

THE IMPACT OF SALES PROMOTION ACTIVITIES ON THE PATRONAGE OF GLOBAL SYSTEM OF MOBILE COMMUNICATION (GSM) SERVICE PROVIDERS IN OGBOMOSO AREA, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The development of GSM has generated heated competitions among the GSM Service Providers in Nigeria thus calling for a study on informed strategies of attracting customers, retaining patronage and influencing brand loyalty. This work examined the impact of sale promotional activities on the patronage of GSM service providers in Ogbomoso Area in Oyo State, Nigeria. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 120 respondents which include both staff and students of Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, Ogbomoso. Both descriptive and inferential statistics which involve table presentation, frequency distribution, percentage and regression analysis were used for data analysis. The results showed sex, age, marital status, GSM service users and prefer GSM service influence usage of GSM services of the respondents. The regression results showed that sales promotion is necessary in the GSM service industry in order to promote trial switch, encourage brand loyalty, improve sales profit level and have advantage over competitive environment.

Keywords: *Sales promotion, GSM services, Ogbomoso Area, Nigeria, GSM Service providers*

INTRODUCTION

Recent studies like (Wojuade, 2006) confirm that GSM mobile communication is one of the most explosive developments ever to have taken place in the telecommunications industry. Combining the convenience of mobility with the rich multimedia content of the Internet and with the integration of the mobile telephone with palm-sized computers, cameras and content related information makes it almost inevitable that the ubiquitous access point to the electronic information has become some form of mobile appliance. Communication without doubt is a major driver of any economy. Emerging trends in socioeconomic growth shows a high premium being placed on information and communication technology (ICT) by homes, organizations, and nations (www.nigeriabusinessinfo.org, 2007).

Nigeria Communication Commission (NCC) has been established to cater for various licenses to private telecommunication operators. These include 7 fixed telephony providers that have activated 90,000 lines, 35 internet service provider with customer base of about 17,000, several VSAT service provider are in operation. The return of democracy in 1999 paved the way for the granting of GSM license to 3 service provider; MTN Nigeria, ECONET Wireless (now AIRTEL Nigeria), and NITEL in 2001. On

August 12, 2002 NCC granted a license for Second National Operator (SNO) to Globacom Nigeria. The motive is to create an alternative network to the Government owned MTEL, whose service is nothing to write home about, (www.nigeriabusinessinfo.org (2007)). At present, other registered GSM service providers in Nigeria are ETISALAT, STARCOMS and MULTILINKS (www.nigeriagallery.com, 2011), as well as Zoom, Visafone. The need to maximize profit and to attract as many customers as possible has brought about a competitive edge between the GSM service providers in Nigeria. Sales promotion is now fully recognized as a vital element in the marketing mix, and has therefore become a vast industry. It is pertinent to understand that the problems that exist in the GSM service industry in Nigeria cannot be over emphasized. Some of these are poor network service, insufficient network coverage, cost of GSM services, competition between GSM service provider among others being major setback to the usage of GSM service by all.

Sales Promotion: The power of sales promotion at influencing sales and customer's patronage has been documented in the literature of marketing and sales management. According to Moemeke (1997), besides advertisement, sales promotion is the next available marketing strategy that help to promote sales, increase product life cycle, sales growth and enhance customers' goodwill. Modern marketing management calls for more than developing good quality product, attractive price and making brands accessible to target customers. Companies engage in integrated marketing communication to attract and retain customers' loyalty.

In the same vein, Nwankwo (1996) observes that sales promotion as those marketing activities other than personal selling, advertising and publicity, that stimulate consumer purchasing and dealer effectiveness, such as display, shows and exposition, demonstrations and various nonrecurrent selling efforts not in the ordinary routine. It also includes a combination of all marketing devices or techniques, special reductions, trade gift, premium offers, contests, and other such short-lived promotional activities directed towards consumers and retailers, aimed at motivating sales. In other words, it encourages immediate purchases. Sales promotion, according to Manale, Jose and Zacharias (2007), has become a vital tool for marketers and its importance has been increasing significantly over the years.

In India, sales promotions expenditure by various marketing companies is estimated to be Rs 5,000 crores and the emphasis on sales promotion activities by the Indian industry has increased from 500 to 600 per cent during the last 3 to 5 years (Economic Times, June 15, 2003). Given the growing importance of sales promotion, there has been considerable interest in the effect of sales promotion on different dimensions such as consumers' price perceptions, brand choice, brand switching behaviour, evaluation of brand equity, effect on brand perception and so on. One of the purposes of a consumer promotion is to elicit a direct impact on the purchase behaviour of the firm's customers (Kotler, 2002; Blattberg and Scott, 1990). Research evidence suggests that sales promotions positively affect short-term sales (Priya, 2004). Promotions affect significantly sales aggregate and stock piling and purchase acceleration. However, there have also been studies that suggest that sales

promotion affects brand perceptions. In another study, Schultz (2004) argues that over dependence on promotions can erode consumers' price-value equation.

Similarly, Yoo, Dondhu and Lee (2000), based on structural equation model, suggest that frequent price promotions, such as price deals are related to low brand equity, whereas high advertising spending, high price, good store image and high distribution intensity are related to high brand equity. There is also a managerial belief that if a brand is supported with frequent promotional offers, the equity of the brand tends to get diluted. On the contrary, there have also been studies that indicate brands benefit from promotions. Amongst the elements of marketing mix, sales promotions have long-term influence on brand equity (Yoo et. al, 2000). Mariola and Elena, (2005), based on a sample of 167 buyers suggest that monetary and nonmonetary promotions are useful to create brand equity because of their positive effect on brand knowledge structures.

Belch, G. and Belch, M. (1998) have define sales promotion as a direct inducement that offers an extra value or incentive for the product to the sales force, distributors, or the ultimate consumer with the primary objective of creating immediate sales. Sales promotion involves some type of inducement that provides an extra incentive to buy. This incentive is usually the key element in a promotional programme. Also, Osunbiyi (1991) observed that sales promotion is the marketing practice of temporarily offering better value for money, sales promotion is not a personal selling. It is a miscellaneous selling tool not categorized as advertising or personal selling. It is a non routine sales activity. Promotion centers on some form of special purchase incentive offered to the consumers or retailers and it is usually short-termed. It is tactical, and it is designed to achieve a short term objective, sometimes in a limited area or through certain outlets.

Promotion is used as a tool to gain the support of the trade, either directly through trade promotion or indirectly through consumer promotion. GSM services are becoming growing in the telecommunication industry and therefore vulnerable to competition were require promotional strategies by the service providers. The GSM is an emerging communication industry in Africa, with Nigeria rated as one of the fastest growing market. However, the impact of the communication system is largely felt in the urban cities, the impact on the rural dwellers is still marginally poor (Adeyinka, Ajiboye, Emmanuel and Wojuade, 2007). This is in line with the view of Wojuade (2006) that the world is fast becoming a global village and a necessary tool for this process is communication, of which telecommunication is a key element. Development in the telecommunication industry all over the world is very rapid as one innovation replaces another in a matter of weeks. A major breakthrough is the wireless telephone system, which comes in either fixed wireless lines or the global system for mobile communication (GSM) (Wojuade, 2006).

GSM is one of the most explosive developments ever to have taken place in the telecommunications industry (Wojuade, 2006). Combining the convenience of mobility with the rich multimedia content of the Internet and with the integration of the mobile telephone with palm-sized computers, cameras and content related information makes it almost inevitable that the ubiquitous access point to the electronic information is not only the PC but some form of mobile appliance. ECONET wireless Nigeria Limited (ECONET),

one of the winners of GSM licences in Nigeria is a Zimbabwean based company with strong ties in South Africa. It is the fourth largest mobile phone operator in Africa with a significant network in the southern part of the continent (Wojuade, 2006). In Nigeria, ECONET Wireless International (EWI) now AIRTEL holds an equity interest in ECONET of Zimbabwe and the South African government owned company Transnet. Both companies together hold a 60% stake in Nigeria affiliate (Masiyiwa, 2002). According to Masiyiwa, the Zimbabwean ECONET vision was to provide telecommunication to all Nigerians and with a mission to serve Nigeria by pioneering, developing and sustaining reliable, efficient and high quality telecommunication of world class standard and ethics. ECONET has since inception in Nigeria portrayed different outlooks like V MOBILE, ZAIN and currently as at 2011 bearing AIRTEL.

Furthermore, Mobile telecommunications carrier Network Nigeria limited (MTN) is also one of the companies that own GSM licence in Nigeria. It began in 1994 with five countries and over three million customers in Uganda, Burundi, Swaziland, Cameroon and South Africa, leading Africa into a new age of economic developments using telecommunications as the spring board. Effective communication services are essential particularly from a business perspective and nowhere more than in Nigeria which is developing into one of the most important trading partners (Huel, 2001). It is on this principle that MTN has based its vision to become the leading telecommunications provider on the African continent providing quality services as a catalyst for economic development. The success of MTN in Nigeria revolves round providing telecommunication across the country. MTN's aim is to facilitate changes that have long term domestic benefits. Apart from the obvious economic development, local infrastructure and facilities are up graded to improve the quality of life through communication. In 2004, Vodafone commissioned four research studies on the socio-economic impact of mobiles in Africa. The key findings are that:

- The value of mobile phones to the individual is greater because other forms of communication (such as postal systems, roads and fixed-line phones) are often poor. Mobiles phones provide a point of contact and enable users to participate in the economic system.
- Many people who cannot afford to own a mobile phones themselves can access mobile services through informal sharing with family and friends or through community phone shops.
- Use of text messaging in rural communities is much lower due to illiteracy and the many indigenous languages. This has implications for other technologies that use the written word, such as the Internet.

Similar studies have also confirmed the potentials of GSM for economic development and that mobile phones can improve economic growth, quality of life and social capital. For instance, Maverman and Fuss (2005) averred that Mobile phones have a positive and significant impact on economic growth. This impact may be twice as large in developing countries as in developed countries. A developing country with an extra 10 phones per 100 people between 1996 and 2003 would have had GDP growth of 0.59% higher than

an otherwise identical country as observed by Wojuade (2006). Fixed and mobile communications networks (in addition to the openness of the economy, the level of GDP and other infrastructure) are positively linked with Foreign Direct Investment. This impact of mobile telecommunications has grown in recent years (Williams, 2005). This is because, many of the small businesses surveyed use mobile phone as their only means of communication. The proportion is highest for black-owned businesses in South Africa and informal sector businesses in Egypt according to Samuel, Shah and Hadingham (2005).

Also, 62% of the small businesses surveyed in South Africa and 59% in Egypt said they had increased profits as a result of mobile phones, in spite of increased call costs (Williams, 2005). Mobile phones are used as a community amenity. Most mobile phone owners surveyed in South Africa allow family members to use their handset for free and one third does the same for friends. 85% of those surveyed in Tanzania and 79% in South Africa said they had more contact and better relationships with family and friends as a result of mobile phones (Williams, 2005).

According to Balogun (2000), GSM facilitates economic development as it provides easy and effective communication needed to stimulate and promote trade between Nigeria and its foreign partners in the world. Even at home, it plays a significant role in communicating government programmes. Above all, it encourages investment which in the long run promotes employment opportunities. Adeyeye citing Wojuade (2005) noted that GSM has discouraged rural-urban migration, now with GSM people travel to cities without boarding a vehicle. The introduction of GSM also has potential for reducing crime. Accessibility to phone services ensures quick calls to security operations when the need arises as well as informing fire stations during fire incidents to save lives and properties.

Adomi (2006) observed that GSM is used by Nigerians mostly to communicate with one another. He further explained that students used it to communicate with their course mates, friends, lecturers, as well as family and relations. Additionally, family matters, finance, and academic matters constitute the topics/subject of mobile communication for a majority of students. Mobile phones limit the need for students to travel as well as facilitating the exchange of information as the need may arise. Scotts (2004) reports research carried out by GAMOS Ltd on some characteristics of the use of telephones amongst rural and low income communities in some African Countries including Botswana, Ghana and Uganda. The study reveals rural inhabitants and poorer urban users' value phone services but do not use them very often compared to relatively more affluent users; over 40% of respondents in Uganda used mobile phones through friends and family; with a further 24% of people using mobile phones through teleshops. The result from the three countries were quite striking and consistent, demonstrating a strong preference for mobile phones rather than fixed line phones, and a preference for private phones rather than public access points. Scotts citing Adomi (2006) reports that educated people used phones more than the illiterates. They also have stronger intention to use phones in the future, and have a more positive attitude towards phones.

GSM activities have increased and promoted competition in the industry, resulting in an exponential growth in the number of telephone lines. It is instructive to note that while

connected lines only grew at an average of 10,000 lines per annum in the four decades between independence in 1960 and end of 2000, in the last two years, an average growth rate of 1 million lines per annum was attained. As of September 2003, Nigeria had attained over 3 million lines, (2.3 million of which were digital mobile lines). Total tele-density, which had been just 0.4 lines per 100 inhabitants in 1999 stood at 2.6 per 100 inhabitants by September, 2003. Along with this growth in lines has come a boom in private investment in the telecommunication sector. Recognizing the seemingly insatiable appetite of consumers for phone services and the potential of the Nigerian market, investors pumped USD\$2.55 billions of dollars into the sector. Increased competition in the market has also pushed down connection charges, so that fixed lines cost between N7,000-N30,000 in 2003 from over N100,000 in 1999 (Ndukwe, 2003).

In 1999, Nigeria had only 400,000 connected telephone lines and just 25,000 analogue mobile lines. Total tele-density stood at a paltry 0.4 lines per 100 inhabitants. Connection costs were prohibitively high as much as N60,000 for an analogue mobile line and waiting times for fixed lines could run into years. The increase in tele-density goes thus: 0.4 lines per 100 inhabitants in 1999; 1.96 in December 2002 and 3.33 in December 2003. By March 2004, the total tele-density was estimated at 3.92 lines per 100 inhabitants. The Nigeria population now stands at 140 millions with GDP USD52b, GDP growth of 3.7% and inflation rate of 10.4% (ITU, 2004).

Owing to several factors including government deregulation policy, the worldwide trend of rapid development in telecommunications and information technology and the huge potential of the Nigerian market, the story is very different. The immediate past Administration, through the government regulator, the Nigerian Communications Commission has proved itself fully committed to the liberalization of the telecommunication market. Since year 2000, NCC has licensed Digital mobile Service providers, several Private Telephone Operators, Fixed wireless Access Operators, two Long Distance Operators, Internet Service Providers and a Second National Carrier (Ndukwe, 2003).

The emergence of GSM has led to improvements in efficiency and productivity, reductions in transaction costs, increased service innovation and better quality of life for the rural dwellers. Close to 2,000 persons have been directly employed by the GSM operators and an estimated 400,000 Nigerians are benefiting from indirect employment generated by the GSM operators (Ndukwe, 2004). Indirect employment has also been created through contract awards to construction firms, research companies and media consultants. In the financial sector, enterprising banks have designed innovative products that leverage the use of GSM.

The emergence of GSM has also led to the return of significant numbers of Nigerians from abroad. These are telecom professionals who have come back to build the country's communication sector. Moreover, the GSM explosion has given birth to a new class of entrepreneurs who might otherwise have been unemployed. There is a nationwide network of dealers, vendors, GSM accessory sellers and the ubiquitous "umbrella-stand" operators, who interestingly received a special attention for the service they are rendering to the Nigerian public. Hence, this study tends to investigate the impact of sales promotional

activities on the patronage of GSM service providers and provide answers to the following research questions:

- Is there any significant relationship between Sale promotions and the patronage of GSM services?
- Will a proper Promotional activities influence patronage of GSM services?
- How can Promotional activities influence patronage of GSM services?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was carried out in Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, Ogbomoso. The university was established on the 23rd day of April, 1990 with a total number of 436 students. The university is an autonomous public institution with the general function of providing liberal higher education and encouragement to the rapid advancement of learning throughout Nigeria. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 120 respondents which include both staff and students. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used which involves table presentation, frequency distribution, percentage and regression analysis which stated thus $Y = a + b_1x_1 + b_2x_2 + b_3x_3 + b_4x_4 + \dots + b_nx_n + e$

Where Y= patronage

a = constant

$b_j - b_n$ = Coefficients of the variables

x_1 = Loyalty after sales promotion (LASP)

x_2 = Influence of sales promotion in purchase decision (ISPPD)

x_3 = Switch from brands during sales promotion (SDSP)

x_4 = level of usage during sales promotion (UDSP)

e = error term/stochastic error

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A summary of the distribution of these variables among the beneficiary is represented on Table 1, out of 120 respondents sampled, 51.7% were males while 48.3% were females. This revealed that male constitute the majority of GSM services users in the study area. This implies that males were patronizing GSM services providers than female. Hence, the need to encourage women to use GSM services becomes apparent. The table also shows that 7.5% of the respondents were between 15-20 years of age, 68.3% between 21-25 years of age, 18.3% between 26-30 years, while 5.8% were 31 and above. This shows that the population sampled was predominantly middle aged. These age groups are known to be energetic and strong and they are therefore expected to be entrepreneurial and economically active to exploit avenue for business opportunities which eventually encourage usage of GSM services.

Also, 86.7% were single while 13.3% were married. This shows that usage of GSM services were predominantly among the single people in the area. The need to provide for their families by increasing their economic base might have necessitated their non-usage of GSM services by the married people. Moreso, the table shows that 61.7%

of the respondents made use of MTN, 17.5% made use of GLO, 13.3% made use of Celtel, 7.5% of the respondents made use of two out of the networks while non of the respondents made use of all of the GSM service providers. This shows that MTN has highest patronage for good quality service. This table also shows that 34.2% of the respondents prefer GSM service provider in terms of their quality service, 51.7% of the respondents prefer their network coverage while 14.2% prefer their sales promotion. This shows the importance of good quality of services rendered by GSM service providers.

The regression results show the relationship between level of impact measured by patronage and the explanatory valuables such as loyalty after sales promotion, influence of sales promotion on purchase decision switch from brands during sales promotion and level of usage during-promotion were presented on table 2. The table also shows the coefficient of the independent variables, with LASP having the highest with Beta value of 0.161 meaning that LASP has the highest impact on the patronage. The multiple R was 0.300 meaning that about 3% change in patronage were explained by the explanatory variables. The R² was 9% meaning that about 9% change in patronage were explained by the explanatory variables. The *f* value was 2.849 and statistically significant at 0.027 probability level. As expected, loyalty after sales promotion had positive and significant relationship with patronage. The higher the loyalty of after sales promotion the higher the patronage to be recorded. The analysis and hypotheses tested are hereby presented on the tables.

Table 1: Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents by Their Socio-Economic Characteristics N =120

Socioeconomic characteristics	Freq	%	Cum %
Sex			
Male	62	51.7	51.7
Female	58	48.3	100.0
Marital Status			
Single	16	13.3	100.0
Married			
Age			
Less or equal to 20	9	7.5	7.5
21-25	82	68.4	75.9
26-30	22	18.3	94.2
31 above	7	5.8	100.0
Gsm Service Users			
MTN	74	61.7	61.7
GLO	21	17.5	79.2
AIRTEL	16	13.3	92.5
2 Out of 3 Networks	9	7.5	100.0
All of the above	NIL		
Preferred GSM Service			
Quality of Service	41	34.2	34.2
Network Coverage	62	51.7	85.9
Sales Promotion	17	14.1	100.0

Sources: field survey, 2007

Table 2: Coefficients of Variables

		Unstd Coeff		Std Coeff	T	Sig
<i>Mode</i>		<i>B</i>	<i>Std Error</i>			
1	(Constant)	1.253	.392	3.203	.002	
	UDSP	-3.851 E- 02	.085	-.043	-.453	.652
	SDSP	-3.621 E- 02	.111	-.030	-.327	.744
	LASP	.181 .103	.161	1.746	.083	
	ISPPi	9.912 E- 02	.133	.071	.744	.458

Predictor: (constant), ISPPD, UDSP, LASP, SDSP; Department variable: Patronage

Unstd Coeff = Unstandardized Coefficient, Std Coeff = Standardized Coefficient, Std Error = Standardized Error

Table 3: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	StdEE
1	.300	.090	.059	.73

Predictor: (constant), ISPPD, UDSP, LASP, SDSP; Department variable: patronage StdEE = Standardized Error of The Estimate

Table 4: Ananalysis of Variance

Model		SS	df	MS	F	Sig
1	Regression	6.464	4	1.616	2.849	0.27
	Residual	65.236	115	.567		
	Total	71.700	119			

M.S = Mean Square; SS Sum of Square

CONCLUDING REMARK

The usage of GSM services is higher during sales promotion, which means an increase in patronage and level of sales as a result of the sales promotion. Furthermore, majority of the consumers preferred price offs/discount offer as promotional tools. Apart from this, sales promotion can make a subscriber to switch from one service provider to another. In view of this, sales promotion is necessary in the GSM service industry in order to promote trial, switch, encourage brand loyalty, and improve sales profit level and having advantage over competitors in competitive environment. It is therefore recommended that, price-offs/discount offers should be used more often, a good policy should be put in place by the GSM service providers to ensure that sales promotional activities are carried out frequently, while globacom and Celtel with low level of usage should improved on their sales promotion in other to attract more customers.

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