

Full Length Research Paper

Fashion marketing: Strategies in the garment-making micro and small enterprises in Nakuru, Kenya

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Fashion is very dynamic and way of life for humans in many consumer products, clothing included. In Kenya, the clothing industry is characterized by a dynamic environment and intense competition caused mainly by enlarged globalization, trade liberalization and importation of second-hand (*mitumba*) clothes. In this kind of environment, it is becoming increasingly difficult for an enterprise to maintain long-term success. Thus, the clothing enterprises are faced with challenges that demand them to offer higher value added products that meet the demands of the customers. As a solution, sound marketing strategies are critical to the survival and growth of micro-enterprises in the garment making sector. However, there is limited research that has looked at the enterprises from a marketing strategy perspective in terms of the type of marketing strategies that are embraced. This paper aims at highlighting the various marketing strategies. The study used ex-post facto research design targeting garment-making micro-enterprises with less than ten employees in Nakuru town. The main data collection instrument was a questionnaire that comprised closed and open-ended questions. Principal component analysis and Chi-square goodness-of-fit test (χ^2) were used to determine the various marketing strategies and test the hypothesis that there was no variation in the marketing strategies implemented by garment-making micro-enterprises. Eight strategies were identified as being implemented by garment-making micro-enterprises. Based on the results of this study, it is concluded that interactive marketing is the most implemented strategy while e-marketing is the least. However, further research is required to explore the impact of implementing the various marketing strategies on the growth of the enterprises.

Key words: Garment-making, micro and small enterprises, marketing strategies.

INTRODUCTION

To survive and out of necessity, many people engage in entrepreneurial activities such as garment-making as micro enterprises. These enterprises are aimed at providing specific goods and services to targeted apparel consumers. According to Mulu-Mutuku et al. (2004), many

manufacturing micro-enterprises in Nakuru have generally stagnated in terms of growth mainly due to competition. This is witnessed especially in the garment making sector that is characterized by a variety of substitutes and free entry and exit into business.

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In such a situation, marketing is a major issue that needs to be addressed if the micro enterprises are to survive (Ngoze, 2006). The garment-making entrepreneurs must thus adopt marketing strategies that will make them achieve a competitive advantage and enable them remain relevant in the market place.

Stokes and Wendy (2008) argue that marketing plays an essential role in micro-enterprises' growth. This is mainly because a marketing strategy aids in identifying customers who the business can competitively serve, and tailoring product offerings, prices, distribution, promotional efforts, and services towards those customers. In addition, a sound strategy enables an enterprise to develop long-range plans which ensure survival, profitability, growth, and perpetuity (Schiffman and Kanuk, 1992; Cohen, 2000; Fifield, 1992).

Though the textile and clothing sector is a main focus for investment and principal in the development and growth of a country (Ikiara and Ndirangu, 2002), marketing at the micro level in Kenya has not received much attention from researchers. The sector is characterized by a dynamic environment and intense competition caused mainly by globalization, trade liberalization, importation of the second-hand (*mitumba*) clothes and imported new clothing (Kinyanjui and McComick, 2002; Malinowska-Olszowy, 2005; Mangieri, 2006). In addition to the above aspects, there is low demand for locally designed clothing (Elung'ata, 2003). Thus, garment making micro-enterprises in Kenya have the challenge to adopt marketing strategies that will enable them to be more competitive as well as face the threats from the liberalized market (Gakure, 2006).

Ngoze (2006) indicates that one of the major problems for micro-entrepreneurs is how to market their products. There is limited research on marketing strategies used by owners of micro-enterprises in garment making, yet marketing is very critical for business survival and growth (Björk et al., 2004). According to Li et al. (2008), micro-enterprises and large enterprises have different characteristics or approaches to marketing. This study identifies those approaches inherent in the garment-making micro-enterprises in order to gain an understanding of those strategies that are commonly used. This will help entrepreneurs in choosing the strategy to use as well as provide potential entrepreneurs with information on what is being practiced. With this information, an entrepreneur will devise creative and innovative ways of being unique as well as being competitive. It was hypothesized that there was no variation in the marketing strategies undertaken by various garment-making micro-enterprises in Nakuru town.

METHODOLOGY

Based on a total target population of 385 micro-enterprises dealing with garment-making in Nakuru Municipality, confidence level of 0.05 and confidence interval of 3, a sample of 295 respondents was

used for the survey. The sample was selected using a table of random numbers. In addition, 40 respondents participated in the interviews (10% of total target population). The primary method used for data collection was a questionnaire that comprised 27 items on a 5-Point likert scale ranging from "all the time" to "never" in relation to the types of marketing strategies that were adopted. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (1999), a sample size of 1 to 10% of the population may be selected for the purpose of pre-testing the research instrument. A sample of 30 respondents was thus used for the survey while 10 respondents were used for the interview to ascertain the reliability of the research instrument. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was used to test the reliability of the data collection instrument since it required only a single administration to provide unique estimate of the reliability for the given test. It also gave the average value of the reliability coefficients one would obtain for all possible combinations of items when split into two half-tests. The pre-tested questionnaire had a reliability coefficient of .795.

RESULTS

Principal component analysis using Varimax rotation method was used to identify the factorial structure of 27 items and reduce them to smaller number of variables (strategies). The principal component analysis was used for purposes of data reduction and generation of components that represented the strategies as variables (uncorrelated). Five items having factor loadings less than 0.5 were excluded from further analysis. The remaining 22 variables yielded eight strategies, namely; E-marketing; Interactive Marketing; Market Penetration; Pricing; Branding and Cost Reduction; Product Differentiation; Customer Focus; and Product Quality. These strategies had eigenvalues greater than 1 and the total variance accounted for was about 64%. This indicates there are the eight strategies are associated with marketing efforts by the garment-making micro-enterprises (Tables 1 and 2).

Interactive marketing

Interactive marketing strategy accounted for about 8% of the variance with a mean factor loading of .685. Majority of the respondents (66%) indicated having implemented interactive marketing as a strategy. This was the most implemented strategy and was ranked the first (Table 2). These results are consistent with Stokes and Wendy's (2008) arguments that most of the entrepreneurs spend most of their time and resources building relationships with customers who, when satisfied, recommend the business to others. According to Gwin (2009), interactive marketing is considered to be the best approach to creating value for the customer as well as being fundamental in satisfying customer's current and future needs. It is based on ensuring that the customers are well-taken care of. Based on the interview results, this strategy was enhanced by talking to the customers; listening to what they want; giving them full attention

Table 1. Rotated component matrix for marketing strategies.

Marketing strategy variables	Component								Communality
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
E-marketing									
communicate to customers through internet	.860	.071	.049	.012	-.073	.012	.046	-.081	.762
sell through internet	.843	-.025	.034	-.082	.132	-.017	-.036	.027	.738
source designs from internet	.731	.083	.074	.073	-.091	-.062	-.001	.023	.565
Market Penetration									
look for new ways to market designs	.073	.760	.118	-.079	-.018	.226	.113	.295	.755
only make clothes by order	.066	.697	.074	.128	.084	.147	.026	-.055	.544
constantly looking for new customers	-.022	.662	.206	.155	.149	-.153	-.119	-.029	.565
Branding and Cost Reduction									
have a business name	.057	.132	.790	-.048	.125	.206	-.018	-.290	.789
use modern machines	.096	.056	.760	.009	.025	-.261	-.010	.068	.664
employees paid for the work done	.028	.176	.652	.156	-.093	.041	.120	.152	.529
Interactive Marketing									
ask for feedback/evaluation	.030	.030	.011	.782	-.068	-.010	.127	-.012	.634
serving customers very important	.117	.134	.108	.720	.113	.171	-.014	.161	.630
Strong commitment to our customers	-.414	.092	.012	.554	-.034	.045	-.004	-.041	.492
Customer Focus									
customers opinion important in style decisions	-.088	.135	-.023	-.089	.754	-.138	-.011	.029	.623
focus on having as many customers as possible	.074	.079	.021	.219	.681	-.124	.274	.018	.614
set prices to increase flow of customers	.002	-.022	.060	-.101	.656	.439	.016	-.094	.646
Pricing									
our prices always lower than competitors	-.104	.017	-.018	.085	.011	.766	.027	.179	.639
prices based on market price	.046	.327	-.056	.161	-.171	.630	-.071	-.236	.625
Product Differentiation									
Keen on new designs that are on fashion	-.094	-.082	.159	-.066	.026	-.005	.715	-.034	.559
offer after sale services	.110	-.121	-.089	.168	.099	.136	.669	.076	.545
strive to have unique designs all the time	.003	.323	.000	.050	.074	-.164	.662	-.011	.578
Product Quality									
consider quality rather than price in choosing fabrics	-.114	-.079	.042	.007	.116	.212	-.066	.841	.791
emphasize on workmanship	.124	.257	-.051	.130	-.178	-.241	.110	.703	.697
Initial Eigenvalues (total)	2.892	2.314	1.792	1.727	1.566	1.408	1.160	1.126	
% of variance	10.32	8.742	7.977	7.606	7.529	7.290	7.083	7.018	
Cumulative % of variance	10.32	19.06	27.04	34.64	42.17	49.46	56.55	63.564	
Number of items (total = 22)	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	2	

Note. N of Cases = 256; Extraction Method, Principal Component Analysis; Rotation Method, Varimax with Kaiser Normalization, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy= 0.599, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, $X^2= 1145.081$, $p = 0.000$; $df= 231$, Rotation converged in 8 iterations.

when they walk in; and as well as negotiating at a personal level. This was possible since the business people had direct contact with the customers.

Branding and cost reduction strategy

This strategy explained 8% of the variance with a mean

Table 2. Implementation of the Marketing Strategies by the Micro-enterprises

Strategy	Implemented	Did not implement	Ranking
Interactive Marketing	170 (66%)	86 (34%)	1
Branding and Cost Reduction	155 (61%)	101 (39%)	2
Customer Focus	146 (57%)	110 (43%)	3
Market Penetration	144 (56%)	112 (44%)	4
Product Differentiation	141 (55%)	115 (45%)	5
Pricing	119 (46%)	137 (54%)	6
Product Quality	96 (37%)	160 (63%)	7
E-marketing	54 (21%)	(79%)	8

factor loading of .734. This strategy was implemented by 61% of the respondents while 39% did not. In garment-making, most branding is based on the owner's name(s). From the results of this study, most of the respondents indicated that they had a business name by which the customers identified them with. From the interview results, most of the businesses were named after the name of the owner. Most of the respondents (who use their names as a brand name) expressed that it was difficult to change the names since most customers were already used to refer to them that way. According to Azevedo and Farhangmehr (2005), brands provide emotional and self-expression benefits to the customers thus leading to business success since the customer tends to associate the product with the manufacturer. For example, a customer who is loyal to a particular designer derives satisfaction which makes him/her make repeat purchases. Gwin (2009) argues that repeat purchases are likely to take place if the customers identify with a particular product brand or name (owner's name or the business name) and associate that name with the manufacturer. This means that garment making enterprises that had a business name were likely to retain customers; hence more orders that translated to more profit. However, to build an image in the clothing market, advertising, quality and workmanship of the garment is of great importance.

Under this strategy, micro-enterprises also sought various ways of reducing or minimizing costs. Use of modern machine such as electric sewing machines, overlock and embroidery machines increase efficiency, hence, reduction of the operating costs. One of the interviewees indicated: "*Electric sewing machines are faster, neater and easier to use*". This implies that when using an electric sewing machine, one is able to make many pieces within a given time as opposed to the manual machines; hence reducing time spent. Results also indicated that workers were paid for the work done. This kind of arrangement ensured minimum costs of production since the workers were contracted only when there was work to be done. This was viewed as cost effective as opposed to a waged or salaried worker who needed to be paid at the end of the month whether or not there was work. Based

on these results, it is clear that most entrepreneurs in garment making look for ways of cutting costs. This showed that they were applying the principles of remaining competitive as posited by Bharradwaj et al. (2005), Gakure (2006) and Ngoze (2006), that for a business to be competitive, the enterprise needs to be the lowest cost producer relative to its competitors.

Customer focus

This strategy accounted for 8% of the variance with a mean factor loading of .697. This strategy was adopted by 57% while 43% did not adopt it at all. A customer-based strategy involves planning on how to handle the customers at every point and it is practiced by enterprises that are customer-centric. All the respondents interviewed were in agreement that the customer know what he/she wants and one has to listen to him or her (have products as per customer needs). Stokes and Wendy (2008) indicate that micro-enterprises adopt a customer-oriented strategy in order to survive and thrive in a competitive market. Based on this study, it is clear that garment-making micro-enterprises take customer opinion as regards to prices very important while devising ways of having as many customers as possible.

Market penetration

Market penetration as a strategy accounted for 9% of the variance with a mean factor of .706. It was undertaken by 56% of the respondents. Stokes and Wendy (2008) posit that enterprises implement this strategy with the aim of increasing their customer base as well as sales without making major changes on their products. The results indicate that most of the garments making micro enterprises focus more on the market. Market penetration as a strategy was introduced by Ansoff as an alternative strategy which links products to the markets with the least risk in the large firms (Kotler and Armstrong, 1994). However, this strategy is also applicable to micro-enterprises because it seeks to increase the market

share with the existing products. This means that one has to keep on looking for new ways to market his/her designs and constantly look for new customers.

Product differentiation

Product differentiation accounted for 7% of the total variance with a mean factor loading of .682. Those that implemented this strategy were 55% while 45% did not implement it. In garment making micro-enterprises, differentiation is achieved by having new and unique designs as well as offering "after sale" services. Based on the interviews, the most after sale services offered are ironing and quantity discounts. A customer who is price-sensitive would be loyal to a specific garment maker since he/she knows he/she will make discounts based on how many items he/she orders and the frequency of placing the orders.

The garment making entrepreneurs are also keen on what is in the market (fashionable), in order to ensure that their products are unique thus creating a competitive edge. Swinker and Hines (2007) hypothesized that fashion consumers are also keen on what is on fashion and would always want to be unique since clothing is used as a way of extending oneself. Interview results also indicated that fashion consumers want unique designs. Some interviewees indicated that fashion conscious customers hate to see someone else with similar designs and if this happens, they will never wear that garment even though it may be new.

Pricing

Pricing accounted for 7% of the variance with a mean factor loading of .698. The pricing strategy was implemented by 46% of the respondents while majority (54%) did not. According to Stokes and Wendy (2008), the pricing strategy can be equated to the price penetration approach. Based on the results, those who utilized this approach aimed at keeping prices as low as possible in order to achieve the highest level of sales. This indicates that some of the garment-making micro-entrepreneurs will always set prices lower than the competitors using the market price as the benchmark. These results tally with the remarks from some of the interviewees who indicated: "*cannot charge extremely high or low vis-à-vis the average market price*".

Product quality strategy

This strategy explained 7% of the variance with a mean factor loading of .772. It was implemented by 37% of the respondents marketing while 63% did not undertake it. This is an indication that few entrepreneurs in garment making pay attention to quality of the products. The

interview results indicate that good quality is one of the demands that customers make when they order garments. According to Stokes and Wendy (2008), product quality refers to the benefits to the customer as a result of using the product and the actual product features or characteristics that create these benefits. The quality of the fabric is important in garment-making because it affects the hand feel, texture and other performance aspects of the product. One of the interviewee indicated; "*Quality of a fabric is a thing one learns with experience, once you can distinguish between poor and good quality you can offer the best*".

Swinker and Hines (2007) indicate that majority of the fashion consumers (65%), consider quality as important in their clothing purchase. Thus, the entrepreneurs in garment-making micro-enterprises have the obligation to ensure that products presented to the consumers are made of good quality material with excellent workmanship. However, from this study, product quality was not a priority area. This explains why business in second hand clothing continues to thrive in Kenya since the clothes are viewed to be of higher quality as compared to custom-made clothing.

E-marketing

E-marketing strategy had factor loadings that ranged from .731 to .860 with a mean factor loading of .811. These explained 10% of the variance. Majority of the respondents (79%) indicated that they never undertook E-marketing with only 21% indicating that they undertook it. It was the least adopted strategy among those identified (Table 2). This means that garment-making micro-enterprises in Kenya have not yet embraced the usage of internet as a means of communication or for sourcing for designs, though it is viewed as a modern business practice.

These results are consistent with the findings of Kinyanjui and McCormick (2002) that most Kenyan garment making enterprises do not engage in E-marketing. Stokes and Wendy (2008) observed that the full impact of the internet on competitive strategies is yet to be seen among entrepreneurs. Based on the interview results, the main ways of communicating to the customers are through cell-phones and face-to-face.

However, there is need for the garment-making micro-entrepreneurs to embrace the internet more as a communication tool as well as a source of inspiration for the latest design ideas. This means there is need for computer training to equip the entrepreneurs with skills necessary to effectively implement this strategy.

Testing of the hypothesis on variation of marketing strategies

To test the hypothesis that there is no variation in the

Table 3. Chi-square goodness-of-fit test statistics for the marketing strategies.

Strategy	Chi-Square	df	Asymp. Sig.
E-marketing	85.562 ^a	1	.000*
Interactive Marketing	27.562 ^a	1	.000*
Product Quality	16.000 ^a	1	.000*
Branding and Cost Reduction	11.391 ^a	1	.001*
Customer Focus	5.062 ^a	1	.024*
Market Penetration	4.000 ^a	1	.046*
Product Differentiation	2.641 ^a	1	.104
Pricing	1.266 ^a	1	.261

Note. a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 128.0. *Significant.

marketing strategies undertaken by garment making micro enterprises, Chi-square goodness-of-fittest was used (Table 3).

The results indicate that there was variation in the distribution of six strategies which was statistically significant. The P-values were less than 0.05 and chi-square values were more than the critical value (3.84 at 0.05 confidence level and 1 *df*). These include E-marketing; Market Penetration; Branding and Cost Reduction; Interactive Marketing; Customer Focus; and Product Quality. However, two strategies had P-values of more than 0.05 and Chi-square value less than the critical value (Pricing and Product Differentiation); meaning that they did not vary in the distribution across the garment-making micro-enterprises. This means that entrepreneurs in the garment-making enterprises commonly implement Pricing and Product Differentiation strategies while there is a difference in the implementation of the other six strategies. This implies that these two strategies are very crucial in garment-making. However, entrepreneurs in garment-making micro-enterprises need to diversify their strategies in order to be unique and gain a competitive edge.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of this study indicate that there are various strategies that micro-enterprises can embrace as they try to market their products. Pricing and product differentiation were implemented across all the enterprises. Thus entrepreneurs in garment making or fashion design need to be keen on how they price their products and vary their design for them to remain competitive. Interactive marketing was the most implemented while E-marketing was the least implemented. For entrepreneurs to successfully implement e-marketing, they to be empowered so as to embrace the changes in technology. However, there is need for further research to investigate the most effective strategy/strategies to use in garment-making micro-

enterprises, highlighting those that are important and relating them to business performance/growth. This study can also be extended to other major towns such as Kisumu, Mombasa, Nairobi, Eldoret and Nyeri and comparisons need to be made.

Conflict of Interests

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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