

IGBO TRADITIONAL MARKET DAYS: IMPLICATION FOR MODERN MARKETING IN NIGERIA

¹Enyia, Charles Daniel & ²Kalu, Sylva Ezema

¹PhD student, ²Professor

^{1, 2} Department of marketing,

University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria

Email - ¹charlesdanenyia@gmail.com, ²sylva.kalu@uniport.edu.ng

Abstract: *With the integrating speed of modern marketing in today's business environment, there is reason for scholars to forget how it all started. This study is aimed at creating a reminder on the relationship between Igbo traditional market days and modern marketing in Nigeria. 8 markets were selected from 3 states within South-East Nigeria which are; Afo Umuosu Nsulu Market, Eke Ohiabiam market, Ahia Nkwo market, Eke Awka market, Nkwo Ogidi, Afo Nnobi Market Eke Onwa market and Owerri Nkwo Orji market in Abia, Anambra and Imo states respectively, 360 copies were distributed to these markets (45 copies for each market), 299 were returned and useful for analyses. Wilcoxon Sign-Rank test was used in testing the null hypothesis. The study found a significant relationship between traditional market days and modern marketing.*

Key Words: *Igbo, Traditional Market days, Afo Umuosu Nsulu Market, Eke Ohiabiam market, Ahia Nkwo market, Eke Awka market, Nkwo Ogidi market, Afo Nnobi Market, Eke Onwa market, Owerri Nkwo Orji market, Abia, Anambra, Imo, Modern marketing & Nigeria*

1. INTRODUCTION:

The Igbo people are located on the south eastern part of Nigeria and they consist of five core Igbo speaking states which are Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo state. However, the Igbos spread across other states such as Delta, Rivers, Bayelsa, Akwalbom, Edo, etc (Okeke, Ibenwa & Okeke, 2017). According to National Population Commission (NPC) 2006 census of Nigeria, the Igbo population was estimated to number about 21 million. They inhabit a land area which is about 15800 square miles and they also occupy 5.8⁰ north and 6.8⁰ east. The origin of the Igbo people has remained exceptionally remarkable as it has been believed that the Igbos are descendants of the Gad who happens to be the seventh son of Jacob also known as Isreal (Oduah, 2013). Gad had three sons named Eri, Arodi and Areli and these sons settled in today south eastern Nigeria and have fathered so many clans and have established kingdoms and town which are still in existence today such as Owerri, Umuleri, Aguleri, Arochukwu etc.

The origin of market days in Igbo land can be traced to the reign of Eze Nriji for I within 1300-1390AD. According to Igbo history, Eze Nriji for was visited by four strangers one day at his palace. As they visited, these four strangers who were also regarded as wise men behaved as if they were deaf and dumb so they did not disclose to anyone what their mission was. However, history had it that Adama who happened to be one of the king's servant ushered them into the guest apartment. When Eze Nriji for went to see them in their apartment that night, they did not communicate with him, neither did they receive his gift of kolanut (Nwokoye, 2008). In his wisdom, Eze Nriji for instructed his soothsayer to monitor the activity of the strangers and this he did by sending a rat to disturb them while asleep. The rat had to disturb the four baskets each of them were carrying. When he nibbled the first basket which belonged to Eke, Oye woke up and called the owner of the basket (Eke) by name and told him to wake up and see what was happening to his basket. The rat repeated the same exercise on all other baskets and through this, the strangers revealed their names without knowing. Their names were Eke, Oye, Afo and Nkwo (Okigbo, 2015). The next morning, Eze Nriji for proceeded to see the strangers who were initially referred to as 'Ndibialaijeekwuokwu' which can be translated as (dumb visitors). As Adama broke the kolanut for the morning ritual, Eze Nriji for I called each of the strangers by name and they were astonished. Immediately, they requested for water to wash their hands and faces as well as request for kolanut. After the morning ritual exercise, these strangers gave the king four earthen pots and directed him to keep them in front of the shrine outside the palace. They informed the king that the pots were sent down by Chukwu (God Almighty) and his people must observe the names as market days. These pots were named after the strangers as well as the market days.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

Despite the unique history of the Igbos, the event of the civil war (1967-1970) left them in a condition which is similar to a conquered territory (Bruder & Parfitt, 2012). The civil war had so much effect on their economic operations such as observation of market days, displacement of people from their home, communities/territories, unfavorable treatment from the government and those from neighboring regions. One significant act from government

which creates much problems for the Igbos was the compulsory 20 pounds that was offered to Igbos irrespective of what they owned in the bank as well as the loss of manpower (over 2 million Igbos), (Eze, 2015). The confiscation of landed properties owned by the Igbos and other acts were also aimed at exterminating the existence of the Igbos and their God given marketing attributes. However, in all these odds, the Igbos have proven to be resilient in their business activities. Today, the Igbos have grown to be builders of nation as there is no part of Nigeria and abroad their presence is not found pioneering business affairs in large quantities. It is true that the Igbos found themselves in the midst of enemies who knew their worth yet would not want to see them prosper. Today, Igbos produce vehicles, software programs as well as banking platform for use in Nigeria today but it is sad to note that the government with high level of Islamic ideology would not let them grow in peace. This is because there is a natural fear that the Igbos would someday take the lead and make them inferior just like the case of Israel and neighboring countries. People still get frightened that despite all that was taken away from them, they have shown resilient and have come back to their feet. Another strategic move by the government of Nigeria to bring their economic progress to an end was the disintegration that was activated within the old eastern region. The change from regional to state government which brought about enmities between the core Igbo states and its neighbors. Take for example, the Ikwerre man who has very similar characteristics with the Igbos would choose to be called an Edo man rather than an Igbo man. These factors and many more created challenges which affected the implementation of traditional market days in Igbo land.

3. THEORETICAL FOUNDATION:

This study would be anchored on Guerrilla Marketing Theory and Resilience Theory.

Guerrilla marketing theory according to Levinson (1984) is a competition strategy used by organization whereby minimum budget is used in achieving big results and its methods are highly unconventional. Ries and Trout (1986) are of the opinion that one of the major drivers of Guerrilla marketing theory is the application of flexibility. According to Hutter and Hoffmann (2011), the effects of Guerrilla marketing theory are manifested in surprise, diffusion and low cost. Surprise marketing actions attract customers so much because they are taken unaware. This surprise leads them to diffusing such marketing information to various groups and individuals. This often deals with spread of information at very low cost. This theory is related to this work because the Igbos have fought to remain on their feet, they have surprised even the government of Nigeria and enemies within. They have grown to become leading marketers and producers and their productions are often self-advertising. Despite the fact that the government had employed several strategies to kill the concept of the Igbo language, the people have continually applied negative entropy. Some of the ways the Igbos have implemented Guerrilla marketing theory are viral marketing, Ambush marketing, Ambient marketing, etc and this can be regarded one of the reasons why the Igbos are known all over Nigeria as those who are associated with business. Without such marketing ideology, the Igbos would have become refugees after the civil war in Nigeria. The visit of the four strangers to Eze Nrijofofor I was a surprise to him and his ability to figure out the names of the strangers was also a surprise to them. The message from Chukwu was clear. He was to pass the message to all his subjects and market days were to be named after the names of the four strangers.

The second theory is Resilience Theory. This theory can be simply defined as a process of bouncing back from perceived or actual adversity, misfortune or frustration (Ledesma, 2014). According to O'Leary (1998), resilience is often associated with survival, recovery and thriving the introduction of things in the concept of resilience shows that an individual or group must have encountered a situation which must have made him go beyond the level where his strength can carry. It is also associated with high self-esteem, optimism, adaptability, determination as well as a high level of perseverance (Bonanno, 2004). Linking this to the Igbos, we see a high level of resilience existing among the Igbos because after they were conquered during the civil war, they have chosen not to remain on the ground. They have raised empire out of nothing and today, they have built their cities such as Onitsha and Nnewi into tourist and industrial hub. Despite the fact that the Igbo marketing days have not received the awareness it is supposed to receive, there is evidence that light is truly at the end of the tunnel.

4. MODERN MARKETING IN VIEW

Today, South-Eastern Nigeria still believes in the principle of market days. In fact, they have a calendar of market activities. Although, some of these market days have been renamed and modified to be in congruence with national and international marketing. Some have adjusted their market days to once every week or once every seven days. The Afo Umuosu-Nsulu market for instance is known for Saturday marketing where people from all corners of the state come together for buying and selling activities. Today, the use of ICT has created a dynamic shift in the ways in the ways in which businesses are being done (Saleh, Mirzaei, Aghaei & Abyari, 2012). The Igbos would no longer depend fully on traditional market days to carry out buying and selling functions because information and transactions can just occur with the click of a button. Because virtually every business has a web presence when there is no restriction, people can easily walk in and out of offices while sitting in the comfort of their rooms. Hoge (1993) defined e-marketing as the transfer of goods/services from one source (seller) to one or more destination (buyer)

which involves electronic methods. Furthermore, Strauss & Ansary (2006) also defined e-marketing as a process whereby ICT is used in creating, delivering and communicating value to customers. Both the events of the civil war and the introduction of ICT turned the marketing days practice around. Today, the Igbos own big businesses all across the country and the use of Igbo market days in another man’s land may not be ideal hence, the need to accept the reality of the day. However, most rural areas in south-east still follow the traditional Eke, Oye, Afo and Nkwo market days.

The introduction of Christianity to eastern Nigeria also influenced the practice of traditional market days and other festivals (Okeke, Ibenwa & Okeke, 2017). Most Igbos became more attracted to foreign festivals such as Easter and Christmas celebration. People have left their cultures of marriage and have also adopted the foreign man’s white wedding. People have also followed the trend being brought about by western education and no one remembers omenala (tradition).

5. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

- To empirically examine the extent to which traditional market days relate with modern marketing in Nigeria.

6. RESEARCH QUESTION

- Does traditional market days significantly relate with modern marketing in Nigeria?

7. HYPOTHESIS

- H₀ There is no significant relationship between traditional market days and modern marketing in Nigeria?

8. METHODOLOGY

This study is a cross-sectional survey which cuts across Abia, Anambara and Imo states respectively. Eight local markets were selected as follows;

Table 1: Markets selected for study

S/N	ABIA	ANAMBRA	IMO
1	Afo Umuosu Nsulu Market	Eke Awka	Eke Onwa market
2	Eke Ohiabiam market	Nkwo Ogidi	Owerri Nkwo Orji market
3	Ahia Nkwo market	Afo Nnobi Market	

The researcher purposively distributed forty five (45) copies of questionnaire to each of the markets selected in the various states. A total of 360 copies were distributed but 299(83.1%) were retrieved and useful for analyses. Data was analyzed using Wilcoxon sign rank test because the two samples drawn for this study are dependent samples (traditional market days and modern marketing), the paired observation are randomly and independently drawn, data are non-parametric and the level of measurement is ordinal.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	Percentiles		
						25th	50th (Median)	75th
TRADITIONAL MKT DAYS	299	18.92	3.527	10	25	16.00	19.00	22.00
MODERN MARKETING	299	22.78	3.471	12	30	21.00	23.00	25.00

Table 2 shows that traditional marketing has a mean of 18.92 while modern marketing has a mean of 22.78. Traditional market days also have a standard deviation of 3.527 while modern marketing has a standard deviation of 3.471. The median is also found within the 50th percentiles. This signifies less difference between group of responses.

Table 3: Ranks

	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
MODERN MARKETING - TRADITIONAL MKT DAYS			
Negative Ranks	21 ^a	44.81	941.00
Positive Ranks	270 ^b	153.87	41545.00
Ties	8 ^c		
Total	299		

a. MODERN MARKETING < TRADITIONAL MKT DAYS

b. MODERN MARKETING > TRADITIONAL MKT DAYS

c. MODERN MARKETING = TRADITIONAL MKT DAYS

Table 3 shows the mean rank of 21 negative ranks (44.81 mean rank) was negative with a sum of 941.00 while the positive ranks were 270 (153.87 mean rank) with a sum of 41545.00 which is higher while 8 responses were ties. This also signify the existence of a significant relationship.

Table 4:

	MODERN MARKETING - TRADITIONAL MKT DAYS
Z	-14.168 ^b
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000

a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

b. Based on negative ranks.

Table 4 further shows us a significant relationship with a p-value of 0.000 which is less than alpha of 0.05. Based on this result, we would reject the earlier stated null hypotheses for this study which stated that there is no significant relationship between Igbo traditional market days and modern marketing in Nigeria.

9. CONCLUSION

This study has established the fact that there is a significant relationship between Igbo traditional market days and modern marketing in Nigeria. The Igbos have proven themselves as those who attribute business as part of their culture. Before Nigeria was formed, there had been traces of good business transactions among them. This study has looked at the antecedents which characterized the formation the institution of the traditional market days and how Eze Nriji for religiously instituted the practice as instructed by the strangers who visited him. We also see that despite the fact that the market days institution has been disrupted by events and previous governments, the Igbos have shown resilience towards establishing modern marketing activities with the foundation of traditional concepts.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

There are several lessons that should be learnt from this study and this is shown in the recommendation below;

- i. Government at all levels within south-east region must take it as a responsibility to bring back traditional values so that the Igbo culture would not be lost.
- ii. The modern marketing activities cannot exist independently in Nigeria. Since the Igbos are prone to business, there must be a close tie within the community they come from and what they do.
- iii. The Igbo language must be taught to children. This is a good way of maintaining succession.
- iv. There must be harmony among Igbo speaking states
- v. Nigerian government must understand the significance of the Igbos towards economic and national development. They should provide a good business environment for them instead of politicizing governance.

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