, government regulatory agencies, credit commodity, independent press, financial institutions, and more (Kotler, 2012). Given the close connection between the marketing system and the economic system, it is crucial to acknowledge the social and economic challenges that the Nigerian marketing system has faced. These challenges range from the country's slow pace of development to its current state of economic and political crises. It is important to mention the oil boom in the early 1970s, which led to the neglect of other sectors of the economy. Moreover, the focus on politics in Nigeria has also affected the marketing system, as those responsible for representing the society's interests in decision-making

processes have often misinterpreted their people's needs, resulting in neglect of areas such as agriculture, technical skills, and education that could have propelled the country to greater heights. In this study, we aim to examine the developmental trends in the Nigerian marketing system, along with the challenges it faces and potential solutions.

While great devices may be invented in the laboratory, great products are invented in the marketing department. Many remarkable laboratory inventions fail to generate excitement or interest. Marketers have the responsibility to "think customer and guide companies in developing offerings that are meaningful and appealing to their target customers. In today's rapidly changing global economy, traditional business roadmaps can no longer be relied upon (Urnett, 2015; Kummer, 2010). Companies are realizing that building a strong reputation takes time and effort, but it can be easily undermined if customer satisfaction is not prioritized. Smart companies understand that long-term success lies in cultivating mutually satisfying customer relationships based on delivering quality, service, and value.

Humancentric marketing is an approach that prioritizes the customer by placing them at the heart of marketing strategies and activities. It emphasizes the importance of understanding customer needs, preferences, and behaviors to deliver personalized experiences and value. By gaining deep insights into customers through market research and data analysis, marketers can create targeted and relevant messaging, products, and services. According to Peppers and Rogers (2016), this customer-centric approach helps build stronger relationships, enhances customer satisfaction, and drives business growth. By aligning marketing efforts with customer desires, humancentric marketing enables companies to deliver meaningful and appealing offerings that resonate with their target audience.

Market performance is a comprehensive evaluation of a company's effectiveness and success in the marketplace, encompassing various indicators such as financial outcomes, market share, customer satisfaction, brand reputation, and competitive positioning (Kotler & Keller, 2016). It is crucial to understand how marketing efforts relate to market performance to grasp the concept fully. In this context, humanizing marketing efforts plays a significant role in driving positive market performance. By recognizing the human element behind business decisions and connecting with customers on a deeper level, companies can create meaningful experiences that resonate with their target audience (Anojan & Subaskara, 2019). This approach builds trust, taps into people's emotions, and influences their decision-making process, thereby positively impacting market performance (Kotler & Keller, 2016). The ability to establish strong connections with customers through human-centric marketing enhances customer loyalty, satisfaction, and overall market performance.

Techniques for humancentric marketing involve finding a balance between personal attention and the convenience of automation and advanced technology. Customers value being recognized as individuals with unique needs and preferences. To cater to this,

businesses can implement strategies like offering both chatbot and live chat options on their website, allowing customers to choose the level of interaction they prefer (Kotler & Keller, 2017). When starting a new business or launching a startup, effective branding is crucial for success. Branding plays a significant role in establishing a strong and distinctive brand identity that resonates with the target audience. Neglecting branding can undermine the efforts in finance, management, product development, and marketing (Kotler & Keller, 2017).

To justify marketing expenditures and demonstrate marketing's contribution to overall performance, measuring marketing performance is essential. Marketing professionals face increasing pressure in this regard. Research on measuring marketing performance is necessary to restore confidence in the field and strengthen its standing within organizations (Ambler & Roberts, 2019; O'Sullivan & Abela, 2019; Stewart, 2019; Bolton, 2019; Lehmann, 2019). Understanding and effectively assessing marketing performance can enable marketers to quantify their contributions to a firm's financial success. Marketing performance refers to the achieved sales volume within a specified period compared to predetermined sales targets (Rotich, 2016). Achieving greater sales performance is a key objective for sales leaders as it directly impacts their key performance indicators. In today's dynamic business environment, organizations that rely on poor information for key sales decisions risk losing their competitive edge. To effectively measure marketing performance, it is important to establish clear goals and objectives. This involves aligning marketing efforts with overall business objectives and setting specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) targets (Kotler & Keller, 2016). By defining key performance indicators (KPIs) that directly reflect marketing's impact on the business, such as customer acquisition costs, customer lifetime value, brand awareness, and customer satisfaction, marketers can track and evaluate their performance accurately (Lee, 2019).

Data analysis and marketing analytics play a crucial role in assessing marketing performance. By leveraging data from various sources, such as customer surveys, sales reports, website analytics, and social media metrics, marketers can gain valuable insights into customer behavior, preferences, and the effectiveness of marketing campaigns (Brynjolfsson et al., 2011). This data-driven approach allows for informed decision-making and optimization of marketing strategies to drive better results.

Ultimately, measuring marketing performance goes beyond the numbers. It is about understanding the impact of marketing activities on the overall success of the business. By demonstrating the value and effectiveness of marketing initiatives, marketers can strengthen their position within organizations, secure resources for future campaigns, and contribute to long-term business growth (Webster, 2019). Furthermore, the insights gained from measuring marketing performance enable marketers to make informed decisions, optimize strategies, and deliver better customer experiences. Marketing performance measurement is a crucial aspect of evaluating the effectiveness and impact

of marketing efforts. By setting clear objectives, leveraging data and analytics, and incorporating qualitative insights, marketers can accurately assess their performance and make informed decisions to drive business success. Embracing a data-driven and customer-centric approach to measuring marketing performance empowers marketers to continually refine their strategies, enhance customer experiences, and contribute to the growth and profitability of their organizations.

Statement of the Problem

Today, organizations face significant challenges in outperforming their competitors in an increasingly hostile business environment. This holds true for industries like food and beverages, which strive to meet the evolving needs and preferences of their customers. To gain a sustainable competitive advantage, firms prioritize strategies that focus on Humancentric marketing techniques and Marketing performance. These approaches aim to optimize efficiency and create value for customers while achieving corporate objectives. However, despite these efforts, the food and beverages industry still experience low customer patronage. This study seeks to explore the relationship between Humancentric marketing techniques, Marketing performance, and customer patronage in non-alcoholic beverage firms in Imo State, Nigeria. Understanding and implementing these concepts is crucial for success in the food and beverage sector.

Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to assess Humancentric marketing techniques and Marketing performance of non-alcoholic beverages firms in Imo State Nigeria.

Specifically, the study will examine:

- i. The relationship between design thinking as humancentric marketing technique and marketing effectiveness of non-alcoholic beverages firms in Imo State.
- ii. The relationship between design thinking and Marketing efficiency of non-alcoholic beverage firms in Imo State Nigeria.

Research Questions

This research question guided the study:

- i. What is the relationship between design thinking as humancentric marketing techniques and Marketing effectiveness of non-alcoholic beverage firms in Imo State Nigeria?
- ii. What is the relationship between design thinking and Marketing efficiency of non-alcoholic beverage firms in Imo State Nigeria?

Hypotheses

- H₀₁** There is no significant relationship between design thinking as humancentric marketing technique and Marketing effectiveness of non-alcoholic beverage firms in Imo State Nigeria.
- H₀₂** There is no significant relationship between design thinking and Marketing efficiency of non-alcoholic beverage firms in Imo State Nigeria.

Methodology

Descriptive survey design was used in this study. The management and staff of Coca-cola bottling company and Dubic breweries limited firms in Imo State Nigeria constituted the population of this study with a population of three hundred and sixty-five (365). The sample size of this study is one hundred and ninety-one (191) determined from the population unit using Taro Yamani's formula. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled Humancentric Marketing Scale (HMS) which was made up of two sections i.e. A and B. Section A contained questions that elicited the respondent's personal data e.g. company name, location, age, occupation and gender while section B contained four (4) structured question items which were developed from the research question and structured in a four-point scale of; Strongly Agree (SA) (4-point); Agree (A) (3-point); Disagree (D) (2-point) and Strongly Disagree (SD) (1-point). Marketing performance was measured by the yearly turnover of the non-alcoholic beverage firms. The research questions were answered using frequency counts converted to percentages with 2.50 as the criterion mean while the hypotheses was tested using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation at 0.05 level of significance. The hypotheses decision rule was based on the calculated t-cal against the tabulated t-tab. Since SPSS was used here, the rejection of the hypotheses was based on the comparison of the SPSS t-value or significance level in the output directly with the chosen 0.05 alpha level of significance. When the t-value is equal to or less than the chosen alpha, reject the null hypothesis, if otherwise, accept the null hypothesis.

Results

Table 1: What is the relationship between design thinking as humancentric marketing techniques and Marketing effectiveness of non-alcoholic beverage firms in Imo State Nigeria?

S/N	ITEMS	Mean	SD	Decision
	Designs thinking is important in the Marketing effectiveness of our non-alcoholic beverage company as it:			
1	Attracts Customers	3.84	0.92	Accepted
2	Retains Customers	2.99	0.96	Accepted
3	Impresses customers	3.26	0.80	Accepted
4	Establishes relationships with our customers	2.97	0.94	Accepted

Table 1 indicates that attracting customers, retaining customers, impressing customers, establishing relationships with our customers were the relationship between design thinking and marketing effectiveness of non-alcoholic beverages firms in Imo State Nigeria, as their mean scores were more than 2.5 which is the criterion mean.

Table 2: What is the relationship between design thinking and Marketing efficiency in beverages firms in Imo State Nigeria?

S/N	ITEMS	Mean	SD	Decision
Designs thinking is important in Marketing efficiency of our non-alcoholic beverage company as it aids in:				
1	Creating and maintaining relationship	2.72	0.81	Accepted
2	Creating customer satisfaction	2.81	0.91	Accepted
3	Building brand equity	3.06	0.83	Accepted
4	Product bundling	2.81	0.92	Accepted

Table 2 indicates that creating and maintaining relationship, creating customer satisfaction, building brand equity and product bundling were relationship between design thinking and Marketing efficiency of non-alcoholic beverages firms in Imo State Nigeria as their mean scores were more than 2.5 which is the criterion mean.

Hypotheses Testing

This section presents the summary of hypotheses testing in accordance with the raised objective of the study. T-test was used to test the hypotheses of significant relationship between design thinking and Marketing effectiveness of non-alcoholic beverages firms in Imo State Nigeria. The summary of this analysis is presented as follows;

Table 3: Summary of T-test showing no significant relationship significant relationship between design thinking as humancentric marketing technique and Marketing effectiveness of non-alcoholic beverage firms in Imo State Nigeria.

Variables	Sig	R
Design Thinking (DT)	0.165	
Marketing effectiveness	0.116	0.072

Table 3 shows that the correlations between design thinking and Marketing effectiveness is 0.104 which is more than 0.05, indicating a strong relationship, therefore we reject the null hypothesis of no significant relationship.

Table 4: Correlations matrix showing the relationship between design thinking and Marketing efficiency of non-alcoholic beverages firms in Imo State Nigeria

Variables	Sig	R
Design Thinking (DT)	0.165	
Marketing effectiveness	0.116	0.072

Table 4 shows the correlations between design thinking and market share growth is 0.072 which implies that there is a significant relationship between design thinking and Marketing efficiency of non-alcoholic beverages firms in Imo State Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

It was revealed that there is a significant relationship between design thinking and Marketing effectiveness of non-alcoholic beverages firms in Imo State Nigeria as the correlation index measured was less than 0.05. This implies that attracting customers, retaining customers, impressing customers, establishing relationships with our customers were the relationship between design thinking and Marketing effectiveness of non-alcoholic beverages firms in Imo State Nigeria. These findings align with the research of Smith & Johnson, (2022), which emphasized the significance of food type, overall restaurant package, and food quality as crucial variables according to customer preferences.

Conclusion

The non-alcoholic beverage business strives in an atmosphere which is favorable and profitable. For there is sustainability in the beverage business, strategies which are able to motivate and retain customers needs to be put in place. Effective knowledge of Humancentric marketing enhances productivity and customer acquisition therefore elongating the life span of the organization for maximum profitability. There is need therefore for the management and staff of non-alcoholic beverage firms to understudy the various factors such as Humancentric marketing which would enhance the profitability of their business in order to ensure its stability in the market and increased marketing performance.

Recommendations

Based on the findings the following recommendations were made:

1. Non-alcoholic beverage firms in South East, Nigeria should strive to define their brand effectively as it affects the Marketing performance of their firm.
2. Design thinking as a factor should be put into consideration to improve the Marketing performance of non-alcoholic beverage firms as good designs strategically positions non-alcoholic beverage firms to enjoy greater patronage and increase customer base.

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