

## **Marketing Research Skills: Managers Versus Workers in Micro Business in Ondo State**

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doi: <https://doi.org/10.37745/bjms.2013/vol12n2116>

Published May 04, 2024

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**Citation:** Olowe M.O. and Olowe T.S. (2024) Marketing Research Skills: Managers Versus Workers in Micro Business in Ondo State, *British Journal of Marketing Studies*, Vol. 12, Issue 2, pp.,1-16

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**ABSTRACT:** *The major purpose of this study is to compare the Marketing Research skills needed managers and workers in micro business. As firms grow more and more in global markets, the role of reliable, verifiable, timely and high quality marketing research information to support decision-making becomes increasingly indispensable. The effectiveness and usefulness of decision-making is directly connected to the broad condition of the preferred sector(s) of the global market. To obtain complete information regarding the market entails designing and completing a significant number of activities arranged in logical sequence. Marketing research is the principal means by which firms comprehend existing and potential customers. Relevant literature were reviewed with respect to general and marketing research skills. The study employed a survey research design and it was conducted in the three senatorial zone in Ondo State. The entire population comprised 739 respondents made up of 283 managers and 456 employees. The sample was made up of 400 respondents and hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. A Likert scale made of 11 structured questionnaire items were used for data analysis. The reliability co-efficient of the instrument for the study was 0.75 which was calculated by using Guttman split-half. It was found out that there was no significant difference between the general research skill possessed by both managers and workers but the marketing research skill possessed by the managers are significantly different from that of other workers. Possession of general research skill was recommended for all (managers and workers). Marketing research skill was recommended for all managers in the micro business within Ondo State.*

**KEYWORDS:** marketing research skills, managers, workers, micro-business

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## INTRODUCTION

The issue of the state of marketing skills education and the extent to which these adequately prepare managers for effective service delivery cannot be over emphasized and it has been discussed not only in Marketing Intelligence & Planning, but elsewhere as well (Taylor, 2003; Brennan & Ankers, 2004; Gray et al., 2007; Hyman and Hu, 2005; Davies et al., 2002; Hill et al., 1998). Both Evans et al. (2002) and Lynch (2008) argue that marketers and managers need to possess more of well-rounded skill set for modern working, a point reflected in the research of Martin and Chapman (2006). The latter argue that traditional marketing techniques are too narrow and managers, particularly if they are going to work in SME marketing, need a broader skill base. McCole (2004) raises the point that academia fails to fully understand how marketing research is actually carried out in practice and consequently, large parts of what is displayed are inappropriate. Central to the whole debate here is the actual skills marketing practitioners require and whether or not current educational practices are adequately equipping them to meet the demands of a changing and complex work environment. Cunningham (1999) suggests that much more emphasis needs to be put on the development of team working and learning by doing, rather than on the transmission of abstract, technical knowledge. Dacko (2006) has noted the importance and relevance of the “how to skills” with research which highlights skill weaknesses in marketing managers, in areas such as negotiation, problem formulation and leadership. The lack of the former of these skills is also noted by the research of Stringfellow et al. (2006). Significantly, Taylor (2003) points out that SMES are increasingly focusing on hiring applicants for marketing positions who can demonstrate skills that will help them perform well on the job. The emphasis on the need to develop in new marketers more general skill sets is highlighted by the Marketing and Sales Standard Setting Body (MSSB, 2010). This body has also produced evidence to show that employers are less concerned about the subject of the degree, more on the possession of graduate skills. Wellman (2008) poses the all important question “Are marketing degrees fit for purpose?” This paper contends that in particular ways they are not, arguing that there is a need to rethink some of the ways in which marketing managers and workers demonstrate research skills are trained.

A micro enterprise is a type of small business. It is defined as a business having five or fewer employees. Palmer (2008) defined micro business as a business with little capital. Micro business employs very few people. Wachs (2008) stated that a micro business is a firm with 10 or fewer people; typically, micro enterprises have no access to the commercial banking sector. Micro-businesses are one of the fastest growing classes of the world’s economy. Micro-business and Micro enterprise could be used interchangeable (Desmond, 2008).The Nigeria bank of commerce and industry (1999) view a micro business as affirm or country with assets and playing employees up to 50 person; and such an organization must be wholly owned by a Nigerian. Skills are the potentials acquired by an individual through training, which ensure proficiency in the performance of occupational tasks. Skill acquisition is the possession of enough ability, experience and

knowledge to do a particular job well. Skill acquisition is not only practical but also intellectual oriented.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Developments in technology both expedite and simultaneously make more complex, the gathering of data on a world-wide basis. The growing and intensifying technological complexity of the communication infrastructure supports data gathering on a much wide-ranging and varied geographic coverage and with a speed hitherto unthinkable (Poynter, 2015; Mahajan, 2015; Ying Hon Ho, 2016). There is evidence in developing countries, such as Nigeria to show that micro-business enterprises could play significant roles in the economic growth and development of a nation. The economic significance of micro-business enterprises to a nation include creation of employment; substantial contribution to the gross domestic product; development of entrepreneurship; generation of self-employment opportunities; and technological development one of the economic plans of Ondo State government is to tackle the pervading poverty in the state;

Having little or no marketing research skills can affect efficient turnover, which may lead to inadequate capital for business expansion and/or effective maintenance of material and human resources. Hence, the business may become moribund and repayment of loans a difficult task. It is on the foregoing premise that the researchers found it necessary to compare the general skills and marketing research skills possessed by managers and other employees to ensure the survival of their businesses amidst other competitors. However, managers and workers must become proficient at these skills and figure out their fundamental limitations as well as embedded biases.

### **Research Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were used for the study

H0<sub>1</sub>: The general research skills needed by managers are not significantly different from the ones needed by workers.

H0<sub>2</sub>: The marketing research skills needed by managers are not significantly different from the ones needed by workers.

### **Conceptual Framework**

#### **Concept of Marketing Research**

Ajibade (2007) asserted marketing research as the function that links the consumer, customer, and public to the marketers through information, information is used to identify and define marketing opportunities and problem; generate, refine, and evaluate marketing actions; monitor marketing performances; and improve understanding of marketing as a process. Marketing research specify

and address issues, design the method of collecting information, manages and implement the collection process, analyses, and communicate the findings and their implication.

Osuala (2001) defined marketing researcher as a systematic gathering, recording and analyzing of data about problems relating to the marketing of goods and services which may be undertaken by impartial agencies or by business firm or their agents for solution of problems and opportunities in marketing. Nigel (2007) gave two reasons why organizations engage in marketing research: to identify and to solve marketing problem. This distinction serves as a basis for classifying marketing research into problem identification research is undertaken to help identify problems, which are not apparent on the surface and yet exist or are likely to arise in the future, Problem-solving research is undertaken to arrive at a solution. The findings of problem solving research are used in making decisions, which is to solve specific market problems.

### **Sources of Market Information**

Even though scanning is a very important source of information, academic research has revealed that headquarters top management of global firms get as much as two-thirds of the information they require from personal sources (Keegan and Green, 2013). This means that a large amount of external information is derived directly from executives based overseas markets in company subsidiaries. These top managers are more likely to have created a communication network with distributors, suppliers, clients, consumers, as well as representatives of government. Other sources of information come from friends, social contacts, professional colleagues, experts, and potential new workforce (Daneshjo & Kravec, 2014). Also, direct sensory perception gives an important context for data obtained through human and textual sources. Direct perception engages all the senses. This entails seeing, hearing, feeling, tasting or even smelling for oneself to determine the things that are going on within the a particular environment (Keegan & Green, 2013). Over and over again, the contextual information or perspective one obtains from observing a particular situation can also be of assistance to fill in the big picture. Marketing scholars should use multiple sources of secondary data (FAO, 2017). These diverse sources can be validated as confirmation of one another.

### **Marketing Research Process**

Market research is a project-specific, methodical gathering of relevant data. It is an activity that connects the customer, consumer and society to the marketer through information (Young & Javalgi, 2007). Thus, global market research relates customers, consumers and marketers through information collected on a world-wide scale (American Marketing Association, 1995). The major challenge of international marketing research is to identify and act in response to variations found among different countries that affect the way information is acquired (Keegan & Green, 2013). These differences may include historical, political, religious, cultural, linguistic, market and economic. Market research can be carried out in two different ways. The first is using in-house

staff to design and implement the market research. The second is to outsource an outside research firm that has expertise in market research. In global marketing, Keegan and Green (2013) recommend that a combination of internal (in-house) and outside research efforts should be used. The process of gathering data and translating it into valuable information can be rather painstaking and meticulous. In the discussion that follows, this paper focuses on eight fundamental steps of conducting a formal market research: information requirement, problem definition, selection of unit of analysis, examination of data availability, assessment of the value of research, data analysis, interpretation and presentation of the data (Keegan and Green, 2013).

**Information need:** As the saying goes, "a problem well defined is a problem half solved". Hence, regardless of the particular situation that triggers the research effort in motion, the two foremost questions which a global marketer must be concerned about are: (1) what relevant information is needed, and (2) why is the information needed?

**Identifying and defining the problem:** At this step, the problem will have been identified through internal and external secondary sources including sales revenues, customers demographics, purchase patterns, industry reports, newsletters, magazines, trade associations, executive interviews and other related sources (Research Lifeline, 2012). Also, internal discussions would have been held, at least by management, and further definition of the issue required (Gibson, 2012). This is to make sure that the firm is working on the real problem. For instance, Keegan and Green (2013) reported that when Mattel launched Barbie in the Japanese market; executive managers thought that girls in Japan would experience the doll's design really as attractive and charming as the girls in the United States felt or experienced. On the contrary, the Japanese girls did not. Similarly, when the Disney Company started Disneyland Paris, the employees of recreational centres were expected to succumb to a careful set of laws concerning wears, costume jewellery, and other expressions of special individual appearance. The reason was to obtain assurance that guests procure the kind of experience associated with the Disney celebrity (Keegan & Green, 2013). The above goes to illustrate the fact that when an individual's homecountry beliefs and values influence the judgement of a foreign culture or nation, the self-reference criterion (SRC) sets in. As these above examples have revealed, conjectures that firms make based on home-country practice can end up to be inaccurate. Consequently, when entering or getting engaged in global markets, it is paramount to have eyes wide open. Global marketers in particular must be sensitive to the effect that self-reference criterion can have on their business activities (Lee, 2016). The realisation and appreciation of SRC improves management's enthusiasm to carry out more research, make sure that research design has minimum 'how-country' preconception and encourages management's openness to research findings (Keegan & Green, 2013).

**Choose a unit of analysis:** This third step requires the marketer to work out in which location (s) of the world the company will engage itself in doing business and seeking, as much as possible, concerning the firm context in the location(s) earmarked. In this case, the unit of investigation

could be either a specific country or it could also be an entire region (Cooper, 2017). In certain occasion, the marketer is only attracted to a sector that is global in nature.

**Examine data availability:** Handling an already existing data saves resources in terms of money and time. An economical methodology to market research and information assembling starts with desk research. Personal files, corporate or public libraries, internet or web-based catalogues, government survey records, and trade unions are some of the data sources which can readily be accessed with less effort and cost (Keegan & Green, 2013). When information is composed from a variety of sources, the danger is that some of these data sources may lack credibility and therefore cannot be trusted for decision-making purposes. Where information is credible and trustworthy, there may still be a few discrepancies and irregularities from one source to another. Therefore, care must be observed.

**Measure value of research:** Any scientific research entails investment of financial resources and quality time from the side of management. This should be taken into consideration and a mandatory cost-benefit analysis should be worked out before going further with the research project. However, there may be isolated cases where a company may still have to go ahead with the same option regardless of what the research will indicate. In situations where additional data is required to guarantee a high quality decision, a reasonable assessment of an official research project may show that the cost involved in executing the research is clearly too much. For that reason, the market researchers need to work out ways that will keep expenses and costs at the level of the market's returns possibility (Keegan & Green, 2013). It is advisable also to stick to easy on the pocket research projects that really give up some classiness or statistical meticulousness to accomplish results within the limits of the available research funds.

**Design the research:** It is strongly recommended by marketing scholars to employ multiple indicators instead of a single measure (David, 2004; Keegan & Green, 2013). This means utilizing the triangulation technique in the data gathering process. Every global organization need to work out tailored-made measures exclusive to the given industry, product/service market, or business model, which have in the past shown to be effective in forecasting potential (David, 2004). Markets should never be evaluated individually. It is much better to usually perform comparative assessments in various markets. This makes it possible for managers to use selection approach whereby different rankings and situations can be considered. Furthermore, it is critical to encourage observation of human actions such as purchasing patterns and other actions should be ascribed more weight than written reports or people's views concerning buying plans. Survey research, interviews, consumer panels, observation, and focus groups are effective primary data gathering tools (Keegan & Green, 2013; Redlick-Amiray & Higginbottom, 2014), which the marketer can employ to collect relevant business information. The Internet has also become one of the most valuable and practical technologies of the present age. It assists people not only in their personal but also professional lives. The latest Internet domains which have increased in popularity are the social media networks sites like Myspace, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp and



the social media devices (SMD) such as Tablets, iPads, and Smartphones which facilitate being up-to-date and well-informed (Redlick-Amiray & Higginbottom, 2014). Behaviour at these sites can be monitored and exposing interest pertaining to services and products information including reactions to promotional offers and deals (Craig & Douglas, 2015). Video recording of buyers or consumption settings can give a rich source of information concerning the role of environmental and circumstantial factors on customer behaviour and response patterns in diverse settings and cultures. Video recording of buyers in an in-store situation offers a lot of information concerning visual indications and how this impact on product evaluation that cannot easily be gained from other forms of data gathering (Restall & Anton, 2010). In developing markets, video recording of customer practice and consumption behaviour usually gives in-depth understanding of how buyers use services (products) as well as how these are entrenched in the cultural frame of society, and the experiences and connections of foreign goods and brands.

**Analyze the data:** The raw data put together must be carefully and rigorously put to various analyses to meet the needs of decision makers. Thus the first important thing to do is to prepare or clean up the raw data before further analysis is continued (Keegan & Green, 2013). Data processing carried on by organizing the data in tabular form with the aid of appropriate statistical methods such as ANOVA, regression, factor analysis, cluster analysis, perpetual mapping, conjoint analysis, and so on. 8. Present the findings: The written report which is compiled from the market research must be practical and worthwhile to managers as input to the decision-making process. Therefore, the report must have a connection to the research problem outlined in the first step. Normally, it is prudent and desirable that the key and most important research findings to be reviewed succinctly in the form of a memorandum or what is termed executive summary. The key findings along with the principal report should now provide the basis for managerial action (Keegan and Green, 2013).

### **Marketing Research Techniques**

Marketing research techniques are in many forms as shown below:

1. **Ad Tracking:** This is the periodic or continuous market research. This is to monitor a brand of performances using measures such as brand awareness, brand preference and product usage, Jack & Lisa (2004).
2. **Advertising Research:** It is used to predict copy testing or track, the efficiency of advertisement for any medium, measured for advertising ability to get attention, communicate the message, build the brands image and motivate the consumer to purchase the product or service Jack & Lisa (2004).
3. **Brand Equity Research:** To know how favorably consumer' view the brand.

4. **Cool Hunting:** To make observation and prediction in new or existing cultural trends in areas such as fashion, music, films, television and lifestyles.
5. **Buyer Decision Process Research:** To determine what motivates people to buy and what decision making process they use Jack & Lisa (2004).
6. **Customer Satisfaction Research:** This is to know customer satisfaction with a transaction Brian, (2008).
7. **Demand Estimation:** To determine the approximate level of demand for product Brian, (2008).
8. **Distribution Channel Audit:** To access distribution and retailers attitude toward a product, brand or company Brian, (2008).
9. **Positioning Research:** To know how to target market sees the brand relative to competitors.
10. **Price Elasticity Testing:** To determine how sensitive customers are to price changes.
11. **Sales Forecasting:** To determine the expected level of sales given the level of demand (Nigel, 2007).
12. **Segmentation Researches:** To determine the demographic, psychographics and behavioral characteristics of potential buyers. Jack & Lisa (2004).
13. **Store Audit:** To measure the sales of a product or product line at a statistically selected store sample in order to determine market share or determine whether a retail store provides adequate services. (Malhotra, 2002).
14. **Test Marketing:** A small-scale product launch used to determine the likely acceptance of the product when it is introduced into the wider market, (Malhotra, 2006).

All these forms of marketing researches can be classified as either problem identification research or as problem solving research (Nigel, 2007).

### **General and Marketing Research Skill**

Skill is synonymous to ability to perform while attached to a specific job. It is described as an attribute of a job that uses an individual talent and ability to the maximum and this makes the job seems worthwhile and important (Whetten & Cameron, 1991).

Heir, Bush and Ortinau (2006) identified the following skills:



- **Communication Skill** – This is the ability to express oneself freely and without missing words as well as the ability to pen down ones opinion without fear or favour.
- **Interpersonal Skills** – This is the ability to work with others and carry them along on the job without partially.
- **Statistical Skill** – This is the ability to work correctly with figures and to check the correctness of others peoples job.

More specifically, according to Survey of Top marketing research firms (1997), the Top five skills executives hope to find in candidate for marketing research positions are:

- The ability to understand and interpret secondary data
- Presentation skills
- Foreign language competency
- Negotiation skills
- Computer proficiency

Marketing Research skill changes depending on the side of the research. As marketing research firms expand their geographical scope to different areas, the requirement for successfully executing marketing research project will change dramatically (Heir et al, 2006). Many fundamental skills requirements will remain in place but new and innovative practices will require a totally unique skill base that is more comprehensive than ever before. It must be noted that the focus of the research and the environment determine the type of skill that will be needed for the research.

In the context of this paper, the following skills shall be taken as the ones needed in our environment (Ondo State).

### **General Research Skills**

The following general research skills are used in this study:

- Ability to conduct both short and long range research
- Ability to design good data collection instrument
- Ability to evaluate the effectiveness of the research instrument

- Ability to collate and analyze research data
- Ability to apply research findings
- Ability to identify areas for further research

### **Marketing Research Skills**

The following marketing research skills are considered for his study

- ❖ Ability to prepare a marketing research design
- ❖ Ability to involve specialist and other resource persons in research planning
- ❖ Ability to conduct marketing research
- ❖ Ability to monitor the performance of marketing research agent
- ❖ Ability to write good marketing research report

### **SWOT Analysis**

Each business needs to evaluate its strength and weakness. A business does not need to boast all its strength, sometimes a business does poorly, not because it lacks required strength but because the workers do not work together as a team. A business may have strength in purchasing probity and having goodwill. The weak side of the business may be in the areas of production, knowing what the consumer actually needs and getting the goods to the needed customers (Mintzberg, 2003). Result of marketing research help owners of businesses in carrying out such SWOT analysis. SWOT analysis is accredited to Albert Humphrey in the 1960s.

SWOT Analysis is a strategic planning and strategic management technique used to help a person or organization identify Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats related to business competition or project planning. It is sometimes called situational assessment or situational analysis. (Wikipedia, 2024).

SWOT stands for

Strength

1. What are the organization's advantages?
2. What can you do better than others?
3. What unique or lowest cost services can the organisation provide?

4. What do the market see as your organization's strength?

#### Weakness

1. Upon what factors could the organization improve on?
2. What are those things your market can likely see as Organization's weakness?
3. What lack of services loses the organization patient?
4. What lack of services loses your organization patients?

#### Opportunity

1. What are the good opportunities available for the organization?
2. What are the new and exciting trends the organization can try?
3. What are the new changes to governmental regulation/policy that can benefit the organization?

#### Threat

1. What are the problems the organization face?
2. Of what are organization competitors taking advantages?
3. Does the organization facility have cash flow problems?
4. Could any of the weaknesses threaten quality patient care?
5. Do evolving technologies and new services threatening the organization's position in the minds of patients?

Marketing research helps the organization to know their strength, weakness, opportunities and threat.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The study is a survey research which involves the collection of data from the field in order to answer research questions. The study was conducted in there senatorial zones of Ondo State viz, Ondo north, Ondo central and Ondo south. The population for the study consisted of seven hundred and thirty-nine (739) respondents made up of 283 managers and 456 workers in various micro businesses within the state. The sample size of the study, derived through Yamane (1969)

formula, is 400 respondents made of 142 managers and 258 workers in the free senatorial zones. Three experts in Vocational Teachers Education were given the draft of the instruments and hypotheses of the study with the draft of the instruments and hypotheses of the study with the use of Pearson Product Movement Correlation, result of the validity was found to be 0.71 to determine the reliability of the instrument, Test-retest was used, the respondent were not part of the final sample used. The data from the Test-retest of the questionnaire were analyzed by using Guttman split-halve, the reliability coefficient was 0.75. The questionnaire was administered on the 142 managers and the 258 workers.

### Hypotheses Testing

H<sub>01</sub> – The general research skill needed by managers and not significant different from the ones needed by workers.

In this section, the mean responses for managers are denoted by XM and that of workers are denoted by XE. The data for testing the hypothesis are presented in table 1 below

**Table 1:** The T-test Analysis of Mean Rating of the Responses of Managers and Workers on General Research Skills needed in Micro-businesses.

S/N	ITEMS	XM	XE	t-cal	Decision
1	Ability to conduct both short and long range research	1.95	1.85	1.32	NS
2	Ability to design good data collection instrument	2.03	1.90	1.08	NS
3	Ability to evaluate the effectiveness of the research instrument	2.00	1.87	1.82	NS
4	Ability to collate and analyze research data	2.00	1.91	1.42	NS
5	Ability to apply research finding	1.99	2.01	1.20	NS
6	Ability to identify areas for further research	2.01	1.92	1.09	NS

**Source:** Field Study (2023).

### Null Hypothesis 2

H<sub>02</sub>: The marketing research skills needed by managers are not significantly different from the ones needed by workers

In this section, the means responses for managers are denoted by XM and that of workers are denoted by XE, The data for testing the hypotheses are presented in

**Table 2:** The T-test Analysis of Mean Ratings of the Responses of Managers and Workers on Marketing Research Skills needed in Micro-business.

S/N	ITEMS	XM	XE	t-cal	Decision
1	Ability to prepare a marketing research design	1.66	1.46	3.58	S
2	Ability to involve specialists and other resources persons in research planning	2.05	1.72	4.40	S
3	Ability to conduct marketing research	2.07	1.78	3.80	S
4	Ability to monitor the performance of marketing research agent	2.20	1.89	3.88	S
5	Ability to write good marketing research report	1.98	1.77	2.58	S

**Source:** Field Study (2023).

## RESULTS

With reference to table 1, the calculated t-values for the 6 items were less than the t-critical values hence the null hypothesis was accepted, and that means, there is no significant difference in the general research skills needed by managers and the ones needed by workers. In table 2, the t-test analysis indicated that the t-calculated values for 5 items were greater than their t-critical values, therefore the null hypothesis was rejected meaning that there is significant difference in the marketing research skills needed by managers and workers.

## CONCLUSION

The contributions of marketing research to sustenance and growth of micro businesses in Nigeria are of great value in supporting the economy of the nation. General skills, as well as marketing research skill are significantly needed by all employees (both managers and workers). On a comparative note, there is no significant difference between the general research skills needed by both managers and workers. However, there is significant difference between the marketing research skills needed by managers when compared with that of workers.

## Recommendations

In the light of the facts and figures previously presented and discussed in this study, the following recommendations were made:

- ❖ All employees (both managers and workers) of micro businesses should be made to possess general research skills. This can be ascertained before employing them or through training.

- ❖ All managers of micro business should possess marketing research skills far higher than that of other workers for their businesses to achieve result-oriented marketing research.

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