

Building Trust in Business – A Study of Nigerian IGBO businessman

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Abstract: *Regardless of where the Igbo man is, within or without the Igbo regions, trust is one of the foremost vital tool in business dealings and negotiations. This study aims at revealing the kind of trust apparent, and unique to the Igbo-men in business, how the Igbo-men build trust in their business, the antecedents of trust building in Igbo land, and the impacts of those trust in business dealings and negotiation. Through the process of content data analysis, results were drawn from a percentage margin of answers and feedbacks generated from real life experiences and discussions from unstructured interview from selected Igbo-men across the five states of the south-east region of Nigeria, which shows that 70% percentage of the Igbos practice the affective based trust in business dealings and negotiations, while 18% percentage practice cognitive based trust, 7% engages in both affective and cognitive based trust, and the remaining 5% are undecided.*

Keywords: Igbo, Trust, Cognitive trust, Affective trust, Business.

I. INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW OF THE IGBO PEOPLE

The Igbo people are those who are by birth or marriage originates from the southeastern part of Nigeria, speaks Igbo language —a language which belongs to the Benue-Congo language family and is one of the main ethnic groups in Nigeria.

Before the Igbo people had contact with the western civilization, their rich corpus literature and language were orally transmitted. Through prohibition, reinforcements, precepts and examples. Children and wards get initiated into the linguistic community, where they also get schooled on the Dos and Don'ts in the society.

Long before now, the Igbos are noted to be more of farmers, hunters, fishermen, and so on, but nowadays, a larger percentage of Igbo men are known to be business men who trade mostly in electronic appliances, building materials, and so on.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

In Igbo land, trust building is highly pivotal for the smooth sailing of any business gathering whatsoever. Before any service or product can be adjudged to be of 'Good Quality' then the customer must have built a level of trust and confidence in the product or service provider, same way every business man wants to be

accorded as the quality dealer of whatever kind of business or services he renders.

Igbo business-men want to be trusted and viewed as worthy and never failing as far as delivering original products is concerned. An Igbo man relish being used as a point of reference. 'Ichoroigoteezigboya, gaanashopuMaziOkeke' (If you want to buy the original, get it from Mr. Okeke's shop). This kind of scenario usually occurs when a business man has proven his reliability overtime, and as well established a good working relationship with the customers built through a level of confidence and trust, which they might have acquired based on past experience, or the perception and knowledge they believed the dealer has.

Among the Igbos, there is something referred to as 'Itummaduahia' which often occurs when someone is going to the market to get goods, a different party, gives the first party some money to help them make some purchases. This act is mostly common among the Igbos who live or do business within the same locality.

In Onitsha main market for instance, a lot of Igbos sell different products, while others carry out varying services. Meanwhile, only few of this Igbo men can afford to get their goods directly from the producers and as such warrants them to travel out of Nigeria for the business quest, thereby propelling those who cannot travel out to make a list of the item of goods lacking in their store, then handed over to those travelling alongside the corresponding amount of money for the proposed goods.

When the traveler fails to deliver appropriately on the first trial, or assumed to have cheated, such person loses the trust of his counterparts, and as well dismissed as being dubious and untrustworthy, and if reverse is the case, the person has as well earned and built a level of trust among his counterpart. This kind of trust is what is referred to as 'Affective trust'.

On the other hand, an Igbo man who finds himself outside a non-Igbo speaking environment, will easily trust an Igbo business man he or she meets there because of the faith he or she has that the Igbo man, will treat him right and not give him a bad product or services due to the believe that every Igbo-men in diaspora are seen as either brothers or sisters. For this kind of trust, it is termed the 'Cognitive trust'. But however not as common as that of the 'Affective trust'.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Operational Definition of Concepts

Cultural Dimensions in Business:

With diverse and multiple authors' contribution on culture, which when simply put is the way a particular group of people live their lives, however tolls down to their way of doing business as well. Embracing Geert Hofstede 1980's culture paradigm in business studies. Though Hofstede's perception was greatly criticized, it however still plays a vital role when dealing with cultural dimension as it relates to business and political life of different ethnic or cultural groups.

Trust: Several studies conducted on the term 'trust' by diverse academic groups such as psychology, management, sociology, and so on, all yield diverse perception of what 'trust' means. For Blaine. G.(2016), trust is a psychological concept apparent to only a group of career fields such as; the "journalists, moral philosopher, natural scientists", and so on. For, Blaine, trust has nothing to do with cognitive or affective knowledge.

On the contrary, Ulsman, (2000, 2002,20003, &2008) perception of what trust is revolves round a cognitive trust, which involves believe or faith in someone, culture, and so on. Trust is as well built more easily among people who are close or related. (Hardin, 2002). Trusting someone means giving them the discretion, without bothering whether they betray one's loyalty in them or not. Two types of 'trusters' do exist. The low truster and the high truster. The low truster are those who do not easily trust a target except they have previous evidence of experience which proves the target to be trust worthy. This kind of trust relates to that of the 'affective trust'. While the high truster are those who do not need to see or have any previous

experience before proceed to trust their target. This kind of trust as well relates with the 'cognitive' kind of trust. (Ashkanasy. N. 2005).

COGNITIVE BASED TRUST AND AFFECTIVE BASED TRUST

The Igbos has been noted to engage in both cognitive and affective based trust, but however depending on the situation of things on ground. A certain situation could warrant an Igbo business man to carry out a cognitive trust, most especially when a close friend or relative wants to do business with him, or affective when dealing with customers or clients with good past experience.

Cognitive Based Trust: this can be described as an individual's belief about reliability, dependability & competence. This is more like faith in trust worthy intentions. It occurs when a person makes conscious decisions to trust based on the best knowledge he/she has. McAllister, (1995). People who have this kind of trust are most times fooled easily. (Ashkanasy. N. 2005). Based on the general stereotyped knowledge that the Yorubas, (another major ethnic group in Nigeria) have about the Igbos loving much too much and tends to be cunny on money related issues, they will never trust an Igbo man with matters dealing with money. This kind of trust is also prevalent among the Igbo when it comes to cultural norms and value, as the younger ones generally believe the adult are well seasoned in the culture and tradition even though not all adult do.

Affective Based Trust: this type of trust is described as having mutual interpersonal care and concern which results in confidence in the ability of others. Affective trust is more emotional than rational. People trust because of their positive feelings for the person in question, or for previous experience which thus earns the target some certain level of trust. For instance, a business man who picks someone from the same hometown did so on the bases of affective trust.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research work is anchored on Inter-subjectivity theory. Inter-subjectivity is a term coined by social scientists as a short-hand description for a variety of human interactions. For example, social psychologists Alex Gillespie and Flora Cornish list at least six definitions of inter-subjectivity (and other disciplines have additional definitions).

"Intersubjectivity" has been used in social science to refer to agreement. This occurs between people when they agree on a given set of meanings or a definition of the situation. Similarly,

"Intersubjectivity" also has been used to refer to the common-sense, shared meanings constructed by people in their interactions with each other and used as an everyday resource to interpret the meaning of elements of social and cultural life. If people share common sense, then they share a definition of the situation. Many other theories could have been used but the Inter-subjectivity theory best suits the purpose of this research work.

The relevance of this theory lies in the fact that trust thrives better when there is mutual understanding between parties, the phenomena of 'Trust' and mutual understanding' share a sort of intersubjective relationship

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study used secondary data, which were sourced from articles in reputable journals, internet materials, and textbooks. The secondary source was augmented with data obtained from direct observation on the activities of Igbo business men across the country. Also, data was generated from unstructured interview and discussions. This was done this way so as to prevent observer's paradox. Data generated from the above sources were subjected to critical analysis with a view to addressing key issues underlying the study.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

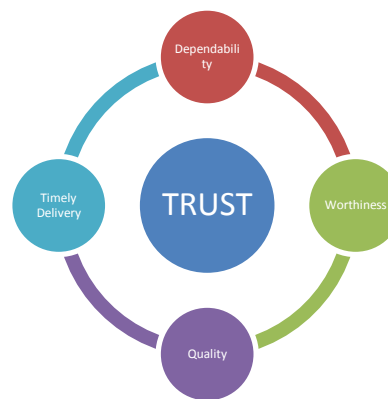
This study categorized issues and provides answers to the research questions.

What brings trust amongst Igbos?

From our findings, issues surrounding trust among Igbo Business owners are categorized into the following;

Trust = D + TD+ CW + Q Where; D= Dependability, TD= Timely Delivery, CW= worthiness, Q= Quality.

A RADIAL CIRCLE SHOWING WHAT BRINGS TRUST AMONG THE IGBOS



Igbos are humans and as such, the same factors responsible for trust between business relationships in any part of the world also produce similar result amongst Igbos.

This research work however found out that there are some very unarguable and peculiar ones which include but is not limited to the following;

i. Dependability: Some Igbo men do not involve themselves directly into a business venture. They rather invest or lend money to business people in return for interest and on agreement that the money will be returned on a certain date. If the creditor gets his money with profit as agreed, the Borrower earns his trust but if it turns out otherwise, trust is lost.

ii. Timely Service Delivery: How reliable a business partner is makes a mark in the heart of an Igbo business man. If order for is being placed for goods and the supplier delivers within record time, the tendency of such a supplier to earn the trust of an Igbo business man is high.

iii. Quality: The recommendation of a certain business by people who have had any form of business relationship with a firm in past times makes it easy for an Igbo business man to trust and find more reasons to do business.

iv. Worthiness: Most Igbo business men did not start up with money capital. They rather got some goods on credit, made sales then returned the money for the goods while they made with the little profit. This circle was repeated several times until they became fully established. If an upcoming Business-man fails in the first trial to return the money for the goods supplied on credit at the first instance, the business man finds it difficult to receive such assistance in the nearest future

What type of trust is prevalent among Igbos?

A scale of 100% was used to weigh the responses, findings and feedbacks gotten from the unstructured

interview and discussions, and at the end, the researcher was able to state categorically that 70/100 uses the affective based trust, 18/100 embrace the cognitive based trust.

From the above, it becomes glaring enough that the type of trust prevalent among the Igbos is the Affective based trust which takes 70% out of 100.

What is the impact of trust building in Igbo land?

Trust building in Igbo land promotes a healthy interpersonal relationship which further encourages future business dealings. Just as the Igbo proverb which goes thus: "Uzo di mma, a gay angaabuo" (when a road is good, it will be plied twice). This simply implies that when a target or business man delivers his responsibility effectively as expected of him, it will further boost or trigger more business dealings and negotiations in the nearest future.

Furthermore, trust building in Igbo land helps invokes unity among two parties, thereby making the environment or society peaceful.

What is the role of trust in business negotiation among Igbos?

Is it not a fact that the issue of distrust has brought so many businesses to a standstill in a case, where the dealers are not trustworthy or noted for past dubious acts. However, trust in business plays a vital role among the Igbos as it aids in the dissipation of an atmosphere of doubt. An Igbo proverb states; "aka nnikwuo aka ekpe, aka ekpe a kwuo aka nni" (when the right hand washes the left hand, the left hand will in return wash the right hand). This simply puts means a good deed will surely get its own reward, same way there is a reward for a trustworthy business man, as people will be able to vouch for his business even in his absence. However, below are the roles in which trust plays in any business relationship and which cannot be overtly overemphasized. Some of such roles include;

- i. Trust between business partners strengthens the business and gives room for growth and expansionary drives.
- ii. Trust between business partners unites in a common front with which they can combat a common enemy as well as cripple unhealthy competition.
- iii. Trust in business is the bedrock for expansion. It puts the business on an innovative Path since there is no room for mutual suspicion and no one feels threatened when a new idea is brought to be deliberated on and executed.

iv. Trust reduces risk responsibility; Business partners who come together to trust themselves make the burden of a Loss they could not avert, less. They also pull resources back together and get the business working again faster.

IV. CONCLUSION

Trust in every sphere of human life, and especially in that of a business Igbo-man is extremely of high value, as others' perception about how trustworthy he is, will either make or mar his business. Trust according to the research findings plays crucial roles which as well brings an uplift in the business of an Igbo-man. Meanwhile, the research findings and results ascertained that the type of trust, mostly prevalent among the Igbo business-men is the Affective trust.

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