

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**MARKETING COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES EMPLOYED BY SMALL
AND MEDIUM SCALE ENTERPRISES IN THE ACCRA CENTRAL
MARKET**

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DECLARATION

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, Nancy Maame Akua Erskine-Sackey, declare that this dissertation, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and dully acknowledge, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted in part or whole for another degree elsewhere.

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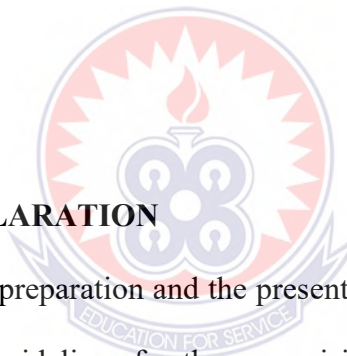
SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation and the presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for the supervision of thesis as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my husband Mr. Kenneth Erskine-Sackey; my children Lady Sofia, Lady Paula, Kenneth; my mother Madam Sophia Denson and aunty Madam Joana; for their unrelenting support and prayers towards the successful completion of this work.



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ABSTRACT

Every business faces competitive forces that require a strategic approach for competitive advantage. Marketing communication strategies have been one of the key functional strategies that Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) adopt to inform customers about existing and new products. Marketing communication is also used to create awareness and persuade customers to buy products. This study investigates the marketing communication strategies Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the Accra Central Market employ to market their wares. A qualitative approach was adopted for the study and thirty participants were purposively sampled. Semi-structured interviews and observation were used to elicit data from respondents. Data were analysed from the perspective(s) of the marketing communication and Porter's five forces of competition. Findings show that all sampled respondents (shop owners/managers) used various forms of marketing communication strategies including customized ones borne out of financial constraints, and thus unique from traditional marketing communication strategies. For improving the known potential efficiency of marketing communication tools for SMEs, shop owners/managers should use marketing communication strategies professionally and also allocate budget for the implementation of marketing communication strategies.



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter provides an introduction to the study, highlighting the background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions, and theoretical framework, significance of the study and the summary of the chapter.

1.1 Background of the Study

In recent years, various programmes and workshops have been organised to enhance development and expansion of small business enterprises by government and non-government organisations (NGOs). So many business enterprises grow rapidly; however, often when there is a small change in the economy, it negatively affects them and thus, they regress rapidly. Ahmed (2006) explains that Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) are now seen as another sector of the economy which is playing crucial roles in industrial development. This suggests that Small and Medium Scale Enterprises are important and crucial in shaping the growth agenda of countries. Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) have over the years had greater influence on developing economies including that of Ghana. Agbenyo (2015) argues that some Small and Medium Scale Enterprise businesses in the country have developed to the level of business merchants and service suppliers of very big international and intercontinental conglomerates. SMEs have made possible the creation of job openings especially in the retail sector, and also contributed to increase in Ghana's export base (Ghana Investment Promotion Centre, 2010). SMEs found in the traditional market system can be complicated due to rigid competition. For them to ensure their survival, there requires personal commitment and skills as well as aptitude in the execution and implementation of their business. The rate of SMEs

venturing into the retailing sector increases each year due to lack of entry barriers. Berman and Evans (1989) defines retailing as a conclusive set of activities or steps used to sell a product or a service to consumers for their personal or family use. Mehra et al. (2001) explained that retailing involves the process of a retailer matching individual demands of the consumer with supplies of all the manufacturers in a retail market.

The Ghanaian traditional market is characterised by lack of entry barriers, resulting in over flooded business environment made up of SMEs, hawkers and street sellers who battle fiercely for customers. Such throat-cutting competition has seen some SMEs performing poorly in terms of profitability. Due to the nature of the market system, some SMEs use price of goods, convenience of shopping and quality of the products to compete amongst themselves in traditional markets (Reardon & Hopkins, 2006; Minten 2008). Therefore the owner/manager of a SME adopts communication strategies to reach out to her target audience. In marketing, the concept communication is defined as all the promotional elements of the marketing mix which involve the communication between an organisation and its target audience on all matters which affect marketing performance (Picton and Broderick, 2001). Marketing communications represent the voice by which SMEs can establish a dialogue with customers and shoppers about their product or service offerings (Keller, 2001). The marketing communication strategy again is the direct way in which SMEs communicate their products and services to their target audiences (Brassington & Pettitt, 2000). According to Doyle (1998), SMEs communicate their products to their target audience in order to inform and persuade them about their products and also encourage existing customers to repeat transactions. To be successful, SMEs must know their markets, their market segment needs, the demographics of the market, and

how to communicate effectively in that market (Nieman, Hough & Niewenhuizen, 2003). Through effective communication SMEs are able to convey messages about their products to customers and subsequently build long lasting customer relationships with them. On this basis, there is the need for SMEs to be proactive and adapt sustainable communication strategies to remain competitive (Pearce & Robinson, 1997).

In Ghana, traditional markets are usually patronised by customers of both low and high disposable incomes who buy products or items on a daily, weekly or monthly basis. These markets are characterised by the sale of everything from fresh vegetables to prepared foods, from building materials to garments and crafts among others. SMEs in the retailing business are found in close proximity and location providing stiff competition in virtually the same categories of merchandise. Some of such locations in Ghana where this kind of competitive retail business in a market environment takes place are Kotokoraba Market in Cape Coast, Market Circle in Takoradi, Kintampo Market in Kintampo, Makola Market in Accra and many others.

This study investigated how SMEs in the retailing business in the Accra Central Market, faced with competition, employ communication strategies to sell their product offerings to their target audience.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Business owners of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) have found it difficult to survive despite the enormous contribution they have made to economic growth (Neumark, Wall, & Zhang 2011). According to some scholars, SMEs contribute to 92% of all Ghanaian businesses (Benneh Mensah & Nyadu-Ado, 2012). Since 1957

that Ghana obtained its independence from Britain, SMEs have been the cornerstone in Ghana's economy providing 70% of the gross domestic product (GDP) (Benneh Mensah & Nyadu-Addo, 2012). A lot of studies have been conducted to establish the importance of SMEs and the role that play in a country's economy. For example, Bani (2003) studied about SMEs in Ghana and pinpointed that Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in Ghana are seen as a major source of employment income and personal development for the rural and urban folks. Other studies conducted show that SMEs are seen as the engines through which the growth pillars of developing countries can be attained (Stokes, 2010; Amin & Banerjee, 2007). According to Ghana News Agency (2006), a fraction of Ghana's population derive their livelihood from SMEs, but according to Amoako (2013), only 40% of small businesses set up annually succeed beyond 5 years. This phenomenon affects policy makers since SMEs have played an important role in the Ghanaian economy (Amoah-Mensah, 2013).

Osmanagic and Antighechian (2010) observe that the main problem of small businesses (SMEs) is the way they employ communication strategies. Scholars who have extensively researched into the area of small businesses all share the common view that small and medium scale enterprises perform marketing communication activities poorly. They assert that the marketing communication activities are done in a more haphazard, informal, unstructured, spontaneous, and reactive way, which are completely different from that of large organizations (Gilmore, Carson & Grant, 2001; Cojocariu & Stanciu, 2012; Mutoko, 2014). According to these scholars, small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs) differ in their marketing activities such as communication from that of big organizations by virtue of their limited resources, inadequate expertise of owner-managers, and limited impact on the marketplace. Vos

and Schoemaker (2004) however stress the importance of marketing communication in businesses to include, among others, increased product awareness and customer relationship building. It is therefore not clear how the apparently haphazard and informal marketing communication strategies of SMEs in the traditional markets promote their businesses.

However, minimal investigation has been done on the strategies some SMEs employ to succeed in their business. This has aroused my interest in the study of some strategic operations of SMEs in Ghana, especially communication. Hence by embarking on a case study with SMEs in the Accra Central Market with focus on how shop owners/managers communicate their product offerings to target audiences.

This study therefore seeks to investigate the communication strategies SMEs employ in the Accra Central Market (how they implement them in their businesses) to gain competitive edge over other SMEs found within the same environment.

1.3 Research Objectives

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the diverse marketing communication strategies SMEs in the Accra Central Market employ in doing their business and how these SMEs implement the communication strategies.

The research therefore seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. To investigate how small businesses create their marketing communication strategies in the Accra Central Market.
2. To identify the tactics employed by SMEs to realise the use of marketing communication strategies in the Accra Central Market.

1.4 Research Questions

The research questions developed to guide this study are:

1. What marketing communication strategies do SMEs in the Accra Central Market employ to sell their products?
2. What are the tactics that are employed by the SMEs to realise the use of these marketing communication strategies?

1.5 Significance of the Study

Marketing communication has been used for several years as an umbrella term to refer to the various communication tools used by marketers. Every organisation has at one time or the other constructively used communications tools such as advertising, sales promotion, PR, personal selling, or even direct marketing. It is the strategic use of these communication tools that makes marketing communication a better approach to reaching consumers and other stakeholders. Marketing communication tools directed towards the consumer are important elements of competitive dynamics in retail markets. Shop owners/managers use a myriad of promotion techniques to attract their consumers. Some of the most commonly used techniques are the typical price promotions, discounts promotions, feature advertising (store flyers and posters) and in-store displays.

The findings of this study could be highly significant to SMEs in the traditional markets. SMEs businesses constitute a major economic sector in Ghana in terms of income and employment generation. Hence findings could serve as a guide for stakeholders who wish to train SMEs in the traditional markets. Training sessions could be organized for them from time to time to educate them on effective strategies

they can adopt to improve their sales and expand their business such as the findings and recommendations of this research.

Secondly, findings of this study could be useful to the local government library as a source material in guiding retailers and other SMEs to orient their businesses towards growth.

Thirdly, the Accra Central Market is considered as one of the major commercial hubs and a centre for revenue mobilisations for the socio-economic development of the city of Accra. The survival of the market translates into an assured or guaranteed source of taxes for the government to undertake development projects. Therefore findings and recommendations of this study if established may influence some SMEs towards developing creative ways to communicate with their target audiences.

Finally findings of this study will expand the knowledge area of marketing communication strategies in the SME sector and serve as a source of reference to other researchers to further probe the topic area in other dimensions.

1.6 Summary of chapter one

This chapter dwelt on the reasons why the topic was chosen to be studied, backed by objectives that drove the researcher to conduct the survey to unfold relevant information to address the research questions and how significant the study would be to academia and the business organisations.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews related literature by scholars on the study of marketing communication strategies employed by shop owners/managers of SMEs in the Accra Central Market. The chapter also reviews literature on communication, types of communication, communication in marketing, marketing communication, marketing communication strategies in Small and Medium Enterprises in Ghana. This chapter will examine the theoretical framework that is related to the study.

2.1 Communication: An Overview

Communication is the process of exchanging information. Information can be conveyed as words, tone of voice, facial expression and body language. According to Barbour (1976), words account for 7 percent of information communicated, vocal tone accounts for 55 percent and body language accounts for 38 percent. Relationships are built on the interpretation of information (words, tone of voice, facial expression and body language) between two or more parties. Therefore the success of a person or a business depends on the positive relationship established through communication. Communication then becomes meaningful to the building of relationship in businesses if the content of the message being communicated is found useful or interesting (Walker, 2007). The study of some aspect of communication is important because every administrative function and activity involves some form of direct or indirect communication. Therefore one of the most inhibiting forces to the effectiveness of business is the lack of the effective communication (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2010).

2.2 Definitions of Communication

The definition of communication appears to have evolved over the years from a consideration of the stimulus – effect model to that of the present day transaction model. Hovland, Janis and Kelley (1953) produced a communication definition in the 1950s as a process of changing attitude of audiences based on some message(s) sent out to them. Lasswell in 1960 conceptualised communication as a process which explains who says what, in which channel, to whom and with what effect. By the definition of Berelson and Steiner (1964), the transmission of information, ideas, emotions and skill by the use of symbols can be considered as communication. Dale (1969) explains communication as the sharing of ideas and feelings in a mood of mutuality. According to Theodorson and Theodorson (1969) communication can be seen as the transmission of information, ideas, attitudes, or emotion from one person or group to another, primarily through symbols. However the definition of communication took a different tone from sending information to sharing and understanding of information in the 2000s. Pearson and Nelson (2000) see communication as the understanding and sharing of meaning. Mcshane and Glinow (2000) say it is information transmitted and understood between two or more people. To Croft (2004), it is about the reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing images, and creating images. In 2011, Keyton also described communication as the process of transmitting information and common understanding from one person to another.

The above definitions and others similar to them suggest that communication is a continuous process of back and forth information sharing between two or more people or entities. The effectiveness of communication to a very large extent depends upon the required understanding of what is being received. It can be argued that the sharing of meaning is possible only when the receiver, for whom the message was meant,

understands the message in the same way that the sender of the message wants it to be. This therefore produces the required feedback the sender seeks.

2.3 Types of Communication

There are two types of communication; these are verbal and nonverbal communication. Verbal and nonverbal communications serve as a way to develop, organise, and disseminate knowledge (Duncan & Moriarty, 2008). Communication encompasses a great deal of human (and animal) activity. Reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing images, and creating images are all acts of communication. There are, as well, many more subtle communication activities that may be conscious or unconscious, such as facial expression, gesture, “body language” and nonverbal sounds (Croft, 2004). All these can be done using both verbal and non-verbal means of communication. Katz and Kahn (1966) see verbal communication as using human language to represent the world and pass on information. They further posited that nonverbal communication refers to the communication and interpretation of information by any means other than language.

2.3.1 Verbal Communication

Tamparo and Lindh (2000) say that when a form of communication is spoken, it is considered to be a verbal communication. Arnold and Boggs (2007) say that verbal communication takes place when people use words to share experiences with each other. Verbal communication is about language, both written and spoken. In general, verbal communication refers to our use of words.

2.3.2 Nonverbal Communication

Gamble and Gamble (2013) note that nonverbal communication is actions humans do and include their appearance, use of objects, sound, time, smell and space. By

nonverbal communication people can change the meaning or the understanding of the verbal messages. Butland (2012) noted that nonverbal communication is a complex system of behaviors and meanings. Also nonverbal communication is any communication without the use of words, spoken or written. It could be said that nonverbal communication is the way people move, the tone of their voice, the eye movement, the space between people and the way they dress (Butland, 2012). It is claimed that nonverbal communication is more important than words people utter, as it is estimated that only 7% of the force of a communication lies in its content (Raudsepp, 1993). Looking at the impact of nonverbal communication, researchers such as Feldman and Rimé, (1991), Fridlund, (1991), Fussell, and Krauss, (1989) believed that the 93 per cent figure may be a little high, but at the same time, they do accept the relatively high impact of the “other-than -words” dimension, which is considered as nonverbal communication. In general, researchers who concerned themselves with verbal and nonverbal communication accept that nonverbal communication accounts for 60 to 70 per cent, or approximately two thirds of what people communicate to one another, and these statistics have been widely accepted and reported by most contemporary nonverbal communication textbooks (Hickson, Stalks, & Moore, 2004).

Raudsepp (199) shows the importance of nonverbal communication when he notes: “Nonverbal communication is more eloquent, honest, and accurate than verbal communication. It tends to be more spontaneous, less controlled or manipulated, and is the window to our true feelings and attitudes. The critical role of nonverbal communication is further evident from research findings indicating that nonverbal cues play a significant role in shaping receivers’ perceptions of communicators’ credibility, persuasive power, courtesy, and interpersonal warmth (Barbara, 2000). If

indeed nonverbal communication accounts for 60 to 70 per cent of what we communicate then it is of great importance to undertake a study that investigates the types of communication strategies SMEs employ in the Accra Central Market, especially the nonverbal cues, as a vital activity for survival.

Eye contact: Members of different social classes, generations, ethnic groups, and cultures use their eyes differently to express messages. According to Raudsepp (1993), eye contact is the single most powerful and persuasive way to gain attention and win approval. However, it can be overdone, but on the other hand, it is essential to be maintained for the correct length of time. Eye contact tends to be quite direct and prolonged when speaking, less so when listening. This is the opposite of the dominant-culture pattern in which the speaker tends to look away from the listener and the listener looks directly at the speaker. The overall amount of eye contact is not different from dominant-culture patterns; it is when the eye contact occurs that differs (Johnson, 1971). On the other hand, direct eye contact is often viewed as disrespectful. When a person from a Latin culture is being spoken to, they may look away or down as a sign of respect to the person speaking, especially if that person is significantly older than the listener or is in a position of authority over them (LaFrance & Mayo, 1976).

Gestures: Frequent and sometimes large gestures are normative. The expressiveness of the communication is what is valued, and if the gestures increase expressiveness they are seen as enhancing communication (Valdez, 1998). Besides, people from Latin cultures tend to use a medium to high level of gestures. This is consonant with a cultural pattern that considers a higher level of emotionality in expression to be the norm (Kaplan, 1967; Albert & Nelson, 1993).

Touch: According to Berko, Wolvin and Wolvin (1998) touch is the physical entering of another person's territory. This may be done with or without permission. Touch is usually reserved for friends or intimates. Different cultures regard touch in different ways. Some avoid touch, while others encourage touch. For instance, many Indians have adopted the European American custom of handshaking, at least outside of traditional settings. The Indian handshake is very light and fleeting; to avoid imposing energy on the other person or receiving energy one does not want. The same is true within families. Sometimes one may wonder why one feels comfortable or uncomfortable, when being touched. It could well be a result of one's upbringing, and culture within which one is brought up.

Physical Appearance: Appearance messages are generally the first nonverbal message received and can be used to develop judgements about people based on how they look, what they wear and their level of attractiveness, among other things (Virginia, Richmond & McCroskey, 2004). Physical attractiveness impacts how people perceive others as similar to themselves and is used to evaluate credibility and general attractiveness (Hickson & Stacks, 1993).

2.4 The Application of Communication in Business

Good communication ensures that the messages about products and services are heard. According to the National Archives, UK (2013), effective communication can happen when a message sent is fully received and understood by the target audience and when the right message is sent to the right person in the right medium at the right time. Again when organisations effectively send messages to their target audiences, it helps these target audiences to match their needs to the offerings of these organisations (National Archives, UK 2013). Through communication, traders and

organisations influence the environment according to these goals and requirements of the business. Both large and small organisations constantly communicate information intentionally or unintentionally about their perceptions, intentions and feelings, as well as their brand and identity. Communication is central to the everyday functioning of small and large businesses (Hargie & Dickson, 2004). Organisations exist to communicate (Hybels & Weaver, 1998). Communication approached through better listening to customers and before, during, and after transactions, can build or destroy important relationships because marketing depends on effective communication (Duncan & Moriarty 1997, 1998; McKenna 1991; Peppers & Rogers 1993; Schultz et al. 1993; Zinkhan et al. 1996). Dzisi and Ofori (2014) in their study concluded that one of the marketing strategies that drive the development and performance of SMEs in Ghana is communication. According to Kuwusi and Gakure (2014), SMEs can use a number of communication strategies in order to effectively market their products and services. The study identifies how findings in the reviewed literature apply to SMEs in Accra Central Market.

2.5 Application of Communication in Marketing

The traditional communication model (Lasswell, 1948) indicates that communication includes a *source* that encodes the message, the *channel* or medium through which the message is transmitted, *noise* that interferes with the communication processing, a *receiver* who decodes it, and *feedback* that sends the receiver's response back to the source. The model could be applied to marketing; in that case the company could be the source, the message becomes the product, the channel the distribution system, noise the clutter of competitive products and claims, the receiver the customer, and feedback the information received through customer service, sales, and marketing research. Duncan and Moriarty (1997) observe that many marketing roles essentially

consist of positions in which communication represents the central element of marketing activities. According to their perspective, communication is not only generated by marketing activities, but is a key element located at the very core of all company functions. In this saturated market environment, characterised by an increasingly high competition, a new synergy is needed. Marketing communication which is consumer and relationship centred represents an alternative approach that can replace traditional marketing approaches. Although communication always has been a critical element in marketing, high level of interactivity makes communication an even more valuable element of marketing. The new marketing generation is better explained and understood by considering communication as a crucial element in building relationships with customers and stakeholders. In the same way, small businesses employ both verbal and nonverbal communication strategies to build relationships with both existing and potential customers. According to Irabatti (2012), the nonverbal communication approaches of small businesses affect the buying decision of customers. SMEs in Accra Central Market also use verbal or non-verbal communication strategy to inform their customers about their products. This study therefore investigates the verbal or non-verbal communication strategies that are employed by these traders in the Accra Central Market and how these strategies contribute to competitive advantage.

2.6 Marketing Communications

There are several reasons why a small business would embark on a communication campaign. One is to enhance the image or reputation of an organisation or product and the other is to induce sales. Consequently, promotional efforts also seen as communication, seek to create awareness or positive attitudes towards the organisation or product. To facilitate this process, receivers or target audience have to

be given relevant information before the appropriate decision processes can be developed and purchase intentions established as long-run behaviour. The communication objectives therefore basically seek to move people to action and induce them to purchase the products. Marketing communication encompasses sales promotion, personal selling, advertising, public relations and publicity (Shimp 2010). These stimulate consumer purchases and dealer effectiveness. The communication or promotional techniques try to influence consumers or behaviour of small businesses in the most direct way. These shops choose customer-oriented promotional tools to improve store-image and increase sales immediately. Profitability does not depend on individual traits or professions of store managers/owners. When the computability of external environment becomes uncertain, small independent businesses prefer to spend more money on in-store promotions rather than on outdoor promotions. Customers purchasing decisions are sometimes influenced by marketing communication strategies such as merchandising displays, and other in-store promotions (Glanz, Bader, & Iyer, 2012). Castro, Morales and Nowlis (2013) also suggest otherwise that sometimes some customers prefer to buy from stores in which the products appear messy on the shelves because they believe the messy shelves and displays are due to popularity. They continued to say that messy display of products in store can also mean that a lot of customers have touched the products and so they are contaminated. Fam and Yang (2005) joined an international research by investigating the integrated marketing communication (IMC) strategies of small-and medium sized enterprises. Fam and Yang differentiated successful and unsuccessful traders in three countries, namely in New Zealand, in Hungary and in Portugal and compared the aim of promotional activities, the preferred communicational tools and the promotional expenditures between successful and unsuccessful traders. When the

marketing communication mix of successful traders was analysed across the three nations, it was realised that successful traders of all investigated countries consider personal selling and in-store marketing communication as the most important promotional tools. It is interesting to note that IMC approach is not typical of managers of small shops. Sales promotion, price-markdowns and point of sales are important communication tools for traders following discount strategy (Józsa & Fam, 2007) According to Eposito (2013), there are limited empirical studies that focus specifically on marketing communication in the small business context. In order to be able to answer the research questions and to compensate the shortcomings of previous researches connected to this topic, primary data will be collected from SMEs in the Accra Central Market to identify how marketing communication strategies is applied in business activities.

2.7 Marketing Communication Strategies in Small and Micro Enterprises

All small businesses have strategies of communicating their products to their target audiences. Macrom (2006) defines marketing communication as all strategies, tactics, and activities involved in getting the desired marketing message to intended target markets, regardless of the media used. McCabe (2010) sees marketing communication as important to a defined audience, including an understanding of how the information is received. This means that the message contained in the information is directed to a particular group for a specific purpose such as persuading, informing and reminding. It is a blend of personal, non-personal, verbal and nonverbal forms of communication aimed at a target market. The particular combination of various promotions methods such as advertising, personal selling, and sales promotion are commonly used. Chris (2006) maintains that the use of marketing communication in business is to inform, persuade, educate remind and create awareness.

Marketing communication is an important tool that is used to create brand awareness and brand image (Luxton, Hodge, & Reid, 2002; Macrom, 2006) which in turn create customer loyalties. Small businesses take into account some factors before choosing a communication strategy. The common one is the geographical nature of a market to be reached, and the nature of their target audience.

According to Well, Spence-Stone, and Crawford (2011) marketing communication used by many people in the world is advertising. Advertising is any paid message by a sponsor, designed to communicate ideas, goods, or services for exchange. Most small businesses cannot afford advertising and indeed prefer more personal forms of communication with customers (Burns, 2001). Studies indicate that many small businesses do not advertise because it is expensive and because all too often it is not targeted at specific customers (Beck, 2014). According to Kotler, Cunningham, and Turner (2000), advertising also has shortcomings. Although it reaches many people quickly, advertising is impersonal and cannot be persuasive as company salespeople. In addition, advertising can be very costly. A study by Nick and David (2010) makes clear that owner-managers in small businesses typically prefer interactive marketing, that is, interacting on a one-on-one basis with customers, rather than impersonal marketing because there is a strong preferences for personal contact rather than impersonal through mass promotion.

Valdimar, Halldor and Gordon (2010), contend that displaying of goods or products is another communication strategy used by almost all small businesses or traders. Traders struggle to make their products visible or catchy to the eye of potential customers through strategic positioning of the products.

Kotler, Cunningham, and Turner (2000), maintain that personal selling is the most effective tool at certain stages of the consumer buying process, particularly in building up buyers' preferences, convictions and actions. Compared to advertising, personal selling has several unique qualities. It involves personal interaction between two or more people, so each person can observe the others needs and characteristics and make quick adjustments. Personal selling is one of the promotional mix which involves face to face communication between a marketer and the customer (Weitz & Bradford, 1999). Personal selling also allows all kinds of relationships to develop, ranging from a matter-of-fact selling relationship to a deep personal friendship. The effective salesperson keeps the customers' interest at heart to build a long-term relationship (Kotler, Cunningham, & Turner, 2000). Irabatti (2012), In his study found that nonverbal communication cues adopted by small business traders such as appearance, played a major role in determining the mood of the customer's purchase, and also, the approach and attitude of the trader equally affected customers buying decision. These are all forms of nonverbal communication that small business traders employ to attract and retain customers. Traders who adopt nonverbal communication such as friendliness, pleasing attitude and smile, eye contact, clothing and body posture manage to build relationship with their customers (Irabatti 2012).

In other studies by Low (2000), Kim and Fam (2001), Gabrielli and Baboni (2010) and Johnson (2000) found marketing communication to be important to small businesses in Europe. In the African context however, the work of Tsikirayi, Catherine, Muchenje and Katsidzira (2012) in the case of small businesses in Zimbabwe found that the majority of small business owners and managers do not emphasise the importance of marketing communication. This trend was also identified by Onah and Oguwo (1991), who in their study of Nigerian small businesses in

relation to marketing communication practice found that small business owners in Nigeria paid little or no attention to marketing communication. In the Nigerian case, these scholars realised that not only did such orientation inhibit their growth and ability to compete with larger companies but also affected sales output. In a similar study Ogechukwu and Latinwo (2010) stated that the lack of competence and appreciation for promotion were the weaknesses of most small business owners. Ogechukwu and Latinwo also indicated that some of these owners lacked the understanding for the application of the marketing concept. In Ghana, Dzisi and Oforu (2014) conducted a similar research in the Eastern region to examine the effect of marketing strategies on the performance of SMEs. Their findings revealed that SMEs in Ghana mostly use traditional form of marketing communication to reach potential customers and also to entrench their brands. This study is not too sure whether these findings are applicable to the Accra Central Market; therefore this study seeks to identify only marketing communication strategies prevalent among small business operators in the Accra Central Market.

2.7.1 Small and Medium Enterprises in Ghana

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) can be defined in terms of their total revenue and the number of employees. The SME sector is quite amorphous and therefore defies a simple definition. There is no single uniformly acceptable definition of small firms (Storey, 1994). Also, according to Ward (2005), there is no universal definition for SMEs since the definition depends on who is defining it and where it is being defined. Venture Capital Trust Fund Act, 2004 (Act 680) of Ghana defines a small and medium scale enterprise (SME) as an industry, project undertaking or economic activity whose total asset base (excluding land and building) does not exceed the cedi equivalent of \$1 million US dollars in value. While the USAID

defines SME as any enterprise with fixed assets not exceeding US \$250,000 excluding land and building. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), no single definition can capture all the dimensions of small or medium business size. In Ghana, the Ghana Statistical Service, in their 1987 Ghana industrial census considered firms employing between 5 and 29 employees and with fixed assets not exceeding \$100,000 as smallscale, while those employing between 30 and 99 employees as medium scale category. Whiles Steel and Webster (1990), Osei, Baah-Nuakoh, Tutu, and Sowa (1993) also defined small scale enterprise in Ghana using an employment cut off of 30 employees. The National Board for Small Scale Industries (NBSSI) which is the regulatory body for SMEs in Ghana applies both the fixed asset and number of employees criteria to define SMEs. This regulatory body defines SMEs as firms with not more than nine (9) workers, has plant and machinery (excluding land, buildings and vehicles) not exceeding 40,000cedis (\$9,506 using the 2017 exchange rate). The SME market constitutes the vast majority of businesses in Ghana including traders and wholesalers in the Accra Central Market. SMEs over the years have evolved to become the key supplier and service provider to the ordinary Ghanaian, large corporations, inclusive of multinational and transnational corporations. SMEs are important to almost all economies in the world, especially to those in developing countries. They contribute to productivity and job creation, and also serve as a nursery for larger firms (Palma & Gabriel, 2005). The Ghanaian economy has seen tremendous boom in the area of Small and Medium Scale businesses. According to Acolatse, (2012) SMEs represent greater than ninety percent of most businesses in Ghana. SMEs engage a vital fraction of the Ghanaian financial sector. SMEs put food on the table of many Ghanaians. However, growth of these businesses seems a mirage as most of them collapse soon after coming into

existence. Due to the importance of SMEs to the economic growth of Ghana, it is important to study the strategies they employ to stay in business and grow their businesses. Among these strategies is communication, therefore, this study seeks to investigate the marketing communication strategies SMEs in the Accra Central Market utilise in developing their businesses.

2.7.2 Contributions of Small and Medium Enterprises in Ghana

Available evidence points to the fact that SMEs occupy an important and strategic place in the economic growth and development in all countries (Abor & Quartey 2010) constituting as high as 90% of enterprises in most countries worldwide. SMEs are vital in most developed and developing economies including Ghana in that they contribute a lot in terms of GDP and employment generation (Abor & Beikpe, 2005; Keskin, 2006). For the past two decades SMEs have been identified as important contributors to the growth of Ghana's economy through the generation of employment, productivity and innovation (Aryeetey, 1995; Kayanula and Quartey, 2000; Abor and Quartey, 2010; Mahmoud, 2011). Thus, the SME sector is regarded in certain situations as a valve for absorbing the teeming unemployed youth in the Ghanaian economy (Mensah, 2004). SMEs in Ghana often flourish on their adaptability and agility such as their close proximity to their customers, their openness towards new ways of working and their risk taking approach (Berry, 2002; Laforet & Tann, 2006). SMEs in Accra Central Market are not exception. The marketing communication techniques used by these businesses contribute to their flourish. This study aims to identify these communication techniques used by these SMEs in the Accra Central Market that help them flourish.

2.8 Accra Central Market (Makola)

Makola Market is a renowned market place and shopping district in the centre of the city of Accra, the capital of Ghana. Makola Market is located next to the Kwame Nkrumah memorial park over the High Street, and bounded by Kinbu, Thorpe Road (which becomes Kojo Thompson Avenue to the North), and Pagan Road. Makola Market is located within the AshieduKeteke Sub Metro, Accra Metropolitan Assembly. In terms of land size, Makola market has an area size of about 6.84 acres (MoF, 2014). Makola attracts enormous volume of both human and vehicular traffic commuting daily to the centre to trade in goods and services. The usual brisk business at Makola makes it impossible for pedestrians to walk freely on the pavements. Shop owners and hawkers display their products to points that are demarcated for shoppers and pedestrians to walk, therefore most of the pedestrians resort to using the streets instead of the pavements. In terms of economic activity, Makola market is mostly characterised by the informal economy with most of their activities not regulated. The market facilitates wholesale and retail trading of all kinds of goods and services including foodstuffs, cookware, clothing, medications, detergents, building materials, car parts, shoes, tools, pots, pans and almost anything else that is a legally traded commodity. These goods are both homemade and imported. Furthermore, Jewellery made from locally handcrafted beads can also be found on sale in the market. With regard to the current economically active population, female traders constitute the greatest share engaged in these economic activities. Moreover, financial institutions such as banks, savings and loans, micro-finance as well as Susu companies are a major characteristic of this market. Makola market is a place where people from all the 10 regions of the country as well as people from other countries can be found.

2.9 Theoretical Framework

2.9.1 The Marketing Communication

Pickton and Broderick (2001) define marketing communications as all the promotional elements of the marketing mix which involves the communications between an organization and its target audiences on the matters that affect marketing performance. Marketing communications are a management process through which an organization engages with its various audiences (Fill, Jamieson, 2011). Marketing communications are the connecting element which represents brands and businesses with their clients. The basic idea of marketing communications is the creation of such relations through dialogue. Then customers are ready to make a series of purchases and increase engagement (Fill, Jamieson, 2011). Fill, Jamieson (2011) identify three different perspectives of marketing communications:

1. Marketing communication – attractive force. From many consumers, target audience, marketing communications are tools that act as a bridge to create a one-way, two-way communication with the target audience
2. The second theory is the audience. Usually, the main feature of the use of marketing communications is to provide information to those or other customers about products or services based on target audience. To achieve an efficient level, marketing communications should be accessible and understandable to the target audience
3. The cognitive response. Consumers should be considered as key activists as problem solvers using tools of marketing communications, which in future will be able to help them when choosing a product or service.

In marketing communication the central idea is that communication does not take place in a vacuum, but in a broader context which includes not only traditional media but also other communication efforts, as well as product and service encounters (Duncan and Moriarty 1997). The concept target audience is defined by describing it as those individuals or groups that are identified as having a direct or indirect effect on business performance and are selected to receive marketing communications. Wells, Burnett, and Moriarty (2000) agree that the final element in the marketing mix is communication and it is designed to send marketing-relating messages to a selective target audience. Churchill and Peter (2003) state that organisations and small retail shops often use marketing communication to inform, persuade and remind consumers of their products and brands (Churchill & Peter, 2003). According to Doyle (2000) there are several reasons why managers want to communicate to markets and audiences: inform; persuade; image creation and reinforcement. Duncan and Moriarty (1997) propose that communication should be relational rather than persuasive. In marketing a relational approach to communication is encouraged because it exhibits that communication goes beyond persuasion and aims to build dialogue with stakeholders in the attempt to achieve three main objectives: to inform, listen and respond. Kotler, Keller, Brady, Goodman and Hansen (2012), in their book *Marketing Management*, define marketing communications as “the means by which firms attempt to inform, persuade and remind customers - directly or indirectly - about the brands they market”. Schultz et al. (1993) and Schultz and Shimp (1997) one time said marketing is communication and communication is marketing; the two are inseparable” The main purposes of marketing communication are to inform, persuade or remind the selected target audience of the market -offering (Lamb et al., 2003).

However, Bearden et al. (2007) emphasize that marketing communication's ultimate role is to influence the behaviour of the target market, and not only to inform, persuade or remind the consumers. Communication objectives, such as creating awareness of or interest in the marketing offer, are certainly not enough. Marketing communication should, in fact, lead to changes in the behaviour of the target market in the purchase of products or loyalty towards the brand. Marketers can use the marketing communication strategy to convince the selected target market(s) that the products or services offered provide a significant and competitive advantage over those of their rivals (Lamb *et al.*, 2003).

Duncan (2005) mentions that marketing communication can add value for customers, because customers need to be informed on aspects, such as the features and potential benefits of a product, where it can be bought, and whether it is a well-known brand with a good reputation, or whether it has already formed a positive association in the minds of the consumers. In other words, marketing communication can influence the target audiences' perceptions of crucial features and symbolic associations that are superior to those of the competitors.

Marketing communication can also add value for the company/advertiser by building brands and creating brand equity. Since marketing communication mainly occurs at brand level, it can be used by companies to create popular, well-known or valued brands. Branding can also bring in economic advantages for companies, because of the potential to produce in vast quantities and to create barriers for new brands trying to enter the market. All advertising, public relations, personal selling, direct response marketing and sales promotion, and all other communication elements are collectively known as the marketing communication mix. Dramatic changes in

the marketing environment over the past decade have however forced organisations to adapt in certain ways to survive in this environment. The marketing communication manager of the 21st century has to keep in mind that there are multiple markets, multiple customers, multiple channels and multiple media. The focus is now on the tension rather than on the acquisition of customers and alongside this is media proliferation, audience fragmentation, advance of information technology, consumer empowerment, increased advertising clutter, shift in channel power and desire for more accountability – all considered to be driving forces leading towards integrated marketing communication (Kitchen, Schultz, Kim, Han & Li, 2004).

2.10 The Marketing Communication mix

Marketing communications normally covers personal selling, media advertising, direct response marketing, sales promotion and public relations (Doyle, 1998). The various elements of the marketing communication mix are the major techniques that marketers use to communicate with customers as well as other relevant audiences. The range of tools available to an organisation to communicate with its target audience is called the marketing communications mix (Pickton and Broderick, 2001). According to Kotler (2003) the marketing communications mix consists of five major modes of communication: advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, direct marketing and public relations

2.10.1 Sales Promotion

Sales promotion is by definition a short term initiative to encourage a buyer to purchase a product or a service. Sales promotion includes several communication activities. Brassington and Pettitt (2000) define sales promotion as a range of marketing techniques designed within a strategic marketing framework to add extra

value to a product or service over and above the “normal” offering in order to achieve specific sales and marketing objectives. This extra value may be a short-term tactical nature or it may be part of a longer-term franchise-building program”. Moreover, Zallocco, Perreult & Kincaid (2008) defined sales promotion as an intentional effort from marketers to deliver the appropriate information in suitable inducement way to get the desired acceptable responses from the customers. These activities are used for providing additional value to the customers and to stimulate and endorse further sales. The activities can be in forms such as coupons, samples, premiums, rebates, sweepstakes, and point of purchase (Smith, 1998). Now when the activities are clear the next step is to decide how to reach out to the customers with those chosen activities. There are three ways in how companies can use sales promotion strategy. Push, pull or a combination of the two strategies are choices companies can undertake. Push strategy means that companies are pushing their products or services through distribution channels to the final customer via sales promotions. These sales promotions in push strategy’s consist typically of allowances, buy-back guarantees, free trials, contests, specialty advertising items, discounts, displays, and premiums. Pull strategy is contradictory to push strategy and means that companies try to make the customers pulling (asking) for their products and services (Fill, 1995). These can be done by using the sales promotion tools such as; samples, coupons, cash refunds and rebates, premiums, advertising specialties, loyalty programs/patronage rewards, contests, sweepstakes, games, and point-of-purchase (POP) displays. Companies adapt their marketing this way to stimulate interest, and most importantly make a demand that the product or service will provide a fulfillment to the end user. This strategy is mainly used when the market is reaching saturation. Companies attempt,

then, to grasp customers to choose their products instead of their opponents by offering the above mentioned methods (Smith, 1998).

2.10.2 Personal selling

Personal selling is one of the most important tools of marketing communication, and with the help of this instrument there is a direct communication between company and consumers. Also the Chartered Institute of Marketers (2009), personal selling has a high level of clout, medium level of credibility and control, but at the same time high level of cost. These entrepreneurs want to communicate personally with their loyal customers, which in turn gives them more benefits.

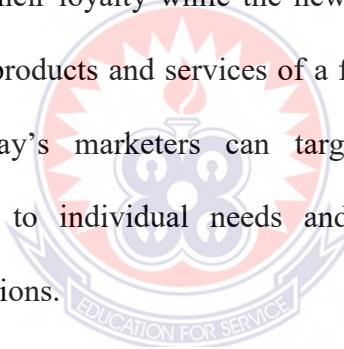
2.10.3 Advertising

Advertising, by definition is the non-personal communication of information usually paid for and usually persuasive in nature about products, services or ideas by identified sponsors through the various media (Bovee, 1992). Goals of advertising are to inform, remind and to persuade the customer. The goal is typically reached by major media including, radio, magazines, yellow pages, newsletters, newspapers, television, direct mail, brochures, telephone, internet and outdoor (billboards, blimps, etc.) These types of communication channels are called “mass communications”. This means that by using these channels companies are reaching the masses.

One of the most famous models in advertising is the AIDA model. AIDA stands for action, interest, desire and action. The AIDA model suggests that communication channels are used to get attention from buyers, then hold the interest, create or bring desire, to finally make the buyer to act and buy companies product or service (Engel, 1994).

2.10.4 Direct marketing

Kotler and Armstrong (2004) argued that direct marketing is the use of consumer direct channels to reach and deliver goods and services to customer without using marketing middlemen. These channels include direct mail, catalogues, telemarketing, interactive television, kiosk, websites, and mobile devices. It consists of direct connections with carefully targeted individual consumers to both obtain an immediate response and cultivate lasting customer relationships. Direct marketing, if well planned and executed effectively, has the potential to be more cost effective than other promotional tools because of the precise targets that the technique allows. Existing customers can be contacted to introduce them to new products and special offers, hence, affecting their loyalty while the new customers can be identified and encouraged to purchase products and services of a firm through direct channels (Van der Merwe, 2003). Today's marketers can target small groups or individual consumers, tailor-offers to individual needs and promote these offers through personalised communications.



2.10.5 Public Relations (PR)

Broom & Tucker, (2008) defines public relations as the management process whose goal is to attain and maintain accord and positive behaviours among social groupings on which an organisation depends to achieve its mission. Its fundamental responsibility is to build and maintain a hospitable environment for an organisation. Public Relations is also a way of management which functions as an evaluation of the publics' attitude, and identifies the policies and procedures of an individual or an association with the public interest. It is a planned and implemented programme. PR is used to create better understanding about the company and its services. PR can use all the same communication tools as in other areas of marketing, but the goal or aim for

using PR makes it a special communication tool. The goal is not as in other communication tools to increase sales or other measurable aspect. Instead the goal is to generate purposeful communication with its publics.

2.10.6 Sponsorship

Sponsorship is a two-way mutually beneficial partnership between an organisation or person being sponsored and the sponsor (Amoako, Dartey-Baah, Dzogbenuku, & Junior, 2012). Sponsorship works on the premise that association largely affects image and that the sponsor may exchange money, goods or services in kind return for the association that the sponsorship provides. Those being sponsored may include groups or teams, events, charities, individuals, buildings and TV programme. Fill and Hughes (2008: 65). Furthermore, sponsorship is an investment, in cash or in kind, in return for access to exploitable business potential associated with an event or highly publicised entity. The key words in this definition are investments, access, and exploitable. By constantly looking at sponsorship as an investment opportunity, there is a viable pay back in the form of brand recognition and brand value. When the intention of the sponsorship is investment then automatically the sponsor expects value in return. Secondly, sponsorship can be seen as access to means; that is, having the ability to capitalise on your association with that particular offering (event, sports, festival, etc). Lastly, when sponsorship is defined as an exploitable phenomenon, it means the sponsor expects to take the greatest advantage of the relationship. In other words, it allows sponsors to make the greatest use of their investment and capitalise on their relationship to gain publicity (Allen, 2010). Sponsorships are often considered as altruistic forms of support like patronage or fundraising. The key difference is that sponsoring relies on mutuality. The sponsor expects a reward for his support, which he most commonly utilises for communication purposes HundGöschel

(2009). Sponsorship of events and individuals can be especially effective as a marketing tool because it can be a means of accessing a wide range of audiences such as decision makers in business, government entities, and customers. Events allow business owners or executives to relate directly with their customers, while they give customers the opportunity to try out the products of a company firsthand.

2.10.7 Word-of-Mouth Marketing

Word-of-mouth marketing is defined as any positive or negative statement made by customers experiences about a product or company, which is made available to a mass of people and institutions (Hennig, Gwinner, Walsh & Gremler, 2004). Word-of-Mouth Marketing (WOMM) can also be defined as the method of communication between two non-commercial people and without influence of the business they are talking about (Taylor, Strutton, & Thompson 2012). Word-of-mouth marketing is communication about products and services between people who are perceived to be independent of the company providing the product or service, in a medium perceived to be independent of the company (Silverman, 2001). Early studies on WOMM have shown that it has an important impact on customer decisions (Allsop, Bassett & Hoskins, 2007), and helps to present a good post-purchase wakefulness. Word-of-Mouth marketing might have different kinds of special effects in the present world. The effect can be positive or negative.

The term WOMM is used to describe verbal communications (either positive or negative) between groups such as the product provider, independent experts, family and friends and the actual or potential consumers (Ennew, 2000). Word-of-mouth marketing (WOMM) has been frequently cited as the most effective form of communication in influencing consumers. As a result, WOMM plays an even more

important role today in shaping consumers' attitudes and buying behaviors (Yang, Mantian, Russell, Henry & Xiaohong, 2012). Because customers communicate among themselves at no or low cost for the firm, WOMM also can be a highly efficient means for gaining new customers (Garnefeld et al., 2010). According to Word of Mouth Marketing Association, 92% of consumers worldwide trust recommendations from friends and family more than any form of advertising, and Nielsen Global Survey (2007), 78% of people found "recommendations from consumers" is the form of advertising that they trust most (Yang et al., 2012). The main factor affecting WOMM is the power of relationship between decision maker and recommendation source. Its recommendation source may or may not know the decision maker personally (Argan, 2012). WOMM is the best way for advertising business or services, because there is no need to pay a thing. But on the other hand WOMM is such an aspect of marketing that once it is out it cannot be changed, so it can affect the company in a positive way or negative (Hasan et al., 2012).

Passive WOM marketing activities usually consist of reviews and observing conversations about a service or a product that happens in a virtual environment (internet). It should be considered that WOMM has changed and evolved to more sophisticated models, for instance word-of-mouth marketing can exist in the virtual world. For example, today on-line word-of-mouth can be seen in the form of reviews where certain product users share their ideas with others in a virtual ambience with others who are interested in the same product. Shop managers/owners try to build good relationships with customers to encourage positive word-of-mouth marketing for the growth of their business.

2.11 Porter's Five Forces of Competition

According to Porter (1998), a firm develops its business strategy in order to obtain competitive advantage over its competitors. The Porter's five primary forces of competition are: threat of new entrants; rivalry among existing firms within an industry; threat of substitute products; bargaining power of suppliers, and bargaining power of buyers. These forces act as a basis to develop strategies for market opportunities. Porter's five forces model argues that all organisations face competitive forces that significantly affect their profitability. If an organisation understands these forces, it can then develop strategies that protect it from the forces. Marketing communication strategy can be one of the competitive strategies that organisations can use to communicate its product offerings and services to customers. This in turn can allow the organisation to be consistently profitable. Porter suggested that in order for an organisation to protect or defend itself from competition from rivals, new businesses, and substitute products, then, a consumer-centred communication strategies such as one-on-one marketing or relationship marketing could be adopted (Porter, 1998). For the businesses or shops in the Accra Central Market who are virtually threatened by the presence of new traders or businesspersons each new day competing for the same customer on a product, then a communication strategy that can attract and persuade customers can be adopted.

2.9.1 Understanding competitive environment using Michael Porters five forces model

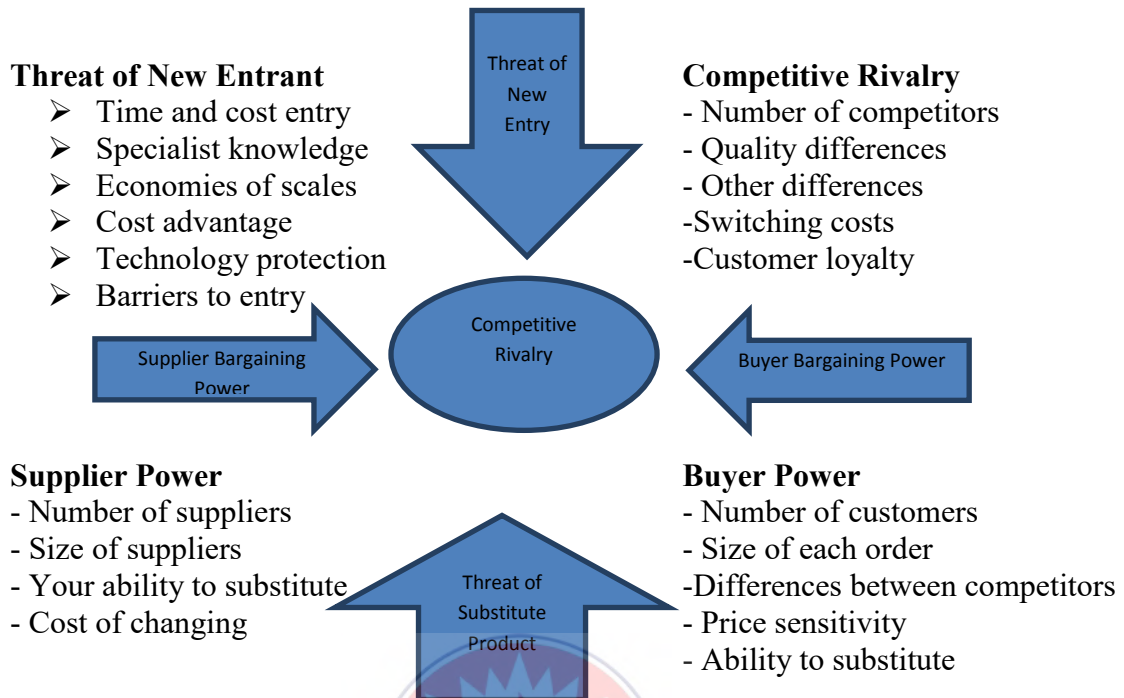


Figure 2.1: Porter's Five Forces Model

The framework helps identify the sources of competition in an industry or sector. Threat of entry will depend on the extent to which there are barriers to entry. These barriers include economies of scale, capital requirement, experiences, expected retaliation access to distribution channels, legislation. Threat of substitution reduces demand for a particular class of products as customers switch to the alternatives. This depends on whether a substitute product provides a higher perceived benefits or value.

In this aspect the traders in the traditional markets strive to develop strategic activities in their business deliveries to make them more superior than the competitors. These strategies could be in terms of the quality of products being sold, their relationship with customers and in their choice of communication. Competitive strategy is about being different. It means deliberately choosing to perform activities differently or to

perform different activities than rivals to deliver a unique mix of value (Porter, 1997). The relationship with buyer and seller can have similar effects in constraining the generic freedom of an organization and in influencing. Buyer bargaining power is likely to be high when some of the following conditions prevail. For instance when the cost of switching suppliers is low, the concentration of buyers particularly if the volume purchases of the buyers are high. Supplier bargaining power is likely to be high when the brand of the supplier is powerful and also when the switching costs from one suppliers to another are high. These forces sometimes become uncontrollable by traders and hence a good communication strategy could encourage customers' patronage in market products.

Competitive rivals are organizations with similar products and services aimed at the same customers group. Rivalry among traders in the Accra Central Market is a critical aspect due to lack of entry barriers. In most cases the traditional market traders rivalry is centred on attributes like variety and choice, target market, location among others. The rivalry is influenced on the target based customers each chain focuses in the market. The essence of a broad differentiation strategy is to be unique in ways that are valuable to a wide range of customers (Thompson and Gamble, 2007). The differentiation could be in the form of delivery, communication, customer relationship and product quality. Any of these differentiation concepts enhances firms' competitiveness and competitive advantage. Shop owners or managers have communication strategies they employ in the market but might be different from each other and so the purpose of this study is to identify the communication strategies used by shop owners or managers to maintain a competitive edge in the Accra Central market.

2.12 Concept of Strategy

Firms are business set ups that are initiated with a core intention to make profit. Depending on the efforts and outlined systems, firms vary in great extent to the magnitude of growth in the market environment. Strategy matches the market position of the firm to its resources and capabilities. Crafting of a strategy represents a manager's commitment to pursue a particular set of actions in growing the business, attracting and pleasing customers, competing successfully, conducting operations, and improving the company's financial and market performance (Gamble 2007). Strategy defines the organizations purpose, goals, promotes, objectives and deals with the organizational competitive advantage. It also defines the business of an organization product / market scope. Strategy is a plan, play, patterns position and perspective (Mintzberg, 1985). Strategy provides the business with a framework for resource allocation. Given finite resources, businesses are forced to make choices between alternative investments, which imply different ways of competing. A competitive advantage is the goal of strategic thinking and the primary focus of successful entrepreneurial action (Gordon, 2004). To achieve the goal of competitive advantages, shop owners/managers in the Accra Central Market must offer value to customers at a cost that produces economic performance superior to rivals. The better conceived a shop owner's strategy and the more competently it is executed, the more likely that the shop will be a standard performance in the market place.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This section highlights the research methodology used in carrying out this study. The chapter involves the following sections: research approach, research design, sampling technique, sample size and data collection. The chapter discusses the research design used to achieve the research objectives of the study. Elements discussed in this chapter are: Research Approach, Research Design, Sampling Technique, Data Collection, Data Collection Techniques and Data Analysis.

3.1 Research approach

The study adopted the qualitative research approach. This approach is best suited for answering the research questions owing to the depth and the context-related issues the study seeks to ascertain (Bryman, 1988).

According to Creswell (2009), qualitative research largely uses descriptive words and open-ended questions. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) also note that in qualitative approach, the content, experience, and form of the social action is observed and analysed rather than a mathematical interpretation or any other formal transformation. The use of qualitative research approach enables the researcher to explore and gain understanding of phenomena (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). SMEs (in the market) include both literates and non-literates have their own understanding of the daily experiences they structure in the competitive market environment to remain in business. The qualitative research approach therefore enables the researcher to interpret their way of doing business (Merriam, 2009).

3.2 Research Design

Research design is a plan or framework for conducting a study and collecting data. It is the specific methods and procedures you use to acquire the information you need (Smith & Albaum, 2012). The research design is the researcher's overall plan for obtaining answers to the research questions guiding the study.

The research problem of this study was to investigate the marketing communication strategies employed by SMEs in the traditional market in their business. The appropriate research design chosen was case study.

Yin (2002) defines a case study as an empirical enquiry that investigates a case or cases by addressing the 'how' or 'why' questions concerning a phenomenon of interest within natural context. Creswell (2002) also defines case study as an in-depth exploration of a bounded system based on extensive data collection. He recommends case study as a methodology if the problem under study relates to developing an in-depth understanding of a case and if the purpose is to understand an event, activity, process of one or more individuals. In the view of Cooper and Schindler, (2006), a case study is a method of studying phenomena through detailed analysis of an individual situation.

Case study provides an opportunity to test the relationship among several aspects of findings, as well as changes that have taken place over different periods of time. Case studies look for specificity, exceptions and completeness of a research study. It is useful when looking for patterns of SMEs' behaviour within any market environment (Cooper & Schindler, 2006).

The focus of the study is to identify marketing communication strategies employed by SMEs to induce buying and to gain competitive edge in the Accra Central Market,

therefore the researcher deemed the choice of case study as suitable for gaining enhanced understanding of how retailers use marketing communication strategies to promote their businesses.

3.4 Sampling Technique

Sampling procedures can either be probability or non-probability. Probability sampling refers to selection procedures in which elements or persons are randomly selected from the sampling frame and each element or person has a known, non-zero chance of being selected to participate in the survey. Non-probability sampling also refers to selection procedures in which elements are not randomly selected from the population or some elements have unknown probabilities of being selected. In this study a non-probability sampling technique was used to select participants for the study.

According to the opinions of Gay, Mills and Airasian (2009), qualitative sampling involves the selection of participants for a study in a manner that the individuals chosen would be key informants or respondents who would contribute to the researcher's understanding of a given phenomenon. In this study, the respondents were SMEs in the Accra Central Market. Accra Central Market is one of the busiest and highly populated markets in Accra which makes it difficult to readily get a shop owner to interview. According to Creswell and Clark (2011) purposive sampling involves the selection of specific individuals or groups who are especially knowledgeable about or have experience with a phenomenon of interest. Purposive sampling is also known as judgmental, selective or subjective sampling (Takooshian, Mrinal & Mrinal, 2001). In purposive sampling, the researcher selects sampling units based on his or her judgment of what units will facilitate an investigation (Adler &

Clark, 2008). The researcher had to use this technique because some of the retailers declined to give out information to the researcher. In all 30 respondents were selected for this study.

3.5 Data Collection

There are varieties of ways to collect data in qualitative data studies; these include interviews, focus groups discussion, observation and document analysis (Walter, 1995). This research adopted observations and interviews as the key instruments for data collection. An introductory letter was collected from the Department of Communication and Media Studies to introduce the researcher to the shop owners in the Accra Central Market.

3.6 Participant Observation

Participant observation was adopted for this research as a data collection tool. This tool gives the researcher an opportunity to observe respondents in their natural settings. Denscombe (2008) states that observation does not rely on what people say, what they do, or what they think, instead, it draws on the direct evidence of the eye to witness events firsthand. It is based on the premise that, for certain purposes, it is best to observe what actually happens.

Bell (2008) also believes that observation is useful in determining what people actually do or how they actually behave in their contexts. Participant observation is a distinctive method because the researcher approaches participants in their own environment rather than having the participants come to the researcher. Again participant observation also prevents disparity because at times what people say they believe and do is often contradicted by their behaviour.

The consent of the retailers, who are the respondents of the study were sought before the observation was done (Creswell, 2008). The researcher made careful, objective field notes about what was seen, while recording all accounts of activities in much detail as possible.

3.7 Interview

Interviews are a systematic way of talking and listening to people and a way to collect data from individuals through conversations (Kajornboon, 2005). The nature of the study demanded that the respondents be interviewed due to their busy schedule and their educational background. In order to get more insight into the research topic, the researcher made great use of open-ended questions. This was done in concordance with Kvale (1996) who considers interviewing as a way of collecting data as well as gaining knowledge from individuals. He defines interviews as an interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest. Interviews are considered as platforms for participants to get involved and talk about their views. Similarly, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) explain that an interview is not simply concerned with collecting data about life: it is part of life itself. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) suggest that for effective interviews, there must be a rapport between the researcher and the respondents in order to place respondents in a comforting mood.

The interview with each of the retailers lasted 20 minutes. In order to achieve consistency, all interviews were conducted with the aid of an interview guide. Most of the respondents were visited once. Only a few of them were visited twice because the researcher wanted more clarifications from them after some observations. Conversational techniques such as personal introduction, clarification of the purpose of the research and the support given to respondents to freely bring up questions or

issues that were relevant to the topic were employed to set the tone of the interview. The interviews were recorded and played back over and over again before finally employing the service of a professional translator to transcribe those responses in the local languages verbatim into English.

3.8 Data Analysis and Procedure

Qualitative data analysis is a search for general statements about relationships and underlying themes (Marshall & Rossman 2006). In this study thematic analysis was adopted for analysing all data collected through interview. Braun and Clarke (2006) define thematic analysis as a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. They explain that a theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set. Moore and McCabe (2005) assert that the main advantage of thematic analysis is that it helps to reduce and simplify data collected in a way that satisfies the accomplishment of research objectives. However, human error is highly involved in thematic analysis, since there is the risk for researchers to misinterpret the data gathered, thereby generating false and unreliable conclusions (Krippendorff & Bock, 2008). In order to prevent this human error, the researcher sought for clarification from participants during the thematic analysis into areas that was not clear to the researcher.

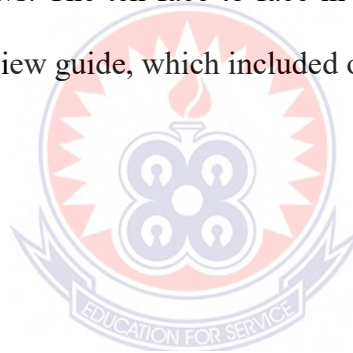
After the interviews with the shop owners at the market, the responses were transcribed. The transcribed data was studied and similarities and differences across the data set were identified and coded. After coding, the next phase was to search for themes by collating similar codes into potential themes. Themes were later reviewed to ensure that they corresponded with the codes and the data set. Further analysis was

done to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells to address the research question. Finally after discussing and relating the themes to the research question and literature, a report of the analysis was produced.

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter investigated the research methodology and the different research design methods, which include the quantitative research design, qualitative research design and mixed research design. A qualitative research design was used for this study.

In addition the qualitative method was discussed in detail. The research was conducted making use of a case study. The research execution made use of ten face-to-face in-depth interviews. The ten face-to-face in-depth interviews were conducted with the help of an interview guide, which included open-ended interview questions.



CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0 Introduction

The study focused on how SMEs who operate in the Accra Central Market employ marketing communication strategies in their business. The findings, discussions and analyses of data derived from the participants through interview and participant observation are presented in this chapter. The findings are presented below and are in response to the research questions of the study. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What marketing communication strategies do SMEs in the Accra Central Market employ to sell their products?
2. How do SMEs use these marketing communication strategies?

The analysis presented in this section is based on thirty interviews conducted over a period of four weeks in the month of July 2017 in the Accra Central Market. Respondents were shop owners, shop managers and, in other cases, shop attendants. The categories of SMEs interviewed included the following:

Table 4.1: List of Participants and their Communication Strategies

	PRODUCT CATEGORY	NUMBER INTERVIEWED	COMMUNICATION STRATEGY
1	Cosmetics and Beauty products	3	Advertisement, Sales promotion, Product display, Relationship marketing Word-of-mouth
2	Jewellery and accessories	1	Sponsorship (PR), Advertisement Product display
3	Fabrics	3	Sales promotion, Product display, Personal selling, Direct marketing, Relationship marketing
4	Linen and towels	2	Word-of-mouth, Product display
5	Diapers and sanitary products	5	Word-of-mouth, Product display, Sales promotion, Personal selling, Relationship marketing, Expert advice
6	Electronics and electrical	3	Personal selling, Advertisement, Product display, Expert advice, Relationship marketing, Product testing, Word-of-mouth
7	Clothing	5	Product display, Sales promotion, Direct marketing, Relationship marketing, Word-of-mouth, Expert advice, Personal selling
8	Food and beverages	5	Product display, Personal selling, Posters, Word-of-mouth, Relationship marketing, Food aroma
9	Beads	1	Advertisement, Sales promotion, Direct marketing, Product display, Word-of-mouth, Relationship marketing
10	Stationery	2	Personal selling, Product display, Expert advice

Source: Field Data, (2017)

RQ1. What marketing communication strategies do SMEs in the Accra Central Market employ to sell their products?

4.1 Traditional Marketing Communication Strategies

The first research question sought to examine the communication strategies of selected SMEs in the Accra Central Market. Shaheen and Haneef (2014) define communication strategy as actions designed to make communication efforts of an organisation more purposeful. In marketing, communication strategies are employed by organisations to inform, persuade and remind target audience of the products and services of organisations. Marketing communication strategies are also used to create awareness of products and services. This research question was addressed through in-depth interviews of participants and the researcher's observation. Table 4.1 gives the list of the categories of SMEs interviewed and the marketing communication strategies they employ in selling their products. The study discovered that some shop owners and managers did not have a documented plan for communicating their products to customers but had a plan that was implemented and a reason for adopting each communication strategy. Tsikira, Muchenje and Katsidzira (2012) in their studies identified marketing communication strategy as one of the factors that ensures the expansion of businesses. Observations made and responses from the interviews indicate that SMEs use marketing communication tools such as advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, word-of-mouth marketing and direct marketing. Most of the shops or business owners relied on customer's word-of-mouth marketing. Others also used relationship marketing, posters and sponsorship to get their messages across to customers. During the interviews, most of the participants explained that they knew the advantage of using some of the marketing communication tools especially advertisement, but due to the implementation cost they hardly pay attention to them.

This finding supports what was said by Tsikira et al (2012) and Onah and Oguwo (1999) that small businesses in some African countries pay little or no attention to marketing communication and that this orientation inhibited the growth of these small businesses.

Shop owners and shop managers also indicated that they employed their own strategies which were cost effective, to draw the attention of customers. Among these strategies were friendly smiles and cheerful attitude, attractive display of products, expert advice and relationship marketing. Others also said they used prayers. One shop manager said:

Sister I don't do anything ooo. I am just there and through my prayers God brings me customers. I do MOGPA every morning. I think it's the prayers that brings the customers

Another shop manager who had a 'food joint' also said:

Every morning I open my radio loud to a station that plays music and the sweet scent of my food attract customers to my shop. And when they come I make sure I serve them well ..., my choice of spices also helps with the publicity.

She also revealed during the interview that she uses posters to inform customers of the food available. She emphasised that she made sure the food on the posters looked inviting and mouth-watering to attract customers. It was noted that all the shop owners/managers used product display to communicate. This finding supports the views of Valdimar, Halldor and Gordon (2010). They contend that displaying of goods or products is another communication strategy used by almost all small businesses or traders. All these communication strategies used by shop owners/managers are meant to persuade, remind or inform customers of their services and products and also create awareness due to competition. The findings also showed that even though some shops sold similar products, the communication strategies

employed were different. The three respondents who dealt in cosmetics and beauty products had different communication strategies. The first respondent said she used advertisement and sales promotion as the main form of communication. The second respondent said she relied on customers referrals through word-of-mouth marketing and relationship marketing. The third respondent also said he used expert advice and his good looks.

4.2 Advertising

The responses from the participants demonstrated that shop owners/manager shared different objectives of the implementation of marketing communication activities. Thirty shop owners were interviewed and observed; and the findings showed that only five out of thirty shop owners use advertisement as a way of communicating with customers. Kotler (2003) explains that the basic objectives of advertising are to inform, persuade, remind or reinforce. Kaur (2008) explains that there are several ways to advertise, including newspaper advertisements, ads on television, ads on websites, displaying banners on events, radio and billboards among others. The findings indicate that some shop owners believed that in order to create awareness nationwide, advertisement was the best option. One of the participants who dealt in beads explained:

My sister and I are graduates and we know the benefits of advertisement and so we use Telemarketing on Adom TV and Adom Fm to advertise our beads. We want customers nationwide and beyond this country so we believe advertisement is the only solution. The only unfortunate thing is that because our competitors saw us on Adom TV they have also copied us and have started advertising.

The shop owner/manager stated further that their focus was on creating a quality image and so they place more emphasis on the mass media advertising in order to widely publicise quality.

One of the cosmetics and beauty product owner also disclosed that she had been doing advert on Adom TV and some other radio stations because advertisements attract customers fast. She said:

Customers believe that once we do the advert on the television it means our products are of high quality so they come to buy. Hmmm, others want people to know that they visit shops that do advert on televisions so they come to my shop and it makes me happy that I do adverts.

Another shop owner who dealt in electronics said he did not use advertisement but Hisense Electricals does the advert and mentions the name of his shop. He believed that advertisement was a thing for large organisations but not small ones. This response is in agreement with the findings of Ogechukwu and Latinwo (2010). They found in their study in Nigerian that SMEs lack the competence and appreciation for marketing communication and also most of the small business players think promotion is for large businesses. The fifth participant deals in jewellery and he said he used advertisement a lot. He gave reasons for choosing that tool:

Ghanaians go to Togo, Benin, China and Dubai to shop in copper, silver and gold jewellerys and so I have to do advert to let them know that I sell all these products here. If I do the adverts on all popular TV stations then they won't go to Togo, Benin and China to shop. You see my shop is big and I have made name and I have many outlets so I have to do advert to show that we are growing. You see those who don't have money don't do adverts.

Franco, Santos, Ramalho and Nunes (2014) describe various reasons that influence Marketing communication efforts within SMEs. They said that the characteristics of the owner of the shop largely influence the use of marketing communication strategies. Seyyedamiri and Faghieh, (2015), supported the findings of Franco et al by stating that decisions within SMEs are usually made by the owner and, as such, decisions regarding the choice of marketing communications tools are implemented on the basis of the owner's intuition. The findings proved that the decision to advertise rested on the decision of the manager or the shop owner since it involved financial commitment.

4.3 Sales Promotion

All respondents indicated that they use sales promotion in one way or the other. Sales promotion is defined as techniques which are mainly used by shop owners in a specific time period to attract or encourage customers to purchase products and services (Mecer, 2002). According to Gimadeeva (2016), the decision to use of sales promotion as a communication tool can and should be made by the owner or the manager of the shop or business. All the shop owners and attendants interviewed agreed that the decision to use sales promotion and its duration were made by the owners. The findings indicated that shop owners utilise sales promotion but not on regular basis.

One of the respondents who dealt in fabrics said:

I believe when I have new products customers come to buy, so my secret is that I reduce the prices of old fabrics so that I can get enough space for new products. I do that only on 1st July and December.

Another respondent who owned a cosmetic shop said that she utilises sales promotion but only in the month of December. She said she used discount as the sale promotion tool. She said:

I don't do promotion but I only reduce my prices in the month of December to clear old stock and get new cosmetics for the coming New Year.

A shop owner who deals in sanitary products disclosed that she rarely used sales promotion in her business but she sometimes gives discount to some customers who express interest in buying products that look old and faded. In her response she said:

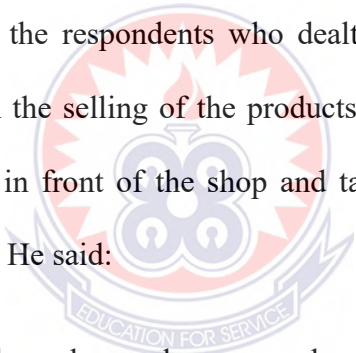
We don't have money to do promotions but sometimes when the packaging of the diapers become old and faded due to the sun rays and movement, I reduce the price a little and sell to interested customers and sometimes when there is a new diaper brand that I am selling, I make a sample available for customers to see and feel the diaper to help them make decision.

A shop owner who deals in undergarments said that she sometimes uses sales promotion as her communication tool by giving out free gifts to loyal customers. During the interviews conducted in the Accra Central Market, the researcher found that sales promotion is a tool that has found attention in most shops but some shop owners did not know that they were using sales promotion as a communication tool. In spite of that the operation of sales promotion varied from shop to shop. They all performed the same task which aimed to induce sales. Gherasim (2012) shared the opinion that today consumers are increasingly looking for products with low price and attractive conditions. In this regard, shop owners direct most of their activities to meet the requirements of such customers. It was noticed that most shop owners used the method of discounts and rewards and ultimately, both tools lead to the creation of loyal customers.

Another method of sales promotion that was used by one of the respondent was trade shows. The respondent said they sometimes participate in international trade shows in Ghana, Togo, Benin and Nigeria. He said they had plans going to the Canton fair in China in future.

4.4 Personal Selling

Personal selling is one of the most important tools of marketing communication and with the help of this tool shop owners and their attendants had direct communication with customers. Also according to the Chartered Institute of Marketers (2009), personal selling has a high level of influence but medium level of credibility. During the data collection, it became obvious that shop owners paid significant attention to personal selling. One of the respondents who dealt in electronics said he had two attendants who helped in the selling of the products but there were some self-styled contract men who stand in front of the shop and talk to potential buyers about his products for commission. He said:



There are some boys here who approach customers to view at our products. They convince them to come to my shop and buy from me because of the quality of my products and the prices. When they are successful then I give them something. I have not employed them ooo but they do that on their own. There are other boys too who do the same for other electronic shops. Look at them, all these boys are there to call buyers to all the shops here. That is all they do. Some even put some margin on the prices and if they are lucky some customers buy at their price. So they come for the product and give to the customer and then take their cut and then bring me the price of my product.

The other common approach was that shop attendants call on any customer who stands to look at their displayed products to come and buy from them. This is what one of the attendants had to say: “we sell children clothing and so we invite customers

who stand to look at our displayed products to come inside and have a look at our wide range of products”

When the customer comes then they tell them of their product offerings stressing the quality of their products.

4.5 Public Relations

All the shop owners and managers interviewed, with the exception of one, indicated that they did not use public relations. The one with the exception said he sponsors both television presenters and programme guests with his collections in return for publicity. He deals in jewellery and so he often gave some of the products to Presenters/Show guests to be exhibited on TV shows. He said any time his products were exhibited, customers came to ask for the same product or similar. He said he finds that strategy helpful.

4.6 Direct Marketing

When the respondents were asked if they had ever used direct marketing, their responses were negative. However when the term (direct marketing) was explained to them some responses changed to positive responses. A respondent who deals in beads said he used that a lot, and often gave out fliers and photographs of his products to be displayed on social media platforms such as *Facebook*, *Instagram* and *WhatsApp*. Another respondent who deals in fabric said he and his shop attendants give out business cards to customers who then contact them to inquire of their latest products. Again three respondents who deal in cosmetic products, clothing and fabric said their attendants sometimes used pictures of their products as their *WhatsApp* profile pictures. One said her attendants used pictures of the clothing line as their profile pictures and so they keep changing their profile pictures.

4.7 Word-of-Mouth Marketing

Word-of-mouth marketing is the most important component for most small business owners because most of them rely on customers to spread news about their products to other customers. Almost all the shop owners-managers agreed that word-of-mouth marketing was by far the most efficient tool for marketing their products. Not surprisingly, all shop owners-managers interviewed emphasised customer service. They said they all depended on word-of-mouth marketing from their customers and so they ensured they treated their customers well and with respect. They believed good customer service is something that goes hand in hand with word-of-mouth marketing.

4.8 Attractive Display of Product

Product displays have been found to have considerable impact on sales. Cornelius, Natter and Faure (2009), found that the simple presence of product displayed in front of a shop is an effective way to positively augment a store's image with customers. This was not different from what most shop owners-managers were doing in the Accra Central Market. Responses from interviews and the observations made indicated that shop owners/managers used product display as the basic form of communicating on their product offerings. Kerfoot, Davies and Ward (2003) in their study also argue that the effective display of a product can increase the sale of products as well as increase the average amount spent in a shop. Most shop attendants report to work very early so that they can take time to arrange all products well based on product categories.

4.9 Expert Advice

Another method shop owners and managers use to communicate to customers is giving expert advice to customers who find it difficult to decide on what to buy. A shop manager who sells perfumes said:

Sometimes customers may ask me to help them pick a nice scented perfume, and if I am able to impress them with my choice, then they say “eeeei you know perfumes papa”. This makes them come back and even recommend our shop to friends.

Interview responses suggest that respondents were able to influence customers any time they are able to exhibit a certain level of product knowledge. A shop owner who deals in cosmetics said:

You cannot sell cosmetics if you don't learn the active ingredients in each product and the skin type it will work best on when applied. You have to know the ones that bleach and the ones that do not bleach. The secret is, you will lose your customers if you cannot recommend the right product for their skin type. I have my customers because I give them the right recommendation. They always come back.

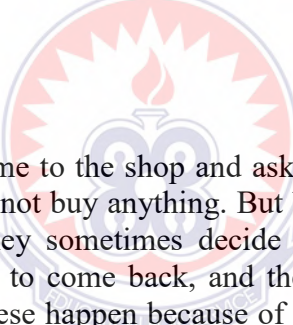
A similar response was given by the electronic dealer. He said sometimes he had to explain the quality of the various categories of products that were on sale at his shop.

Customers appreciate it a lot if I explain the durability and quality of the electronic appliances and help them choose the best. Others too get angry because they will insist on the one they want to buy and that you should give them what they have asked for.

4.10 Relationship Marketing

Rai and Srivastava (2013) note that in a market that is characterised by intense competition and intensifying customer expectations, cutting on defection and building long lasting relationship with the customers seem to be the only way to achieving sustainable profitable growth. Relationship marketing acknowledges that a stable

customer base is a core business asset (Rowley, 2005). This idea was not different from that of shop owners and managers interviewed in this study. Findings showed that all shop owners/ managers believed that the best way to communicate with customers was to build a good and friendly relationship with them(customers). They said their relationship with customers had been one of the best strategies to gain customer loyalty. One shop attendant said they try to be friendly with customers to make them feel comfortable to shop. She said some customers find their friendly gesture irritating so they avoid any pleasantries when such customers come to shop. Whiles some customers enjoy the nonverbal communication cues of these shop attendants, others do not like it. This revelation supports the findings of Butland (2012) that nonverbal communication is a complex system of behaviours and meanings. She adds:



Some customers come to the shop and ask of the prices of everything in the shop but will not buy anything. But because of the friendly way we receive them they sometimes decide to buy one or two things. Some even promise to come back, and they tell friends to come and shop with us. All these happen because of the way we receive them in our shop. Some happy customers even take our phone numbers to call us for updates on our products.

This supports Irabatti's (2012) view that the nonverbal communication approaches of small businesses affect the buying decision of customers. One way of creating a mutual relationship between shop owners and customers was that, shop owners/managers allowed customers to keep their bought items with them (the shop owners/managers) while they (customers) go through the market to buy other shopping items. This kind of extra service helps shop owners/mangers to have loyal customers. One manger interviewed said:

You know customers come to buy a lot of things among which your products are part, and sometimes when they come to my shop they would be tired and sweating due to walking through the market and carrying of their goods. So what I do is to give them a place to sit and tell them to leave their things here with me while they continue with their shopping. And they are so happy to leave them here because taking a 'kayaye' to carry your things while you do your entire shopping is expensive. These children have started charging paa.

Another person also revealed that sometimes some shop owners/managers go the extra mile to pack all the items bought by their customers in boxes and seal them with cellotapes as an added service to their customers. These are done to keep the customers coming back to shop and also make customers introduce more customers to their shops.

4.11 RQ2. How do SMEs use these marketing communication strategies?

It was found that the thirty SMEs interviewed combined both traditional and non-traditional tools in implementing marketing communication strategies. The traditional tools found in common use were personal selling sales promotion and advert. Some used direct marketing whilst another shop used public relations in the form of sponsorship. Smith (1998) posits that the marketing communication strategies consist of sales promotion, advertising, direct marketing, public relations, (sponsorship), packaging, point-of-sale and merchandising, word of mouth marketing and corporate identity. Findings from this study indicated that all the shop owners and managers interviewed rely on word-of-mouth marketing as a form of a communication tool. Osmanagic and Antighechian (2010) in their study found that SMEs mainly used word-of-mouth marketing as their communication marketing tool making it the most important aspect of SMEs communication strategy. Shop owners also used non-traditional tools such personal communication with customers, expert advice, errand services for the customers and most importantly product display. Some reasons

gathered from the interviews revealed that owners-managers adopted these traditional and non-traditional tools because they believed their use could result in quick purchase response from customers. Others also were of the view that the non-traditional tools and word-of-mouth marketing were cheaper to use. Some also shared the reason that due to their other outlets, using a paid means of communication like advert could help them reach more customers.

In answering the second research question on how SMEs use communication strategies, it was discovered that SMEs advertised through television and radio; used gifts and discounts for sales promotion and also used fliers, social media and call cards for direct marketing.

4.12 Advertizing

Data collected showed that shop owners/managers that employed adverts used both television and radio. One manager said:

Adom TV has a programme called 'Selewa', advertises products of small businesses in Ghana and so we took advantage of the low price opportunity and decided to send information of our products to all Ghanaians. The producers of the programme came to my shop to take coverage of our products. They made me talk about the products emphasising on the quality, affordability and the location of our shop.

Another shop owner who also uses advert said the message she wishes to send to customers about her product is what she propagates through advertisement. She said:

I don't do the talking but I make an advertising agency do the advert for my shop on one of the local television and radio stations. They come to take coverage of our wide range of products and then come up with a message I approve to inform customers of our products and how and where to get them.

A jewellery shop that uses advert said their adverts are done on both television and radio using famous actresses as ambassadors. He also adds, “for the television adverts, we make the actress wear our jewellery to exhibit the beauty of the products. People want to use things famous people use that is why we make the actress do the advert for us.”

4.13 Sales Promotion

The findings of the study are indicative of the fact that shop owner-managers who use sales promotion implement it by giving out discounts, free gifts, exhibitions and trade shows. These tools were used to help the shop owners/managers sell off product surplus in order to get new stock and induce selling for a short period. It was observed that the use of this communication strategy was solely the decision of the owner because of the cost involved. One of the cosmetics shop owners said she uses sales promotion once in a year to clear all her old stock in order to buy new ones for the coming year. She said she reduces the prices of some of the products in order to induce the sales.

Another also said she gives out gifts to customers who buy her products up to a certain amount. Trade shows were also used to communicate products offerings to customers. A shop owner who sells beads said he had been exhibiting at both local and international trade fairs by paying for exhibition space to display products. Testing of samples was also another form of sales promotion. A shop owner who deals in diapers and sanitary products said sometimes when a new product is being introduced they make available a sample of that product and allow customers to touch and feel the texture. She also said the only time she gives discount was when some of her products

looked very old due to rough handling she then reduces the price for some customers who show interest to buy those products.

4.14 Personal Selling/ Relationship marketing

Customers' purchasing decisions are sometimes influenced by the interactions they have with shop attendants. Personal selling involves personal interaction between a seller and a buyer(s), so each person can observe the others needs and characteristics and make quick adjustments; it is also a face to face communication between a marketer and the customer (Weitz & Bradford, 1999). Findings indicate that most shop owners/managers believed their existence in the industry for so many years was due to their healthy relationships with customers (during their interaction) in the shop. Responses from the participants indicate that a conscious effort is put in the recruitment of shop attendants. One disclosed:

We look out for people who have welcoming smiles and know how to talk to people before we employ them to work in the shop. Ghanaians want to be treated with respect so if you don't respect then you cannot work here.

Through the interaction with customers, some owners/managers have been able to build good relationships with their customers. In implementing personal selling, some attendants said when they see any customer looking in the direction of their shop they quickly call them to come and look at their products and immediately engage the customer in a conversation. The attendants said they ask the customers questions about what they want to buy, which type and the quantity. They said they also show them the types of products available and try to convince them about the quality. This was typical of the electronic shops. One said they are sometimes

aggressive and they can even follow the customers in an attempt to persuade them to try their products.

In terms of the nonverbal cues used in communication, another attendant said when they call customers into their shops, they demonstrate some courtesies such as helping them with their bags and offering them seat so that they can show them samples of products that the customer might be interested in. This form of communication allows all kinds of relationships to develop, ranging from a matter-of-fact selling relationship to a deep personal friendship. Irabatti (2012), in his study, found that nonverbal communication cues adopted by small business traders such as appearance, played a major role in determining the mood of the customer's purchase, and also, the approach and attitude of the trader equally affected customers buying decision.

A shop attendant of a diaper and sanitary products shop said they gain loyal customers through their friendliness, attitude and smiles. Another also said through excellent services given to the customers they are able to keep existing customers and also gain additional ones.

4.15 Direct Marketing

Some interviewed shop owners/managers use direct marketing in communicating with their customers. This is done by the issuing of business cards to customers. Others also use social media platforms such as '*whatsApp*' '*facebook*' and '*instagram*' to create awareness of their products. Some said they take photographs of their products and used them as their profile picture and in their status they write "...products are on sale, contact ..."

4.16 Word-of-Mouth Marketing

All shop owners and managers interviewed indicated that they relied heavily on customer positive word-of-mouth marketing to direct customers to their shop. According to Mele (2007), some of the factors customers consider to give a positive word-of-mouth to other customers are the quality of service and the quality of the product. Mele explained that if customers are treated well, receive what they expected to receive, and the shop manager and attendants effectively rectify any failures and omissions, customers will then be highly satisfied and willingly recommend the shop to other customers. A shop manager who deals in linen and towels said:

We don't do any promotion here but rather people know of our shop as Hajia NPP so they tell customers who ask for direction to a linen and towel shop to go to Hajia NPP's shop. You see my mother started this business a long time ago and she is a strong NPP member so people started calling this shop as Hajia NPP. And this name has brought us so many customers because it is easier for people to remember and recommend others to the shop.

Shop owners/managers believe that customers play a major role in helping their businesses grow by recommending their shops to other people through their positive word-of-mouth marketing. They all agreed that they had earned the positive word-of-mouth marketing due to the kind of services they give customers. A respondent whose shop was located at a corner of one of the shopping buildings in the Accra Central Market said she does not use any promotional tool except for word of mouth. In her case the position of her shop does not make her visible and that her shop is usually overlooked by most shoppers or customers because of its location. Customers could only locate the shop when they are directed to the place. In her response, she said: "Sister look at where my shop is, it's only prayers and customers recommendations that make me sell my products".

Another respondent, a manager of a Nestle products shop, disclosed that prices of their products were usually fixed and customers have wide range of shops to buy from and so they only benefit from their customers' word-of-mouth. He said: "Hmm our business is hard ooo because we cannot give customers discount; all we do is to treat customers well in return for them to bring us other customers."

Some other response from one of the shop managers was that:

...there is no need for me to pay so much to do television or radio advert to promote my business, customers are well aware of what they get from my shop and how I treat them. My customers bring me other customers.

4.17 Product Display

Most shops spent time to arrange their products in a way that could attract the attention of customers or shoppers. These were done early mornings before customers start coming to shop. When the shop owners/ managers were interviewed on the communication strategies they adopt to promote their products, most of them said they don't do anything special other than displaying the products to create eye appeal. It was observed that products were displayed with careful consideration of product packaging colour, shape, size, label and packaging material of the products. This observation is in tandem with the findings of Glanz, Bader, and Iyer (2012), which suggest that customers purchasing decisions are sometimes influenced by merchandising displays; but this is also contradicted by the views of Castro, Morales and Nowlis (2013) who assert that sometimes some customers prefer to buy from stores in which the products appear messy on the shelves because they believe the messy shelves and displays are due to popularity. Some customers rely on display of the products to make impulse purchase decision (Atalay, Bodur, & Rasolofarison

2012; Chandon et al. 2009; Kahn & Wansink 2004; Lemon & Nowlis, 2002; Morales, 2005; Nowlis, Dhar, and Simonson 2010; Valenzuela & Raghuram 2009). Responses from the interviews indicate that shop owners indirectly communicate with all shoppers or customers. Some use glass showcases wooden shelves and mannequins. One of the responses was that, “we come early in the morning to bring some the products we sell out from the shop to neatly arrange them for customers to know what we sell. We pack them back in the evening when we close.”

Another respondent said:

Sometimes we don't need to talk because customers see the products we sell. We only talk when customers look at our displayed products and do not buy any. We then ask them what they wanted and then if we have a substitute product we then recommend our product to the customers.

4.18 Summary

This chapter presented findings and discussions of the study. The study found various communication strategies used by SMEs in the Accra Central Market. Findings showed that managers and owners of shops used communication strategies to market their products in their own unique way. It came to light that all shop owners and shop managers interviewed used personal selling and product display among other communication strategies. Apart from the product displays and personal selling, some SMEs used advertisements, sponsorship, direct marketing and sales promotion. The SMEs interviewed relied on positive words-of-mouth from their customers to bring customers to their shops. The chapter finally looked at how these SMEs use the communication strategies to inform, persuade and create awareness of their products and services.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter sums up the findings of the study on the communication tools used by SMEs in the Accra Central Market. It also draws conclusions from the study's findings and outlines recommendations (for practices) and suggestions for further studies.

5.1 Summary of Findings

The study investigated the communication strategies adopted by SMEs in the Accra Central Market. The key findings of this study that answered the research questions were:

1. The findings revealed that SMEs in the Accra Central market do not have a deliberate communication programme for their businesses even though they used some form of communication strategy. The study also revealed that every product sold had a unique form of communication strategy. SMEs interviewed use both traditional marketing communication strategies and their own self-made format of communicating with customers. Findings showed that advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, direct marketing and word-of-mouth marketing are used by some SMEs in the Accra Central Market. Most shop owners and managers interviewed relied on product display and relationship building as their way of communicating. All respondents (shop owners/ managers) said they treat customers well in order to build a relationship with them. The shop owners/managers said they promote relationship marketing to stimulate customers' word-of-mouth marketing.

Others also said that another way of communicating with customers was by the of quality products they sold. Other communication strategies included colourful posters and sweet scented food aroma. All these strategies support Dzisi and Ofosu (2014) who in their study concluded that communication is one of the strategies that drive the development and performance of SMEs in Ghana.

2. Other findings included activities of shop managers/owners. It was observed that some shop owners/managers gave out gifts, offered price discounts, exhibitions and trade shows as a way of promoting sales. Shop owners who applied advertisement as communication strategy used popular television stations as their media to propagate information about their products. In terms of direct marketing, shop owners/managers gave out fliers and displayed photographs of their products on social media. All shop owners/managers interviewed indicated that they used personal selling, encouraged relationship marketing to generate positive word-of-mouth marketing by customers. They also displayed their products to attract, persuade and inform customers. Lastly others also gave expert advice about their products. This was done by explaining certain features of their products to customers and recommending products to customers based on certain criteria.
3. The observations and the interviews conducted showed that SMEs in the Accra Central Market agreed to the fact that there was intense competition in the market and so the communication strategies they use are chosen on purpose; namely to help them survive the existing competition.

5.2 Conclusion

From the above findings, it can be concluded that communication strategies are employed in both large and small organisations. Small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs) in the Accra Central Market find marketing communication useful to the growth of their businesses. Shop owners/managers use both verbal and nonverbal communication strategies to persuade and inform customers of their products. The verbal communication strategy found included advertising, word-of-mouth marketing, personal selling and expert advice. The nonverbal ways of communication identified in the study were product display, sale promotion, direct marketing, food aroma, some aspect of relationship marketing and sponsorship.

In addressing the research questions presented at the beginning of the study, it can be concluded that SMEs in the Accra Central Market used the traditional marketing communication tools (advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, direct marketing and public relations) to compete with other businesses. Word-of-mouth marketing was also found to be the most relied form of communication for the shop owners/managers. Attractive display of products, food aroma, expert advice and relationship marketing were also other forms of communication adopted by shop owners/managers within the Accra Central Market.

The findings revealed that SMEs respond to competition in different ways. According to Porter (1998), a firm develops its business strategy in order to obtain competitive advantage over its competitors. Marketing communication was found to be one of the strategies a business formulate to respond to competition. Marketing communication was used to inform customers of products offerings and also used to persuade customers to buy products.

5.3 Recommendations

The study recommends the following:

1. In terms of education, local government, district assemblies and other major stakeholders could organize deliberate training programmes for SMEs in the traditional markets for the management of their businesses. These governing bodies could also train SMEs in the traditional markets on strategies they could adopt to develop their business. One of these strategies should be communication strategies.
2. SMEs should be given the opportunity to have interactive sessions with big organisations through mentoring and workshops. These interactions will help both SMEs and big organisations to learn business strategies such as communication from each other.
3. Financial support should be given to SMEs to expand their businesses so that they could utilise modern communications strategies in promoting their businesses.
4. Innovative communication strategies of SMEs could be studied and developed into concepts for further scrutiny.
5. Finally shop owners/managers should take pain to train their attendants in ways to develop their communication strategies towards the growth of business.

5.4 Limitations

The major limitations of this study were time constraints and access to financial resources. In addition some SMEs and traders refused to participate in the studies due to the perception that agreeing to participate in the study would exposed them to the

public and their competitors. This was in spite of the assurance that their identities would not be disclosed and that the study was for educational purposes.

5.5 Future Research

This study focused only on thirty shops within the Accra Central Market. Further studies could be done on other business centres to compare findings. Secondly, a future research can be done to investigate how customers respond to the communication strategies adopted by small and medium scale enterprises.

Finally future studies could increase the number of SME participants in the study to get a wider scope of views of communication strategies used by SMEs and their motivation for adopting the communication strategies.

5.6 Summary

This chapter looked at the key findings of the study. It also drew a conclusion on the findings of the study and presented recommendations which were drawn from the results associated with the study. Furthermore, the chapter suggested future research options that can extend knowledge on the subject under study.

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APPENDICES

INTERVIEW GUIDE

This interview guide is designed to help investigate how SMEs create their marketing communication strategies. It is on this background that your company/shop has been purposively selected to participate in this research. You are required to provide responses to these questions I am going ask, I trust that we are going to have an enjoyable conversation on this topic. Please be assured that all your responses and comments will be held in confidence and respect. Thank you for your cooperation/Shop.

1. What is the name of your company?
2. When was the shop/company established?
3. What products/services do you deal in?

TYPES OF MARKETING COMMUNICATION TOOLS USED

4. A) Which of the following traditional marketing communication tools do you use to communicate with potential customers:

Advertising	Personal Selling	Direct Marking
Sales Promotion	PR	Word-of-Mouth
Any Other		

Yes	No
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- b) Provide reasons for the ones you use and reasons for the ones you use.

Ones used by the owner

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Reasons for ones not used

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.....
.....

(For the ones that you use please answer the following questions)

MODUS OPERANDI

5. Are you using the advertising as a communication tool? If yes, can you describe how you use it? If not, for what reasons?

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6. A) Do you pay attention to personal selling?
b) How have you established this process?

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7. How do you use direct marketing in your company?

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8. A) Do you use sales promotion?

b) If yes, what tools are you using?

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9. How often do you use sales promotion?

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10. How much money do you spend on marketing in comparison with other costs?

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11. Do you rely on word-of-mouth as a way of communicating with customers?

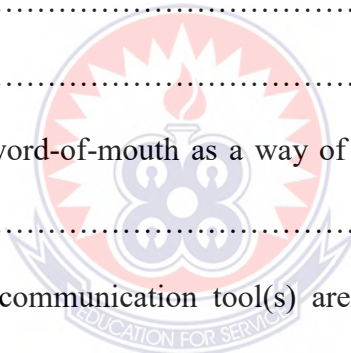
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12. What marketing communication tool(s) are currently being utilized by the company?

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13. How is it of importance to your business?

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14. Can you describe how you implement your marketing communication strategies?

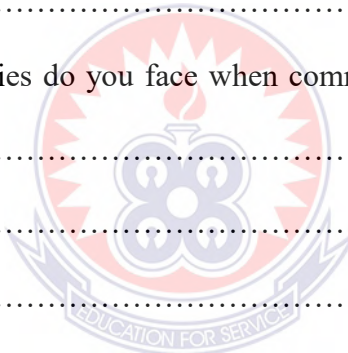
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15. Which tools in your opinion are the most effective and why?

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16. A) What difficulties do you face when communicating with your customers?

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b) How do you deal with these problems?

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17. Do you think that the marketing communication strategies you employ have any competitive advantage?

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