

# Effect of Promotional Strategies on Customer Retention: A Case Study of MTN Telecommunication Company in Nigeria

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## **ABSTRACT**

*This study investigated how promotional activities impact on consumer retention in MTN telecommunication company in Nigeria. This study adopts descriptive survey design. The population of the study encompassed the customers of five subsidiaries MTN companies in Lagos, Nigeria. Through multistage sampling techniques, 280 respondents were drawn to participate in the study. The primary data were collected using a well-structured Likert scaled questionnaire. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS: Version 25) was used to analyse the data collected. The regression analysis revealed that Media Advert (MA) ( $\beta=0.063$ ,  $p=0.008$ ), Direct marketing (DM) ( $\beta=0.309$ ,  $p=0.000$ ), and personal selling (PS) ( $\beta=0.645$ ,  $p=0.000$ ) have significant positive effects on Consumer retention. Sales Promotion (SP) ( $\beta=-0.080$ ,  $p=0.322$ ) however, was found to have a negative but statistically insignificant impact on consumer retention. The study concluded that Media Advert (MA), Direct marketing (DM), and Personal Selling (PS) should be used in promotional activities for the purpose of retaining customers in MTN Nigeria Ltd. As for the Sales Promotion, contrary to the expectation, it should not be considered as it has negative, though insignificant value. The study therefore recommended that the management of MTN should invest more in the variables found significant in its promotional strategies in order to improve on their customer retention.*

**Key Words:** Promotional Strategies, Consumer Retention Media Advert, Direct marketing, and personal selling

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In any organisation, whether manufacturing or service industry, profit or non-profit oriented, the main purpose of its establishment is to achieve certain goals and objectives of the organisation. Most companies today in Nigeria and the world at large operate in an increasing complex and unstable environment. Nigerian telecommunication is one of the multinational companies that are involved in the delivery of telecommunication services. The companies are spread all over the six geo-political zones in Nigeria

Competition among telecommunication companies has called for intense application of promotional tools that will appeal to customer for sustainable patronage. Nigerian MTN. however, seems to be dominating the market with its numerous products in the past. However, some of the challenges that MTN is facing presently are how to seek the best management and promotional strategies, to grow the company's performance, retain customers and increase shareholders value. Excellent companies are known not only by well-conceived promotion outlining; where, when and how the companies will compete but also by their ability to execute the promotional decision option selected (Chris, 2006). Appropriate and effectively executed promotional strategies are required to productively guide the deployment of available resources in the company's promotional abilities in pursue of desired goals and objectives (Rafael, 2014). Customers are now better educated and the intense competition among global businesses today is a complex one. In order to satisfy the changing need of customers, companies must first know their needs and that is where promotional strategy begins. For a company to survive in today's competitive market, it has to strategise in satisfying customer's needs more effectively and efficiently through promotional strategies.

However, promotional strategy is a marketing concept that has to do with the choice of a target market and formulation of the most appropriate promotional mix to influence and persuade the customer's consumption pattern in order to improve the organisational performance and increase shareholder's interest and customer retention (Nzelibe, Moruku and Joseph, 2021).

Promotional strategy is aiming at the target heads of the household as they had the final say on where the disposable income will be spent. Marketing department is also saddled with the responsibility to determine the best promotional strategy to be employed in a given customer demographic environment.

Over the years, some notable authors such as Zainal and Laboni (2015), Pembri, Fudamu and Adamu (2017), Familmaleki, Aghighi, and Hamidi (2015), Ayuba (2005), Chris (2006), Akpan (2010) have regarded the promotional mix (advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, public relation and direct marketing) as having such roles as stimulating demand, boosting sales in a particular geographical area, improving profit, increasing market shares, countering competitor's strategies and retaining customer loyalties and patronage in the organisation. It is in line with this that the study was carried out on the impact of promotional strategies (advertising, personal selling and sales promoting) on customer retention in MTN telecommunication industry. This study therefore examined the effect of promotional strategies on Consumer retention in the MTN industry.

Apparently, there has been continuing researches in both the developed and developing countries with respect to the impact of promotional strategies that will inform, persuade, rebuild and restore confidence in customer's buying pattern and retention (Akpan, 2020). This study investigates how the promotional strategies of advertising, personal selling and sales promotion can persuade customers to continue to patronise the

Nigerian MTN telecommunication. In an attempt to address the objectives and problem of the study, the following hypotheses were formulated.

- i. Media advertising has no significant impact on Consumer retention in the MTN industry.
- ii. Direct marketing has no significant impact on Consumer retention in the MTN industry
- iii. Personal selling has no significant impact on Consumer retention in the MTN industry
- iv. sales promotion has no significant impact on Consumer retention in the MTN industry

## **2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Promotional Strategies**

Promotion is the use of communication mix or elements to inform and persuade individuals, groups or organisations to purchase a company's product or service (Kotler, 2006). Promotional mix is the combination of five key communication tools: advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, public relation and direct marketing (Chris, 2006). A strategy is a comprehensive plan of actions that has to do with the application of skill and knowledge to achieve organisational vision and mission statements which normally leads to the attainment of organisational goals and objectives (Nzelibe, Moruku & Joseph, 2011).

Promotional strategy enables brand managers to identify gaps and opportunities in the market and allows organisations to monitor the effect of past marketing communications. Promotional objectives are a derivative of both marketing and corporate strategies (Chris, 2006). However, promotional strategy is a marketing concept that has to do with the choice of a target market and formulation of the most appropriate promotional mix to influence and persuade the customer's consumption pattern in order to improve the organisational performance (Nzelibe, Moruku & Joseph, 2011). Organisational performance is improved if there is common understanding about the tasks the promotional strategies have to accomplish (Michael, Grey & Elnora, 2006).

Promotional effort is seen as communication tasks such as creation of awareness or positive attitudes towards the organisation or product (s) (Michael, Grey & Elnora, 2000). Organisational performance comprises the actual output or results of an organisation as measured against its intended outputs (or goals and objectives). According to Kotler, Peter, Linden, and Stewart (2000), organizational performance encompasses three specific areas of firm outcomes: (a) financial performance (profits, return on assets, return on investment, etc.); (b) product market performance (sales, market share, etc.); and (c) shareholder return (total shareholder return, economic value added, etc.). The term Organisational effectiveness according to Upadhaya, Munir, and Blount (2014), is broader. Specialists in

many fields are concerned with organisational performance including strategic planners, operations, finance, legal, and organisational development.

## **2.2 Media Advertising**

Kotler (2006) defined advertising as any paid form of non – personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods, or services by an identified sponsor. Advertising can be a cost-effective way of disseminating message and educating people. The business world is very competitive and each business must seek ways of getting that extra edge which requires putting a business and its products before prospective buyers to enable them easily find what they seek. This is where advertising comes in.

## **2.3 Personal Selling**

Achumba (2000) describes personal selling as an oral presentation in a conversation with one or more buyers for the purpose of making sales. Kotler, (2006) posits that personal selling is the personal communication between a firm's sales force and customers for the purpose of making sales and building customer relationship. It could also be defined as a two-way flow of communication between a potential buyer and a salesperson that is designed to identify the potential buyer's needs, match these needs to one or more of the firm's products or services and convince the buyer to purchase the product (Enitilo, Ajayi, & Famuagun, 2017).

## **2.4 Sales Promotion**

Achumba (2002) defines sales promotion as those marketing activities, other than personal selling, advertising and publicity that stimulate consumer purchasing and dealer effectiveness, such as displays, shows and expositions, demonstration. Sales promotion can also be defined as special offers; more specifically, referring to the institute of sales promotion, it is a range of tactical marketing techniques designed within a strategic framework to add value in order to achieve specific sales and marketing objectives (Bunn & Banks, 2004). The potential benefits of using sales promotion could range from attracting new consumers from competitors to persuading consumers to switch to brands with higher profit margins or simply inducing existing customers to buy more (Enitilo, et al, 2017).

## **2.5 Direct Marketing**

Direct marketing is one of the major components of the promotional mix. Direct marketing is used to target the consumers and influence them to get response quickly. Through using direct marketing techniques, marketers can gain and keep customer without the use of an intermediary (Jobber, 2007). According to Jobber (2007), direct marketing can be defined as "The distribution of products, information and promotional benefits to target consumers through interactive communication in a way that allows response to be measured." Direct marketing is a valuable tool for service and product marketing where immediate response is required and in mass competitive market (Belch & Belch, 2003).

Direct marketing covers a wide range of methods like catalogue companies, direct mailers and telemarketers by gathering customer names and sold goods mainly through the mail and by telephone. Today with rapid advances in database technologies and new marketing media, especially the Internet and other electronic channels-direct, marketing has undergone a dramatic transformation (Kotler, Peter, Linden, & Stewart 2000).

## **2.6 Customer Patronage**

Customer retention can be defined as how companies or organisations are able to maintain the existing customers' base on establishing good relations with all who buy the company's product, (Kotler, 2006). Customer retention marketing is a tactically driven approach based on customer behaviour. Johnson (1998) outlined some philosophies of retention-orientation;

- i. Retention marketing requires allocating market resources: the company has to realize some marketing activities for customers in order to generate higher profits in the company. The company can keep their budget flat or shrink it while increasing sales and profits.
- ii. Active customers are retained: customers are likely to feel they are in control and smart about choices they make and they like to feel good about their behaviour. Marketers take advantage of this by offering promotions of various kinds to get consumers to engage in a behaviour and feel good about doing it.
- iii. Retain customers' means keeping them active with the company. If the company does not keep them active, they will slip away and eventually no longer be customers.
- iv. Marketing is a conversation between customers and the marketer. Marketing with customer data is a highly evolved and valuable conversation but it has to be backed up between the customer and the marketer because the marketer must listen to what the customer is saying to better their products or services offered.

## **3.0 EMPIRICAL REVIEW**

Pembi, Fudamu and Adamu (2017) examined the impact of sales promotional strategies on organisational performance with reference to Flour Mills Maiduguri, Borno State, Nigeria. The result signified that sales promotional strategies have positive and significant effects on organisational performance. Obi (2018) examined the impact of advertising on Consumer retention, with Cadbury Nigeria Plc as the case study. The findings of this study showed that consumers get attracted to what they perceive through advertising in any form and subsequently influence their buying behaviour. Mukorombindo (2014) researched on the impact of direct marketing on sales performance at seed potato co-op. Findings revealed that there was a weak relationship between direct marketing, and sales performance. Afande (2015) conducted a research on effect of

promotional mix elements on sales volume of financial institutions in Kenya at Kenya Post Office Savings Bank. It was revealed that sales promotion has the most effect on sales volume followed by personal selling, public relation then direct marketing which had the least effect on sales marketing.

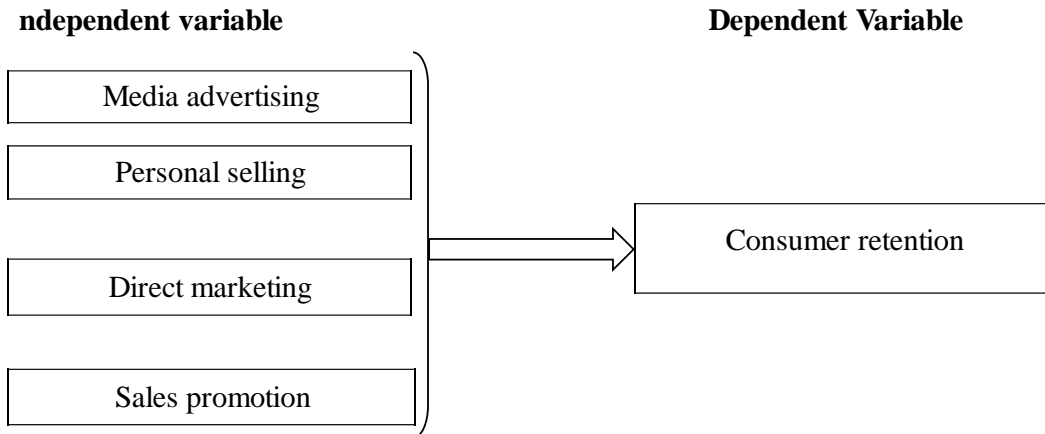
Aliata et al (2012) conducted research on influence of promotional strategies on banks performance. Descriptive research was conducted. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 88% of bank branches. Questionnaire was used to collect data. It was revealed that there was a positive relationship between promotional strategies; direct marketing, sales promotion, personal selling, advertising and viral marketing on expenditure and bank performance.

Enitilo, Ajayi and Famuagun (2017) evaluated the influence of promotional strategies on consumers' patronage of insurance business in Ado-Ekiti Metropolis, Nigeria. The result showed a strong and positive relationship between media advertising and Consumer retentions. The result also indicated that personal selling has significant effect on Consumer retentions. The results further showed that there is a significant relationship between sales promotion and Consumer retentions of insurance businesses in Ado Ekiti metropolis. The results also showed that there is a strong and positive relationship between direct marketing and Consumer retentions. Langat (2016) conducted research on influence of product, price, promotion and place on enterprise project performance: A case of Safaricom enterprise project, Uasin Gishu County, Kenya. Findings revealed that product, price, promotion and place influence enterprise project performance.

Ezenyilimba, Mbah & Eze (2019) focused on the effect of sales promotion on customer patronage, of alcoholic beverages. The findings revealed that both dependent and independent variables (price, pack, contest and coupons) had significant effect on customer patronage. Alo (2015) examined the effect of sales promotion as it induces Consumer retention and network switch in the telecommunication industry. The study found out that consumers preferred free airtime as the most among the non-monetary incentives of sales promotion. Hence, it was concluded that sales promotion induces consumer retention and network switch using Etisalat customers as a case study.

#### **4.0 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

The conceptual framework for this study is as shown in the Figure 1 below. The independent variable promotional strategies are represented by media advertising, personal selling, sales promotion and direct marketing while the dependent variable consumer retention is measured by consumer's willingness to continue to buy the products of MTN.



**Figure 1:** Conceptual framework

Source: Literature Reviewed

The figure is explaining the nature of the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. The dependent variable is customer retention which is expected to be determined by the four independent variables; Media Advertising, Personal Selling, Direct Marketing and Sales Promotion.

## 5.0 METHODOLOGY

This study adopts descriptive survey design. The population of the study encompassed the customers of five selected MTN subsidiaries in Lagos state. The population of this study was the customers that patronise MTN products in Lagos. The population is infinite as such, the sample size was (280) determined using Kretcie and Morgan table. The sampling technique employed in this study is multi-stage in nature to allow the researcher divide the population into groups without restrictions. The study utilises a well-structured questionnaire to collect data on the variables under consideration. Promotional strategies were represented by media advertising, personal selling, sales promotion and direct marketing. Consumer retention was measured by consumer's willingness to continue to buy the products of MTN. Given that most of the items in the questionnaire are targeted to examine respondents' perceptions of the study variables, the five point Likert scale was used ranging from 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'undecided', 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree'. According to Glenn (2007), Likert scale is probably the most widely used response scale in survey research. To analyse the collected data, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS: Version 25) was used. A number of Statistics were used. These included descriptive statistics to describe different characteristics of the respondents. Correlation analysis was used to determine the relationships between all the variables used in the study while multiple regression analysis was used to determine the effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable used in the study.

## 6.0 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This part presents the result of descriptive statistics, correlation analysis and regression analysis to establish the effect of promotional strategies on customer retention in MTN.

### 6.1 Descriptive Analysis

Table 1 presents the mean and standard deviation of the respondent's perception of promotional strategies and consumer retention in the MTN organisation.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Cust. Retention	142	3.60	4.80	4.1676	.46655
Media Advert.	142	1.50	5.00	3.6359	.92394
Direct Marketing	142	3.00	5.00	3.9845	.66186
Personal Selling	142	3.40	4.60	3.9423	.33903
Sale Promotion	142	2.50	3.80	3.0754	.26125
Valid N (listwise)	142				

Source: SPSS OUTPUT

Based on the Table 1, the dependent variable, Consumer retention (CR) has a mean value of 4.1676 and standard deviation of 0.46655. This means that majority of the respondents perceive their level of patronage as high. Direct Marketing (DM) had the highest mean with a value of 3.9845 suggesting that the respondents perceive that it has the highest effect on customer retention and a high standard deviation of 0.66186 indicating that the respondents do not agree closely on this. It was closely followed by Personal Selling (PS) yielding a mean value of 3.9423 and standard deviation of 0.33903. The low standard deviation suggests that the respondents are in close agreement on this. Media Advert (MA) came third with a mean value of 3.6359 and standard deviation of 0.92394. The significantly high standard deviation indicates that the respondents disagree largely on the effect of this promotional activity. Finally, Sales Promotion (SP) had the least mean yielding a value of 3.0754 and a standard deviation of 0.26125. This suggests that the respondents perceive sales promotion as the least effective method of increasing sales patronage. The low standard deviation indicates that the respondents agree closely on this point.

### 6.2 Correlation Analysis

In order to determine the relationship between the dependent and independent variables, the data was subjected to Pearson correlation analysis. The result is as presented in the table 2.

**Table 2 Correlation Analysis**

		Correlations				
		CR	MA	DM	PS	SP
CR	Pearson Correlation	1	.296**	.764**	.761**	-.096



	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.255
	N	142	142	142	142	142
MA	Pearson Correlation	.296**	1	.234**	.129	-.171*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.005	.125	.042
	N	142	142	142	142	142
DM	Pearson Correlation	.764**	.234**	1	.627**	-.042
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.005		.000	.623
	N	142	142	142	142	142
PS	Pearson Correlation	.761**	.129	.627**	1	-.026
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.125	.000		.761
	N	142	142	142	142	142
SP	Pearson Correlation	-.096	-.171*	-.042	-.026	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.255	.042	.623	.761	
	N	142	142	142	142	142

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS OUTPUT

Table 2 shows that the independent variables Media Advert (MA), Direct marketing (DM), and personal selling (PS) all have strong positive and significant relationships with the dependent variable, Consumer retention. Media Advert yielded a correlation coefficient of 0.296 significant at the 0.001 level (2-tailed), while direct marketing and personal selling returned correlation coefficients of 0.764 and 0.761 respectively with both significant at the 0.001 level (2-tailed). Finally, sales promotion has a correlation coefficient of -0.096 but not significant at 0.001 level (2-tailed). From the correlation matrix table, all the independent variables show a significant positive relationship with the dependent variable with the exception of sales promotion that shows an inverse insignificant relationship with the dependent variable.

### 6.3 Regression analysis

This study employed multiple regression analysis which is an analytical tool used when there is a need to predict the value of a variable based on the value of two or more other variables. The results of regression analysis are presented in subsequent Tables.

**Table 3: Model summary<sup>b</sup>**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	Change Statistics			Sig. F Change
						F Change	df1	df2	
1	.856 <sup>a</sup>	.733	.725	.24455	.733	94.046	4	137	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), SP, PS , MA , DM

b. Dependent Variable: CR

Source: SPSS OUTPUT

Table 3 presents a summary of the model in which the item of interest is the adjusted  $R^2$  statistics, which is 0.725. This suggests that promotion strategies accounts for 72.5% of the variation in Consumer retention in the MTN industry. The remaining 27.5% can be explained by other factors that are not captured in this model.

**Table 4: Analysis of Covariance**

		ANOVA <sup>a</sup>				
	Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	22.498	4	5.624	94.046	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	8.193	137	.060		
	Total	30.691	141			

a. Dependent Variable: CR

b. Predictors: (Constant), SP, PS, MA, DM

Source: SPSS OUTPUT

Table 4 is an ANOVA table that is used in testing model fitness. From the table the value of F- Statistic stood at 94.046 with a p-value of 0.000; which is significant at 1 percent. This indicates that the model is fitted for the purpose of carrying out the analysis.

**Table 5: Regression analysis**

		Coefficients <sup>a</sup>				
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	.408	.361		1.129	.261
	MA	.063	.023	.125	2.711	.008
	DM	.309	.041	.439	7.593	.000
	PS	.645	.078	.469	8.271	.000
	SP	-.080	.080	-.045	-.995	.322

a. Dependent Variable: CR

Source: SPSS OUTPUT

Using unstandardised coefficients in Table 5, Media Advert (MA) has a coefficient of 0.063 and a P-value less than 0.01. This means that Media Advert has a statistically significant positive impact on Consumer retention (CR) and for every 1 unit change in Media Advert, there is a 0.063 variation or 6.3% increase in Consumer retention. Additionally, Direct Marketing (DM) has a coefficient of 0.309 statistically significant at 0.01 level. This means that Direct Marketing has a positive effect on Consumer retention and that for every unit increase in Direct Marketing there is likely to be 0.309 variation or 30.9% increase in Consumer retention. Similarly, Personal Selling (PS) has a coefficient of 0.645 statistically significant at 0.01level. This means that Personal Selling has a

significant positive effect on Consumer retention and that for every unit increase in personal selling there is likely to be a variation of 0.645 or 64.5 % increase in Consumer retention. Lastly, Sales Promotion (SP) has a coefficient of -0.080 but not statistically significant at 0.01 level. This means that Sales Promotion has a negative effect on Consumer retention and that for every unit increase in Sales Promotion there is likely to be a variation of -0.080 or 8% decrease in Consumer retention. However, this variation is considered to be statistically insignificant. The likely reason for having such a result could be attributed to the customers doubt on the quality of products when discount is given on products price.

## **7.0 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The study found that media advertising has significant effect on Consumer retention in the MTN industry. This finding is in congruence with the findings of Obi (2018) who examined the impact of advertising on Consumer patronage, using Cadbury Nigeria Plc as the case study and found out that advertising plays a major role in Consumer patronage. The outcome is also in congruence with Enitilo, Ajayi and Famuagun (2017) who evaluated the influence of promotional strategies on consumers' patronage of insurance business in Ado-Ekiti Metropolis, Nigeria and found a strong and positive relationship between media advertising and Consumer retention. Again, the study found that direct marketing has significant effect on consumer retention in the MTN industry. The findings are in agreement with Hiroki and Ashok (2011), Mukorombindo (2014) and Afande (2015) who found that direct marketing has significant effect on sales performance in the agro industry. Also, the study found that personal selling has significant effect on consumer retention in the MTN industry. This finding is in agreement with Afande (2015) and Enitilo, Ajayi & Famuagun (2017) who found that personal selling has significant effect on Consumer retention in various industries. Finally, the study found that there is no significant influence of sales promotion on Consumer retention in the MTN industry. This is in contrast with the findings of Ezenyilimba, Et al (2019) who found that sales promotion has significant effect on customer patronage of alcoholic beverages.

## **8.0 CONCLUSION**

The study investigated how promotional strategies impact on Consumer retention in MTN Nigeria Ltd. Based on the findings, the study concludes that Media Advert (MA), Direct marketing (DM), and Personal Selling (PS) should be used in promotional activities for the purpose of retaining customers in MTN Nigeria Ltd as they are found to be significant. As for the Sales Promotion, contrary to the expectation, it should not be considered as it has negative, though insignificant value.

## **9.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Firstly, managers of MTN company should pay attention to the use of media advert in attracting consumers to their products.

Secondly, MTN company should employ more of Direct Marketing as a promotional tool in order to improve customer patronage.

Thirdly, MTN company should invest more on personal selling as it yields best desired outcome in customer retention.

Fourthly, little attention should be focused on sales promotion as its effect in customer retention is trivial.

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