



An investigation into the hazards of hawking as a marketing strategy: A perspective of traders in Lagos

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Abstract

The study investigates the hazards of hawking as a marketing strategy for trader who hawk their wares in Lagos and its environs. The study adopted descriptive survey design to purposively sample 140 street hawkers in Lagos and its environs. The data were gathered from the respondents at the hawking sites using a structured interview guide and the data analysis was carried out using SPSS version 20. The reason given for using hawking as a marketing strategy were that, goods are bought easily with hawking, hawkers sell more compared to been at one place, hawkers makes goods available to more customers, goods are bought early, hawking is done to meet sales target, among others. Also, fatigue/tiredness, malaria attack, rain beaten, involvement in an accident robbery attack, among others were some of hazards faced by using hawking as a marketing strategy. Policy implications and directions for future studies were presented

Keywords: Hazards, hawking, marketing strategy, traders, Lagos

Introduction

The over heightened competition in today's business environment has compelled organizations to adopt the appropriate marketing strategy to increase sales and profit (Kabeta & Sidhu, 2018). Firms have no option than to embark on various marketing strategies to maximize profit, lest, they wind up in business (Aaker & Moorman, 2023) ^[1]. Saldanha *et al.* (2023) ^[23] define marketing strategy "as a comprehensive marketing mix that addresses the demands of consumers, with the price being competitive, adopting effective communication channel and placing the product at strategic location for a purchase. Various types of marketing strategies such as word-of-mouth marketing, direct marketing, personal selling and hawking have been elucidated by extant literature (Beiman, 2022; Huang & Rust, 2021) ^[10]. According to Varadarajan (2020) ^[25], some of these strategies may be offensive or defensive. Notwithstanding, Olson *et al.* (2021) ^[22] shared that most of these marketing strategies are very aggressive and have a lot of health and occupational hazards on the personnel who carry out these strategies. In Nigeria, street hawking has become rampant in major cities as hawkers parade the streets with their wares amidst chasing of in-coming vehicles. According to Somis (2021), hawking is one of such marketing strategies embraced by most firms globally. Hawking has been conceptualized by the 1960 Public Health and Urban Services Ordinance of Hong Kong as "any person who sells, or exposes for sale his wares or offers for hire his labour in a public place; or any person who itinerates for the purpose of selling or exposing for sale his wares, services or labour" (Alimo, 2024) ^[2]. It involves the process of offering a product or service for sale on the street. Hawking as a marketing strategy could pose a lot of occupational health hazards for personnel who use this strategy because of the nature of the activities involved in the process (such as a hawker been knocked down by a truck, hawkers inhaling of fumes from cars, a hawker falling in the process of running after vehicle to make a sale etc) (Mongay, 2022) ^[16]. Hawkercs sometimes run after moving vehicle without concentrating on other vehicle coming from

behind, which can subsequently knock them down. Hawking entails displaying products by the roadside, carrying head pan or raising a sample of products to the commuters (a person who regularly travels from one place to another, typically to work) while these vehicles are moving (Lee, 2022) ^[14]. Thus, the road is being shared between sellers and the motorists. Although, the congestion emanated therein could slow down vehicular speed, the ensuing hustling and bustling in the midst of seemingly uncontrollable 'traffic jam' is likely to be dangerous for hawkers (Ekpenyong & Sibiri, 2018). The health hazards involved in running after a moving vehicle in an attempt to sell goods to the buyers is risky in nature taking into consideration that they (the hawkers) have no control over the traffic (Ashimolowo, 2020).

A work hazard is a potential damage, harm or an adverse health effect the worker experienced from working or exposure to certain working conditions that include the materials, substance they use, the process and the practice involved in that job (Lu, 2021) ^[15]. Hawkercs are exposed to several work hazards that includes physical injury (accidents), diseases, changes in the way the body functions, growths, decreases in life span, change in mental condition resulting from stress, traumatic experiences, to mention but a few (Asiedu & Agyei-Mensah, 2022) ^[4].

Statement of the Problem

The ultimate aim of every business entity is to improve sales and profitability in order to increase shareholders' wealth. The marketing strategy adopted affects the performance of a business entity (Bazan & Estevez, 2022) ^[5]. In the course of operating micro and small business ventures to earn some income to take care of households and families' economic and social problems, many traders have adopted strategies that make them market their products. In the informal sector a lot of these micro and small business entrepreneurs do not have enough resources that will help them in using the more sophisticated marketing strategies. Some of them also do not have enough money to rent permanent shops or stores. As an answer to the problem, displaying the goods and services

at vantage points is seen in several cities, causing a lot of overcrowding and traffic jams in the crowded city centres. Overcrowding in turn brings about very high competition and so the micro and small entrepreneurs resort to hawking as their marketing strategy to take advantage of the traffic jams on the roads. However, several occupational and health hazards have been known to be associated with hawking. There have been rumours of traders being knocked down by vehicles, attack by thieves and rapists, among others. Several studies have been conducted in several African and Indian cities and towns, some of which are Iwuoha (2020) ^[11], Asiedu & Agyei-Mensah (2022) ^[4], CCOHS (2020), ILO (2018). Most of them confirm the problems hawkers go through in their work. Despite the frightening hazards, several traders are seen hawking varieties of product in the street of Lagos and its environs. One thus keeps wondering whether there are no such occupational and health hazards in the street. If the traders in these streets experience these hazards, why are they still using hawking as their only market strategy? These and other problems are what the study seeks to find answers to.

Research Objectives

1. To identify the reasons for choosing hawking as a marketing strategy and;
2. To examine hazards respondents encounter as they hawk their goods in the selected locations in Ashaiman.

Significance of the Study

The outcome if adopted will assist first traders in diverse ways, including coming out with effective ways of hawking and reducing the hazards of hawking. The study will also be beneficial to government and stakeholders to look critically at the way these hazards occur or are likely to occur as a result of using hawking. This will help find better ways of handling the problems. To consumers, the findings will be able to know how to find a better way of participating in the goods and services of the traders so that the challenges will be minimized.

Delimitation of the Study

An investigation of the hazards of hawking among all types of business organizations in Nigeria can be quite involving and demanding. Therefore this study was restricted to traders in Lagos and its environs. That is, street hawkers and businesses who use hawking as their marketing strategy.

Literature review

Nature of Street Hawking

The act of selling goods or services on the streets or in public spaces, usually by people who are not officially employed by any company or organization, is known as "street hawking." Hawking is the practice of offering goods or services to members of the public without having a permanent built-up structure, according to Getu, Kifle, Mesfin, Yifru, Tamene & Sewunet, (2024) ^[9]. Street hawkers and street vendors were one of four categories of informal workers identified by the 2017 International Conference of Labor Statisticians in their efforts to address the "place of work" of informal workers (Mwanthi, 2024) ^[17]. The categorization gives no further details or clarification of who comprise the two groups of informal workers. Ngada & Kyari (2023) ^[19] identified informal units

who operated in public spaces in central city areas and residential neighborhoods. Exactly who qualifies as a street trader or street vendor still remains unclear. There are interchangeable usages of the expressions, "market vendor", "street vendor", "street trader", "vendor" and "hawker" in the informal economy discourse and these terms are loosely defined both across and within cultures (Senna, 2022) ^[24].

Nature of Street Hawking in Nigeria

Nigeria and many sub-Saharan African countries have been experiencing rapid population growth and urbanization from both natural increase and high rates of migration into the cities and large towns. The contemporary situation in Nigeria is that of the migration of young people from the hinterland into the main centres of commercial activity (Iwuoha, 2020) ^[11]. In the cities and towns, most of these young persons have difficulty finding jobs in the formal economic sectors due to their often limited education and lack of skills for formal employment. In their quest to make a living, many of these persons, have no other choice than to take to the streets to fashion out a living. Lately, several means of hawking are employed by these hawkers such as the use of wheelbarrows, tabletops, and mobile kiosks. It is interesting to know that some of them virtually live on the streets and are exposed to the vagaries of street life, including rape, commercial sex work and crime (Iwuoha, 2020) ^[11]. In Nigeria, the issue of street hawking has also enjoyed immense attention both within the media and in academia, due to the ever-increasing numbers of street sellers in almost all major cities of the country (Kwarteng, 2020) ^[13]. Concerns expressed include the street congestion they contribute to, the negotiation for power and the resultant friction that ensues between these street hawkers and city authorities (Ansah & Ahmed, 2023) ^[3]. However, street hawking in the major cities of Nigeria and particularly in Lagos is not a recent phenomenon (Iwuoha, 2020) ^[11]. Given that the Nigerian Government has no backup plan to savage local economy, many nationals thinking of daily survival see street hawking as an immediate avenue for meeting one's daily survival needs. circumstantial evidence suggest that Lagos daytime population exceeds one billion five million, most of the inflows originate from the city's outlying towns and villages, and converge at the city centers to engage in commercial activities including hawking but return home after the day's economic activity closes (Ansah & Ahmed, 2023) ^[3].



Lagos State To Jail Street Hawkers, Buyers



Source: "Nigeria Districts - A repository of all districts in the republic of Nigeria

Fig 1: depicts some traders hawking their wares in Ghana

Reason for Choosing Hawking as a Marketing Strategy

Hawking or street selling in Nigeria and Africa at large is a unique phenomenon that arose out of the need to solve societal problems such as unemployment, poverty and consumer goods accessibility (Obuzor & Gabriel-Job, 2022) [21]. In Nigeria, the increasing scourge of poverty and worsening economic condition means there has been a drastic rise in street hawking in the country's major cities such as Lagos, Port-Harcourt, Abuja and Onitsha (Fonceca *et al.*, 2022) [8]. Poverty is has been a major reason for hawking. When parents are unable to find employment to sustain the family, they resort to hawking. Street hawking has become a lucrative business in the informal sector proven to be resilient despite various governmental efforts aimed at eradicating it. According to Jumah *et al.* (2021) [12], it is sometimes the only means of eking a living for survival. In the study of Ngada & Kyari (2023) [19], it was revealed that (40%) of the respondents agreed that their wares are bought easily during hawking than stationed at a particular location. Others (35%) also agreed that it was the only means of meeting sales target whilst (25%) intimated that hawking was used to meet people who normally will be difficult to reach and I have no shop or store. Also, in the study of Iwuoha (2020) [11] it was revealed that 64.4% of the respondent engages in street hawking to augment family income, 28.0% engage in street hawking to earn a living, 6.9% engage in street hawking for school related expenses

Occupational and Health Hazards Associated with Street Hawking

Street hawking irrespective of who (age and sex) engages in it, is associated with major hazards (Lee, 2022) [14]. This includes sexual assault which increases the vulnerability of the hawkers to diseases such as HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections, increased risk of unwanted pregnancies and unsafe abortion (Lee, 2022) [14]. Other hazards include physical assaults, mobbing, involvement in road traffic accidents, kidnapping and ritual killings. Street hawking leads to increased exposure to antisocial activities like smoking, drug and alcohol abuse, cultism and crime. (Ashimolowo, 2020; Bulduk & Ince, 2022), hawkers are exposed to harsh weather conditions, insect and reptile bites and hunger. When children are involved, in addition to these other risks, they are deprived of education and sound health

and these constitute child abuse (Ashimolowo, 2020). Street hawking defaces the environment from littering by people who buy the goods sold by the hawkers (Amoo *et al.*, 2020). This adds to environmental pollution when the available drainages are blocked leading to flooding and increased breeding of vectors especially during the rainy season. The health of residents who live around these areas is jeopardized due to the increased prevalence of communicable diseases. There is an increased risk of physical injuries sustained by the hawkers when they carry their goods on their heads or hands and run after moving vehicles in an attempt to ensure their sales are completed. This in addition contributes to the impediment in the flow of traffic as they flood these major roads and junctions (Amoo *et al.*, 2020).

Empirical Review

The study of Dharejo *et al.* (2023) [7] determine the effect of street hawking on the socioeconomic circumstances of independent contractors known as "street vendors," "hawkers," "peddlers," "petty chapmen," "informal workers," and "street traders," or other trading persons. In Pakistani society, these are known by different names: (Rahri wala, pheray wala, theli wala). And sometimes they are known for their products like: (Sabzi wala, Phal wala, and lemon wala). The personal and demographic profiles, company profiles, monthly priority budgets, and consequences of street vending on street vendors' lives were investigated using a descriptive survey and interviews. The study concluded that street vending is vital to the economic survival of street vendors. The magnitude of its influence, however, is just sufficient to meet their bare necessities and provide for their families

Also, Mercy *et al.* (2024) [18] assessed the effectiveness of street vendor associations among women street vendors in Nairobi City County. A descriptive survey study design was used to collect both qualitative and quantitative data using questionnaires, interviews, and content analysis. Snowball sampling was used in select 204 female street vendors from the streets. Quantitative data was filtered, coded, and analyzed using the Social Sciences Statistical Package (SPSS) while qualitative data was analyzed using verbatim quotes. The standard deviation, computation average and chi-square were performed to show the rankings for benefits and challenges of women's street vending associations. The findings of the computation average showed that leadership opportunity was the highly ranked benefit (mean=0.913). While poor leadership was the most highly ranked challenge in street vendor's associations (mean=1.651). The findings of the chi-square revealed that all benefits of street vendor associations influenced membership as their p-values were less than 0.05; Leadership opportunity (p=0.000), Welfare and access to credit (P=0.002), training in business (P=0.001) and networking (P=0.003).

Methodology

The descriptive cross-sectional survey research design was used for this study. The targeted population of the study included all traders in Lagos and its environs who adopted hawking solely as their only marketing strategy.

The study employed purposive sampling technique in selecting street hawkers in Lagos

The main source of data for the study was field survey. Both close-ended and open-ended questions were developed.

Also, secondary source of data comprising of journals, text books, and internet were sought

Interview guides were used to collect the primary data for the study. The interview guide consisted of both open- and close-ended items. The close-ended items were used for the background characteristics. As Best & Khan (1995) described it, the reliability of an instrument is the degree of consistency that the instrument or procedure demonstrates whatever it is measuring, and does so consistently. An instrument should also have items that are valid, that is, the data-gathering instrument should measure what it is supposed to measure. As such, the content validity of the questionnaire was checked by careful examination by the supervisor.

The instrument was pre-tested using 15 traders at Lagos who did not form part of the target population.

Two weeks was devoted to the collection of data. Attempts were made to interview the traders that were found at any particular time and at specified locations. The reasons for the interview were first explained to them and then their consent sought before any interview started. The interview was over after four weeks and it took 20 minutes to interview each respondent.

All information received from the respondents via the data collection instrument was entered, coded and analyzed with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. The descriptive statistical analysis of data generated tables from the SPSS which were transferred to Microsoft Office Excel for modification and generation of appropriate charts. Frequencies and percentages were calculated for each demographic item. These responses were described accordingly.

On issues of ethical concern, no data was collected from vulnerable teams and the research was carefully designed to avoid creating any type of physical or psychological damage. Additionally, the respondents were informed about the aim of the research and how their personal data were going to be used, as well as their full consent was sought

Results and discussions

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The findings of the study revealed that the respondents 14 (20.0%) were aged from 14 to 20 years, 28 (40.0%) were aged between 21 and 34 years, with 28 (40.0%) aged from 35 and above years.

It can be deduced from the results that the traders in the sample were within the productive ages. A finding of concern is the fact that 14 of the 70 respondents, forming 20.0% were aged from 14 to 20 years. These were also observed during the data collection. The concern is that children who were supposed to be in school were among the hawkers to make ends meet. This is an indication that some children were being denied of their basic rights to education and instead they were engaged in child labour.

Three of these children aged 14, 15 and 16 were asked to indicate why they were not in school and their responses indicated that they were selling to pay for school fees; to buy books and to buy food respectively. This was what the 14 year old said:

The study’s findings showed that the majority of the respondents 40 (57.1%) were females while the remaining 30 (42.9%) were males. The finding is not surprising as Bhowmik &Saha’s (2020) study on street vending activities in 10 cities of India found average female in hawking as

formed about 30.0% but in Imphal city in India females were found to comprise of an overwhelming majority of 88.5%. In addition, Hussein (2021) also found from his study in that females engaged in hawking among his respondents formed 60.0%.

Data from the study indicated that the majority of the respondents had Basic education. A high majority, being 47 out of the 70 respondents (67.1%) had basic with 21(30.0%) having the second cycle education. Only two (2.9%) had received Higher national Diploma education. The results clearly indicate that a high proportion of the respondents had low educational level. Hussein (2020) also similarly found the majority of the hawkers in his sample to have had some form of formal education with only 16% who being illiterate. It could be deduced from the responses and open confirmation by the respondents that they were trading because they could not further their education owing to lack of funds.

The respondents were asked how long they had been hawking and it was revealed that 57.1% had been hawking goods for periods between worked one and four years, while 38.6% had been hawking for periods between five and seven years. Only three of the respondents had been in Hawking for less than a year.

Objective one: Reasons for Choosing Hawking as a Marketing Strategy

The respondents were asked to indicate at most two reasons for choosing hawking as the only marketing strategy and their responses are illustrated Table

The respondents gave their reasons for engaged in hawking as a marketing strategy and it was discovered that majority 20(28.6%) goods are bought easily, 13 (18.6%) to sell more compared to been at one place, 11 (15.7%) to sell more, 9 (12.9%) makes goods available to more customers, 6 (8.6%) goods are bought early, 4 (5.7%) to meet sales target, 4 (5.7%) to meet people who normally will be difficult to reach and 3(4.3%) I have no shop or store. Based on the responses of the respondents hawking strategy seems to work for most of them and hence, the desire to leave their places of hawking for a permanent place will prove to be very difficult. With increasing unemployment in Nigeria, the government is morally handicap in dealing with them. This stems from the fact that the government is unable to provide employment or suitable market place for this group of persons who are used to hawking and most of them are the bread winners of their families. Table 1 presents the findings

Table 1: Reasons for Choosing Hawking as a Marketing Strategy

Reasons	Frequency	%
To sell more compared to being at one place	54	75.6
To beat competitors/overcome competition	20	28.5
It makes your goods available to more customers	16	12.9
Goods are bought early	16	8.6
I have no money to build a kiosk/rent a shop or store	12	5.7
To meet people who normally will be difficult to reach	11	5.7
To meet sales target set for the week	11	4.3
Total	140	100

Source: Field Data, 2024

Objective Two: Hazards respondents encounter as they hawk their goods in the selected locations in Lagos

The responses of the respondents on hazards faced while hawking were that, half of the respondents 50(70.0%) reported fatigue/tiredness, 35(54.6%) of the respondents faced malaria attack, 30(42.0%) were beaten by rains, 15(21.0%) of the respondents involved in an accident whilst 10(14.0%) of the respondents get involve in robbery attack. With an in depth discussion with one hawker she told us in the process of carrying out her duties she was involved in an accident where she slipped and fell in the middle of the street which caused huge traffic because the vehicles had to stop for other hawkers to lift her from the floor and collect her items on the street. According to her, the accident caused fear in her so she had to close from her hawking activities at the spot. She also said she sustained minor injuries but did not go hospital due to inadequate funds. Table 2 presents the findings

Table 2: Hazards Faced in Hawking

Hazard	Frequency	%
Fatigue/Tiredness	50	70.0
Beaten by rainfall	30	42.0
Involvement in accidents	15	21.0
Robbery attacks	10	14.0
Malaria	35	54.6
Total	140	100

Source: Field Data, 2024

Conclusion

The environment in which business operate is not static but changing at an increasing rate. As a result, business owners are constantly devising strategies to enable them be at par with such constant change. One of the various marketing tools aimed at facilitating enhancing sales is hawking. The study revealed that small entrepreneurs who predominantly adopt the use of hawking are besieged with a plethora of challenges which include but not limited to the following: Rain beating, car accidents involvement, robbery attack, and fatigue/tiredness. Notwithstanding, the study revealed that traders enjoy substantial sales and are able to meet sales target. The study further discovered that goods of traders are bought easily as a result of the marketing strategy (hawking).

Policy Implication

The findings of the study have some policy implications The Government of Nigeria and its Agencies should, as a matter of urgency enforce and streamline appropriate laws on street hawking in order to integrate a human phase into its enforcement, as well as safeguarding human life and maintaining clean environment. This is because for some of the hawkers that is their source of livelihood and hence, their relocation and prohibitions should take this into consideration.

Training the youth on handy work whose mode of marketing does not involve street hawking and empowering those on the streets with information on how to transform and re-engineer their products to catch the eye of many through professional packaging and innovative marketing (through distributive routes such as shops, malls and online).

Institutionalizing boundaries for hawkers in terms of areas where hawking is prohibited and enforcing such laws with appropriate sanctions.

Provisions of containers for collecting refuse in order to ensure the clean environment.

Placing a ban on hawking with children and child hawkers in order to safeguard the future of such children, this is because they are exposed to road accident and sickness.

Direction for Future Studies

The focus of the study was on street hawking in Lagos and its environs. Other states could be a focus in future studies with purely qualitative approach

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