

The Types of Small Businesses and the Communication Strategies Employed By Entrepreneurs in Eldoret Town, Kenya

Florence N. S. Standa

Principal's Office,
Chepkoilel University College,
P.O. Box 1125 - 30100, Eldoret, Kenya.

Corresponding Author: Florence Standa

Abstract

Communication strategies for competitive advantage have become vital tools in development and establishment of small scale business enterprises in both urban and rural areas, to such an extent that it is hardly possible to set up and operate enterprises without the application of reliable and timely information on strategies of communication. The study investigated the types of small businesses and communication strategies used in the enterprises by the operators in Eldoret town. This study was a descriptive survey design. Stratified random sampling method was used to get 20 small business enterprises from which data was collected. Each small business comprised ten (10) persons, which made the total population to be two hundred persons. Observations, interviews, questionnaire, and also tape recorder and photographs were instruments used to collect data. Data analysis was in form of descriptive and inferential statistics. Chi-square method was used in discussing and interpreting the relationship in the data. It was found that many types of small enterprises are operating in Eldoret town. However, whereas communication strategies exist in the study areas, there is limited access to them by some traders; they are also inadequate and thus limiting the growth of their enterprises. The study recommends that SBEs in the new millennium must combine communication strategies' strength that their size provides with the agility that responding to external change demands. That SBEs must also demolish the complacencies while returning the communicating capabilities that bred past success. The study is significant as it provides information useful to business holders on how to improve their business language for competitive advantage. It also contributes to the already existing pool of knowledge in small-scale business by acting as a benchmark for similar researches in the field of communication.

Keywords: small businesses, communication strategies, entrepreneurs, Eldoret Town, Kenya.

INTRODUCTION

Businesses are organizations specializing in commercial activities. Saleemi (1997) says that these businesses are often referred to as business enterprises and the expression 'enterprise' gives some indication of the nature of their operations and the objectives that they pursue. Business involves adventurous or risk-bearing operations, which aim to achieve some financial gain. Such gains will therefore be the reward for those who invest in the business and take the risk of losing their investment if the enterprise or undertaking fails. People involved in setting up and managing such activities are referred to as entrepreneurs and expressions such as 'entrepreneurialism' and the 'enterprise culture' have become part of the language of Kenyan business as from 1990s. The second president of Kenya, Daniel arap Moi, gave a nod to the development of *Jua Kali* sector to create sole proprietors as there was rampant unemployment in Kenya by them.

According to Manuel (2002), business enterprises are the primary economic institutions through which people in modern societies carry out their tasks of

producing and distributing goods and services. This paper, therefore, adopts the view that a society consists of people who have common ends and whose activities are organized by a system of institutions designed to achieve these ends. Callaghan (1994) notes that there are characteristics which appear to be shared by all kinds of business organizations, whatever their size, shape and/or location. These are: a) established objectives or goals which guide their business activities; b) have as their prime beneficiaries those who have put capital into the enterprise and produce and supply goods and services of one sort or another to meet the demands of consumers. These general characteristics provide only a limited insight into practical business operations.

Business organizations are remarkably diverse. What they do, how they do it and why they do it varies widely from enterprise to enterprise. Callaghan (ibid.) argues that there are various explanations for this diversity; that some of them are relatively superficial. Business organizations differ by reference to their products, some producing goods, others, services.

Other explanations however touch upon the more subtle aspects of organizational activity; for instance, by considering the objectives the owners of the business are pursuing. The following questions, therefore, become a base of argument: Are they perhaps profit maximizers, aiming to achieve the highest possible level of financial return for the business? Are they content to trade at a level of profit, which simply enables the business to survive? The answer remains that they have to strategize communicably to be able to meet the target.

Business enterprises have been classified, first by level of activity and second by communication activities. The level of activity identifies an organization according to its place within broadly defined bands of economic activity. These are the primary, secondary, and tertiary bands (Callaghan, 1994). Lesikar *et al.* (1996) in this case note that with communication activities, business falls into three broad categories: internal operational, external-operational and personal communication activities.

Level of Activity

A practical starting point in any study of business organizations is an examination of the classifications, which can be applied to them. Lesikar *et al.* (ibid.) argue that businesses may be classified by the nature or level of their activity, by the ownership sectors to which they belong, and by their legal form. Primary business covers organizations engaged in the initial stages of the production process. It includes activities like agriculture, mining, quarrying, and other related operations involving extraction such as oil and gas drilling.

Faircloth (1997), in this case, notes that secondary businesses extend to the second stage in the production process. It covers all business engaged in manufacturing goods – everything from aircraft to adhesives. Here, there are two categories of goods: capital or invested goods (e.g. buildings, plants, and equipment) and those treated as consumer goods. Consumer goods may in turn be categorized as either durable (motor vehicles, fridges among others) or non-durables (food, clothing). Enterprises such as assorted food vending, *samosas/sausages* selling, transporters (*boda boda* and *Tuk Tuk* taxis), telemarketers etc belong to the category of secondary businesses. Callaghan (ibid.) says that tertiary business covers organizations that provide services. The term service, like goods, is a very wide one. It extends from private sector service industries such as finance, insurance, travel and tourism and catering to public services such as health, education and policing. Newspaper vending, transporters, telephone (community) booth bureaus operators come under the tertiary category of business class. Case (1996), in this case, notes that the service industry is more involving than the goods sector. The potentials of

service industry communication are so great that it is difficult to recognize them.

The history of business is the history of organizations being set up to produce and to distribute. In the course of carrying out these activities they also become consumers themselves. Thus two distinct groups of consumers emerge, commercial consumers and private or as they are sometimes called, ultimate consumers, that is ‘you’ and ‘I’. This can only happen as a result of the application of communication strategies. The importance of communication in business becomes even more apparent when we consider the communication activities of an organization from an overall point of view as below.

COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES

To understand how important communication is to business, one should note how much communication business requires. Callaghan (ibid.) argues that this can be explained using communication activities, which are in three categories: Internal operational Communication; External-Operational Communication, and Personal communication.

Internal Operational Communication

All the communications that occur in conducting work within a business is classified as internal operational. This is the communication among the business’s entrepreneurs that is done to implement the business’s operating plan. Desimone *et al.* (1995) notes that business people communicate with a variety of individuals and groups every day. Here, the audience includes, employees, shareholders, government officials, customers, community leaders, the news media, suppliers and anyone else in position to help or hinder the work or business’ operating environment. Operating plan means the procedure that the business has developed to do whatever it was formed to do - for example, to manufacture products, provide a service or sell goods; *Jua kali* artisans, community telephone booth operators, newspaper vendors among others.

External-Operational Communication

The work-related communication that a business does with people and groups outside the business is external-operational communication. This is the business’s communication with its publics, i.e. suppliers, service companies, customers and the general public. Every business is dependent on outside people and groups for its success and because the success of a business depends on its ability to satisfy customer needs, it must communicate effectively with them. Lesikar *et al.* (1996) comment that “in today’s complex business society, businesses depend on each other in the production and distribution of goods and services. This interdependence requires communication. Like internal communication, external communication is vital to business success.”

Personal Communication

The development of the mass media and advanced communication technologies must not be allowed to diminish the importance that interpersonal communications continue to have in all societies. Undoubtedly inter-relations do exist between modern and traditional communication in many situations where their different components are compounded in such a way as to complement one another, interesting results are achieved.

Callaghan (1994) observes that communication can at times occur without necessarily trading. That is, not all communication that occurs in business is operational. In fact, much of it is without purpose as far as the business is concerned. Such communication is what is called personal, that is, exchange of information with friends and even strangers at workplaces and is a part of communication activity of any business. Greco (1993), in this case, notes that typically, effective communication is based on face-to-face interaction between people working to establish and maintain mutual trust and understanding. This form of communication is interpersonal communication, which is often supported by the appropriate written, spoken and broadcast communication materials among others. All these must be designed to clearly convey messages that support the interpersonal communication that precede or follow. Although not a part of the business's plan of operation, personal communication can have a significant effect on success of that plan. This effect is a result of the influence that the personal communication can have on the attitudes of the traders and buyers (customers).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study investigated communication strategies used by different types of entrepreneurs for competitive advantage in Small Business Enterprises (SBEs) in Eldoret town. Communication skills are the basis of successful business in the world today. During business transactions in the small-scale business dealings both verbal and non-verbal communication are used. For example, language is used to persuade customers into buying the various goods on display in the market, on the streets, at bus stops and on pavements. The sight and aroma of fried fish for sale is common by the street sides. Soaking of green vegetables in water to keep freshness is done as a sign to attract customers. These and many other communication strategies are used in the small-scale business sector. It was considered important to assess the communication strategies used by the small-scale business people.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study was confined to small-scale business people in Eldoret Municipality. It concentrated on sellers of various foodstuffs: in the market, along the

streets, by the roadside, on pavements, at bus stops; hawkers and other small business holders like tailors, *Jua Kali* artisans, community phone operators, transporters such as the *Boda Boda* (Motor bike) and *Tuk Tuk* operators. The findings on the types of SBEs in the town and the communication strategies they use may differ with other municipalities in Kenya or beyond. However, the study provides a good framework for undertaking similar studies in other urban areas to understand the state of entrepreneurial activities and recommend ways to improve them.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The area of study was small business enterprises in Eldoret municipality. Eldoret town was chosen because business enterprises there revealed the true nature of Kenya's economy as they scramble for customers. Business enterprises included green vegetable sellers, fish mongers, fruit sellers in the municipal market, shoe shiners along the streets and bus stop, tailors in the verandas and back streets, ice-cream vendors, fast food sellers, newspaper vendors and *samosa/sausage* sellers along the verandas, streets and bus stop, maize roasters, seedling sellers at streets and road junctions, florists along the verandas and small kiosks, handcrafts dealers, carpenters, kiosk operators, butchers, community telephone operators and hair salons/barbers in small shop malls, *posho*, millers and *Jua Kali* artisans in back streets. These enterprises are strategically placed to communicate in various ways, their enterprises to the customers in estates and the CBD.

This study employed a descriptive survey design. The method involved dividing the entire population of 100 small business enterprises in Eldoret into various sub-groups, then taking a simple random sample within each group. This ensured that the sample represented key groups of the population. The major tools used included participatory observations and interviews. Questionnaires were also prepared by the author and given to the respondents to fill. A total sample of (200) persons were studied. A hundred and sixty persons from the total sample answered the questionnaire whereas 40 persons were observed and interviewed. Eight persons were given the questionnaires to respond to whereas two persons had the benefit of being interviewed and observed thus making a total of 10 persons from each category of 20 SBEs. The collected data was then analysed statistically and presented.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This paper discusses the types of small scale business enterprises and the type of communication strategies they employ in Eldoret town. Different SBEs use different types of strategies to communicate their business interests to clients. However, in most cases, the SBE operators do not have basic training and

exposure to more productive and competitive use of communication to enhance business.

Cereal Sellers

The cereal sellers who participated in the study were those with stalls in the municipal market. They sold an assortment of cereals such as dry beans, dry maize, popcorns, peas and green grams. The sellers of dry maize advertised their goods by displaying them in sacks. On top of each sack, they placed the various containers that they used to measure maize and just sat there waiting for customers to come by. The sellers of dry beans had a similar mode of advertisement but the beans were of various types and colours. Therefore, the colours lured the customers to buy various types of beans either out of curiosity or out of necessity.

During the interview, these cereal sellers said they also employed verbal communication when necessary. For example, they asked the customers to stop and they persuaded them to buy their cereals. They said they did this in order to influence the buyer to buy their cereals otherwise the buyer would likely move on to another stall for the same cereals. This kind of communication did not seem quite effective but they did not seem to have any other option. Given a better strategy of communication, they would do better in the business. This was because it was understood that a large fraction of Kenyans depended on cereals as their staple food. They reported that due to lack of sufficient funds they were not able to use sophisticated communication strategies like radios, televisions and Internet, newspapers, magazines, loud-speakers among others to create homophily within the population. As such, when the rest of the population required cereals they seemed to require persuasion to buy; otherwise, there was a tendency to go for other cereals.

It is through necessity that they learnt these skills in business. There was no formal education provided for these small-scale business entrepreneurs especially those in cereal selling business. The negative aspect of selling cereals by visual advertisement was that the sellers sold the cereals only to the people who were able to reach the market and this did not include all the people who would have liked to use the cereals. In this business, it was a general agreement that they would prefer a different kind of communication to maximize their profits.

Kiosk Operators

The kiosk operators who participated in the study owned kiosks by the roadsides. These stocked an assortment of items such as soap, body and cooking oil, food like queen cakes, sodas and water; and house-ware. The goods were displayed to look like a mini shop. They first painted their kiosks with bright colours that form a pleasant spectacle. They got

artists to draw and write for them a few items and names respectively on the wall. They also reported that they got posters from the manufacturers of various items and displayed them. Kiosk operators depended on passersby to buy their goods. They believed that the bright colours of the kiosks attracted buyers. However, they reported that the amount of goods sold solely depended on the number of people who chanced to pass by the kiosks. The kiosk operators reported that they learnt their skills through observing other kiosk owners. It was mainly by imitation. On being interviewed, the kiosk operators responded that their mode of advertisement of goods was not effective for the business flow since, there were days when they hardly sold any goods. This was perhaps where their would-be customers were attracted to super- markets because of the sophisticated ways of advertisements.

Green Vegetables Vendors

The green vegetables in the municipal market were displayed by vendors in various ways. There were vegetables in full sacks arranged in one corner of the market place. The vendors here were the wholesalers of green vegetables. Each seller stood or sat by his/her consignment of sacks. They attracted the buyers by calling out "customer; *karibu* customer". One or two voices came out softly as buyers passed-by. When the 'customer' approached one seller, the seller pulled out samples of the green leaves from the sack and said that the rest were the same, fresh and clean and quickly announced the price of each sack. The seller continued to hold the attention of the customers by describing the quality and value of the vegetables plus the locality where the types of green vegetables were found. The seller expressed readiness to reduce the price by asking how much the buyer could afford apart from the price offered. Some buyers did not respond, they just moved on. Some offered to buy a sack of green vegetables at half the price offered. They were then told that they could not get it at that price. Some buyers eventually offered to buy the sack of green vegetables after the bargaining.

The green vegetable sellers reported that whenever people passed by, they called out to attract the attention of passersby. They said they poured water on the leaves of vegetables so that they remained green and fresh. These skills of advertisement, according to them, were sheer common sense. They also agreed that it was out of imitation of others. They said that they liked their mode of advertisement and were not aware of any other strategy of communication that they would use to improve their businesses. The vegetable sellers were confident that their mode of advertisement was effective. They expressed doubts about any other communication strategy that could be used apart from the one they knew. Out of the total sample, 10(20%) were green

vegetables sellers while the remaining 80% formed the other categories. They reported that they sold their vegetables by showing them to the customers, talking about the value, quality and price and they persuaded the customers to buy. One vendor reported that she had thought about this communication strategy herself. The other indicated that through observation of what other sellers did, she was able to imitate and sold green vegetables to buyers without a problem.

In their view, it was possible to do better by getting other strategies of communication. They were of the opinion that perhaps if the municipal council would put up kiosks or small rooms on which labels would be installed so that communication would also be written to appeal to the customers. They indicated that if the government would devise a way of educating them on communication strategies they would perhaps improve on their business. The two vegetable sellers reported that their mode of advertisement of business was too shallow and could not attract many customers because it depended on actual seeing the vegetables and hearing what the sellers had to say. They also said that the way they displayed their vegetables was rather discouraging for some customers to buy because some dust settled on the vegetables.

Fish-Mongers

The fish-mongers are entrepreneurs who sell fish in the market. They were located in the market and by the streets sides near other business people like vegetable sellers, onions and tomato sellers. It was easy locating them. The aroma of fish attracted customers and to realize that one was a fishmonger she or he sat near or stood by his/her fish, and there was a cooking pan with oil, a top a charcoal burner and the sight of raw and fried fish. Mostly their form of communication was non-verbal. Occasionally, they called out to customers and negotiated prices of their fish of various sizes. Some customers would prefer raw fish packed for them and others upon request by the vendor would prefer deep fried fish.

When interviewed on their skills of communication, they responded that their skills of selling fish were learnt from other people. But for others it was an in born skill. There was a lot of competition and unless one had a good relationship with people the business could be disappointing. They arranged fish on tables according to their sizes and also priced them according to their sizes as a mode of advertising fish. The sales depended on the fluctuating meat availability on the market. They said that during the mad cow disease period customers just flocked to their venues to buy fish which they priced a bit higher than usual. That also when it was advisable not to eat chickens, fish business boomed. Customers got the communication about bad meat of the cow and of

chicken, and the fish-mongers prepared their fish for sell out.

From participatory observation, some fish-mongers were noted as being more hygienic than others and this attracted more customers and therefore sold their stocks completely. Also when there was scarcity of meat and chicken or when they were highly priced, fish become a convenient substitute for meat and fish mongers did good business from their known venues. From the interviews, the vendors did not know any other mode of advertising such as use of magazines, brochures, and ICTs, among others.

Maize (*Posho*) Millers

The *posho* mills studied were situated in the suburbs of Eldoret town. They were situated in small rooms with labels and drawings on the buildings showing what type of business went on inside. Occasionally, if there was no direct route leading to the room, a sign-post helped to show the direction of the *posho* mill by way of an arrow. The *posho* millers who were interviewed said they advertised their business mostly when the grinding mill was in the process of grinding. Due to its sound, the customers would automatically branch in to have their cereals ground. They also advertised their business by making sure the grounded flour was of fine quality. That is, the customers themselves helped in advertising the business.

Shoe Shiners

The shoe shiners in Eldoret town were found mostly on the verandas, pathways and back streets, and pavements. The way of communication observed was the display of a small rack of various colours and types of shoe polish. One could also see various sizes of shoe brushes. Most conspicuous was a tall stool in front of the shoe shiner who sat on a lower stool commonly known as '*kitimoto*' (kitchen chair/stool). The position was such that when a client sat on the raised seat, his/her feet fell at the level of the shoe shiner's stool. The scenery of the shoe shiners business was self-explanatory. No one could confuse it for cobbler's business although the two businesses dealt with shoes.

The shoe shiner sat at his business and occasionally kept brushing a shoe whenever there was no customer, a non-verbal communication. Two different shoe shiners were interviewed. One said his location by the street side was a way of communicating to the respective customers. He did not use any form of writing to attract customers. The second shoe shiner said he used the same mode of advertisement but sometimes wrote the price of polishing a pair of shoes and placed it on the stool facing the road. It was noted that the shoe shiners did not have any advanced form of advertising to their

business. They only relied on attracting the attention of passersby.

Jua Kali Artisans

Jua kali artisans who participated in the study fabricated various items including charcoal stoves (*Jikos*). As one passed by their workshops one could hear shrill noises of metal cutting. Some finished charcoal stoves were displayed outside their warehouses. An advertisement poster of 'Jikos sold here' was also occasionally observed the door of the warehouse. The charcoal stove sellers said they advertised their business mainly by display. They also displayed various types of charcoal burners. "The trick was to make some unique shapes," they said. Unique shapes lured customers into buying them so that they would go to try them out. One of the producers of the charcoal burners said that he learned his skills of making charcoal burners from a village polytechnic. He also had lessons in marketing from the same village polytechnic. Both participants said they relied mostly on tactic to advertise their products.

Newspaper Vendors

Newspaper vendors fall under the circulation department of the news (print) media houses. They are not employees of the media houses. The editorial, advertisement/marketing, production and circulation departments of the media house depend on dissemination of newspaper by vendors. The vendors in Eldoret town dealt with different types of newspapers, such as the *Daily Nation*, *Standard*, *Kenya Times*, *Independent*, *citizen*, *Parents*, and *Drum*, among others. They walked from vehicle to vehicle, hotels and even in or near banks and bus-stops and also displayed near premises people frequented most such as bakeries. They also wore jackets printed on the names of the companies they served. In most cases they were found near banks in buses and near restaurants. They communicated verbally and applied non-verbal techniques of communication. They only displayed the newspaper or even just the headline of the newspaper. The customers took time to skim through and if they were interested they bought the newspaper, but some of them just gave them back. One could take the newspaper to read through while the vendor was standing right there with a hope that he/she might buy but, the reader gave back the newspaper and left.

The vendor returned to the print media houses with the unsold newspapers at the end of the day if there was any otherwise they sold all of them. They restocked the weekly newspapers such as citizen and independence. The newspaper vendors said that the skill of selling newspapers was very easy. So long as one knew how to read simple English and to count. Counting was important since it could be said that for every ten newspapers they got a commission of 10%.

There were problems but the most challenging one was the fact that people could take the newspaper and they disappeared with it while the vendors were still serving other customers. They also disappointed the vendors by just reading through the newspaper for about an hour without having bought it. This made the newspapers not to be sold and it affected the expected profit.

Tailors

The tailors who took part in the study were those who owned small tailoring shops and those who practiced their tailoring business in open spaces on verandas at the street junction and corners of the town. It was noted that such tailors displayed a number of already sewn clothes on hangers around the small room or around a makeshift wardrobe. There were also new rolls of unsown clothes neatly arranged on lines for display. The tailors attracted the attention of passersby by the characteristic utterance of *karibu* (welcome) customer. When a customer stopped to show interest in the clothes, the tailor stopped what he/she was doing and handed a few samples to the customer as he used persuasive language. The tailor strived to convince the customer about the fair quality of his/her materials of clothes and the fair fashion of the styles he/she had made. Finally, he/she asked the customer to choose one ready-made or have the option of taking measurements for one to be stitched. In a matter of a few minutes the tailor explained how his/her items were of a rare quality and affordable such that if the customer left them he/she would not get the same quality anywhere else.

These same tailors were given a questionnaire to fill. When interviewed the tailors reported that they advertised their business by writing on posters, which were placed them in a conspicuous place. Prospective customers would then be guided by the posters to the venue of the tailors. Another strategy of advertisement was just to display their wares and hoped that customers and window shoppers would be attracted to them. They also reported that they strove to make good quality products for example clothes in fashion at particular times, to please the customers who could then talk about them hence advertise the products.

The two tailors who were interviewed said they learned their skills from observing what other tailors did. They reported that advertisement by posters was effective since the customers who went to them had been guided by the posters. The tailors were not sure whether their modes of advertisement were effective in maximizing profits. They stated that they knew other modes of advertisement like using the television, radio, and even Internet. But according to them these were for rich people and big companies who could afford. Their tailoring skills pleased customers and many of them.

Hair Salon Operators

In this category of small business enterprise, only two persons participated. They were interviewed and subsequently given a questionnaire to fill. The salon operators who were interviewed reported that their mode of advertisement of their business was by way of posters on their doors. Then customers would turn in to try out the hairstyles advertised. They also said that they printed some small posters and dropped or pinned them at strategic places like telephone booths and walls of buildings hoping to capture customers. The salon operators said they learned their skills through workshops and seminars organized by manufacturers of hair products and hair chemicals. However, they were not sure whether these modes of advertisement were effective. They believed that their business depended on sheer luck. Although they were aware of many other modes of advertisement like the use of television and radio, magazine, brochures etc, they said these were expensive since they were only striving to make ends meet.

Butchers

There were two (2) butchers who were interviewed. They said they advertised their business mainly by painting their building red colour and large drawings of the animal type that they dealt with. For example, beef butchery would have a large drawing of a bull or cow, while mutton butchery would have a large drawing of sheep or goat, whereas Pork butchery would have a large drawing of a pig. The two butchers indicated that they learned their skills from fellow butchery operators. For example, one who could afford the cost of glass had the whole front of his butchery made of glass to expose the meat to prospective buyers. The one who could not afford it just used writings on the wall of the buildings. They wished to use other modes of advertisement but were unable due to lack of funds. When they started a butcher business, they could weigh a heavy junk of more than 1 Kg of meat for customers who requested for 1 kg only and more than just 2 kgs for one who wanted 2 kgs. The butchers attracted more customers that way. They kept their meat fresh and maintained proper hygienic standards within their premises.

Carpenters

The carpenters who participated in the study reported that they communicated to their customers through display of their timber and finished products. Their mode of advertisement from observation was more or less like the *Jua Kali* fabricators of charcoal burners. They displayed the various types of timber and the finished cupboards, beds, tables, stools, wardrobes, chairs among others outside their workshops. Some of them had marked prices for self-advertisement while others were left unidentified for better bargains when a customer showed interest. The carpenters were not aware of any other mode of advertisement apart from the one they used. They seemed satisfied

with the strategy of communication, they used, that is, displaying their timber and finished products.

Maize Roasters

The maize roasting business took place by the street sides, pavements, verandas and junctions. The dealers had the charcoal burners burning a wire mesh for placing the maize as they roasted green maize on the fire. They reported that they relied on appearance of the roasted maize for advertisement. They said that the aroma of the roasting maize attracted customers. They did not use any sophisticated mode of advertisement except for the green leaves left from the roasted maize. They were also not aware of any other mode of advertisement of their business. Regular customers were established as the maize roasters maintained the same spot without shifting and had fresh maize, which they roasted well. The maize-roaster placed the roasting maize on a wire mesh atop a charcoal burner. They fanned the charcoal of fire as the sound of roasting maize could be heard ten meters away. The aroma went farther than the sound.

There were between six (6) and ten (10) customers at any given time. They were customers with sharp appetites for the roasting maize. The maize roaster served customers by cutting with an instrument, a piece at a time according to what a customer paid for, e.g. 5/= or 3/= for a sizeable piece or even 10/= up to 15/= for a whole maize. One passer-by noticed a customer friend and stopped to greet him. He joined his friend as they chatted and bought maize to eat. The maize-roaster kept the customers away from the side that faced the street to expose his maize to the passers-by; pedestrians and motorists. One motorist parked her car and approached the maize-roaster. They exchanged familiar greetings and she booked three pieces of roast maize on the cob. She drove off as the maize roasted, leaving the cook-foil with the maize roaster. She returned after a few minutes to collect her maize which were wrapped in the cook-foil and she paid 45/=.

The maize roaster staffed the sacks with maize leaves stripped from the cobs. The bare maize cobs were put in the same sacks. The maize roaster sold the full sacks to dairy farmers at a profit. These farmers communicated by cell phones if the leaves had accumulated to feed the cows to satisfaction before they could come to collect the sacks.

Telephone Booths (Community phones) Operators

The telephone booth operators who participated in the study were those along the pavements or by the roadsides. They advertised their business by the characteristic green or pink phone company colours of the paint on their makeshift booths. These were also adorned with pictures of the various types of the 'yes' and 'Safaricom' scratch cards. They also

erected posters that were labelled “Safaricom”, “Telcom” and “Zain”. On being interviewed, they said that they relied on the general advertisement of community phone over the radio and Television. Since by the time customers came to the booth they seemed to be aware of what they wanted. They also said that they were usually patient with customers’ questions until they provided the phone services. Scratch cards for various phones were sold by these community phone operators.

The community telephone operators were aware of more sophisticated modes of advertisement but they said they had not applied them. Examples of these modes were TV, radio, posters, exhibitions, Internet among others. Long queues were the order of the day. The demand for customers to use community phones was high as the clients kept pushing for quick service. Community phones have awakened the urge to communicate by verbalizing the needs between and among individuals. The distance notwithstanding hence quotes McLuhan and Fiore’s (1968) prophecy thirty years ago come true that “communication would turn the world into a global village.”

Boda boda and Motor-bike/Tuk-tuk Transporters

The transporters who participated in the study were those who operated ‘*boda boda*’ taxis (Transport by bicycles). They wore uniforms which were labelled ‘*boda boda*’ – EBBT which meant Eldoret *Boda Boda* Transporters. They stood by their bicycles, which were labelled with a number in addition to the writings EBBT. The two ‘*boda boda*’ operators who took part in the study said they cushioned their carriers comfortable by using sponge and soft cover with bright colours to attract customers. They did not use any other mode of advertisement but wished that they would advertise using local newspapers. They claimed that they competed favourably with motor vehicle taxis since they were cheap, but they owned up that they did not operate long distances.

Motor-bike/*Tuk-tuk* transporters are a recent development that people prefer to *boda-boda* mode. It is a three-wheeled vehicle that carries four passengers. It uses diesel fuel to run the engine. It has a built body and covered with canvas. There are particular routes for *tuk-tuk* to operate, such as Elgon view and Pioneer estates but they go to other estates on hire. Passengers pay Ksh30 to Elgon view estate but one can pay Ksh70 for the same distance for hiring from Eldoret town. Passengers who were interviewed complained of the noise that *tuk-tuks* make as one cannot hold conversation on phone or with another fellow passenger while aboard. However, the operators said the *Kapsabet* bus stop was ideal for them as people come there to board. Parents hire them to transport children to and from schools. The *Tuk-tuk* drivers owned cell phones for

communication if they were needed somewhere urgently to transport passengers or goods.

Ice Cream Sellers

Ice cream sellers were adorned in white. They pushed trolleys that were also white with the label “Ice Cream”. On the trolley there were also pictures of the various types of Ice Cream and polythene bags, cups of various sizes and cones for packing the Ice Cream. While pushing the trolley, they occasionally sounded a high-pitched bell to attract customers. They were noted for their polite language while addressing customers. When interviewed, the Ice Cream sellers said that they advertised their business by pushing their well-labelled and conspicuous trolleys around the streets. They also took advantage of the hot sun to move around to attract customers who may require ice cold cream to quench their thirst.

Ice Cream Sellers were aware that big firms advertised their business using advanced modes of advertisement but they had never used them because of lack of funds. One seller reported that sometimes he got customers especially mothers and fathers with toddlers. He simply would stop in the pathway of the young child or toddler, ring the bell and waive the ice-cream which made the child cry for it. The parent would buy from him/her. He earned extra cash on Saturdays, at crusades and at *Kipchoge* stadium where foot-ball teams or Volley ball - Pipe-line Vs. Coca-Cola among others played and also at athletic events in Eldoret and its environs.

Fruit Sellers

Fruit sellers who took part in the study owned stalls in the municipal market. They were specifically those who sold oranges and mangoes. They also labelled each heap of fruits with a price tag. Some fruits were cut to expose the juicy part to attract customers. Also fruit salads were prepared and served in minute bowls for customers. When interviewed, they said that they advertised their business by their skills of arrangements and neatness in addition to cleanliness. They also said that they had to talk politely to customers to be able to convince them to buy the fruits. They were aware that there were other modes of advertisement but they did not use them. Fresh fruits were sold more than those which had stayed for longer time. They attracted more customers from restaurants and hotels. They reported that those fruits, which had stayed, were sold cheaply and in bulk to those that made juice especially oranges and passion fruits.

Samosa and Sausage Sellers

These were found at bus stops and along the streets. There were two (2) *samosa* sausage sellers. These were collectively interviewed. They responded that they believed their business advertised itself by the aroma from the steaming ovens. The ovens were also caged with glass to expose the delicious *Samosas* and

Sausages. Customers were then attracted by their sight.

Some *samosas* were sold at the market, especially in the evenings when business people were leaving town with their wares. They just placed a gunny bag full of *samosas* on the pavement, but behind fish-mongers and vegetables, unions and tomato sellers. Customers who looked exhausted from the day's hard work flocked there to feed. The customers were dressed in partly torn jackets, shirts and even shoes. They bore a resemblance of packing boys and girls. Some of these people were cleaners and loaders in the market. These customers came in large numbers may be owing to the political turmoil that befell the country following the disputed presidential election results of 2007. Internally displaced persons that include youths and other people camped at Eldoret show ground and they came out during the day to provide labour and other services in the town. A full gunny bag of fifty kilograms would empty in fifteen minutes which the owner replaced immediately with the one from a hide-out. When asked how much a *samosa* cost, the quick answer was ksh.5/. The vendors were not willing to divulge much information with fear the researcher might be a municipal council informer. They refused to take a photograph of the business. Having sold three bags, the young men disappeared behind the street. This business took place at the same spot and occasionally rotated around the open air Municipal market. Those who sold *samosa*/sausage from the steaming ovens reported that they also advertised their business by dressing up in white aprons. They did not find it necessary to use other modes of advertisement, e.g. shouting, ringing the bells, and putting up stalls. They said they learned these skills by sheer imagination.

Tree/Vegetable Seedlings Sellers

These were on the verandas and street sides. They displayed various kinds of seedlings for sale. There were two participants. They reported that they had to lure customers by calling them over. The seedlings were grown in pots and some had become trees adding to the scenery of green environment; where such scenery advertised the availability of the seedlings. They were not aware of any other mode of advertisement apart from displaying their seedlings of various sizes.

Handicraft Sellers

The handicraft sellers who participated in the study were those found along the road opposite *Sirikwa* Hotel and outside *Uchumi* supermarket. The handicraft businesses here dealt with pots used for planting flowers, woodcarvings and weaved chairs. The most pronounced handicraft was pot making and miscellaneous. The handicrafts were arranged along the road, outside *Uchumi* super-market and at other strategic positions where buyers could easily spot

them. The respondents interviewed revealed that they used display method and posters to communicate to their customers. Those who came to view their items could be welcomed and even taken inside the stalls to see more of the items.

These respondents reported that those were the only modes of communication they used. They wished to use exhibitions, workshops, magazines and seminars but capital could not allow them. From the observations and interview schedules, the respondents' general view was that they would continue doing business to earn a living despite municipal council security guards' harassing them, hence the world-wide effects of inflation. The businesses had been in existence for the past five years, therefore the entrepreneurs were motivated to continue competing by improving their communication strategies.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study revealed that various communication strategies are employed in SBE to meet their competitive advantage in Eldoret town. The entrepreneurs have taken a first step to launch their small business enterprises in Eldoret and their success depends on the communication strategies a person knows and chooses to apply, whether verbal or non-verbal. Therefore, training in business communication skills through seminars, conferences, workshops and exhibitions will bring the small business people and their enterprises on board where television, computer, microphones, telephones, posters, workshops and marketing, conferences, magazines, brochures, tele-marketing, tele-conferencing among others play significant role in communication for competitive advantage in business. Sensitizing the business community also on the use of Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) will enhance development in the business sector country-wide. This paper recommends that the entrepreneurs should be exposed to modern communication facilities such as information communication technologies (ICTs) through seminars, conferences, workshops, and exhibitions supported by the Government, NGOs, Municipal council and well wishers.

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