Chapter 15


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ABSTRACT

The importance of developing societies in the global marketplace is never in doubt as they constitute a vital consumer base for products and services from developed countries. Yet, there is a general paucity of research on consumption behavior in developing societies. This chapter draws on Nigerian immigrants’ informal entrepreneurship in Ghana to explore how these entrepreneurs respond to consumer demands and needs and the specific clientele attraction strategies they deploy to sustain and expand their businesses. The chapter argues that understanding the entrepreneurs’ responses to consumer needs and their customer attraction strategies contributes to a better understanding of these businesses in their current forms, scope, and their future prospects. Ultimately, the chapter sheds light on what shapes consumption practices that make the existence of these businesses in the developing world possible and their relevance for the global marketplace and the globalization discourse.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This chapter focuses on Nigerian immigrant business owners in Ghana. It explores their perspectives and responses to consumer needs and demands and attraction strategies they adopt with the view to show how these work in the context of a developing country. The country of focus is Ghana. Also known as the Gold Coast in the colonial times, Ghana played host to diverse groups of immigrants, and continues to do so from within Africa and other parts of the world outside Africa (Jahoda, 1961; Peil, 1974; Boahen, 1977; DeCorse, 2001; Adepoju, 2003). The ten major international immigrant groups in Ghana are of Nigerian, Togolese, Burkinabe, English, Chinese, Indians, Lebanese, Malian, Ivorian and Liberian origins. About a decade ago, Twum-Baah’s (2005) work profiled the volume and characteristics of international migrants in Ghana to reveal that, Ghana’s immigration figures are dominated by people of Nigerian origin. Arhin’s (1979) classical work and others (e.g. Amenumey, 2008; Anquandah, 1985; Davies, 1966; Kobo, 2010; and Massing, 2000 etc.) show historical origin and activities of Nigerians and other immigrant groups such as Malian and Burkinabe in Ghana. Antwi Bosiakoh and Williams Tetteh (2018) provide an overview of the driving factors and information about why Nigerian immigrants venture to Ghana, and are entrepreneurial in Ghana.

Recent studies on Nigerian migration across the world highlight how Ghana ranks high in terms of destination preference for Nigerian immigrants. Five-percent of the estimated 5.2 million Nigerians living in other countries (Orozco & Mills, 2007) is known to be resident in Ghana (Mberu & Pongou, 2010; Olatuyi, Awoyinka & Adeniyi, 2013; Orozco & Mills, 2007). Also, Ghana is the third top destination of Nigerian migrants in the global south, following Sudan and Cameroon, and the fifth destination on a global scale (Olatuyi et. al., 2013).

Regardless of their origin countries, migrants in various parts of the world are known to be entrepreneurial as some venture into business development in their new contexts (see for example Kalitanyi & Visser, 2010; Rath 2000). Nigerian immigrants also create their own jobs through establishing businesses in destination countries including Ghana. Their entrepreneurial pursuit and successes are often measured by standards including their provision of jobs within the new contexts (Antwi Bosiakoh, 2017b; Eades, 1994; Hill, 1970). To date, scholarly focus on Nigerian immigrants’ business creation/operational activities in Ghana, have omitted, or at best shed very little light on the strategies deployed to attract clientele and address customer demands. Given that clientele attraction strategies and customer demand responses are core components of both business development, maintenance and also business expansion processes, this chapter fills that gap by investigating these two domains. The chapter contends that understanding Nigerian immigrants’ clientele attraction strategies and how they address consumer demands provide a valuable contribution to knowledge. This argument is based on two points. The first point is that, this knowledge contributes to a better understanding about these businesses in their current forms and scope as well as the prospects they hold for the future. The second point is that, by understanding these activities, we gain deeper insights into what shapes the consumption practices that make the existence of these businesses in the developing world possible, as well as their relevance in the global marketplace and the globalisation discourse. The study is guided by two research questions, namely 1) How do contemporary Nigerian immigrant entrepreneurs (operating in a developing country, Ghana) seek to understand and respond to consumer needs? and 2) What strategies do the entrepreneurs deploy to attract clientele-base to sustain and expand their businesses?

The chapter is organized as follows: The introduction is followed by discussions on the notion of relational mediation in business with a focus on responses to customer needs, and clientele attraction