A challenge for geomarketing in developing countries

The Nigerian narrative

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Efforts are continually made from within and outside developing countries, to better understand the consumer and customer distribution, for the purpose of devising and delivering a more accurate means to market insight within such regions. Despite some of the efforts being made, it appears there still is an inability to achieve a similar level of market and/or population insight as there is available for most developed countries. It is anticipated, however, that hindrances to achieving the market insight desired may be akin to issues such as market entry via locations with greater disposable incomes comparative to similar locations, data limitations – inconsistencies, limited accessibility, geographies used consisting administrative boundaries and lacking information structure – and insufficient efforts from academia on this subject matter when compared to private-sector efforts, which are likely to present a bias suited to their own purposes.

Background

The application of geomarketing and geodemographic principles, within developed countries such as Britain and America, may be considered as advanced with respect to how both principles are applied. It is also understood that these principles offer an adoptive organisation or entity an improved capacity for insight into a given population. Geodemography (also described as socioeconomic profiles) is reported as being widely used in both the private and public sectors of the aforementioned countries and, as such, is continually researched and improved upon by participants in the sectors mentioned. Its application is seen in the fields of marketing (Tynan & Drayton 1987; Sleight 1997),

Received (in revised form): 5 February 2014

DOI: 10.2501/IJMR-2014-000

education (Batey & Brown 2007; Singleton 2004; Singleton & Longley 2008) and policy derivation (DETR 2000; Harris & Longley 2002; Noble *et al*. 2006). However, there exists a stark contrast when comparing 'like for like' with a country like Nigeria or with similar developing countries. When such a comparison is made, social and economic inconsistencies, prompted by the lack of insight into socioeconomic distributions within a population, outside of generic differentiation offered from census variables – demography (age, gender and marital status), education (basic, secondary and tertiary), living conditions (household size, dwelling configuration and ownership) and income (unemployed, employed and self-employed), becomes more obvious. In addition, the inability to obtain granular population insight, at an individual or household level, when attempting to apply the principles of geomarketing in Nigeria, is believed to compound further an already difficult situation when seeking insight. This is perceived to be a likely barrier to accurate consumer insight within the country, irrespective of success stories sometimes shared of successful organisations found operating in Nigeria. It is also good to note that there exists the belief that Nigeria's population, roughly estimated at 160 million people from its 2006 enumeration exercise, offers a good chance at success for any service-oriented organisation operating within its boundaries by meeting the needs of this population, via its services on offer. Though widely reported that a large proportion of this population, about 70%, daily experiences economic hardship, there are reports of increasing consumer spending in this and other similar regions, prompting what might appear a scramble for an entry point into the market.

Consequently, many of the organisations foraying into this region may be observed as possessing an elaborate marketing plan along with their devised consumer segmentation strategies. However, the question remains, 'Are the (data) structures and methodologies currently available and adopted as well as adapted, within developing countries like Nigeria, effective enough to deliver a clear approach to marketing?'

Introduction

Marketing, according to Kitchen (1999), will involve a group of certain processes, namely anticipation, management and the satisfaction of a customer's need – all of which constitutes a group of activities undertaken during an exchange process. The basis for these activities is to make a product or service appealing enough to an individual or group, causing them to part with cash in exchange for such goods and/or services. Kitchen further argues that, 'the thoroughly understood need and inherent behaviour of the customer, as well as being able to initiate a critical analysis of existing and likely opportunities with this customer, with the aim of gaining a competitive advantage, should and may be considered the perfect theory to marketing'. This would be tenable if such a theorem were ever to exist, but at this point no such perfect theory of marketing exists. In another vein, Baines *et al.* (2008) reviewed concepts of marketing and concluded that 'marketing had changed over the years'. They infer the process of marketing as one that has gravitated from a 'transactional concept', such as pricing, promotion and distribution, to a 'relationship concept', which is marketing hinged on gaining or gained customer trust. A relationship concept to marketing is understood as offering limited organisational risks and also provides an improved commitment to the customer. This may be considered an attempt by Baines and colleagues to validate the proposed 'perfect theory to marketing', as suggested earlier by Kitchen (1999).

An earlier review of marketing strategies, by Smith (1956), reflects a clear disparity between product differentiation and market segmentation. It presents the perspective 'larger market areas are divided up into smaller ones', and represents actions taken in response to variations in product preference by a rather distributed customer base. It is understood that the fragmentation of larger markets referred to by Smith enables improved marketing focus and also offers improved insight for groups of contrasting segments (Christopher & Peck 2003). Where all studies referred to above are jointly examined – namely Kitchen (1999), Baines *et al*. (2008), Smith (1956), and Christopher and Peck (2003) – a reader of these articles is offered an expanded perspective of micro-marketing. When these differing perspectives of marketing and micro-marketing are combined, encompassing periods during which definitions of marketing have changed, the expectations from marketing can be identified as requirements intended to facilitate clear insight into a customer's buying needs, a subject best approached using smaller customer groupings. However, while contrasting the above view of marketing relationships found in developed countries against the same for developing countries, it is observed that organisations operating in these regions – developing countries – borrow marketing concepts from their counterparts in developed countries (Zou *et al.* 1997) more likely to be practising relationship-driven marketing. From the above, it can be inferred that marketing in developing countries is still transactional. Furthermore, marketing in developing countries remains far from being described as relationship driven (Zou *et al*. 1997; Ellis 2005). This is probably because organisations in developing countries are yet to fully comprehend the implementation approach required for the marketing strategies they have adopted.

The above suggests that, despite access to segmentation and customer differentiation strategies, which may be implemented on a regular basis for marketing activities in most developing countries, there is still lacking 'an understanding of the customer', 'their needs' and 'their purchasing attitudes' in developing countries. This implies that there appears to be a disconnect between provider and customers in developing countries when compared to the earlier described scenarios in developed countries. Customer interaction in developing countries is understood as being primarily transaction-focused, rather than relationship-driven. Furthermore, there exists a limited understanding of the segmentation methodologies often adopted, prompting a lack of effective insight on market segments created and used in developing countries by organisations – most of which is required to aid the creation and development of relationship-driven marketing structures.

Customers and consumers: why are we differentiating them?

The 2008 economic 'meltdown' across several continents is believed to have piled the pressure of achieving and/or retaining profitability on to many organisations. This is in addition to ensuring the continuity of operations, despite actual and looming economic difficulties (Claessens *et al*. 2009). Such a situation would warrant that many organisations better understood who their primary customers were; this would mean ensuring these organisations focused more on relational or relationship-styled marketing rather than transactional marketing. Focus on a relationship-driven marketing approach would be intent on ensuring revenue generation. Consequently, there is a school of thought which suggests that those organisations that switched marketing methods prior to the arrival of the global economic challenge, from transactional marketing to relationship marketing, were likely to be better positioned and able to remain profitable despite the economic difficulties at hand (Slater & Narver 1995; Claessens *et al*. 2009). This arises from understanding that greater focus will be placed on retaining the patronage of existing customers by better tailoring products and services to meet their identified needs, while also remaining attractive and competitive in the eyes of the consumers who are 'would be' customers (Rundle-Thiele 2006).

Unfortunately, the above does not necessarily guarantee that all organisations switching marketing styles, from a transaction-driven to a relationship-driven approach, will survive the economic difficulties being experienced. Woolworths, a family-oriented department store in Britain, provides an example of an organisation that experienced major administrative difficulties during the 2008 economic downturn; this is despite its operating what may have been a relationship-driven marketing structure. All branches of this store across the UK were closed in mid-2008, shortly after the global economic turmoil began (Smith *et al.* 2011). That said, the success or failure of an organisation cannot and should not be tied to a single aspect of its approach to marketing. Rather organisations are advised to explore multiple market strategies (many of which may be new to them), reviewing related internal processes driving a 'go to market' approach and its adopted pricing structures, combined with re-examining the relationship-management style implemented. This should be carried out across all spheres of operation as well as between the organisation and its customers. This is considered vital for delivering an effective market targeting and insight strategy, required to remain profitable when faced with adverse economic conditions. It is suspected that Woolworths had not proactively examined its customer trends, hence it lost most of its business to virtual or online stores offering similar products and services, thus becoming unable financially to sustain its operations. Generally, the most important part of the above reference, with respect to marketing strategies, is the retention of established customer relationships. This will often be considered a 'first priority' in marketing (Sliwinski 2002), while seeking to convert consumers into loyal customers will probably be the next priority.

Furthermore, Sliwinski has described a reason for maintaining customer relations as a consequence of marketing activities being driven towards a micro-marketing focus. This was explained as being done at a geographic micro-level. Hence, micro-marketing can further be described as a concept that brings into consideration heterogeneity of market characteristics while pursuing a clear differentiation strategy for pricing and store layout, suited to local market characteristic (Smith 1956; Kitchen 1999). Furthermore, organisations, while seeking to achieve heterogeneity of market characteristics as well as undertaking micro-marketing activities at geographic micro-levels, can be described as being tasked with satisfying and anticipating the needs of both existing and prospective customers. This is while maintaining a focus on local characteristics attributed to some of their customers. However, there remains a need for some form of differentiation between existing and prospective customers, at which point differentiating or discriminating between customers is seen as a start to better understanding the varying needs of those customers.

Ultimately, it may be said that differentiating between customers and consumers is done for the following reasons.

- Providing as a first priority, a clear breakdown of customer structures within a micro-marketing framework. This intends aiding an organisation to obtain clearer customer insight, understood as crucial for structuring a marketing campaign or customer-interfacing strategy. An organisation may consider this one of the required steps to establishing, and also identifying, brand loyalty – propensity for a customer and/or consumer to continually spend in favour of a given provider, despite the availability of alternative options. It would also aid an organisation in exploring market viability for various options on offer to the customer, from within its portfolio of products and services.

- The next priority will be to adopt a means of clearly distinguishing between existing and potential customers. This will involve an organisation establishing incentive-based strategies aimed at rewarding existing patrons for their loyalty, as well as presenting potential customers with the prospect of achieving a similar reward or loyalty status. Alternatively, it may entail the promotion of products and services using discounted prices, with the general intention of attracting more consumers to become customers

Given the above, this raises concerns about the approach to marketing found practised in Nigeria, which, based on observation, may be described as transactional – where it appears that everyone is treated like a consumer. It is observed that marketing in a Nigerian context is undertaken in two ways, the first being conventional media-based marketing – visual, audio and print – while the second entails taking to the streets in an attempt to reach many more people. Unfortunately, both modes of marketing applied often appear to lack any thought for individuals considered as customers, as more focus appears placed on acquiring new customers than on retaining existing ones. In addition to this, a lack of access to data structures able to facilitate micro-marketing, as described earlier, is anticipated to restrict further the ability to transition into relational marketing from transactional marketing in developing countries.

Marketing and achieving consumer conversion in developing countries

Nguyen and Nguyen (2009) are of the opinion that market size and the growth capacity found in most developing countries offer a good mix for the marketing success of various products and services. This they believe is particularly true as it relates to the marketing of international brands in such regions. They do, however, bear in mind that there are issues and challenges likely to be faced in developing countries, especially when an international organisation attempts to establish its presence there. Furthermore, Keller and Moorthi (2003) have advised that international brands setting up in a developing country require a clear understanding of their host country. They further highlight that a yardstick for the measurement of performance in these developing countries will need to be based on a combination of market share, profitability and customer conversions.

In addition, issues examined earlier in this article are understood as being better addressed by using geodemographic profiles and by applying geomarketing principles, for the purpose of better targeting both customers and consumers, and thereby enabling improved product positioning as well as capturing a considerable market share within a new market. However, in contrast to the case in developed countries, marketing in developing countries is understood to remain a non-specific process to consumer profiling. It has remained a review and segmentation of customers, assessed on the basis of cumulative individual disposable income. Consequently, many international brands marketing their products and services in developing countries enter such regions by identifying areas where cumulative average spend is considered 'robust enough to sustain profitability', while also working at achieving market share. However, this will often result in such organisations selecting a commercial or administrative region as their point of entry. Such locations provide an operational base within the developing country for the brand; it also facilitates for the organisation revenue assurance and market profitability. It does not, however, necessarily guarantee a wider reach for products or services on offer. As disposable income typical in these areas will surpass that from other regions, accessibility and product penetration on the basis of price become limited to the region of first entry and offer. This will present a limitation to achieving good market share or exposure for such an organisation and its goods and services on offer.

However, some years back, it may have been acceptable to presume no academic or commercial studies existed for the purpose of exploring the creation and use of geodemography and/or geomarketing principles, or even the application of geographic linkages to marketing in developing countries. This may have been as a result of challenges brought about by a lack of appropriate resources, unstable politics, restricted access and non-availability of credible data/information and, in some instances, corruption (Prothero 1963; Moller-Jensen & Kofie 2001; Coulombe & Wodon 2007). Today, however, such a statement may be considered somewhat inaccurate. It is believed there exist certain organisations and institutions that continually explore applying geodemographic profiles to a process of discriminating between customers, and also use geomarketing principles to segment and target both customers and consumers in developing countries (Coulombe & Wodon 2007; Ingwe *et al*. 2008; Ojo 2008).

Furthermore, the desire by several developing countries for accelerated development is believed to have prompted the need to review the potential use of socioeconomic distribution and its associated classifications, as a means of segmentation into applicable categories for the purpose of resource allocation (Ingwe *et al*. 2008; Ojo 2008). Given this development, consideration can be offered for such a development to occur, namely the capacity to segment populations into relevant categories as well as providing an opportunity for identifying ‘at risk’ households, as a means of initiating vital strategy components needed to achieve effective socioeconomic (and health) policy adoption and its related interventions, like the United Nations (UN) Millennium Development Goals (MDG) (UNDP 2010; UNICEF 2010a, 2010b). In addition, a spatial bias to resource distribution within developing countries has slowly begun to become a frequent topic of discussion (Duclos *et al.* 2004; Sahn & Stifel 2004). But still, organisations operating within developing countries are yet to clearly define or outline an approach to achieving an effective use of geomarketing or geodemographic profiles for micro-marketing. Consequently questions are raised on issues that are likely to impact the process of developing an effective geodemographic or geomarketing structure for developing countries. Such questions ask, ‘Will there be applicable data readily available at the needed resolutions?’, or ‘What data has been continually collected and is there knowledge of its availability?’ and also, ‘Will the use of a geomarketing approach in a developing country actually offer identifiable improvements to marketing or targeting, when compared to using basic marketing segmentation – demography, geography and transaction-based profiles?’

The focus of this article does not include attempting to answer all questions asked, as an attempt at responding to all questions raised may divert the attention of this article. However, in the process of reviewing potential answers for some of the questions asked, a framework guiding on the development, application as well as use of geographic linkages, geodemographic profiles and an application of geomarketing, for targeted strategies in developing countries, evolves. Another issue that does get highlighted within the assessment and examination of questions raised, is the limited knowledge and use of geodemographics and geomarketing in developing countries, understood to possess the capacity to offer better targeting and marketing insight.

Nigeria: geomarketing minefield or goldmine?

As a developing country, Nigeria's economy battles the challenge of being described as 'potentially hostile towards international investment', thereby causing capital flight (Le Vu & Zak 2006). Like many other developing countries, it has been referred to as being 'high-risk for investment'. This is based on an understanding that the investments being referred to are classed as foreign direct investments (FDI) into such countries, and of the necessary ability to continually remain accessible and attractive for FDI influx. But, as identified by Nguyen and Nguyen (2009), developing countries offer access to a large market with countless opportunities. Furthermore, Keller and Moorthi (2003) are of the opinion that an understanding of the host country by an investing organisation is required when accessing a market in, or the economy of, a developing country; this ensures that market share can be gained, consumer conversion will occur and profitability be achieved. However, the lack of geographic linkages, geodemography and geomarketing principles being used in developing countries, may mean many services and products are likely to be positioned beyond the reach of the intended segment. This can be related to the attitude of many international brands positioning themselves in regions believed to offer greater profitability and market share, rather than locate themselves and their product or service portfolio, within or near the most appropriate market segment required to offer greater geographic distribution.

Buttressing this assertion, several international brands identified as establishing a market presence in Nigeria tend to select either one of three core locations: Lagos, Port Harcourt or Abuja. These are known to be the commercial capital, a key export point for Nigerian crude products and the political nerve centre of Nigeria, respectively. This results in the volume of disposable income earned from such locations far outweighing the earnings found across other states of the country. As a result, product or service pricing based on first entry into such locations or market regions often appears a profitable choice but proves an ineffective one; especially where a brand seeks acceptance and patronage, from households with low incomes. This can be attributed to pricing strategies based on these locations – Lagos, Port Harcourt and Abuja – that take into account location costs, associated overheads and price accessibility for a target consumer group, which often exceeds that for other parts for the country. In determining price parity for such goods and services, it sets pricing beyond the reach of inhabitants from other states with less income. As a result, from the 160 million inhabitants recorded as living in Nigeria during the 2006 enumeration exercise, inclusive of any population adjustments made in recent years, it appears that only a small fraction of this population will remain accessible and will end up being properly marketed to, targeted for service delivery or perceived as viable customers. Other inhabitants will most likely remain priced out or excluded due to lower earnings, thus limiting the reach for a given product or service. Many of the international brands in Nigeria and/or in other developing countries, if closely examined, will be found guilty of, or restrained by, the aforementioned phenomenon.

Furthermore, on the subject of marketing in Nigeria and defining such as transactional or relational, it becomes relatively difficult to describe the approach to marketing within this region as relational, based on the following observations: first, marketing campaigns currently run in Nigeria, though visually seen as representative of a target audience, appear as failing to monitor the volume of new business gained, as returns on investment from such a target audience; second, recent efforts identified as increases to customer service support activities in Nigeria, focus more on provision and availability of call centres than on improvement or enhancement of the quality of service (or products) on offer; next, loyalty or customer rewards programmes initiated in Nigeria may often seem like an implementation of coercive lottery – the customer indirectly paying for a reward offered, when presumed loyal; and, lastly, marketing in Nigeria seems to offer a limited amount of attention to concerns for customer churn, a consequence of poorly performing and low-quality products and services being offered to a customer population. The concern here is that the focus in Nigeria appears to be more on the number of people in the market – approximately 160 million – and their presumed need for a product or service the international brand may have to offer, rather than the onus being on the provider to understand the customer's actual need within the market, as well as its ability to effectively differentiate and deliver services to match the differing needs.

This research strongly believes that access to a geodemographic classification, along with an applicable geomarketing framework or geographic linkages for deriving customer insight, would greatly improve the process of introducing many more international businesses into the Nigerian marketplace. Unfortunately, such tools are currently unavailable. A study by Ingwe *et al*. (2008) attempted to explore the use of geodemography to assess resource allocation for government-funded schools in Nigeria; unfortunately, this study is not perceived as offering a clear view of how its derived classifications were used, obtained or applied. Odd as it may seem, this in a way is considered a positive sign that there are raised interests (within Nigerian academia) with respect to adopting the use of geodemography and possibly geomarketing for various purposes in Nigeria. It is assumed, too, that there will be similar scenarios in other developing countries where there is a generated interest in discovering better ways of allocating needed resources.

In the same vein, a recent study by Ojo (2008) sought to create a structured socioeconomic or geodemographic classification for Nigeria. From this study, a level of socioeconomic classification across the entire country was obtained. It is not currently and openly adopted as a national standard, nor does it have its results made public in Nigeria. However, this study produced six broad classification categories at local government area (LGA) level attempting to present what it perceived to be socioeconomic profiles reflective of the dominant population, which is equivalent to local authority (LA) classifications as earlier used in Britain but that, over the years, have been modified to what we see in the geodemographic classification profiles of today (Amos 1970a; Webber 1978; Vickers & Rees 2007). This study by Ojo is considered a step in the right direction as regards the creation of socioeconomic classifiers for Nigeria. However, it is also good to note that, although this ad hoc socioeconomic classification has been derived for Nigeria from the study undertaken by Ojo, it has not been formally tested for its efficacy in depicting inherent socioeconomic distributions within Nigeria. Furthermore, socioeconomic classifications using LA geographies are described as potentially generalising trends in information that are available at smaller geographies (Feng & Flowerdew 1999; Harris & Longley 2002).

Development and use of geodemography in developing countries

Discussion on the subject of development, either in a developing or developed region, is often presented from the context of an economic or infrastructure-driven perspective and, sometimes, development may be found to be a combination of both. From the standpoint of development driven by infrastructure, there are concerns expressed about Africa and its deficiency in the area of providing adequate infrastructure; it is believed this deficiency in infrastructure greatly limits access to foreign investments (Calderon & Serven 2010). Calderon and Serven further present a line of thought that, under the right conditions, infrastructure development will aid in the reduction of poverty for Africa; they present a couple of scenarios cited from studies examined, where the availability of infrastructure is perceived to offer a positive impact, with the reduction of poverty and inequality. On the other hand, an alternative perception of the economic development perspective is one viewed with an understanding that competing theories related to economic development will require that these theories are able to offer a clear context to the approach for assessment (this primarily includes methodologies used in formulating the theories and a testing of results from these methods against observations made) (Lucas 1988). Further to this, Cull and Scott (2010) reflect on economic-related development in developing countries, and further identify that the poor in such regions are disadvantaged. This is attributed to what they describe as market imperfections, something they associate with the likelihood that a small number of relatively wealthy depositors and borrowers are considered as being responsible for a larger share of identified economic activities. As a consequence they suggest this imposes a potentially higher cost of transaction and contract enforcement on economic activities, as well as the likelihood of what Cull and Scott describe as 'information asymmetries', which further impede access for the poor to such activities. This impeded access for the poor is attributed to unavailable collateral and the lack of credit histories or connections, which they (the poor) would use to initiate or undertake such economic activities, in comparison to the wealthy few. The picture painted in both instances is that there remains a pressing need to effectively and adequately address the present issues of a lag in development, either born from infrastructure deficiency or the economic lack found in developing countries – a service geodemography and its associated tools appear able to offer.

The value from geodemography and/or from relevant studies, highlighted by undertakings such as the 'Life and Labour in London' study by Charles Booth (Hyndman 1911; LSE 2005), the Liverpool Social Malaise Study (Amos 1970a) and the Socio-Economic Classification of Local Authority Areas Study (Webber & Craig 1978), brings to the fore the value of creating and making use of socioeconomic discriminators or geodemographic methodologies, as an effective means of achieving population insight. Such insight was required in the past, and is still needed and used regularly, to tackle identified population imbalances imposed by economic deficiencies in a developed country like Britain. This is highlighted in Charles Booth's study of the 1880s, and particularly during the 1970s in the Amos study, and also in the Webber and Craig study, when Britain faced difficult economic circumstances and conditions (LSE 2005; Thompson 2012), a situation this study sees as potentially drawing a parallel with the present-day conditions found in many developing countries. Consequently, the understanding is that the use of socioeconomic discriminators and/or geodemographic methodologies greatly aids in the provision of much-needed population insight required to address issues within a given society, and potentially paints a picture of relevance, one way or another, for geodemography being used in addressing development-related issues in both developed and developing countries, be they infrastructure or economics related.

Conclusion

From an earlier study offering a basis for this article, some of the identified and outlined challenges to geodemography and geomarketing use in developing countries are understood to include data issues and inconsistencies, limitations to access, output areas in use consisting of large-area geographies and, lastly, a lack of definitive information structures. These are challenges considered as 'long-standing issues', however, a geodemographic classification structure was successfully produced at household level, despite earlier outlined challenges, as shown in Figure 1. Consequently, the researcher is of the opinion that a clear understanding of the challenges outlined and described earlier as hindering the ability to achieve population insight in a country like Nigeria provides the basis for developing a geodemographic and geomarketing framework suited to the country and, indeed, other developing countries. Such a framework, it is anticipated, will offer organisations the capacity to achieve greater levels of population insight, which can be utilised for market targeting (for private-sector organisations) and identifying 'at risk' populations (for public-sector organisations). For the private sector this further offers the prospect for better achieving market share and developing a definitive market structure geared towards retaining profitability, and further ensures the conversion of consumers to customers within a given market. While, for the public sector, the opportunity offered is improved

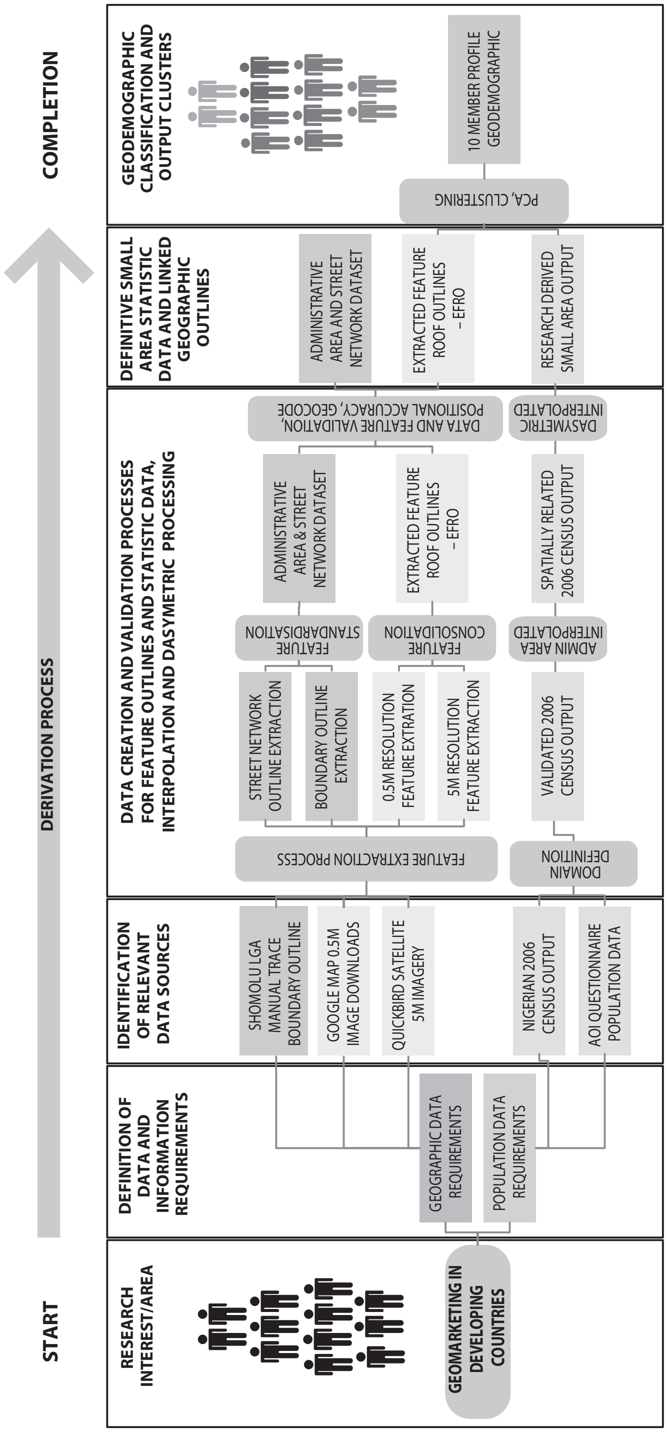

Figure 1 Image showing research derived geodemography data generation and interpretation framework

resource distribution and a more effective means of deciding the location of an intervention programme, as well as an improvement in the process of implementing socioeconomic polices. Many such services are considered lacking and needed in several developing countries, especially Nigeria.

In addition and reflecting further on what is seen as the 'current approach' to marketing and customer differentiation within Nigeria, it reveals the continued use of generic methods to discriminate within a marketplace: use of demography as a means of differentiating within a market; discriminating within a customer base, using individual spend as the yardstick for differentiation; and segmenting a market, using geographic references. The peculiarity, in this instance, is the coarse nature of information used. However, it was noted that the telecommunications industry in Nigeria appears to have adopted a new form of geography unique to the service it offers: base station coverage area. Unfortunately, the geography used and the other forms of segmentation applied in Nigeria – demography and transaction – are unable to help derive the level of detail needed to facilitate geomarketing. An earlier examination of Nigerian postcode geography in comparison to that of Britain (Allo 2010) further highlights the level of difficulty likely to be experienced, where there are attempts to adopt such geographies as a tool for achieving individual levels of targeting. In addition, use of demography and transaction data is seen as 'limiting' when seeking to achieve a deeper level of insight, especially for targeting and marketing. Given that marketing generally is identified as having 'advanced in the direction of being relationship driven', marketing practice in Nigeria is identified as still being transactional and offers an indication that practices in the region are in need of an overhaul. It should be noted, however, that not only methodologies need to be reviewed but also data. This is part of the reasoning behind a need to create an approach for developing geodemographic profiles that can be applied to geomarketing. This also raises the question of the quality and sources of data in Nigeria, inclusive of census output data and other national surveys often conducted. The concerns with data are the questions it raises, regarding its effective representation of the Nigerian population, its distribution and also its authenticity – given that there are often debates on the veracity of data sometimes offered by the government in Nigeria. It is anticipated that the use of technology and an increased demand for 'know your customer' (KYC) resources across the Nigerian business sector offer a potentially new source for data. However, a suitable data structure still seems to be an issue. In comparison, Britain, with the Chorley Report (DOE 1987), defined a basis for its data structure that is now used today for many things; something lacking in Nigeria's case.

However, from a research and/or academic standpoint, further examination of this article's title – 'a challenge for geomarketing in developing countries' – presents a likely perspective of there existing a gap between an industry provided understanding of the consumer market in developing countries and an academia provided understanding of the same. Recent efforts at offering a consumer view for Africa have been consumption driven and spearheaded by private-sector studies (consulting firms); organisations undertaking such studies usually do so with the sole purpose of ensuring client profitability (Eyring *et al.* 2011; Hatch *et al.* 2011; Hattingh *et al.* 2012). As a result, there is no effort to understand the consumer or customer, but rather efforts are made to understand the distribution of disposable income and its associated trends relating to how earnings are spent, and on which products or services. This in a way echoes this article's concerns, presented earlier, about the attitude of international brands accessing markets, setting up and establishing a presence in developing countries. Considering several international brands will depend on advice offered by organisations that produce such studies, on consumer marketing for developing countries, it is better appreciated why a commercial hub would appear a preferred first point of entry. It is understood that such a choice provides the assurance of income as well as profitability but not necessarily reach and widespread acceptability or accessibility. It is strongly believed that there is not enough effort currently being spearheaded by academia in relation to consumer insight requirements for developing countries. Even though this article and its originating study may be considered one of the voices drawing attention to this topic, it is anticipated that such efforts may prove grossly inadequate if left to compete against the catalogue of studies and interpretations of the consumer, produced by the private sector. It is accepted that data issues and lack make up one of the greatest challenges for the developing country, however, given various advancements in technology, it is suspected that many 'long-standing issues' will prove a little easier to tackle. Also, concerns are likely to be raised on the issue of data access and limitations experienced by the academia; however, the private-sector provider of consumer insight may have fewer challenges with such, owing to data access gained by virtue of work being undertaken on behalf of a client base in developing countries. In this regard, the originating research work for this article explored using publicly accessible data, accessed from various public- and private-sector resources and used in conjunction with various data extrapolation methodologies, to devise a framework for generating small area geographies and interpreting socioeconomic disparity, suited to geomarketing at individual or household level (Allo 2012). However, despite the above described effort made, further work is required to provide a more robust interpretation of the consumer in developing countries, rather than that which is currently offered – a consumption-led view from the private sector.

Concluding, a lingering fear is that developing countries and their embedded populations will continually be represented as a point for the consumption of products and services offered by international brands; as a consequence, such populations are likely to be exploited by the continued interpretation offered from the private sector of who the consumer or customer is in such regions. It is important, though, to bear in mind that the private-sector interpretation of the consumer may not be completely biased if it were offered alongside an interpretation from academia, which would seek to offer a more objective interpretation of the consumer and/or customer. Effectively, an academic view would offer a perspective that seeks to understand the individual, probable life choices influenced by location and environmental or social factors, as well as the expectations often held by such individuals – all of which may be ascribed as defining a population as 'citizens'. In conjunction with the view from the private sector, which offers what may be seen as a 'consumers' view, it may be possible to devise a representation of the population within developing countries under the heading, 'citizens and consumers'. This, it is believed, may better aid an understanding of the consumer and customer within developing countries and, also, further improve on the prospects of geodemography and geomarketing within the same.

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