

Advertising Strategies and Tactics Applied by the Flea Market Traders to Alleviate Poverty in Zimbabwe. Case of Mupedzanhamo (Harare) and Global Flea Market (Gweru)

Orpah Onwards Chivivi¹, Painos Moyo and Nyasha Mapuwei

Abstract

The once city council mandated flea markets later linked to Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs) by the Zimbabwean government to lobby for the sustenance of the then poor informal traders, have become booming business in Zimbabwe due to advertising strategies and tactics applied by the small scale traders in Zimbabwe's urban centres such as Harare and Gweru in particular. Despite facing challenges such as arrests and demolition of their sites by law enforcement agents and the city council police, these traders managed to pressurise local city authorities who later introduced an orderly way of trading by constructing vending bays. Instead of spreading their wares in the open to advertise them, the vendors and flea market owners resorted to advertising tactics such as posters, newspapers, bill boards, disco music, and town crying. Goods brought into Zimbabwe by cross border traders earmarked for flea markets business now fill urban centres' flea markets. Customers with different tastes for the goods on offer flood the flea markets as a result. Ironically, the once poor illegal flea market traders have become rich landlords, commuter omnibus owners and shop owners who now move around in the city driving latest vehicles. It is from this background that researchers looked for advertising tactics and strategies that enabled the once poor illegal small scale traders to woo customers who throng their flea market bays to buy all sorts of foreign goods on offer. The key research methods used include onlooker observation, surveys, interviews, critical discourse analysis and hermeneutics of interpretation. The research found out that although the once poor flea market owners now rich landlords and business people started as small scale traders, city council and government's interventions to formalize and legalize flea markets resulted in booming business as advertising strategies and tactics were applied. The research also found out that flea market business is no longer a prerogative for the poor urbanites because even the rich business people have also joined to own and even rent markets as this has become lucrative business. It was clear from the finding of this research that poverty, deprivation and vulnerability have become a thing of the past since flea markets have become sources of poverty alleviation in Zimbabwe's urban areas changing the illegal small scale traders' status from rags to riches. The researchers concluded that Zimbabwe is likely to be a

flea market economy than a manufacturing economy. The researchers recommend that the Government should give full support to the flea market economy as it contributes 50% of private centre employment. The Government needs to open up to foreign investors to revive the ailing economy.

Keywords: Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs), advertising strategies, flea markets, poverty alleviation