European Journal of Business and Innovation Research
Vol.1 No.2, pp.57-69, June 2013
Published by European Centre for Research Training and Development, UK (www.ea-journals.org)

# ASSESSING THE MARKETING ORIENTATION OF MICROFINANCE BANKS IN AKWA IBOM STATE.

**IBOK, NKANIKPO IBOK (Ph.D)**
DEPT. OF MARKETING
UNIVERSITY OF UYO
GSM: 08023553684.

**SAMUEL G. ETUK**
DEPT. OF MARKETING
UNIVERSITY OF UYO

***Abstract:*** *This study was an attempt to investigate whether microfinance institutions (MFIs) operating within Akwa Ibom State have knowledge of marketing or adopt marketing strategies in their drive for savings and services delivery as well as examined the relationship between marketing orientation and the performance of marketing functions by microfinance Banks. Both primary and secondary sources of data were used. The instrument used was marketing knowledge inventory Questionnaire (MKIQ) developed by the researchers. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used in analyzing the data. A major finding of this study was that there was poor knowledge of marketing among microfinance banks in Akwa Ibom State. The result of the hypothesis revealed a significant positive relationship between marketing orientation and performance of marketing functions .Based on these findings, we recommend that microfinance institutions in Akwa Ibom State be more proactive in marketing their services by creating marketing department, to be headed by a seasoned professional marketer, among other recommendations.*

**Keywords**: Microfinance Banks, Marketing Orientation.

## INTRODUCTION

This study investigated the level of marketing orientations among microfinance institutions operating in Akwa Ibom State. Banking is traditionally one sector that is noted with high reform regimes. One of the main characteristics of this sector is its impressive drive for deposit mobilization. The Nigerian banking industry displays one of the highest level of marketing resource utilization but when investigated exhibits a high degree of marketing myopia in their activities (Osakwe,2003). This heightened level of poor marketing knowledge and orientation in the sector is said to partially account for the low quality of service delivery (Cravens, 2001; Robinson, 2004; Kotler, 2004 and Gronros 2000).

The concept of micro banking is dated back to the primitive age, carrying different names like Osusu, Esusu, Etibe etc. (Brafu-Insaidoo and Ahiakpor, (2011). Although these banks were created with the objective of mobilizing rural funds, it failed to achieve its purpose almost after a decade. However, although, it is widely accepted that microfinance banks play a very important role in improving the living conditions of the rural people by making it possible for the rural people to have access to productive resources, it seems these banks in Nigeria are yet to achieve this mandate. This is evidenced by the number of licenses with drawn recently from these banks by the central bank of Nigeria.

The culture of savings, whether by individual or corporate organizations, is widely recognized as part of human nature. People save for various reasons; perhaps they want to provide security against unpredicted happenings, meet contingent social obligations, accumulate funds for investment or meet future consumption challenges.But no matter what ever may be the reasons, the poor particularly in the rural areas were constrained from accessing the services of the conventional commercial banks owing to various reasons such as being too expensive, unattractive or highly risky to operate. The micro finance banks therefore became the only avenue by which rural funds could be mobbed up to accelerate economic development of the society.

Thus, these banks become the main source of funding for the rural poor and micro enterprises.(Braffu-Insaidoo and Ahiakpor, 2011). However, despite the important role played by these institutions in mobilizing rural funds, the industry has been faced with many challenges and constraints which partly accounts for the slow growth and development of the sector. One of such basic challenges is the inability to reach a greater number of the poor in rural areas. One recent study indicated that over 500 million people worldwide demand financial services, but only a small portion of those people actually have access to financial institutions (Brafu – Insaidoo and Ahiakpor, 2011). Therefore, the task of building strong and sustainable micro finance institutions that will meet this massive demand is exciting, challenging, and imperative. It is against this background that this study attempts to assess the level of marketing orientation among micro finance banks in Akwa Ibom State as a necessary prerequisite for any rational effort towards building a viable micro finance institution in the state.

**Objectives of the study**

The general purpose of this study is to examine the level of marketing orientation among micro finance banks operating within Akwa Ibom State. More specifically, the study aims at:

i. assessing the level of marketing orientation among micro finance banks in the state
ii. examining the relationship between marketing orientation and performance of marketing functions by MFB
iii. Providing recommendations on the way forward for the banks in terms of marketing its services for results.

**Research Question:**

One major research question was asked to guide the study. Thus the study sought answer to this research question:

(i) What is the level of marketing orientation among micro finance banks in Akwa Ibom State?
(ii) Is there any significant relationship between marketing orientation and the performance of marketing functions by MFB?
(iii) In what way (s) can the banks improve their services through marketing knowledge and orientation?

**Hypothesis:**

One hypothesis was developed to guide the study and stated as follows:

**HO:** There is no significant relationship between marketing orientation of micro finance banks and their performance of marketing functions.

## THEORITICAL NEXUS

The concept of microfinance banking and marketing are not new to Nigerians but the practice seems to be more formalized in recent years with the various financial sector reforms and the liberalization of the financial sector. However, many studies have made efforts at identifying the key issues that a marketing oriented company or organization must possess. For example; Kohli and Jawroski (2000) asserts that a marketing oriented organization must have:

(a) One or more units or department that must engage in activities geared towards indentifying customer's needs and wants
(b) Sharing of marketing understanding across various departments of the organization and that
(c) The various departments engaging in marketing activities are designed to meet customers' needs at a profit.

Accordingly, Naver and Slater (2000) highlighted the characteristics of a marketing oriented company to include:

(i) An understanding of long term profits as against short term orientation.
(ii) An entrenchment of organizational culture that facilitates organizational learning.
(iii) An inter functional coordination of activities geared towards creating value.
(iv) An awareness of competitors capabilities and
(v) An orientation of the customers towards better understanding their needs and wants in the market.

The starting point for the discipline of marketing lies in understanding human needs and wants. This owes its mandate to the marketing concept which holds that the key to achieving sustainable organizational goals and objectives lies in determining the needs and wants of the target market and then delivering the desired satisfaction more effectively and efficiently than competitors. This concept has three main orientations which should guide marketing practice, namely:

(a) **Customer orientation:** This emphasizes that everything done in an organization or supposed to be done should be oriented toward the customers.
(b) **Profitable sales volume:** This orientation has it that organizations must strive for long term profit rather than just sales.
(c) **Coordinated marketing effort:** This implies everything done or supposed to be done should be organizationally coordinated.

In essence, Kotler (2004) summarized this concept as a customers' needs and wants orientation backed by integrated marketing effort aimed at generating customer satisfaction as the key to achieving organizational goals. Therefore, for any selling activity to be effective, the activity must be preceded by several marketing functions, such as needs assessment, marketing research, segmentation, product research, product development, pricing and distribution. Thus, if a good job is done by identifying customers' needs, then developing appropriate product, pricing, distributing and promoting them effectively, will not be a problem to the business firms. According to Churchill (2000), the organization's objectives and missions must only be considered prior to the preparation and design of marketing strategy. Drucker (2004) on his part sees an effective corporate mission to be market focused rather than product. This implies that organization's mission statement should focus on the needs of the market which the firm attempts to fill or satisfy. Accordingly, Drucker (2004), Kotler and Keller (2006) have all agreed that the mission and purpose of every business concern should be to satisfy the customers and not vice versa. More so, such objectives must be expressed in terms of markets and products. Kotler (2004) further indicated that such marketing strategies be linked directly with the marketing approaches or programs which the firm wants to adopt. This further suggests that unless corporate strategies are crafted and translated into concrete marketing programs, then marketing Vis-à-vis the corporate objectives of the firm will not be realized.

Several authors (see for example: Cravens, 2001; kotler, 2004; Kotler and Keller, 2006; Robinson, 2004 and Ibok, 2008) have all given insights into a firm's way of being marketing oriented through adopting several marketing approaches. Thus, marketing approach is concerned with the planning and implementation of specific marketing actions in the market place.

However, specific marketing actions revolve around the 4ps or marketing mix made up of the following key elements;

(a) **Product:** which consists of developing products in terms of quality, features, options, style, brand name, packaging, sizes, services, warranties and return privileges.
(b) **Promotion:** which involves the firms promotional elements or tools such as advertising, personal selling, sales promotion and publicity.
(c) **Price:** Which consists of decisions in such areas as list price, discounts, allowances, payment period and credit terms.
(d) **Place:** This involves taking decisions in terms of locations, channels, coverage, inventory and accessibility or transportation.
(e)

According to Robinson, (2004), the product policies of the firm should be the foundation for their marketing strategy. This is because, if the product fails to offer the desired satisfaction, in this case competitive interest rate and customer service coupled with creative promotion and well articulated distribution strategies, and then nothing will be sufficient to compensate for this weakness. Robinson (2004) considers pricing or the selection of a pricing policy as a function of three key factors; namely; the demand structure, competitor prices as well as the firm's costs structure. Thus, several pricing alternatives are open to any organization.These pricing options include; geographic pricing, cost plus, breakeven and profit impact target pricing, value in use pricing, market rate pricing, relationship pricing, zone pricing, penetration and even cream skimming strategies.

Gronroos (2000) also highlighted on the firm's promotional need as the most visible of all the marketing mix ingredients and identified the use of advertising in reaching mass audiences through the paid media such as radio, television, newspapers etc. Personal selling by staff through communicating face to face with customers and the use of supporting materials for presentation and demonstration. Sales promotion efforts include such short term tactical incentives that can induce sales such as reduction of interest on borrowing, giving away to encourage more target deposits etc, and the use of publicity in creating additional value or

Vol.1 No.2, pp.57-69, June 2013

Published by European Centre for Research Training and Development, UK (www.ea-journals.org)

image with various stakeholders through sponsorship of special events, games, news stories, community development efforts like scholarship awards etc. Gronroos (2000) further maintained that a firm's distribution policy should be concerned with how to distribute and deliver products to the customers as at when due. Thus, the distribution concern of any organization should be based on network distribution, in these case branches on the one hand and logistics on the other.

However, marketing of financial services cannot be complete without mention to the issue of relationship marketing, which consists of building and maintaining long term relationship with the customers into the foreseeable future. In essence, this concept implies customer for life.

Therefore, we must understand that, the purpose of marketing is to establish, maintain, build, enhance and commercialize relationships so that the objectives of both parties can be mutually achieved. Levitt (1991) summarized relationship marketing thus: "When an organization is loyal to its customers, and is committed to providing valuable and improved services in response to changing needs of its customers, there is the tendency for its customers to repay the former in the form of a mutually beneficial long term relationship, cemented by bonding, trust, reciprocity and empathy."

(a) **Trust:** this is the ultimate glue that holds a relationship together for a long term. Thus, trust is the extent of one party's confidence that it can rely on another's integrity.
(b) **Bonding:** Two parties are bonded together as a result of mutual interests or dependencies between the parties which must be strong enough to tie them together. Thus, if the bonds are weak, then the relationship is in imminent danger of failing apart, whereas stronger bonds increase the parties' commitment to each other.
(c) **Empathy:** This refers to the ability of someone to see situations from the perspective of the other. Thus, it is key in developing emotional relationship among parties.
(d) **Reciprocity:** This involves some give and take approaches between the parties involved in any relationship. Therefore, parties must make allowances or grant favours in exchange for the same treatment whenever the need arises. This give and take process, also known as reciprocity is a web of commitment among the parties, binding them ever closer.
(e)

Therefore, in forming strong customer bonds, Berry and Parasuraman (2006) have offered some tips on how to connect with the customers. They identified three retention building strategies as follows:

(i) Providing financial benefits: This comprises frequency programmes and club marketing programs. Frequency programmes are designed to provide rewards to customers who buy frequently and in substantial amounts. Club marketing on the other hand is open to everyone who purchases a product or service or can be limited to an affinity group or to those willing to pay a small fee and become members of the club. These clubs attract, and keep those customers who are responsible for the largest portion of the business

Vol.1 No.2, pp.57-69, June 2013

Published by European Centre for Research Training and Development, UK (www.ea-journals.org)

(ii) Providing social benefits: This consists of individualizing and personalizing customer relationships; by turning their customers into clients. Donnelly, Beery and Thompson (2005) draw this distinction between customers and clients as follows:

> Customers may be nameless to the institution;
> client cannot be nameless. Customers are served
> as part of the mass or as part of larger segments;
> clients are served on an individual basis. Customers
> are served by anyone who happens to be available;
> clients are served by the professional assigned to them P.113

(iii) Providing structural ties: This involves increasing the consumer's proclivity to repurchase a company's product. Therefore, creating structural ties calls for creating long term contacts with the customer, charging a lower price to customers who buy larger qualities and turning the product into a long term service.

**Relationship between marketing orientation and the performance of marketing functions.**

A number of scholars have discussed about the relationship between marketing orientation or knowledge and performance of marketing functions by corporate organizations. For example; Cravens (2001) established that there is positive relationship between marketing orientation and corporate performance of marketing functions. He observed that this relationship is also mediated through proficiency in launching marketing tactics. In addition, Kotler (2004) suggested that to improve a firm's marketing performance is by enhancing the flow and utilization of marketing intelligence. Moreover, Berry and Parasuraman (2006) shows an impact of marketing orientation on new product performance of service firms, whereas no significant link was found by Osakwe (2003). These seemingly contradictory results have stimulated several studies in this area, see for example: (Jaworski and Kohli, 1993; Kohli and Jaworski, 2000 Baker and Sinkula, 1999; Bennett and Cooper, 2001).

## METHODLOGY

This study is a cross sectional survey of micro finance banks in Akwa Ibom State. Primary data was obtained through self administered Questionnaire and were administered to the branch managers, and marketing officers where there is any and where none existed, credit officers of the banks were served with the instrument. A direct method of distribution and collection of Questionnaire was applied. First, permission to distribute the questionnaire was obtained from the organization's managements. Second, employees were asked by the researchers to cooperate in the study, and it was clear to the employees that participation was completely voluntary. The employees were also told that a certain degree of identification was needed and that their answers would be matched against other important data obtained from the managers. Therefore, for this purpose, employees were assigned a code known only to the researchers, and not to the organization's management. Thus, the employees were assured of anonymity.

Questions asked cover; marketing structure of the organization, segmentation strategies, product innovation, marketing research efforts, strategic marketing plan, customer service, customer complaints and incident managements strategies among others. Purposive sampling method was adopted to get all the respondents. Thirteen licensed micro – finance institutions were chosen based on their geographic locations. Thus, four micro finance banks were selected from each senatorial district of Akwa Ibom State except in Uyo, where five were selected. Thus, giving a total of 13 microfinance banks. From each of the microfinance banks, two people were selected, the manager and either the marketing officer, if available or the credit officer of the bank. Descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were employed in analyzing the data. The hypothesis was tested at $P< 0.05$.

Between December, 2010 and June, 2011, 26 copies of the questionnaire were handed out across the state and collected directly by the researchers. The overall response rate was 100 percent, and 26 copies of the questionnaire were used for data processing in order to identify the marketing approaches and strategies adopted by the banks. Questions relating to marketing practices and overall judgments of the importance attached to marketing in the micro finance banks were asked. Also a five point likert scale of questions was used in measuring the variables under investigation.

## DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This section presents the findings from the field survey. 13 licensed micro finance banks in the state participated in the study. In each bank, the manager and either the marketing officer or the credit officer or customer service officer were served with the instrument. Altogether, twenty six respondents participated in the study across the state. Thus, 26 returned copies of the questionnaire representing 100 percent of respondents formed the basis of our analysis.

**Table 1:** Respondents' characteristics in terms of position in the bank

| Staff category | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Management Staff | 13 | 50 |
| Credit officers/marketing or customer service officer | 13 | 50 |
| Total | 26 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2011.

In Table one, 13 respondents representing 50 percent were bank managers while another 13 or 50 percent were either marketing officers, credits officers or customer service officers. Thus this sample represents a cross section of those who are holding key positions in delivering the desired satisfaction to the customers. Twenty respondents representing 77 percent of them had one form of university education or the other. Of the 26 of them, only 6 did not have a University level education (Table 2);

**Table 2:** Educational level of Respondents

| Educational level | Frequency | percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Primary / Secondary Education | 1 | 3.85 |
| University Education | 20 | 76.92 |
| Others | 5 | 19.23 |
| Total | 26 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2011.

European Journal of Business and Innovation Research
Vol.1 No.2, pp.57-69, June 2013
Published by European Centre for Research Training and Development, UK (www.ea-journals.org)

In Table 3, respondents' sex characteristics were observed.

**Table 3:** Gender characteristics of respondents

| Sex | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Male | 16 | 61.54 |
| Female | 10 | 38.46 |
| Total | 26 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey 2011.

From Table 3 , 16 representing 61.54 percent of the respondents were male while 10 representing 38.46 percent of the respondents were female. This indicates that both males and females were adequately represented in the study.

In Table 4, respondents were asked to indicate whether their qualifications were related to marketing.

**Table 4:** Relatedness of qualification to marketing

| Variables | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Qualifications related to marketing | 4 | 15.38 |
| Degree Qualifications but not related to marketing | 20 | 76.92 |
| Others | 2 | 7.70 |
| Total | 26 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2011.

From Table 4, it was observed that only 4 respondents representing 15.38 percent have qualifications relating to marketing, 20 representing 76.92 percent have degree qualifications but not relevant to marketing, while 2 representing 7.70 percent had one form of professional qualification or the other.

On whether their banks have any marketing department, headed by a qualified marketing professional, it was found out that only four of the banks claim to have a marketing structure, the remaining twenty two have no marketing structure in existence. Table 5 indicates as follows:

**Table 5:** Bank's Marketing Structure well developed/ entrenched.

| Respondents | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Have organizational structure with marketing clearly defined. | 4 | 15.38 |
| Have organizational structure but marketing not well defined. | 22 | 84.62 |
| Total | 26 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2011.

Respondents were further asked to indicate whether they have ever conducted marketing research before or not or hope to conduct one in the future, their responses are indicated on Table 6 below;

**Table 6:** Knowledge and the use of marketing research by MF banks

| Respondents | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Conducted Marketing research before. | 2 | 7.69 |
| Hope to conduct one in the future. | 24 | 92.31 |
| Total | 26 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey 2011

In the Table 6, 7.69 percent of the respondents indicated that they have conducted marketing research before, 24 representing 92.31 percent have not but hope to do one in the future. This lack of marketing research insight is very likely to affect strategic planning as no meaningful marketing effort can be achieved without marketing research.

Respondents were further asked how often they monitor or go after managing customers' incidents in their organizations. Their responses were as presented in Table 7.

**Table 7:** Frequency at which preferences are monitored and incidents managed

| Responses | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Very often | 4 | 15.38 |
| Sometimes | 18 | 69.24 |
| Often | 4 | 15.38 |
| Total | 26 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2011.

From the Table 7, 18 respondents representing 69.24 percent said they sometimes monitor customer preferences and manage customer incidents. Very often and often were indicated by 15.38 percent respectively. This finding indicate that micro finance banks are giving very little or no attention to tracking down their Customers' preferences. This low level of monitoring and managing customer incidents is also indicative of a low level of marketing orientation of the banks.

On the use of advertising or any other promotional mix in promoting their products, their responses are presented in Table 8

**Table 8:** Most commonly used form of advertising

| Responses | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Word of mouth | 14 | 53.85 |
| Information Brochures | 7 | 26.92 |
| Newspapers, Radio and Television | 5 | 19.23 |
| Total | 26 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2011.

From the Table, findings indicate that word of mouth is the most commonly used form of advertising representing 53.85 percent. Information brochures closely follow with 26.92 percent, while the use of newspapers, radio and television were used by few representing only 19.23 percent. These findings further suggest that MF banks have not adequately utilized the benefits of advertising in projecting its products and services in the market place.

On perception of the role or objective of marketing in selling financial products, their responses were presented in Table 9 below:

**Table 9:** Perceptions of the role or objective of marketing in financial services

| Responses | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| To increase revenue for the bank | 18 | 69.23 |
| To enhance the sales of the bank services | 5 | 19.23 |
| To provide maximum satisfaction to the customers | 3 | 11.54 |
| Total | 26 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2011.

Responses from the Table indicate that 69.23 percent opted for increased revenue. However, 19.23 percent went for enhanced sales of services offered by the bank, only a few (3) representing 11.54 percent indicated that the main objective of marketing is to maximize customers' satisfaction. This result again is another evidence of misrepresentation or misperception of the role of marketing. The main objective of marketing is to maximize customers' satisfaction at a profit and not vice versa. Thus this evidence is further suggesting that micro finance banks are not having adequate and clear knowledge of the role of marketing in the marketing of their financial services.

**TEST OF HYPOTHESIS**

One hypothesis was developed and tested in this study. The hypothesis states that, there is no significant relationship between marketing orientation of micro finance banks and their performance of marketing functions.

In order to test this hypothesis two variables were identified as follows:

(i) Marketing orientation – independent variable.
(ii) Marketing performance – dependent variable.

Model specification: Marketing performance is estimated as a function of marketing orientation. Expressed in an equation form as:

$Y = f(X)$

Where Y = marketing performance
X = marketing orientation.

Using the above model, the two variables were subjected to simple regression analysis in order to generate the predicted (Y) value of Y (marketing performance) for X as the value of X (marketing orientation). Please see Table 10 for analysis.

**Table 10:** Model summary of linear regression analysis of aggregate marketing function performance against marketing orientation.

| Model | R | R-square | Adjusted R –square | Standard Error | F- statistics |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total | 0.627 | 0.393 | 0.392 | 2.38469 | 19.139 |

$P < 0.05$; df = 24; critical R-value = 0.195 critical f = 1.96

The relationship between marketing orientation and performance of marketing functions by micro finance banks is found to be positively significant. This indicates that marketing orientation contributes to the prediction of marketing performance. The finding shows a positive relationship between the two variables and concludes that the independent variable (marketing orientation) does affect marketing performance of micro finance banks. This result is consistent with Baker and Sinkula (1999) whose contribution established a positive relationship between market orientation and firm's performance. This also agrees with Kholi and Jawoski (1990), Narver and Slater (2000) whom in their respective studies suggested a market oriented culture as a way of stimulating economic and competitive performance. The implication of these findings is that micro finance banks should constantly make efforts to improve their marketing orientation if they must remain competitive by reconfiguration their capabilities through marketing knowledge acquisition by training and manpower development, employment of marketing professionals as well as keeping abreast of notable changes in the marketing environment.

**Theoretical implications**

This study has implications both for existing academic theory as well as future research. The study adds new understanding to the literature particularly in the area of marketing microfinance bank operations in a developing economy context. This study also shed more light on the factors that influence successful marketing specifically in micro banking industry. The major contribution of this study is its operational framework, which adds to the methodological aspect of marketing under a micro economic context. The findings of this study also have implication for future research. Although Nigerian banking industry is undergoing a transition, microfinance banks should direct its resources at creating a balanced marketing strategy that would help them gain competitive advantage. Besides, future research should examine marketing orientation from the perspective of both developed and developing economies to be able to build a balanced theory for future researchers.

**SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

As would be recalled, the main purpose of this study was to investigate whether microfinance banks in Akwa Ibom State are marketing oriented or not. Findings from the study identified four key issues, the first is that building and maintaining a customer base requires a bank to be marketing or market focused, this is lacking in almost all the microfinance banks in the state. Secondly, is the difficulty of getting everyone in the bank to be marketing oriented and to use the available marketing information? Effective marketing orientation would require managing and training employees on the basic principles of marketing practice. The third issue from these findings is that the banks must be concerned about customers' attitudes, preferences, and complaints, including privacy and security. Finally, microfinance bank must know their customers as knowledge of the customers is almost lacking in most of the microfinance banks.

However, it can be deduced that marketing activities are poorly organized in microfinance banks and there seems to be little or no focus on marketing as there is little or no evidence of a demonstrated commitment to marketing in the banks. Based on all these, we concluded that microfinance banks in the state are having poor marketing orientations, and there is significant positive relationship between marketing orientation and the performance of marketing functions by MFB.

Therefore we recommend the following:

(i) That the starting point for the bank to be marketing oriented is to have a structure with marketing department clearly entrenched in no subordinate position and headed by a Professional marketer, who will craft, plan and design marketing policies, strategies and programmes for the bank.

(ii) The need to strengthen their competitive position also requires sustainable marketing research effort, therefore marketing research and intelligence information should be done periodically.

(iii) Marketing insight that makes customer satisfaction a priority and gives employees wide latitude to satisfy customers, information about relationship including the quality of relevant customer data and the systems for sharing this information across the firm should be stepped up through regular seminars, workshops and conferences.

(iv) The need to differentiate a service defines a particular goal for promotional strategy. Therefore, micro finance banks must work carefully to identify specific features and benefits that will set their companies apart from the competition. This can be achieved by adopting personal service strategies that continue to rely on branch networks. This is important since purchase of financial services often require customers to buy on trust.

(v) Finally, micro finance service marketers must avoid overselling the service, since inflated expectations can be dangerous and can easily result in customers' inertia and dissatisfaction.

**References**

Baker, W. E. and Sinkula, J.M. (1999) the synergistic effect of market orientation and learning orientation on organizational performance, *J. Academy, Mar, Sci"* 27c4) P.411-427.

Bernnett, R. C. and Cooper, R. G. (2001) the misuse of marketing: An American tragedy, *Bus. Hiring's* 24 (6) P. 51 – 61

Berry, L. L and Parasurawan, A (2006) *Marketing Services: competing through Quality*. New York. The Free press. P. 16

Brafu – Insaidoo J. and Ahiakpor, F. (2011) Understanding the marketing strategies of microfinance institutions within the Accra metropolis of Ghana: case of selected institutions. African *Journal of marketing management* Vol. 3 (2) PP.45 - 55

Churchill C. (2000) *Banking on customer loyalty*, J. Microfinance 2 (2) P. 1 - 21

Cravens, D.W. (2001) *strategic Marketing*, 3rd edition. Homewood, IL: Richard D.Irwin. P.68.

Donnelly C, Beery, L.L. and Thompson, T. W. (2005) Relationship Banking: The Art of Turning customers into clients, *Retail Banking*, P. 64 - 73

Drucker, F.P.(2004) *Management: tasks, responsibilities, practices*. Harper and Rom P.65 – 70

Gronroos, C, P.(2000) *Service management and marketing: managing the moments of Truth in service competition*, Lexington, MA: DC. Health Lexington Books

Ibok, N . I. (2008) *An evaluation of the role of marketing in insurance industry*. Contributions to Business Economy. Vol 1. P . 37 - 50

Jaworski, B. and Kohli, A. K. (1993) Marketing orientation: antecedents and consequences. *J. Mark*, 53 (1) P. 70-79.

Kohli, A. K and Jaworski, B.J. (2000) *marketing strategy and competitive position* 2nd Ed. Prentice – Hall.

Kohli, A. K. and Jaworski, B. (1990) market orientation, the construct, research priorities and management implications. *J. Mark* 54 P.1 – 18.

Kotler, P. (2004) *Marketing Management: Analysis, planning, Implementation prentice Hall. and control.* 8th Edition. Prentice Hall, New Jersey.

Kotler P. and Keller, K.L. (2006) *Marketing management,* 12th Edition, Pearson Prentiwce Hall.

Levitt, T. (1991) Marketing intangible products and product intangibles, *Harvard Business Review,* Vol 68. P. 94 - 102

Naver, J. C. and Slater, S. F. (2000) *Marketing strategy and competitive Positioning* 2nd ed. Prentice Hall.s

Osakwe, A . (2003) Big Ideas in Service marketing, *Journal of consumer Marketing*, 8 no. 4. P. 5 – 13

Robinson, M.S. (2004) *Savings mobilization and micro enterprise finance: The Indonesian Experience in the new world of micro enterprise Finance*, West Hartford.

Email: nkanikpo@yahoo.com