

The microentrepreneurialism-internet utilisation nexus in Harare: lessons from small business operators at Newlands Shopping Centre*

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This paper examines linkages which exist between micro-enterprises and information and communication technologies (ICTs), particularly internet usage at Newlands Shopping Centre in Harare. It is observed that, although utilization of ICTs (computers, telephones, faxes, internet, websites, to name but a few) is now quite rife, much force is still required to dovetail and take advantage of the resources into meaningful business by the small-scale business operators. There are principally four explanations to this: knowledge, access and infrastructure, policy, and, externalities. With calculated planning, capacity building and training, scores of small-to-medium enterprises stand a chance to both boost their business as well as jig-saw fit themselves into global operations hence obtain the full rewards of enterprising with technology.

Key words: internet marketing, globalization, economy, policy, capacity, alienation

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This paper makes an assessment of the nature and extent of utilisation of internet marketing by sculpting SMEs at Newlands Shopping Centre, in the hope of gearing for an upscale of the practice for the sculptors and other stakeholders. Secondary objectives of the paper entail: investigating the status and uses of internet marketing by sculptors at Newlands Shopping Centre; establishing the factors influencing adoption or non adoption of internet marketing by sculptors and other operators in the SME sector; examining how internet interplays with other ICTs for the promotion of SMES; and advising recommendations on the best of having the SME sector benefit from the resource of internet technology. It must be underscored that few studies have been done in Africa regarding this matter. one study by Ssewanyana (2004), on the impact of the Internet in industries in Uganda revealed that use of internet in firms

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differed depending on the size, locality, the industry's growth objective, line of operation, type of technology used among other issues. Though very informative, the study failed to distinguish the different kinds of industries that exist, i.e. light industry or heavy industries let alone situating the SME sector in the policy debate. Nevertheless, an overview of studies by both academic and development practitioners on the internet technology have this resource is an emerging chief driver to development through the instrument of providing better advertising and market information by trade organizations, business information exchange, commodity and service transportation efficiency, increased connectivity to (and coordination with) international economic activity and more distributed economic development (Cronin et al., 1994; laRovere, 1996; Lind, 2000, Matambalya and Wolf, 2001; Müller-Falcke, 2002; Stork et al., 2006).

ICTs' advancement and business enhancement are not anachronistic to the globalization trend. In effect, the impetus is towards diffusion, use and appropriation of ICTs in different countries and regions (ITU, 2005). At the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) held in Tunis 2005, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) advocated for the formulation of appropriate Information and Communication Technologies' (ICT) policies as a priority in development debate and practice. The result of this move was formation of the African Information Society whose sequel was a National Information and Communication Infrastructure (NICI) strategy paper. This paper argues that ICTs "... can no longer be seen as a luxury for the elite but as an absolute necessity for the masses" (ECA, 2005:2). This new paradigm in Africa, has paved way for most nation states in the continent embracing the i ICTs as their quintessential national economic development policy strategies. In this vein, the Government of Zimbabwe through the Ministry of Science and Technology Development (MSTD) has made remarkable efforts to create a sustainable knowledge society and economy through the effective use of ICTs by developing a coherent National ICT Strategy.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STUDY AREA AND SME OPERATORS

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The study adopted a case study approach. By its nature a case study is an empirical inquiry investigating a phenomenon within its real-life context (Becker and Ragin, 1992). It was adopted to build an in-depth story of internet marketing by SMEs at Newlands Shopping Centre in Harare (the capital city of the southern African nation of Zimbabwe). The shopping centre is located near the city centre but at the edge of Highlands Low density residential suburb, along Enterprise Road. It is found north-east of the (central business district) CBD. Newlands was purposively selected because of its close proximity to the central business district of Harare (about five kilometres away) and also due to its uniqueness of harbouring stone sculptors whose existence in the place spans nearly two decades (They commenced operations in the early 1990's). The operators have had some striking resilience evidenced by their survival from the shocks and stresses of the economic turbulence over the years whose brew can be traced back to the country's adoption of the structural adjustment reforms in 1991. This is unlike other trades such as vending which sometimes fade seasonally sculpting at Newlands Shopping Centre has been almost a permanent mark over the last decade.

From an estimated population of 200 SME operators at the shopping centre, 25 sculptors and 24 non-sculpting operators were interviewed. Selection was achieved through systematic random sampling. Non participatory observations, questionnaire survey and structured formal and informal interviews are the main techniques that were exploited. 49 questionnaires were distributed to stone sculptors and the other SMEs at Newlands Shopping Centre.

KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS

Out of the 25 sculptors 40% were females, whilst 60% were males. Twenty four other non-sculpting SMEs were also interviewed to try and extract their utilisation of internet marketing. Thirty three percent of the other SMEs were females whilst 67% were males (Table 1). Key informants outside the study area (government and local authority officials) were selected through judgemental sampling. These key informants were: the Director of Programme and Project Development in the Ministry

of Science Technology and Development; Principal Administration Officer, Ministry of Small to Medium Enterprises; Director of Urban Planning and Policy Implementation, Harare City Council.

Table 1: Respondents by gender

<i>Gender of Respondents</i>		<i>No.</i>	<i>Percentage of Sample</i>	<i>Percentage of Total Sample</i>
Female	Sculptors	10	40%	37%
	Non Sculptors	8	33%	
Males	Sculptors	15	60%	63%
	Non Sculptors	16	67%	
Total		49		100%

N=49

As indicated in Table1, the majority (63%) of respondents amongst the sculptors and the non -sculptors were males, whilst females constituted 37%. For the sculptors this could be explained by the fact that, traditionally, sculpting has been a trade for males, whose skills are normally shaped more by affinity than acquired through formal learning. For the other SMEs, this could have been influenced by the earlier Economic Structural Adjustment Program in the in the early 90's whereby there were more males who were economically active during this era (Rakodi, 1995). However owing to the massive retrenchments during this period, most of the retrenched workers started their self businesses and possibly this could explain why there were generally more males engaged in the SME sector at Newlands Shopping Centre than females. A very small percentage (2%) of the respondents fell within the age range of 15 years and below. Those aged above 45 years constituted 8.2%. The majority (89.9%) of the respondents were between the ages of between 16-45 years which largely constitutes the economically active group. This is indicative that most of the entrepreneurs at Newlands Shopping Centre constitute the economically active group which group has a great potential of bringing about colossal economic and financial benefits to the country should they embrace and maximise of new innovations including internet technology in promoting their businesses.

Slightly above half (54.2%) of the respondents were noted to be single (never married) by marital status designation; 35.4% were married and the remainder widowed. Although one would expect to find the married category who are usually the breadwinners constituting the larger percentage of SMEs, the findings revealed that single category which is usually associated with the youths was the most dominant group of entrepreneurs. This goes on to prove that the youths have also become breadwinners in the contemporary Zimbabwe. Most of the respondents (63.8%) reached up to Ordinary ('O') Level qualifications; 14.9 % reached up to the Advanced ('A') level and 8.5% had certificates and diplomas from vocational and polytechnic colleges. A smaller 12.8% had attained ZJC and below. With the bulk of operators being in the literate class, training for internet use gives the impression a very practicable venture.

Period in operation by SME operators and the supporting conditions for internet marketing

The period of operation in trade by micro-entrepreneurs at Newlands Shopping Centre was useful in the evaluation of micro-entrepreneurs perception of whether or not they considered their business operations in the area as a permanent, with room for improvements or simply as a temporary survival strategy which can always be abandoned as and when the economic environment proved favourable. The majority of sculptors (40.9%) were found to have been in operation for a period of nine years, 22.7% had been in operation for three years or less. The other SME operators (non-sculpting) indicated that a greater of their proportion (37.5%) had operated for three or less years. most of them (20.8%) operated grocery shops, reflecting their direct reaction to the pressing socio-economic environment in the country marked by increased food shortages which problem became very phenomenal during mid-year 2008. during the said period, the majority of the population in the workforce in the country were abandoning their jobs in favour of informal sector operations which sector was better rewarding than formal employment. .

Table 2: Period in operation and type of trade

Period in operation	Type of goods / services offered	Other SMEs					Total
	Sculptor	Groceries	Clothing	Hardware	Other	Total	
3 or less	5(22.7%)	5 (20.8%)			4(16.7%)	9(37.5%)	14 (30.4%)
4 to 6	2(9.1%)	1(4.2%)	3(12.5%)		4(16.7%)	8(33.3%)	12(26.1%)
7 to 9	6(27.3%)				2(8.3%)	2(8.3%)	6(13%)
Over 9 years ago	9(40.9%)			2(8.3%)	3(12.5%)	5(20.8%)	14(30.4%)
Total	22(100%)	6(25%)	3(12.5%)	2(8.3)	11(45.8%)	24(100%)	46(100%)

N=46

Source: Research Survey Results (2008)

The existence of SMEs at Newlands Shopping Centre should be viewed as a response to two critical but interlinked factors: engagement into a survival coping strategy and the spirit of entrepreneurialism. According to the key informant from the City of Harare, the existence of the sculptors at Newlands Shopping Centre and their dealership in the non-perishable stone and wooden artefacts and their continuity to a period of about nine years reflects the desire by these entrepreneurs to venture into that kind of industry. This, according to the city official was buttressed by the involvement of key stakeholders resulting in the improvement of a conducive investment climate. According to the World Bank (2008) creating an enabling environment helps in the enhancement of the competitiveness of SMEs. In this aspect, the local authority through its departments of Urban Planning Services, Works and Housing and

Community Services has supported the growth of SMEs by providing space and utilities and network links such as roads. Communication and power have been provided by way of telephone lines and electricity, respectively which resources are critical for infrastructure requirements for ICT operations. Roads, power, communication lines, water utilities constitute the hard infrastructure and conduits governing place sustainability and relevance. The Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) have provided the soft infrastructure of developing a legal and regulatory framework for SMEs development, facilitating linkages between large-scale enterprises and SMEs, providing skills and management training that support entrepreneurship and small business growth amongst others roles.

Application and relevance of internet marketing by SMEs at Newlands Shopping Centre

The study found out that 40% compared to 60% of the sculptors who had never used the internet. Also, less than half (46%) of the other SMEs were using the internet, whilst the remaining 54% had never used the internet. For the first group it was evident that even though sculpting is a trade with so great potential of expansion by the instrument of internet marketing and so magnetic to attract both local and international buyers, most of the sculptors was not even aware of this potential. This is construed from the fact that most of the sculptors had actually never used the internet. It is clear from the findings that SMEs are generally slow in embracing the internet technology. Upon further investigation the study showed only 28% (7 out of 25) of the sculptors interviewed utilised the facility for business purposes. The internet users for business purposes were highly appreciative of the usefulness of the tool in increasing the number of international buyers at the trading site. For the non-sculpting SME operators a very insignificant number did business on the internet. They pointed that their business operations had little, if any connection to internet use.

Forty three percent (43%) of the sculptors who were using internet marketing had done it for three years, another 43% had between 4 to 6 years of usage; 14% between 7 to 9 years and none for more than nine years. Overall, internet marketing was noted to be fairly new among the sculptors at Newlands Shopping Centre. For the other SMEs (non-sculpting), the majority (80%) of the users had 6 and less years of making

use of the facility of internet. Thus, the utilisation of internet marketing by the SMEs at Newlands Shopping Centre was noted to be very new to the extent that some entrepreneurs were not even aware of hence depriving their businesses of the competitiveness they deserved. Apart from marketing, other uses of ICTs like for accounting and bookkeeping purposes were little achieved by simple use of computers.

Gendering the ICT sector

Edwards (2008) has argued that internet marketing has brought about a level playing field for all users regardless of their gender, marital status or age. The research findings established that there were more males who were in the SME sector at Newlands Shopping Centre than the females. The extent to which these two groups were using the internet was critical in the assessment of whether gender affected the use of internet by SMEs. It was revealed that there were more male sculptors (70%) using the internet compared to their female counterparts (30%). For the other SMEs, the male who used internet were 72% whilst the females were 28%. Evidently female entrepreneurs at Newlands Shopping Centre were generally slowcoaches in embracing the internet technology. While 57% of the male sculptors were using internet marketing, their female counterparts constituted a lesser 43% of the users on the other hand. Similarly, the males in the category of other SMEs also constituted a greater (60%) percentage of users of internet marketing than the females in the same category who constituted a smaller 40%. Even though this could have been as an outcome of having interviewed fewer (37%) females compared to males who constituted 63% of the total respondents, the findings still reflect that there was a general dawdling response amongst the female entrepreneurs in embracing internet as a marketing tool. To this end then, it is very crucial for the stakeholders involved in economic development to introduce programmes that are aimed at empowering women in the SME sector to apply e-marketing in their business.

Age, Marital Status and Internet Use and e-marketing

The economically productive age ranges of 16-45 years comprised all (100%) of the internet users. This shows that to a larger extent age had a bearing on the use of internet amongst the SMEs at Newlands Shopping Centre. Regarding marital status of

the respondents and their use of internet, the majority (54.2%) of the respondents were single (both the never married and the widowed); 40% percent of the respondents in this category indicated that they used the internet and more than half (60%) of the widowed respondents made use of internet. This goes on to prove that use of internet in by the sculptors and other SMEs at Newlands has nothing to do with one's marital status, this technology can be used by anyone regardless of their marital status (Table 3).

Table 3: Use of internet by marital status

Marital Status	Use of internet		Total
	Yes	No	
Single	12 (25.0%)	14 (29.2%)	26 (54.2%)
Married	6 (12.5%)	11 (22.9%)	17 (35.4%)
Windowed	3 (6.3%)	2 (4.2%)	5 (10.5%)
Other	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Total	21 (42.8%)	27 (57.2%)	48 (100.0%)

N=48

Source: Research Survey Results (2008)

Level of education and Internet Use

Seventy five percent (75%) of those who had reached up to a diploma level were familiar with the use of internet. Similarly, about 71.4% of the respondents who had reached up to 'A' level consented that they were using internet. Whilst none (0%) of the respondents who had reached the ZJC or below had had ever used the internet (see Table 4). These findings reflect that there is a link between one's educational qualifications and their use of internet technology. Upon deeper enquiry into some of the causes why the SMEs were not using internet it was found that there was a general lack of knowledge on how the technology is used. However in order to adequately address these gaps through formal learning institutions, it is normally required that one should have at least O' level qualifications which is the recognised standard in the country.

Table 4: Use of internet by educational status

		Use of internet		Total percentage
		Yes	No	
Education Status	ZJC and below	0 (0%)	6 (100%)	6 (12.2%)
	O-level	13(40.6%)	19(59.4%)	32 (65.3%)
	A-level	5(71.4%)	2(28.6)	7 (14.2%)
	Other	3(75.0%)	1(25.0%)	4 (8.3%)
Total		21(42.9%)	28(57.1%)	49(100)

N=49

Source: Research Survey Results (2008)

INTERNET (E-) MARKETING UTILISATION

The research showed that internet marketing was being used for a variety of business applications by the SMEs at Newlands Shopping Centre including the following:

- Making payments to or settling orders from suppliers;
- Finding new suppliers and commodities (particularly for the other traders who dealt in supplying motor vehicle spare parts and those in the cell phone trade);
- Advertising products;
- Quotations, receipts and invoices; and
- Online communication sales.

Entrepreneurs indicated that there were facing some challenges in utilising internet marketing. One of the challenges that the SMEs faced was that of network unreliability caused by regular power cuts as Mazoe Earth Satellite station was constantly experiencing problems. The most popular challenge they raised was that in its early times of adoption internet marketing is expensive to establish and to maintain. The sculptors further explained that they faced the challenge of product imitation when they advertise on the net (e-theft of products resulting in them being reproduced elsewhere without respect to ‘intellectual property rights’. They went on to say that it was very expensive to advertise one’s product in three dimensional view

on the internet as most local (in Harare) internet service providers did not offer the facility.

It was however established that 57% of the sculptors who were advertising their products in three dimensional views, were registered members of institutions, which provided the required technical support for the sculptors to advertise their products to wider international markets via the internet such as the Zimbabwe National Arts Council (ZNAC) and the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA). The majority (75%) of the respondents who utilised internet marketing were registered members to an association which offered them some form of support. However for the non-users of internet marketing, the majority (92%) of the respondents were not registered members to any institution. It was noted that there was a relationship between one's membership to a registered institution with their ability to exploit the various aspects of internet marketing at Newlands Shopping Centre. However, it was established that there was generally a slow response in registering with formal institutions amongst the SME operators, particularly those who were not using internet marketing. Perhaps this explains why there are only a few registered SMEs in the data base of the Ministry of Small to Medium Enterprises.

Reasons for adoption or non adoption of internet marketing

Many authorities in literature have expressed that there are various reasons why businesses choose to adopt or not adopt internet marketing. The study at Newlands Shopping Centre established the reasons why the entrepreneurs adopted internet marketing as follows:

- high reliability, swiftness and efficiency in making business transactions;
- reduction in travel costs for items as quotations, invoices and payment of bills;
- relative cheapness to other modes of information transfer including conventional letters;
- enhanced confidentiality due to use of passwords ensuring that information can only be routed to intended recipient;
- flexibility in providing Information about the global business environment;
- facilitation of business expansion for regional and international markets;

- reduction of face-to-face business transactions and bargaining; and
- increasing volumes of sales

The SME operators not utilising internet marketing also gave their reasons for not adopting which were summarised as follows:

- lack of knowledge about the facility/ lack of exposure;
- failure to see its relevance to their business/ relating the facility to big business;
- tendency to increase business operation costs;
- lack of opportunity and accessibility to the facility;
- frustrations due to the limited capacity of the existing facility;
- prevalence of the tradition that the ‘customers come to us’; and
- no use of internet by the preponderance of local clientele.

From the reasons for adoption and non adoption highlighted above, it can be noted that the associated benefits derived from using internet marketing by far exceed the limitations of not adopting it. Some of these benefits which including facilitation of contact with a wide range of customers simultaneously and open to global markets have the ability to maximise returns. To verify this, an assessment was made on the changes in returns obtained by the users and non users of internet marketing over the years. For those who had used the facility for 7-9 years 100% of the sculptors noted an increase in their business returns. In the period of between 4-6 years ago, 40% of the sculptors who were using internet marketing during this period also experienced significant increase in returns; however the other 60% had seen little increase in returns. Between the periods of 0-3 years of using internet marketing, 71% of the sculptors indicated that during this period they had obtained little increase in returns; however the remaining 29% of the respondents indicated that they were still retaining significant increases in returns. The results indicates that the sculptors utilising internet obtained at least above the break even returns which in other words implies that there were making some profit in their trade.

Seventy eight percent (78%) of the non users of internet marketing mentioned that they retained a significant increase in returns during the period of 9 years. Whilst during the period of between 0-3 years, 11% of the non- users of internet marketing faced a decrease in returns, whilst 44% of the non- users was breaking even in its operations, another 39% was obtaining little increase in returns. None of the non-internet marketing users received a significant increase in returns in the period 0-3 years. Some of the reasons that were obtained to explain the changes were to do with the challenging economic environment whereby inflation has been shooting everyday. This led to the depletion in proceeds and also a shrink in their local customer base. The internet marketing users on the other hand had a wider clientele base which also meant that these could export some of their products to the international market unlike their counterparts who relied solely upon the local clients.

INSTITUTIONS, INTERNET MARKETING AND STATISTICAL TESTING

The research queried the views of the several players considerable as key in the local economic development of Newlands through internet marketing. It was found that 57% of the sculptors who were getting support in using the internet were getting it from their membership organisations which included Zimbabwe National Arts Council (ZNAC) and the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA). All the other SMEs who were getting support in using the internet were registered members of an NGO based project by Oxfam Australia's budding entrepreneurs' programme. Fifty eight percent (58%) of the respondents who were using internet marketing pointed out that the support that they were getting was adequate, whilst the remaining 42% was dissatisfied with the support that they were getting from their membership organisations. Those who were dissatisfied with the support that they were receiving highlighted that they required financial or technical support in establishing a centre which provides access to internet services at a lower cost. An example of such a programme regionally is the Catalysing Access to ICT in Africa (CATIA) programme of the Department for International Development (DFID). This is a programme which supports poor entrepreneurs in Africa with a package of strategic activities such as internet services and community radios to improve affordable access to a range of ICTs.

Some entrepreneurs indicated that they required the support of more reliable internet services from the internet service providers to remain efficient in doing their business. Other SMEs were appealing to institutions such as Banks and Small Enterprises Development Corporation (SEDCO) to put up more flexible systems of accessing financial loans, which includes removing the issue of collateral security as some entrepreneurs were still starting their operations. The general sentiment amongst the non users of internet marketing was that they needed intensive education on internet use from the supporting institutions. However most of these support institutions were facing challenges in fully implementing ICTs based strategies for SMEs because of limited funds. For example, the Ministry of Small to Medium Enterprises is allocated a very minimal sum on the National budget which is inadequate to cater for SMEs in Harare alone.

The Ministry of Science Technology and Development highlighted an important point that the other major challenge that local SMEs were facing was due to lack of a proper business model to adopt. The Director of Program and Project Development went on to explain that, in the contemporary Zimbabwean context, businesses do not progress in traceable stages, i.e. from infancy stage to maturity stage, “they just move from level zero to level ten overnight (probably as a result of corruption) .” It is therefore a challenge for challenge for local SMEs to learn from the current business practices as there is lack of a model to follow. The Ministry therefore suggested that as a way forward, SMEs needed to go through an incubatory learning process whereby SMEs go through learning stages up to a level where they can take off on their own in order to compete with other larger firms and adequately utilise ICTs.

The Ministry of Science Technology and Development on the other hand, has not been able to implement its ICT policy as it is still in the state of a draft document. This slow progress within the key Ministries has subsequently resulted in the retrogressive diffusion of ICTs. From the review of literature, it was argued that some of the reasons for non adoption of internet marketing by SMEs were due to lack of policy implementation (Lind 2000, Donner, 2005). Similarly, lack of policy

implementation has been found to be one of the major barriers to the adoption of internet marketing amongst the SMEs at Newlands Shopping Centre.

In this light, it is fundamental for the Government to work towards ICT policy endorsement so that it can be properly implemented. Proper implementation of the ICT policy will lead to the formation of New Technology Based Institutional Forms. These are ICT based initiatives with formal links to universities and research institutions that encourage formation and growth of knowledge- based businesses and provide assistance and advice for new technology-based firms. This is the direction that needs to be taken if SMEs are to scale up their use of ICTs in general and internet marketing in particular.

Internet marketing at Newlands Shopping Centre by the sculptors and other SMEs revealed that the facility is a novel and unfolding practice by the entrepreneurs. As already highlighted some of the strong reasons for entrepreneurs' failure of utilising this technology are lack of knowledge about the internet and its uses, lack of exposure on how internet can be used as a tool for marketing, and, the attitude of regarding the facility as an unnecessary luxury suitable for larger firms which would otherwise increase their operational cost. These reasons proffered by the SME operators predominantly reflect their lack of capacity in utilising internet marketing (including the skills, funds allocated for the cause) and fear of the unknown. Findings by Ssewanyana (2004) on the use of internet marketing by Ugandan firms revealed that most firms failed to adopt internet marketing as a result of lack of capacity or the growth objectives of a firm. This was affirmed by the study given that most of the SMEs viewed their business as self-enclosed projects requiring no linkages with the outside world. The Director of Program and Project Development from the Ministry of Science Technology and Development described this practice by local SMEs as "...a blinkered mindset characterising the generality of most local people, SME operators included." Indeed this was noted to concur with most SMEs at Newlands Shopping Centre and it was such a great developmental setback. It hindered them from exploring the potential of utilising internet as a marketing tool. Yet the world over most businesses are engulfed and absorbed by the globalising environment characterised by serious competition (Castels, 1999), a world driven by information

and its fast transfer and convertible to serious business transactions. Globalisation has placed knowledge at the forefront spurring and driving economic growth to of businesses and firms around the world (Romer, 1992; Barton and Bear, 1999; Simpson and Docherty, 2004).

Contrary to the notion that internet marketing has created a level playing field for entrepreneurs (Edwards, 2008), the situation at Newlands Shopping Centre revealed the general failure by small business to maximise on the tool. Nevertheless, in assessing whether one's marital status influenced their use of internet marketing at Newlands Shopping Centre on Pearson's Chi-square test ($\chi^2 (3) = 3.259, p=0.635$) [where H_0 : One's marital status is related to their use of internet marketing and H_1 : One's marital status is not related to their use of internet marketing] was to reject the null hypothesis showing that the alternative hypothesis might actually be true. The same test also established that the use of internet marketing at Newlands Shopping Centre was largely influenced by one's age. This was brought to light through the application of inferential statistics. A Pearson-Chi square test ($\chi^2 (3) = 4.269, p= 0.362$) was performed [where null hypothesis H_0 Age determines one's use of internet and alternative hypothesis H_1 : Age has no effect on one's use of internet]. The decision was to accept the null hypothesis, thereby suggesting that this hypothesis may actually be true. The results showed that the internet marketing users fell within the age range of the economically active group of between 16- 45 years. These findings are useful in informing decision makers in determining strategies that are suitable for a particular age group. Nonetheless it is still very important to promote the use of internet technology to entrepreneurs in all the age groups since SMEs are composed of individuals of different age groups.

The research also managed to ascertain that one's educational qualifications had an influence on their use of internet. The Pearson's Chi-Square Test ($\chi^2 (3) = 8.586, p=0.35$) [H_0 : One's educational qualifications influenced their use of internet and H_1 : One's educational qualifications do not influence their use of internet] that was performed made the decision to accept the null hypothesis H_0 . This would then imply that the null hypothesis was actually true.

The drawings from inferential statistics exposed that the use of internet marketing at Newlands Shopping Centre was dependent on one's gender, age and educational qualifications. However one's marital status did not have any effect on one's use of internet marketing.

ITCs' Inter-linkages

The study revealed how internet interplays with other ICTs for the promotion of sculpting. It was established that internet marketing alone is not sufficient as there were some shortcomings which existed in using the technology which could be counteracted through employing other means of marketing such as window displaying, road posters, road displaying, regular visits to customers whenever new brands of products come on the market, advertising through the press and making phone calls. Compared to the initial cost of establishing internet marketing, other means of communication demonstrated were less expensive and user-friendlier for small enterprises. For example, in window and road displaying the operators mentioned that very little costs were incurred. Other means such as the cellphone or landlines were noted to have the advantage of speed communication with clients (mostly local) than internet message which depends on many exogenous variables like power outages and several challenges. The interviewees reflected that with the internet, one may not ascertain the exactitude of the message reaching the intended destination, while with voice (phone) half-duplex communication transfers information instantly. To reduce the risk of dealing with fake correspondences via the internet, site visits were noted as essential and these could be made possible with the availability of an efficient transport system. Thus internet is clearly inter-linked with other ICTs. It therefore calls for strong collaboration amongst all ICT based institutions in order to facilitate a smooth flow when using ICTs.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

Summary

The overall conclusion from the findings on the status and use of internet marketing at Newlands Shopping Centre is that internet marketing by the sculptors and other SMEs is a fairly new development. Its utilisation was found to be dependent on gender, age

and educational qualifications. However one's marital status did not have any effect on one's use of internet marketing. The internet technology in general was used for various purposes with the majority of SME operators using the traditional marketing system such as road side displays and advertising through the press. Those entrepreneurs who adopted internet marketing did so for several reasons which include the speed and effectiveness of this strategy in making business transactions particularly with clients across the country and outside. It gave them a platform for global market penetration. The ability to improve a firm's competitiveness and maximisation on returns were noted as positive externalities of the venture. Negative externalities raised by the non-adopters of the technology arose in the framework of the reasons the culture of traditional approaches (for example that buyers would come to commodity markets), and lack of awareness of applicability of the facility. Overall, it was established that the benefits for adoption far outweighed the benefits of non-adoption. Those sculptors using internet marketing were gaining significant returns than those who were not; internet marketing users had a wider clientele base which also meant that these could export some of their products to the international market unlike their counterparts who relied solely upon the local clients. It was recognised that internet marketing alone is not sufficient as there were some shortcomings which existed in using the technology which could be counteracted through employing other means of marketing such as road posters, road displaying, regular calls or visits to customers and advertising through the press. There were strong linkages that were found to exist between the use of internet for business and other ICTs for example efficient telecommunications and transport networks also compliment the role of the internet in business.

Policy Direction

The local SMEs should broaden their growth objectives to include the international markets, i.e. desist from having the mindset of having local clients only and consider expanding to global clients. However, this becomes very possible should they also improve on the quality of goods that they produce. In addition, the micro-entrepreneurs should register with supportive ICT-related institutions which create a platform for networking to share information, for (re)learning. This will be in a bid to counter the challenges of lack of skills and knowledge. In another direction, they must

be encouraged to have more formal qualification through vocational and polytechnic colleges. It is crucial to introduce gender specific programmes aimed at building the capacity of women in the using ICTs particularly the internet to enhance their business. The use of internet marketing should be promoted amongst entrepreneurs regardless of one's marital status or age, however the strategies would be more effective if they target the economically active ages of between 16-45, who more easily embrace the use of the technology because it is of much benefit to them than the younger age category or the old age. Due to the observable inter-linkages that were found to exist between the internet technology and other ICTs such as efficient telecommunications and transport systems there is need for collaboration amongst various stakeholders to form deliberate strategic partnerships to facilitate the smooth flow of ICTs in promoting businesses. The local authority can offer support to the sculptors and other SMEs by providing them with space as well as locating substations of ICT-supportive institutions such as internet service providers in the vicinity of SMEs in this case at Newlands Shopping Centre. The other form of support that the Local Authority can offer to the sculptors is locating them near network links i.e. roads and telephone lines.

The government can assist the sculptors who are using internet marketing by giving them intellectual rights and licenses to prevent product imitation. The lack of a specific business model to follow in the country calls upon the government to introduce an incubatory learning process whereby the SMEs are supported and monitored from the level of onset to a level where the SMEs have the capacity to take off on their own without any form of support and can adequately utilise ICTs as well as competing with larger firms. For SMEs to best utilise the internet to enhance their businesses they require training on the general use of ICTs and internet marketing in particular and accessing financial aid from institutions which advertise them on the net. In addition, the financial lending institutions such as Banks and Small Enterprises Development Corporation (SEDCO) could also assist SMEs through flexing their legal requirements in accessing loans, which includes doing away with the issue of collateral security as some entrepreneurs were still starting their operations. It is fundamental for the Government to work towards ICT policy endorsement so that it can be properly implemented by the responsible Ministry. Proper implementation of

the ICT policy will subsequently lead to the formation of New Technology Based Institutional Forms. These are ICT based initiatives with formal links to universities and research institutions that encourage formation and growth of knowledge- based businesses and provide assistance and advice for new technology-based firms. This is critical in scaling up the use of ICTs in general and internet marketing in particular by SMEs.

Conclusion

The case of the Newlands Shopping Centre micro-entrepreneurs typifies the majority of the operators in this sector. Indeed, the ICT is new in the city. Yet, it is equally critical to tap on the new technology and establish more links in the area of entrepreneurship in both sourcing and selling markets. It is possible to see quite a number of the businesses graduating to medium and even large-scale operating units and then speak of meaningful local economic development in the city. To achieve this end, all the stakeholders should be involved. The externalities that may accrue to the efforts are many but with the engagement of all the forces of entrepreneurialism it is possible to overcome most of the hurdles on the way hence establish a viable urban economy, sustainable and having the fortitude to withstand all other pressures that may arise.

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