

Development of Sustainable Marketing Communications in the Energy Industry of an Emerging Economy: A Case Study of Renewable Energy in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the development of Sustainable Marketing Communications in the Energy Industry of an emerging economy: A case study of renewable energy (RE) in Nigeria. The focal point of the paper is on the significance of renewable energy as part of the solution to energy crisis, particularly because power generation through RE has become of the major driver of sustainable social economic development. Aside from Nigeria abundant crude oil, there is also the availability of renewable energy. Yet, there is lack of wide spread usage of these energy sources e.g. solar, hydro and wind due to challenges such as reliability, cost, and transportation and inadequate application of the Integrated Marketing Communications IMC tools. The emergence of e-commerce and new social media and its impact on consumers' perceptions and experiences has been of particular interest as awareness tool e.g. the use of Facebook to practice marketing in the 21st century. It is important for both government agencies and private sector to have a unique IMC that can help to introduce new range of renewable energy products in the consumer market as one of the significant business functions. While there are various traditional marketing efforts to spread the use of RE as solution to power shortage in the country, there is no study yet on the relationship between the IMC and its impact on the in renewable energy. Also, the impact of the IMC has so far not been evaluated to develop policy frameworks that would give importance to customer needs and wants regarding renewable energy. The paper explores how IMC as sustainable marketing tool could help in spreading the wider awareness and understanding for the usage of renewable energy as alternative power supply for socio economic development. It proposes mixed methods of both qualitative and quantitative methods to properly address the challenges. An investigation into the issues will be done through data collection by interviewing industry experts and surveying a particular consumer segment of the society and their responses will be qualitatively analysed. Thereupon, system dynamics will be applied by using system thinking to develop a system of framework for workable marketing tools/concept to proffer solutions. The need for Renewable Energy (RE) has never been greater in light of the dearth of flowing electricity supply in Nigeria which invariably hinders development sustainability and social economic advancement. A poster illustration of part of the material in this paper was presented recently at the University of Plymouth 14th doctoral conference (Ajani, 2019).

Keywords: Energy, Development, Sustainability, Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC).

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1. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

60% – 70% of the Nigerians do not have access to electricity. Thus, the government of Nigeria has been taking measures to implement energy efficiency and sustainability in all the sectors of the economy (Oyedepo, 2012b). The need for renewable energy as one of the significant requirements for the people to live their lives has been established (Oseni 2012). Only two sources of renewable energy in Nigeria are prominent; the hydro-power and the biomass (Mohammed et al. 2013). FDI in the hydroelectric plant in Mambilla with Chinese investors providing 85% of the total fund (ESI-Africa.com 2018). The government of Nigeria has targeted to increase their energy production and supply power to almost 90% of its population by 2030 and 30% of its production would be from the renewable sources (Gerretsen 2018). There is no study on the relationship between the sustainable marketing communications and its impact on the energy sector or in case of renewable energy. The impact of the sustainable marketing communication has not been evaluated to develop policy frameworks that would also give importance to customer needs and wants regarding renewable energy.

2. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The prevalent shortage of electrical power to engender social economic development begs the question: If traditional marketing is being practiced and there is not much widespread awareness and usage of renewable energy, can (IMC) sustainable Marketing communications be developed to increase awareness and potential usage of renewable energy in Nigeria?

3. OBJECTIVE

The overall aim to explore how IMC as sustainable marketing tool could help in spreading the wider understanding and usage of renewable as alternative power supply for socio economic development. The main objective Objectives are: To collect evidence i.e. data, variable to operationalise the use of IMC. And to structure IMC model in such a way that it could be applied to increase awareness and wide spread usage of renewable energy in Nigeria.

4. METHODOLOGY

The following are the proposed methodology framework: Interpretivism perspective i.e. based on the meanings and understanding on the social issues, perceptions, attitudes and values of a community etc. (Saunders, et al, 2007). Inductive approach (making general observations, understanding the pattern and creating hypothesis, conclusion or theories (Hair, et.al, 2015).

4.1 The Research Design

The research method design will explore, using quantitative method i.e. interview and survey to investigate the extent to which Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) is be applied in the marketing practice of renewable energy both by government and the private sector (Saunders, et al, 2007). Technology (System Dynamics) will be applied to system thinking to design a system of framework for workable marketing tools/concept to attempt solutions to the lack of awareness of renewable energy (RE) as alternative to insufficient crude oil/gas-generating electricity.



5. DATA PRESENTATION

This is a research in-progress

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Utilizing renewable sources would be a way of practicing sustainable development while the construction of IMC framework/model will help in creating awareness and promoting brand image amongst customers. Nigeria needs to explore the renewable energy sources to reduce its energy supply crisis. There is a need for Nigeria to design and implement the sustainable marketing communication to reach out to larger audience in the country as sustainable marketing communications and social media are strong in influencing the business performance.

7. CONTRIBUTIONS TO KNOWLEDGE

This study will contribute to evolving literature on IMC in newly industrialising economies/developing economy using the Nigeria renewable industry as a focus. Also, it will foster academic engagement and it will have social, economic and environmental impacts. All these will enhance health and wellbeing, policy (influences and changes) and technological developments.



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