ICT COMPETENCY NEEDED BY MOBILE NETWORK CARD RETAILERS IN BAYELSA STATE

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ABSTRACT

This research work understudies ICT competency needed by mobile network card retailers in Bayelsa State of Nigeria. The work used two research questions. The work was limited to Bayelsa State Mobile network card retailers. Survey research design was used in the study. The researcher developed an instrument titled "ICT Competency Test" (ICTCT). The instrument was validated by two experts in ICT unit in MTN office in Rumuokoro, Rivers State. The reliability of the instrument was calculated to 0.83 using Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient. The data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation for the research questions. While the hypothesis was tested using Z-test at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of research question 1 revealed that computer operation skill, internet skills, mobile phone operation skill and the use of projectors in marketing are needed in retailing cards. Research question 2 revealed also that most mobile card retailers do not have most ICT skills needed for card retail business. Finally, it was recommended that mobile network card retailers should undergo seminars and training on the use of ICT facilities for the growth and prosperity of their business.

Keywords: *ICT Competency, Mobile Network & Card Retailers*

Introduction

Information and communication technology (ICT) deals with modern gadget used as tool for modern business transaction and communication. The entire world is gradually moving from old system of analog communication and business transaction to advance modern digital communication system. The use of iPhones, Facebook, internets, projectors, computers, iPad and other advanced system of communication is an evidence of ICT dominance in the world system of organization. ICT has grown into different sector of the economy and created an easy means of exploration and development of concepts. ICT has explored significantly in the area of science, technology and social life of the world. Nagy, (2003) pointed out that investment in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and use, can affect innovation. Hallberg & Bond (2002) reemphasized the importance of technology to productivity by saying that the two most important ingredients to enhance the productivity of enterprises are access to finance and to the new technologies.

The current advancement of information technology (IT) going mobile, it has influenced a faster and more reliable broadband networks which have created an experience in a technology driven transition system. Technology based businesses can now be regarded as businesses that engage in technology related products, processes and services. There is also the tendency of low, medium and high-technology that may create a better business environment. Potter (2001) stated that one area of the economy which has seen significant growth on new technology-based products and services and the high-technology sectors are perceived as major sources of future economic prosperity and employment growth. The IT system involves the management information systems (computers, hardware, software, networks) used to automate and support business tasks and decision-making. IT is used to automate simple, routine tasks such as word processing and advanced processes such as production, scheduling and logistics. In this style, information technology enables businesses to operate efficiently and profitably. In examining the technological advances in the past years, observation shows a great increase in the competitive nature of the economic business world. Most industries and organizations use software, computers and the Internet to transform their businesses from local places of business to national and global market competitors. Many companies have responded to these changes by automating their business processes and capturing industry-related information and using it to their advantage.

The advent of technology has initiated businesses to remain flexible, adapting their operations to newer and better technological advances. Chaffey (2002) stated that business owners once had very few tools at their disposal; little more than a basic adding machine and paper records. Today's business owners can complete their duties much more effectively than their predecessors with an array of technological tools at their disposal. In making use of technological tools, organizations and workers enjoy a number of business-related benefits.

On the application of quality assurance, systematic testing is done to ensure that a business is producing quality goods and services for its clients. Rigorous quality standards aid in business outputs needed to meet the required specifications on popular demand. Quality assurance technique can be used within processes such as marketing, customer support and

accounting, as well as product testing. The effective and efficient processing of information related to achieving quality assurance goals is key to the delivery of quality goods and services to business customers. Investments in information technology can help make a firm's operational processes substantially more efficient, and its managerial processes much more effective. Ankit (2006) stated, by making such improvements to its business processes, a firm may be able to:

1. Dramatically cut costs
2. Improve the quality and customer service
3. Develop innovative products for new markets

The investment of information systems technology may result in the development of new products, services, and processes. This can:

1. Create new business opportunities
2. Enable a firm to enter new markets
3. Enable a firm to enter into new market segments of existing markets.

The inclusion of internet marketing involve social interaction of a business relationship that can be discussed in terms of how often people from the companies meet, or how well the parties know each other. It is stated that depending on the extent of the use of information technology for different exchanges, the impact on the social interaction patterns that are carried out without information technology may be influenced. One argument that could be raised in the theorizing on the effect of use of information technology in business relationships is that the number of meetings, or need for meetings will decrease, as the use of the technology handles a great deal of information exchanges, i.e. replaces some of the personal exchange of information.

ICT has a significant influence on our constant interaction in the society. For instance, now we can read our local newspaper using the online newspaper while we are abroad. Another example is we still can connect to our family, relatives, or colleagues while we are abroad by using the electronic mail, messenger, call conference, or video conference. Those are a simple example on how ICT has created a great impact to our life. To keep on the track with the world development, Nigeria should be following the increasing of ICT development number. Based on the Directorate, Transportation and Telematics of Industrial Ministry of Indonesia, the number of ICT user in Nigeria is still in low condition, the number of ICT utilization is only 68.1%. This is also a great opportunity and challenging problem for government and businessman in Nigeria for the future. Information era, digital computer and networking have changed the economy concept to the economy with no boundary in time and space. This phenomenon is called digital economy or economy network. Those things happen because of ICT. ICT brings a lot of advantages for the economic development; it enables millions of transactions to happen in an easy and fast way. Therefore, for improving the economic development and supporting the economy network, Nigeria should develop ICT in a best way. Moreover, Nigeria has a lot in human resources, world class industry which has a branch in the country, and IT industry cluster which is still growing and will get a better

improvement and performance if we use and implement ICT more. If Nigeria as a nation wants to accelerate the economic growth, using the ICT is the great choice to do that.

ICT is one of the economic development pillars to gain national competitive advantage. ICT can give a big help in improving quality of human life. ICT can be used as the learning and education media, the mass communication media in promoting and campaigning practical and important issues, such as the health and social area. ICT provides the wider knowledge and information, which can help in gaining and accessing information. With using ICT, it will be easier in linking all entities within the country. The communication and trading within one area to another area will be easier by using ICT, since the information exchange is easier. ICT can also leverage the national resources, ICT can help in promoting Nigeria's tourism and local product to the world as well as to local citizen within the country. ICT can bring the simplest way for maintaining the communication between the government and the citizen by using the e-government. Therefore, ICT should be more developed by Nigeria's government, if they want to get those benefits.

The telecommunications industry includes a number of subsequent, including the business-to-business sector, the government market and the consumer market. The consumer segment of the telecommunications industry can best be reached through retail outlets, whether brick-and-mortar stores or online shopping outlets.

Telecommunications products can be developed for relatively wide or narrow target markets. Defining your target will influence the types of products you sell and the ways in which you interact with customers.

The product mix is a major strategic decision for all retail operations. The mix of products you carry in your store can be influenced by your target market definition, but there are other factors to be considered as well.

Purpose of the Study

The study looked at ICT competency needed by mobile network card retailers in Bayelsa State. Specifically, the study intend to:

1. Find out if computer operation skill, internet skills, mobile phone operation skill and the use of projectors in marketing are needed in retailing cards.
2. Find out if mobile card retailers do have most ICT skills needed for card retail business.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent do card retailers need computer operation skill, internet skills, mobile phone operation skill and the use of projectors in marketing?

2. To what extent do mobile card retailers possess most ICT skills needed for business operations?

Hypothesis

The null hypothesis was used as a guide for the study and it was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

HO_1: There is no significant difference between card retailers' need for ICT skills and mobile card retailers' possession of most ICT skills needed for business operations.

Scope of the Study

The study is limited to ICT operation skill and mobile cards retailers in Bayelsa State of Nigeria.

Methodology

Research Design

The researcher used simple survey research design. This is because simple questionnaires were used to gather information and data for the study.

Population of the Study

The population consists of a total of 1,234 mobile Card retailers in Bayelsa State. The information was gathered from MTN, AIRTEL, 9MOBILE and GLOBACOM field marketers report. 70% of the card retailers are resident in Yenegoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State.

Sample of the Study

Purposive Sampling Technique was used to sample out 864 mobile card retailers in Yenegoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State. Yenegoa Local Government Area was selected because of the availability of more mobile card retailers. Also the presence of urbanization also influenced the choice of selection.

Research Instrument

The researchers developed a research instrument titled "ICT Competency Test" (ICTCT). The instrument is a three point rating scale consisting of a single test item. ICTCT contains response options such as High Extent (HE), Moderate Extent (ME) and Low Extent (LE). The response options were weighed as HE=3; ME=2; LE=1 respectively.

Validation of the Instrument

The instrument was validated by two experts in ICT unit in MTN office in Rumoukoro, Rivers State. The expert checked the language content of the ICTCT instruments and made necessary corrections before distribution to the field.

Reliability of the Instrument

Test-retest method was used to determine the reliability of the instrument. ICTCT was administered to 10 card retailers in Asaba Delta State. The reliability of the instrument was calculated to 0.83 using Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient.

Method of Data Collection

The researchers personally retrieved the filled data from the respondents in the field. A total of 744 items were retrieved which constitute 86% field retrieval. This figure was used for data analysis.

Method of Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation for the research questions.

Results

Research Question 1

To what extent do card retailers need computer operation skill, internet skills, mobile phone operation skill and the use of projectors in marketing?

Table 1: Card retailers need of computer operation skill, internet skills, mobile phone operation skill and the use of projectors in marketing

S/NO	Response	W	X			Wx	-x	Rmk
1.	High extent	3	4	5	0	1350		
2.	Moderate extent	2	2	5	0	500		
3.	Low Extent	1	7		4	74		
	Total		7	7	4	1924	2.50	H E

Standard deviation=0.06

Data shown in table 1 revealed that 450 card retailers to a high extent do need ICT skills for their business operation. 250 need ICT skills to a moderate extent and 74 mobile card operators need ICT skills to a low extent. Therefore, it would be stated that ICT skill is needed by card retailers to a High extent based on the mean value report of 2.50 range.

Research Question 2

To what extent do mobile card retailers possess most ICT skills needed for business operations?

Table 2: Mobile card retailers possess most ICT skills needed for business operation

S/NO	Response	w	X	Wx	-x	Rmk
1.	High extent	3	10	30		
2.	Moderate extent	2	220	440		
3.	Low Extent	1	544	544		
	Total		774	1014	1.31	L E

Standard deviation=0.07

Data revealed from table 2 show that 544 respondents indicate that they possess ICT skill to a low extent. 220 respondents revealed that they possess ICT skill to a moderate extent. 10 card retailers revealed that the possess ICT skill to a high extent. Based on the mean value report of 1.31 it would be stated that card retailers possess ICT skill to a low extent.

Summary of Findings

The following are the summary of the findings:

1. ICT skill is needed by card retailers to a High extent based on the mean value report of 2.50 range.
2. Most card retailers do not possess ICT skills for their business operations.

Discussion of Findings

ICT is essential for daily business growth and advancement. The study revealed that ICT skill is needed by card retailers to a high extent. This is in line with the statement of Osuala (2004) that views ICT programme as a means of boosting productivity among business minded individuals. Also, the findings of the study showed that most retail operators do not possess ICT skills. This is in agreement with the statement of Dalf (2004) which states that most business operators lack ICT operational capacity to run their daily businesses.

Conclusion

In all, it would be concluded that ICT skill which is relevant to card retail business is not been properly utilized. Most card retailers do not have ICT skills in the operation of their card retail business. Also card retail operators need ICT skills to a high extent for their business operations.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it would be recommended that mobile network card retailers should undergo seminars and training on the use of ICT facilities for the growth and prosperity of their business.

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