

## The Impact of Policies and Support Structures used by Computer Retailers to Support Market Management Culture in Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality

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**ABSTRACT** This study investigated the policies and the support structures used by computer retailers to support market management culture in Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. A field survey was conducted on 50 computer retailers. Data was collected through self-administered questionnaires and the use of random sampling. Descriptive statistics was used for the data analysis. Findings from other studies revealed that there are constraints faced in the operations of these ventures. The field survey confirmed some of the operational challenges to include difficulty to maintain a market management culture that is able to create superior customer value. The findings also identified the search for solutions to the challenges faced by owners of the ventures by providing an insight for further study regarding the institutional weaknesses and policy issues in this part of the world. The implications of the findings are that unless the limitations are resolved, computer retailers in a developing nation will continue to experience poor economic growth, development, and display inferior competitiveness. Recommendations were made on how to enhance employees' performance in order to improve the computer retailers' market structure.

### INTRODUCTION

Recently, a great deal of attention has been given to the importance of organizational culture, but there are no specific policies, operating procedures or structures used by management to support it (Ojo 2010). Therefore, it is evident that organizational culture will definitely affect the success of a firm. Hellriegel et al. (2001) describe four types of organizational cultures namely, bureaucratic culture, clan culture, entrepreneurial culture, and market management culture. These four types of culture represent different types of management philosophies. Du Toit et al. (2010) state that beliefs and values differ from one organization to another. These are often illustrated by a company's bulletin board, newsletter, the interaction of employees in meetings and the way in which people collaborate, which clearly identifies an organization's culture. Nel et al. (2004) define organizational culture as the manner in which things are done in an organization and in fact, it is the personal-

ity of the organization. Organizational culture comprises the attitudes, experience, beliefs and values of an organization. Naiker (2010) articulates that the cultures of organizations are the way in which these companies are run, and often refer to the beliefs of the founders of the organization.

Naiker (2010) describes market management culture as a culture that is made up of the achievements of measurable and demanding goals, especially those that are financial and market-based. According to Gallagher et al. (2008), the difference between market culture and other types of organizational cultures is the degree to which the former focuses its attention on and an understanding its markets as well as supporting the necessary skills to create value for customers. Market culture is customer centric, hence it promotes the belief that the ultimate purpose of a business is to create superior customer value, profitably thus empowering and rewarding employees for delivering noteworthy experiences to customers (Brown 2008), which is the focus of this study, concentrating on computer retailers. It has been noted that these organizations often have contractual relationships with individuals where individuals are responsible for a certain level of performance in return for rewards (Sisodia 2011). According to Hellriegel et al.

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(2001), market culture is often observed as demanding as remuneration is according to output rather than position and is seen as hard driving because competitiveness and profit orientation prevails throughout the organization. Innovation and decentralization in this organizational type enables teams to operate efficiently and professionally. The World Telecommunication/ICT Development Report (2010) mentions that the importance of computers is undeniable, as the world has become a global village because of this invention, giving rise to the increased usage and sale of computers. Laptops and palm-tops have replaced the desktops, which are still popular in many of the industries. Statistics South Africa (2006) reports that computer and related activities contribute to employment and the South African Gross Domestic Product (GDP), through both contract and permanent workers. Computer retailers vary from large, medium and micro retailers to small retailers. Various services are carried out by computer retailers in South Africa such as sales of various types of computers, computer accessories and parts. Other services offered, include repairs of computers, lease and rent of computers. Franchises such as Inter Computers also form part of the South Africa Computer Retailers. This industry imports its products from all over the world, mainly countries such as the United States, as well as the Far East with the balance from Israel, Germany, the United Kingdom and France.

Since high quality service is heavily dependent on a team of highly motivated staff with a cohesive set of values aiming at customer satisfaction, whether or not a company can communicate clearly to its employees the company's customer-oriented values would directly affect the quality of the services provided, and this in turn will affect the performance of the company. The question then hinges on what the policies and support systems being used by management to support market culture consist of. It is against this backdrop that this study intends to research on the policies and support structures management, which are utilized to support market culture, making use of computer retailers in the Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa.

### **Aim of the Study**

The aim of the study is to provide sufficient policies and support structures necessary to be

used to support market management culture among various small businesses particularly focusing on the computer retailers in South Africa.

### **Research Objectives**

- ♦ To determine the necessary skills and strategies used by management to create value for customers.
- ♦ To establish whether decentralization of departments enables employees to operate more effectively in creating customer value and to ascertain in what way a company can communicate customer oriented values clearly to its employees.
- ♦ To investigate whether contingent rewards motivate employees to create noteworthy experiences for customers.
- ♦ To provide practical solutions to computer retailers, and their policymakers in improving performance and productivity of businesses.

### **Research Question**

What are the impacts of market management culture, competitors' orientation and intelligence generation, policies and support structures used by computer retailers in Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa?

### **Problem Statement**

Despite the fact that many studies have been conducted on the organization culture and market management culture, many business organizations in African countries are still ignorant of the benefits of organization culture, management culture, policies and support structures that could be implemented by the management in order to satisfy their customers, maintained a good customers' relation and communicate customer oriented values clearly to their employees, provides necessary skills and strategies used by management to create value for customers. In addition, numerous business managers or business organizations have neglected the benefits of motivation. Most of the employers or managers often neglect their employees' motivational rewards, and yet, they usually want them to render their best knowledge and abilities into their various organizations in order to achieve their organization goals, aims and ob-

jectives. It should be pointed out at this juncture that none of the employees would ever put in their best abilities in ensuring any organizations accomplishment if the management did not provide substantial motivational rewards for employees that would create noteworthy experiences for customers. Sadly, it is often seen from many employees' protests and demonstration that many employees from various business organizations were maltreated through poor implementation of various business organization policies. It is anticipated that the study would provide practical solutions to computer retailers, their policymakers or management in improving organizations performance and productivity effectively and efficiently.

### **Literature Review**

In this study, the literature review focus on theories of organizational culture, market management culture and the policies as well as support structures used to support market management culture.

#### ***Theories of Organizational Culture***

Glaser et al. (1987) point out the Organizational Culture Theory, developed by Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo (1983), which states that the theoretical principles of the theory emphasize that organizational life is complex and that management must take into consideration not only the members of the organization but their behaviors, activities, and stories to help understand how to support cultures that help achieve the organizations' set objectives and goals. The approach is also useful because much of the information from the theory (for example, symbols, stories, rituals) has direct relevance on many different types of organizations and their employees, which forms the theoretical underpinning of this research (Glaser et al. 1987). Because the theorists' work is based on actual organizations and its employees, it has made the theory more useful and practical. The Schein's Three Layer Organizational Theory developed in 1985 again differentiates the elements of culture, by treating the basic assumptions as the core of culture, and the values and behaviors as observed manifestations of the cultural essence (Schein 1985). He contends that there are three levels of culture, which can be used to carefully recognize the organizational culture type employed in an organization. Level

1 contains the artifacts, consisting its constructed physical and social environment. These are visible indicators, for example, how the offices are decorated and how people in the organization dress (O'Donnell and Boyle 2008). Level 2 are the values, which are conscious, affective desires and wants, and they represent the things that are important to people. Schein (2004) further points out that these reflect the founder's original values and serve as the moral function of the business. O'Donnell and Boyle (2008) mentions that these values amount to shared rules and norms used by employees to guide in problem solving, for instance, axioms such as the customer always comes first. Basic assumptions guide behavior and guide employees how to take in, think and feel about work as well as their performance goals, human relationships, which form then part of level 3 of the Schein Model. These consist of ideals and standards held by most people and are often written down.

#### ***Organizational Culture Defined***

Various scholars from an assortment of disciplines have formulated diverse definitions of organizational culture, and hence there is no single definition for organizational culture. According to Urrabazo (2006), organizational culture is a cognitive framework consisting of attitudes, values, behavioral norms, and expectations shared by members of an organization. It can often also be considered as a set of basic assumptions shared by members of an organization (Nontela 2010).

Robbins, (2000) postulates that it is the climate and practices that organizations develop around their handling of people and is often referred to as the adopted values and beliefs of an organization. When above definitions are closely examined, a general agreement exists that organizational culture comprises common beliefs, attitudes, and values. Thus, market management culture as a single type of culture under the umbrella term organizational culture as main objective of this study has to be given attention to.

#### ***Market Management Culture Defined***

As mentioned before, market management culture as part of organizational culture is built on the achievement of measurable and demand-

ing goals, especially those that are financial and market-based (Naiker 2010). Brown (2012) states that market management culture is often tied to monthly, quarterly and annual performance-based goals. The primary assertion of market management culture is that clear goals and contingent rewards motivate employees to perform and meet stakeholders' expectations as part of commitment towards the business. Organizations that employ market management culture seek to create skills that they use to create value for their customers (Hellriegel et al. 2002). Market management culture organizations are concerned with competitiveness and production through emphasis on partnerships and positioning. These organizations are demanding and highly competitive where performance results are more essential than procedure (Kwantes and Borglarsky 2007). Management in market culture organizations highlight that their long-term focus is on competitive action and achievement of measurable goals (Sisodia 2011). Kwantes and Borglarsky (2007) maintain that the emphasis on winning unifies the organization, as competitive pricing and market leadership are significant.

#### ***Policies and Support Structures Used to Support Market Management Culture***

Fyock and Brannick (2002) mention that an organization should assess its culture and climate, and then proceed to establish policies, programs, and strategies that support and strengthen its core purpose and values, which then could lead to its success. A South African enterprise, Hollandia as an example, indicates that its market management culture supporting policies include recruiting suitable qualified employees because the organization demands superior service from its staff. Another example is that of Sanlam Health, which has a results-driven market management culture as part of its policies, which encourages the acceptance of risk and the rewarding of success, which has yielded great profits (Hellriegel et al. 2002).

#### ***Measures of Business Success***

According to Johnson (2009), success in market management culture is measured by contribution to the financial bottom line. Business success due to market-based policies could be measured by indicators attributed to increase in

both, profits and sales in addition to internal loyalty (rate of staff turnover). Other measures of business success include increase in total assets, increase in number of employees, employee satisfaction/commitment, customer loyalty and manager's (owner's) satisfaction with the way the business is progressing/performing. Findings from Johnson (2009) indicate that market culture emphasizes sales growth, increased market share, financial stability and profitability.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research methodology employed in this study consists of a literature review and an empirical study. The literature review provides an insight and understanding into the research problem as well as the necessary background, which guides the empirical part. The empirical approach consists of primary research and collection of data. The study used the quantitative research design and survey research method of data collection. The study involved 50 computer retailers registered with the Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality in town covering King Williams Town and East London in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. The instrument used in this study is the questionnaire. Data for the research study was collected through self-administered questionnaires and the use of random sampling. Self-administered questionnaires were delivered to respondents who completed them and the interviewer collected them at an appointed time. The questionnaire comprised of structured questions, which made it easy for the respondents to indicate their views. Validity and reliability are absolutely the characteristics of good measurements and the keys to assess the trustworthiness of any research study.

Questions related to the policies and the support structures used by computer retailers to support market management culture are usually insightful. Participants in the survey were assured strict confidentiality in order to obtain the necessary information. Responsive questions such as the names and contact addresses of the respondents were removed from the questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of primarily five-point Likert scale questions, which consist of 'strongly disagree', 'disagree', 'neutral', 'agree' and 'strongly agree' questions except for demographic questions. The respon-

dents were requested to answer questions by ranking their different options on a scale of 1-5, where: (1) = Most important, (2) = Important, (3) = Neutral, (4) = Less important and (5) = Least important. Data analysis included using descriptive statistics as the statistical tool. The empirical research for the study was conducted in the main survey.

## RESULTS

The finding reveals that seventy-eight percent of respondents were not motivated and this serves as barriers to improve the employees' performance. The study realized that not all variables established in other proceeding studies done elsewhere were relevant to the operation of computer retailers. Majority of the respondents supported the assertion that their businesses play a significant role in reduction of poverty in the study areas. Computer retailers contribute to more employment opportunities, income generation and to ensure sustainable economy, which lead to poverty reduction in the country. They offer goods and services to marginalized population groups. Eighty-three percent of respondents highlighted that by selling certain goods at a cheaper price to poor people is one way to reduce poverty in the area. Sixty-nine percent of respondents reveal that computer retailers provide basic consumer products, such as cell phone accessories. The low crime rate in this study area indicates that computer retailers in South Africa play a crucial role in creating sufficient job opportunities to a large number of people in the county. As a result, less people committed crimes.

The results of this study confirmed that computer retailers in the Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality in town covering King Williams Town and Eastern London in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa are faced with challenges in increasing competitiveness, achievement of measurable goals and targets as well as achieving profit maximizations for expansion are some of the hindrances confronting the operation of consumer retailers in South Africa.

Finally, it was also found that fifty-eight percent of respondents highlighted that most of computer retailers in South Africa play a crucial role in generating employment opportunity to the unemployed youths. They represent a small part of the economy and yet, they contribute to

increased employment opportunities, increased turnover and productivity, income as well as to improve the living standard for employees particularly population groups who are unable to find employment in regular, modern and registered activities, including unskilled, elderly and handicapped persons, women and men. Computer retailers represent a key vehicle for the achievement of economic objectives of employment generation and poverty reduction. Computer retailers contribute to enhance the standard of living of their employees and their dependents as well as those who are directly or indirectly associated with them.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Data is interpreted by using descriptive statistics as the statistical tool and stating the responses below.

### Characteristics of Sampled Firms (Computer Retailers)

The finding reveals that seventy-eight percent of respondents were males while twenty-two percent were females. This result shows that men are more actively engaged in the entrepreneurial ventures than women in the survey area. In terms of the age distribution of the respondents who participated were between 25 and 34 years old with forty-six percent, forty percent of the respondents were between 35 and 44 years, twelve percent were between 45-54 years old, one percent was above 55 years old, and one percent was between 18 and 24 years old. In terms of the education qualification, the result indicates that most people who participated are holding a certificate with 53.3 percent, degree with 26.7 percent, diploma 13.3 percent and 6.7 percent for other qualifications.

### Impact of Owners/Managers Personality on Sampled Firms

This section focuses on the business profile of the computer retailers in Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa.

The position or role occupied by the respondents in the retail shops indicated that 30.6 percent of the respondents were owners while 61.2 percent were managers, and 8.2 percent were

both managers as well as owners. In terms of the duration of the business, majority (46.7%) of the respondents have been operating their businesses for below 5 years. Approximately forty percent of the businesses of respondents have been in operation between 5 and 10 years, and 13.3 percent respondents' business has been operating for a period more than 10 years. In terms of the legal status of the business, sixty-six percent were sole proprietors, twenty-four percent were partnerships, and ten percent were in a joint venture. In terms of the number of employees provided work for, the result shows that eighty percent are full time workers while twenty percent were part-time or casual workers.

#### **Impact of Market Management Culture on Sampled Firms**

The response on whether the respondents would agree that in their organization, the customer's interest should always come first, ahead of the owners, indicated that twenty-two percent of the respondents disagreed, eight percent of the respondents were neutral and seventy percent of the respondents agreed that in their organization, the customer's interest should always come first, ahead of the owners' in order to grow and expand their businesses. The response on whether the respondents would agree that their products and service offerings are based on prevailing market and customer information indicated that 18.4 percent of the respondents disagreed, 12.2 percent of the respondents were neutral and 69.4 percent of the respondents agreed that their products and service offerings are based on prevailing market and customer information. Regarding the number of times the respondents consult customers in order to find out what products or services needed reveals that ninety percent consult customers to find out what products or services they needed daily, six percent said weekly, while four percent indicated that they consult customers to find out what products or services they needed monthly. The findings about whether the respondents encourage employees to find information about customers' needs shows that ninety-four percent of the respondents agreed that they encouraged their employees to find information about customers' needs, while six percent disagreed. As observed that whether customer needs lead to customers' satisfaction, in-

dicated that twelve percent of the respondents disagreed, ten percent of the respondents were neutral and seventy-eight percent of the respondents agreed that understanding customer needs leads to customer satisfaction.

#### **Impact of Competitor Orientation and Intelligence Generation on Sampled Firms**

This section focused on market culture organizations' emphasis on being aware of competitors and sharing information about competitors and customers within the organization.

Regarding knowing the organization's competitors, the responses obtained show that eighty-nine percent of the respondents agreed that they know their competitors very well, while eleven percent disagreed. In terms of whether the respondents encourage employees to find information about their competitors indicated that seventy-seven percent agreed that they were encouraged to find information about their competitors while twenty-three percent disagreed. In terms of how the respondents often communicate with his/her employees on disseminating information on customers' needs and competitors indicated that ten percent communicate with his/her employees on disseminating information on customers' needs and competitors daily, six percent said weekly, while eighty-four percent indicated that they communicate with their employees on disseminating information on customers' needs and competitors monthly. The findings also reveal that five percent were through the manager's walkabouts in the organization, twenty-one percent were through the organization newsletter, nine percent were via notice boards, fifty-five percent in meetings while ten percent were through vision, values and mission statements of the organization.

#### **Impact of Policies and Support Structures on Sampled Firms**

This section focused on market management culture, which involved shared values and beliefs on customer focus, competitor orientation and inter-functional coordination.

The findings concerning whether the respondents have any strategies in place to encourage being customer centered in their organization indicated that thirty-one percent respondents agreed with the customer centered

approach while sixty-nine percent disagreed. Furthermore, the finding indicates that eighty-four percent of the respondents agreed that they discussed the competitors' strategies in their organization while sixteen percent disagreed. With regards to whether the employees' training is a necessary strategy to create value for the customers in their organization, the study reveals that fifty-four percent agreed that employees' training is a necessary strategy to create value for the customers their organization while forty-six percent disagreed. In addition, the finding also shows that seventy-two percent of the respondents agreed that they reward employees for creating noteworthy experiences for customers in their organization, while twenty-eight percent disagreed. The majority of respondents also highlighted that they were given incentives such as promotions, increment in salaries and bonuses to their employees in order to enhance their job performance.

### CONCLUSION

This study therefore contributes to the area of policies and support structures used by computer retailer owners to support market culture management in order to create positive impact and to improve the socioeconomic development in developing countries and have shown findings as well as recommendations. The literature review presented various elements within the field of information communication technologies, finance, market, business skills, market access, and operating space among others.

These and others are the main impediments facing policies and support structures used by management to support market culture in order to increase their contribution in the socioeconomic development in developing countries.

The main findings of this study showed that organizations are faced with challenges in increasing competitiveness, achievement of measurable goals and targets as well as achieving profit maximizations. In addition, these organizations find it difficult to maintain a market culture that creates superior customer value profitably, and then resultantly reward employees for delivering noteworthy experiences for customers. Unfortunately, the management often finds it hard to support market culture that enables them to reduce employee turnover and increase productivity and hence affect the success of their businesses.

A good understanding of the policies and support structures used by computer retailers to support market management culture in the economic development as well as the impediments faced by the computer retailers in South Africa has been clearly identified and discussed in details and recommendations or suggestions to these policies to support market management culture and impediments have also been discussed.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

This section focuses on recommendations to the computer retailers in developing countries on how business operational systems and performance can be improved effectively and efficiently in order to encourage the employees' job satisfaction and improved customer satisfaction within and outside the business environment. Some of these recommendations and how it could be improved are directed or related to the stakeholders. These are discussed below.

- ♦ Some of the respondents recommended that since the majority of the computer retailers agreed that an organization culture comprises of the attitudes, experience, beliefs, values, behavioral norms, and expectations shared by members of an organization, all efforts should be made to ensure that all employees are highly motivated, as this enhances job performance in their organization.
- ♦ Computer retailers as a vehicle to address the obstacles of job creation and poverty in South Africa, play a critical role in penetrating new markets and expanding economies in creative and innovative ways. The management should increase its efforts in creating a legal environment, which provides policies and support structures that can be used to support market management culture to flourish. An environment in an organization should attempt to provide opportunities and sufficiently to attract employees to be motivated enough to use their experience to create positive values, increase and improve the job performances for the purpose of achieving the organizational aims, goals and objectives.
- ♦ The coordination between the management, employees within and outside the organization should be en-

hanced to reflect a sustainable policies structure used to support market management culture. The involvement of management and employees are necessary in the establishment and sustained support of enterprises. This ensures that all policies, strategies and support programs developed are mostly to support the growth and development of the enterprises market structures. The barriers faced by the computer retailers highlighted in the previous section suggest that the computer retailers or its management as a single actor may not have the capacity to promote their enterprises without support from their employees. The findings of the study showed that the computer retailers play an important role in improving and promoting the economic development in developing countries. They are the sources of job creation, reduction of poverty and generation of revenue. Other main stakeholders such as civil society, experienced business owners and Non Governmental Organizations (NGO) should participate to create a conducive legal environment that will motivate the employees in improving their skills and business performances in the economy. An organization should assess its culture and climate, and then proceed to establish policies, programs, and strategies that support and strengthen its core purpose and values, which then could lead to its success. Some respondents' highlighted that in an organization, the real competitive advantage should be the organizations' strong market management culture inculcated in all employees by management. The management should have absolute culture dedicated to creating and delivering value for the customer as well as financial business performance.

- ♦ Importantly, some respondents also recommend that policies used to support market management culture include cautious staffing with induction, training and empowering employees to delivering noteworthy experiences for customers and rewarding them for what they should be encouraged for. The organization also should have performance review as part of their organizational policies. Market management culture as part of an organization's policies, which

encourage the acceptance of risk and the rewarding of success, which has yielded great profits, should be regarded as a yardstick for improvement and enhancing the employees' performance. Finally, organizations that employ market management culture should be able to create skills that should be used to create value for their customers.

### **LIMITATIONS AND AREA FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

This study focused on computer retailers in the Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality, Eastern Cape and will not investigate the policies and support structures used by computer retailers to support market management culture for either the whole of South Africa or other industries. It therefore implies that the results of this study cannot be generalized to all South African computer retailers. The influence factors that can comprise the policies and support structures employed can only be applicable for computer retailers in the Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality, Eastern Cape. Future researcher may repeat this study by using larger populations such as a whole province. Also, it should focus on such variables as employee personal information and employees' profile.

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