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AN ASSESSMENT OF THE BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES OF E-MARKETING AMONG FACILITIES MANAGEMENT FIRMS IN KADUNA

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Abstract

Facilities Management (FM) is underpinned by integrating people, processes technology and the workplace. Since the advent of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), FM business delivery has been more effective similar to other business deliveries. Among other applications of ICT, electronic marketing (e-marketing) has been identified to enhance the business delivery operations in organisations. While such success of e-marketing is most often than not covers areas such as banking and manufacturing, there is need to explore the accorded successes e-marketing can accrue specific to FM. Hence, this study assessed e-marketing with a view to ascertain the benefits and challenges (of e-marketing) in FM delivery. Using judgmental sampling, data is collected from 75 organisations practicing FM in Kaduna with the aid of a structured questionnaire. The technique was 'drop and collect'. All 75 distributed questionnaires were successfully retrieved. Data is analysed descriptively using the mean and Relative Importance Index (RII) to Rank factors studied. Results reveal that out of the 8 identified benefits of e-marketing to FM, the most beneficial application of e-marketing to FM is its enhancing effectiveness of work and increasing job productivity. Similarly, out of 11 identified challenges of e-marketing to FM, the greatest challenge perceived by the respondents is that interacting with e-marketing tools require some mental effort. Findings reveal that although the respondents perceive e-marketing to FM to being beneficial to both the work and the employee (which by extension is beneficial to the organisation), the mental effort required to using e-marketing tools in FM serves as a great challenge. Therefore, although e-marketing in FM can be said to affect people, work processes and the workplace, the extent of the effect depends on the mechanism put in place to improve the efficiency ofFM service deliveiy (both the core and supporting businesses of an organisation). The implication of this study is for organisations to reap from the identified benefits and also mitigate the challenges of e-marketing towards effective FM sei-vice delivery.

Keywords: Benefits; Challenges; E-marketing; Facilities Management

INTRODUCTION

Striving for the efficient management of the built environment in which businesses thrive, Facilities Management (FM) has emerged as a discipline which integrates resources towards optimal business delivery. While such role of integration played by FM has been often cited by global players of FM such as The International Facilities Management Association (IFMA), The European Facility Management Network (EuroFM) and The British Institute of Facility Management (BIFM) among others, the resources at the disposal of such integration are: people; process; workplace and technology (as reported by Aziz, Nawawi, & Nor Rima, 2016a; Dore, Ines, & Lo Pedro, 2014; Aziz, Nawawi, & Nor Rima, 2016b).

The age of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) has revolutionalized businesses and brought about some paradigm shift in the operations of organisations. Among other ICT applications, electronic marketing (e-marketing) has been identified to have enhanced business operations over the years. This is in line with the claim by Chong, Man & Zhan (2011) that e-marketing as an ICT application is increasingly recognized as the key tool for effective performance in any organisation.

Marketing has a number of objectives which include: incorporating and acclimating people with associations and items; encouraging consumers to embrace specific items; and advancing a positive popular sentiment of an organization, item, or service (El-Gohary, 2010). The development of internet-based marketing has greatly enhanced the development of online marketing techniques in different business exchanges. E-marketing is one amongst several online marketing techniques. According to Burges & Bothma (2007), e-marketing can be defined as the use of electronic information and applications for arranging and executing the conception, appropriation, advancement and evaluating of ideas, products and enterprises to create exchanges that fulfil individual and organisational objectives. While this definition makes it clear that both the inputs and outputs of e-marketing are geared towards fulfilling the objectives of an organisation, the exchanges created by e-marketing is both electronic and wholly relies on the internet (this is confirmed by Harvey, 2010) and also Woon, Shafaghi., Woollaston & Lui, 2010). E-marketing covers both services and products.

E-marketing has been applied to numerous disciplines. With particular emphasis on FM discipline, (Ada, 2014) and also Mansir, Muhammad and Kasim (2015) are of the opinion that the use of ICT in FM (such as e-marketing) plays two major roles which are: as an enabler, whereby most tasks in FM organisations are becoming technology-based and as such, e-marketing enables the efficient execution of the task; e-marketing serves as a utility for innovation in FM organisations whereby its use optimises operations in the entire work processes. As such, the role of e-marketing towards the success of FM organisations cannot be overemphasised. This is evident from works of Dodo and Bilau (2014) which found that e-business in FM is perceived to be a driver of success in today's ever competitive business environments by its role as an efficient tool that can efficiently optimise FM delivery. This is consistent with the definitions of FM which integrates technology alongside people, processes and workplace to enable optimal business delivery.

The success of business organizations in their interactions with customers largely depends on their customer's satisfaction with the level of service delivery. This claim is reinforced by the fact that satisfied customers tend to be more loyal to service providers than unsatisfied ones, thus, the tendency of business continuity tends to be higher with satisfied than dissatisfied customers. Theodosiou and Katsikea (2012) found that organisations which attained higher-level business performance towards their customers expansively utilized the electronic techniques in their operations which by extension increased the value of their product or service.

More recently, organisations have moved from the use of traditional marketing of their products and services to e-marketing. Woon, Shafaghi, Woollaston & Lui (2010) in their investigation conclude that developing awareness of the value of e-marketing and its effect on changes is vital for successful operations of organisations. This discovery boosts the belief that e-marketing improves business processes while strengthening the awareness in new markets of organizations. Although most definition of e-marketing are typically on goods and/or services, e-marketing has equally evolved to advance and evaluate ideas. This is confirmed in the works of Burgess & Bothma (2007), Gay, Charlesworth & Esen (2007), El-Gohary (2010) and also Stokes (2011). The work of Mansir, Muhammad and Kasim (2015) found that the use of e-business in FM practice ranked low. This could probably arise on comparing areas that have excelled in applying e-marketing alongside its use in FM business operations of organisations in Nigeria. This is confirmed by Kalu, Nto, Chioma & Nwadighoha (2017) where they stress that there is almost certainly some organisations facing problems effectiveness, efficiency, client and employee fulfilment, research and development, and absence of awareness of the importance of e-marketing. While bulk of works on e-marketing available somewhat cover non FM operations in banking, manufacturing among others (as asserted by Kalu, *et al*., 2017), there is need to explore the accorded successes these industries have reaped from e-marketing specific to FM. Hence, this study intends to study e-marketing in FM with a

view to determine the benefits and challenges of e-marketing in FM.

E-Marketing: An Overview

The business environment of the 21st century is witnessing rapid change. This emanates from the pace of technological development whereby marketing of products and services have been enhanced extensively. E-marketing is one among other revolutionary forces responsible for such enhancement. The terms e-marketing, internet marketing, web marketing, digital marketing, online marketing are frequently interchanged and can often be considered synonymous. According to Harvey (2010), e-marketing or electronic marketing refers to the utilization of marketing principles and techniques through electronic media and more specifically the internet. In another definition, e-marketing encompasses every one of the activities a business conducts by means of the worldwide web with the point of pulling in new business, retaining current business and developing its image identity (Woon, Shafaghi., Woollaston & Lui, 2010). These definitions clearly show that irrespective of the application of e-marketing, it is a business tool that relies on the internet. This means that certain communication and/or networking infrastructure must be in place for e-marketing to hold.

Strauss & Frost (2014) identify several strategic areas in which e-marketing can help an organisation which include: increased benefits; reduced expenses; generates well-organized supply chains; enlarging client base among others. Similarly, Charlesworth & Esen (2009) identify numerous challenges to of e-marketing faced by organisations which among others include: marketing integration; ICT capacity; security and privacy; infrastructural problems; and ethical issues. Collectively, these issues form the basis of continually improving the business operations of organisations. Among others, these benefits and challenges of e-marketing will be adopted for this study.

Facilities Management

Facilities Management (FM) emerged as a discipline which aim at achieving the sustainable management of the built environment. Over the years, several definitions of FM have evolved. Global players of FM such as The International Facilities Management Association (IFMA) and also The European Facility Management Network (EuroFM) define FM as a discipline that seeks to integrate people, process, workplace and technology (Aziz, Nawawi, & Nor Rima, 2016a; Dore, Ines, & Lo Pedro, 2014; Aziz, Nawawi, & Nor Rima, 2016b). Similarly, The British Institute of Facility Management (BIFM) defines FM as the integration of multi-disciplinary activities within the built environment and the management of their impact on people, the workplace and technology (Dodo and Bilau, 2014). The commonality of these definitions lie in the role of 'integration' underpinning each definition of FM. The ultimate goal of such integration is ensuring optimal functionality of the built environment with a view to achieving the primary activity/core function of any workable space being managed. This is irrespective of the complexity and variability of factors of any built environment.

E-Marketing and Facilities Management

The scope of the Facilities Management discipline covers all aspects of property, space, environment control, health and safety and bolster services and contributes to the delivery 0f strategic and operational objectives on everyday objectives (Mohd-Noor & Pitt, 2009). Office Management needs to be applied from a strategic approach where the capacity is seen to be able to enhance associations by implementing all the strategic approaches and models available. This supports assertions by Tucker & Pitt (2009) that office management ought to be viewed strategically; where the integration and alignment of non-core services required to operate and keep up a business completely bolster its core objectives. Hence, the demand and development of marketing has taken a new height as customers of organisations prefer to search for products and services through electronic means thereby challenging FM of organisations to adopt approaches that could create some form of convenience for the prospective customer and efficiency for the organisation.

Although the emergence of ICT applications such as e-marketing has accorded people more information, Ruchika (2015) is of the opinion that different businesses may develop different e-marketing objectives depending on their operating circumstances. Hussin (2007) believes that the use of technology in the management of assets leads to effective and efficient management of assets and facilities. Additionally, the consistent development of technology opens the route for the enhancement of service delivery in FM. Since FM is regarded to being a relatively new discipline, it could enjoy the flexibilities for readily available techniques and approaches in its implementation. The terms 'people', 'workplace' and 'technology' from this afore-presented definitions of FM has close links with ICT applications. Comparing these definitions of FM and e-marketing, people are meant to acquire ICT skills which when applied to an organisation will lead to efficient management of the organisations workplace. The focus of this study seeks to assess the variables that drive such efficient management of the organisations workplace specific to FM service delivery.

METHODOLOGY

Data obtained from the Federal Inland Revenue Service reveal that 75 organisations operating within Kaduna metropolis practice FM. Using a survey technique for data collection, judgmental sampling is used for this study. The choice of such non-probability sampling is informed by the claim of (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009) to selecting judgmental sampling when a researcher wish to select cases that are particularly informative in fulfilling the research objectives. All 75 organisations will be covered in this study based on the argument of (Saunders et al., 2009) that the entire population can be used for populations that are not large. Hence, 75 structured questionnaires will be used for data collection. The questionnaire consists of a 5-point Likert scale which are: Strongly Disagree (1); Agree (2); Undecided (3); Agree (4); and Strongly Agree (5). The 5-point scale was transformed to mean item score (MIS) for each of the factors of causes and effects delays as assessed by the respondents. The indices were then used to determine the rank of each item. The ranking made it possible to cross compare the relative importance of the items as perceived by the respondents.

Data is analysed descriptively. The mean is computed using the equation by Aigbavboa, Tshikhudo & Thwala (2014) and also Aigbavboa, Liphadzi & Thwala (2014) which is:

$$\text{Mean} = \frac{1n_1 + 2n_2 + 3n_3 + 4n_4 + 5n_5}{\sum N}$$

Where: n_1 = number of respondents for strongly disagree

n_2 = number of respondents for strongly agree

$\sum N$= total number of respondents

Furthermore, Relative Importance Index (RII) is used to compute the importance of factors for both the benefits and challenges of e-marketing in FM by means of ranking each factor. The RII is computed using the equation by Aigbavboa, Tshikhudo & Thwala (2014), Aigbavboa, Liphadzi & Thwala (2014) and also Mansir, Muhammad and Kasim (2015) whereby RII is expressed as:

$$\text{RII} = \frac{1n_1 + 2n_2 + 3n_3 + 4n_4 + 5n_5}{\sum N} \times \frac{1}{k}$$

Where: n_1 = number of respondents for strongly disagree

n_2 = number of respondents for strongly agree

$\sum N$= total number of respondents

K = highest weight on the Likert scale

The choice of using RII is informed by the assertion of (Sodangi, Khamdi, Idrus, Hammad, & AhmedUmar, 2014) where they encourage the use of RII in FM researches. Similarly, Opoku, Ayarkwa & Agyekum (2014) are of the opinion that to analyse data on a Likert scale (as used in this research), the application of RII is suitable.

RESULTS

All 75 questionnaires distributed during the survey were retrieved. Since none of the questionnaires had missing data, all were used for the analysis. While 40 percent of the respondents have working experience of 1-10 years, 60 percent of the respondents have working experience of over 10 years. These results are depicted in Table 1.

Table 1: Years of experience of respondents

Experience (years)	Number of respondents	Percentage
Less than 5	13	17.33
6-10	17	30.67
11-15	24	32
16-20	10	13.33
Above 20	11	14.67
Total	**75**	**100**

Eight benefits of e-marketing to FM were studied. Results of Table 2 shows that the three most beneficial e-marketing applications to FM are: Enhancing effectiveness of work and increasing job productivity; Improving job performance and is compatibility with all aspect of work; and creating a computerized customer database that can be used to perform marketing activities (e.g. inform customers about new products). Similarly, the three less beneficial e-marketing applications to FM are: consistency with the values of enterprises; helping against traditional marketing to focus on internal resources on core strategic plans and projects; e-marketing is very important in conducting business.

Table 2: Benefits of E-Marketing in Facilities Management

Benefits of e-marketing to FM	Frequency of responses					∑f	∑fx	Mean	RII	Rank
	5 SA	4 A	3 U	2 D	1 SD					
Enhances effectiveness of work and increases job productivity	47	20	7	1	-	75	338	4.51	0.90	1st
Improves job performance and is compatible with all aspect of work	31	28	11	4	1	75	309	4.12	0.82	2nd
Create a computerized customer database that can be used to perform marketing activities (e.g. inform customers about new products)	32	22	12	6	3	75	299	3.98	0.80	3rd
Reduce staff, print and postage costs	30	20	16	6	3	75	293	3.91	0.78	4th
Minimize the manual input on conducting electronic transactions to create an automated workflow and business-to-business automated processes to fulfil all customers' needs	16	29	21	6	3	75	274	3.65	0.73	5th
Is very important to conduct business	15	27	25	5	3	75	271	3.61	0.72	6th
Helps against traditional marketing to focus on internal resources on core strategic plans	12	18	31	9	5	75	248	3.31	0.66	7th
Is consistent with the values of our enterprise	13	17	29	9	7	75	245	3.27	0.65	8th

Source: Field Survey (2017)

CONCLUSION

This study examined the several benefits and challenges of e-marketing to FM of organisations in Kaduna metropolis and was able to rank both the benefits and challenges. These results show that e-marketing to FM indeed has several benefits. Findings deduced imply that although the respondents perceive e-marketing to FM has high benefits to the employee and the work, the respondents perceive e-marketing to FM having lower benefits to organisational values and traditional work practices. This latter finding may be as a result of the majority of the respondents

(60 percent) having over 10 years of experience whereby the use of e-marketing could infringe some values they have withheld in their respective organisations over the years. Also, the challenges of using e-marketing tools requiring some mental effort and also lack of knowledge/difficulty of access to the service could be attributed to the majority of the respondents (60 percent) having over 10 years of experience whereby the use of e-marketing and ICT could indeed pose such challenges to their previous work practices.

In conclusion, e-marketing to FM affects the employee, the customer and also the organisation. In FM terms, e-marketing can be said to affect people, work processes and workplace. However, the extent of the effect to a large extent depends on the mechanism put in place to improve the efficiency of FM service delivery to both the core and supporting businesses of an organisation. The implication of this study is for organisations to reap from the identified benefits and also mitigate the challenges of e-marketing to its FM service delivery.

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