

EFFECT OF DIGITAL MARKETING AND PERSONAL SELLING ON CONSUMER BUYING DECISIONS OF LOCALLY MADE GOODS IN FEDERAL CAPITAL TERRITORY (FCT) ABUJA, NIGERIA.

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ABSTRACT

The preference of consumers in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja for foreign products over locally produced ones has threatened the existence of local products and firms here. This necessitated the study, which examined the effect of digital marketing and personal selling on consumer buying decisions of locally made consumer goods in the F.C.T. Abuja. The study adopted the cross-sectional research design whereby structured five-point Likert scale questionnaire was administered on a sample size of three hundred and eight-four (384) respondents. Multiple regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses formulated. The study found a negative and insignificant effect of direct marketing on consumer buying decisions but a positive and significant effect of personal selling on consumer buying decisions. Based on these findings, the study recommended that local consumer goods firms should employ the use of verified social media accounts in interacting with customers. This will create a sense of trust in the customer as it is only authentic brands that are verified by media handlers. The firms may also engage the use of verified public figures as their brand ambassadors. Similarly, that local consumer goods firms should expand the scope of the personal selling by employing the services of more trained and abled hands as sales representatives who will cover more geographical locations, convince more customers to patronize their products

Keywords: Digital Marketing, Personal Selling, Consumer Buying Decision.

INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria, consumer products companies, particularly the small and medium-sized ones, have mostly suffered from fierce rivalry for survival and poor patronage. This is mostly due to the fact that they competed with both domestic and international brands. This led the government to a significant intervention effort in 2018 with the promulgation of Executive Order No. 5 (Local Content Act). Its goal was to protect or safeguard and improve local business capacity, take advantage of regional prospects while maintaining their worldwide competitiveness. The government intervention yielded valuable but short-lived results, but not comprehensive or remarkable enough to make strategic performance change. The dismal performance of the enterprises showed that, three years after the government intervention, some firms were observed to have lost operational steam, lowered production, loss of customer patronage and some even went into eventual extinction. Indeed, a handful that survived past three (3) years, found it almost impossible to grow and expand due to low patronage and lack of customer or brand loyalty. The unfortunate and undesirable situation gave impetus to this study to do an empirical investigation to determine how promotional mix could affect consumer buying decision of locally made consumer goods in the FCT, Abuja, Nigeria.

Businesses are challenged to think of media and communication as tools for the transfer of new ideas that reflect on the concept of competitive struggle between organizations. This is necessary in order to ensure survival and growth in today's world that is characterized by rapid changes and advancements in a variety of spheres of life, especially with changes arising from the rapid transfer of information (Abdullah & Nuri, 2019). In order to ensure that their stated goals are met, every business organization consequently aspires to develop and maintain a credible, profitable, affordable, and accessible channel through which their products and services are known and used by target clients. Therefore, it makes sense to say that businesses are set up to achieve goals of increasing performance and earning comfortable profits by drawing on their contacts with consumers (Ibojo & Akinruwa, 2014). Firms who maintain regular and effective contacts with customers and prospects are strategically positioned to benefit from unknown prospective consumers. By maintaining regular communication with customer locations, firms become more familiar with the actual taste and demands of the population and should tailor their production and marketing activities appropriately.

The current era of globalization is characterized by very tight competition among businesses in their various sub-sector; even between individuals, thus demanding innovation-based competition (Arifianti & Raharja, 2018; Kasman, et al., 2019; Parsons & Descatoires, 2016). Thus, only businesses that are efficient, effective, innovative and productive and easily accessible will be able to survive and even win over competition (Fadilla, 2015; Hermawati, 2013; Johnson & Kask, 2016), while those unable to do so, will experience setbacks and may not rule out bankruptcy.

Personal Selling is a unique element of marketing communication. It is directed at specific market segments, unlike advertising and sales promotion whose main focus is on creation of awareness about the existence of product or service and provision of information on the features and benefits of the goods/services, product availability, price, and so on. Personal selling extends its hands into activities (Olumoko, et al, 2019), bothering around other elements of the marketing mix. It is a face to face communication activity between company representatives and prospective buyers. Personal Selling is very effective and attracts a lot of customer attention and patronage. Firms must provide good budget for this promotional tool to succeed. The utilization of digital channels (like email, phone, fax), to achieve stronger consumer patronage has turned into a need in today's turbulent and aggressive business market. It is being utilized more operationally, as an apparatus to increase wider customer reach, maintain good communication and provide cost-effective products or services to the clients (Sin, et. al, 2012). Today, Customers are no longer passive recipients as they were before; they are now integrated into the digital marketing exchange process and participate in shaping the creation of everything (Abdullahi & Nuri, 2019) from promotional messages. The massive rise in interactive digital communications has enriched communication between companies and consumers, from the traditional Web 1.0 model to the world of highly interactive Web 3.0.

The following hypotheses stated in null form guided the study:

Ho₁: *Digital marketing has no significant effect on consumer buying decisions of locally made goods in the FCT, Abuja.*

Ho₂: *Personal selling has no significant effect on consumer buying decisions of locally made goods in the FCT, Abuja.*

LITERATURE REVIEW

Marketing communication has proved to be relevant in all aspects and activities of marketing (firms, customers, product/brands, pricing, distribution channels and location). In as much as marketing is an activity that involves people and product demanding interactive or exchange transaction, marketing communication becomes an unavoidable interface. By marketing communication, it refers to the media which companies or firms use in conveying ideas, information or messages to interact with customers (existing or prospects). One objective of marketing communication is to achieve creation and sustenance of demand and preference for the product/brand. Another important objective is the desire of the company to shorten the sales cycle in a more profitable way. For the purpose of this study, marketing communication examples were limited to sales promotion, advertising, personal selling, digital or direct marketing and public relations. Other aspects of communication like publicity, branding and sales presentations are worthy of noting but were subsumed in the marketing communication elements, and may not be necessary for specifically categorical consideration. Again, for the purpose of this study, marketing communication constitutes our promotional mix (elements), the subjects of the study investigation.

One of the most effective and critical ways by which companies retain or sustain customer patronage is by employing promotional mix strategy that keeps customers not only satisfied but comfortable, delighted and at the sometime attracting prospective or new buyers. Retention of customer patronage has also proved to be more profitable than scouting for more and ensures quicker market expansion, because if customers continue to feel safe, satisfied and comfortable with firm's product brands or offerings, it has a higher propensity to attract new customers.

Concept of Digital Marketing

Digital Marketing can be described as conducting the activities of selling and buying using electronic platforms or devices, such as personal computers, iPad, email, smart phones, fax and other automated

gadgets. It is a marketing communication system that is or can be prosecuted even in motion and not in a physical market "space", as it can be carried out in the comfort of an office, home, open environment or seclusion/privacy; indeed, it can be conducted anywhere except underneath water. Digital marketing achieves personal convenience and timeliness because both the seller and buyer don't necessarily have to converge in a specific place called "market", to transact. Neither do they have to do transaction within a period of time. Digital marketing also achieves transparency because transactions in the system are done openly on the electronic platform only to the acceptance and satisfaction of the parties involved. This modern marketing communication system entails the conduct of buying and selling activities is through knowledge and skills in computing.

According to Oluwadamilola (2021), digital marketing is a revolutionized and conventional way of marketing products and services to modern technological society. According to Abdel-Fattah and Khaled (2021), digital marketing is an electronic communication channel used by marketers to support products and services towards the market. Also, Amira and Nermine (2020), view digital marketing as a form of marketing that utilizes electronic devices like personal computers, smart phones, cell phones and game consoles to involve the stakeholder to be a part of the procedure. Diez-Martin, et al. (2019) posited that digital marketing is the act of advancing items and administrations utilizing computerized conveyance channels through PCs, cell phones, PDAs, or other automated gadgets. Digital marketing is defined as the sale and purchase of information, products, and services through a computer or internet network (Rao & Ratnamadhuri, 2018). Diyana and Jasni (2018) held that digital marketing can be defined as a projection of conventional marketing which its tools and strategies are on internet.

Concept of Personal Selling

According to Olumoko et al. (2019), personal selling is an individualistic approach that is designed to meet specific needs of prospects, unlike advertising and sales promotion which focus are to create awareness about the existence of a product brand or service. Personal selling is also referred to 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 (Olumoko, et al., 2019).

Personal selling is a direct spoken communication between sellers and potential customers, usually in person but sometimes over telephone. Personal selling serves as a communication bridge between the organization and the target audience (Adegbite, et al., 2019). Personal selling is where businesses use people (the sales force) to sell the product after meeting face-to-face with customer (Enidom, et al., 2019), take objections from prospective buyers that need to be further addressed, to satisfaction in order to clear possible areas of doubt or ambiguity. Indeed, personal selling aims at clearing possible doubts in target consumers.

Further, Iwunze (2018) described personal selling as an interaction between buyers and sellers, for purposes of gaining product awareness, among others. What happens in these interactions is crucial because the behavior of the salesman will impact on the buyers' perceptions of product quality and other profiles. Personal selling is defined as a face-to-face or person-to-person communication. It involves presentation of goods, services, ideas, activities and emotion from sellers to buyers and is usually done in a persuasive manner.

Concept of Consumer Buying Decisions

Kotler and Keller (2016) viewed consumer buying decision as a decision-making process that includes determining what to buy or not (i.e. need) from a seller, which is reliant on the other activities that precede the final decision to buy. The purchasing decision process has stages to overcome by prospective target customers; this includes recognizing needs, seeking information, evaluating alternatives, purchasing decisions, and behavior after purchase (Syaparudin & Hertati, 2020). Kotler and Armstrong (2012) also stated that the purchase decision is a "purchase process related to the brand to be purchased". They posited further that purchasing decisions are individual activities that are directly involved in the process, to make purchase of products offered by the seller. While consumer buying decision making is an individual activity

that is directly involved in obtaining and using the goods offered, consumers will have to consider various aspects before deciding to buy or not (Hertati & Safkaur: 2020; Syafarudin, 2020).

It is desirable that buying should be regarded as important as it involves critical evaluation or assessment. The potential buyer doesn't just jump into buying. The stages through which the buyer goes, are to ensure his satisfaction after consumption so that regrets are not experienced or money is not wasted thereby giving way for frustration. Consumer buying decision is as important and critical as the product itself and therefore shouldn't be rushed. If the process is well complied with, it could lead to brand or customer loyalty.

Empirical Review

Digital Marketing and Consumer Buying Decision

Abdel-Fattah and Khaled (2021) examined "effect of digital marketing on purchasing decisions: a case study in Jordan". Primary data was collected using simple sampling technique and acquired in the Jordanian market with a sample size of 220. Descriptive analysis, reliability test, correlation test, and multiple regressions were used in this research. The study's results demonstrated that digital marketing, such as social media marketing and mobile marketing, has a profound impact on consumer buying decisions. The results of this study recommended that firms should adopt strategies to leverage on the digital world and technology, increase brand awareness to continue competing in today's commercial environment. The marketer could embark on training and providing capacity to brand prospects to be able to have skills in effective marketing communication.

Dash and Chakraborty (2021) investigated "digital transformation of marketing strategies during a Pandemic: Evidence from an Emerging Economy during COVID-19". The study adopted the use of primary and secondary data. Structural equation modelling (SEM) was used to study 535 responses of life insurance customers. The normality of the data was confirmed through skewness and Kurtosis tests. The study revealed that Customer satisfaction significantly affected purchase intention and played a good mediator between digital marketing practices and purchase intention. The study also stated that the digital channel managers expressly understood their key areas of strengths regarding the five dimensions of digital marketing strategies. The study review however, never mentioned the effect of the pandemic in digital marketing, in the life insurance context.

Amira and Nermine (2020) studied the impact of digital marketing on consumer buying decision process in the Egyptian Market. The questionnaires were administered based on a simple sampling method and obtained from the Egyptian market. 285 questionnaires were distributed, and 213 available samples were collected. SPSS software V. 23 was used to analyse the data, and to get the descriptive statistics. Cronbach's Alpha (α) was used to test the strength of internal consistency reliability and correlation coefficients. Findings indicate that the mobile phone, as a digital marketing channel, had a negative impact on consumer buying decisions throughout all the stages of the consumer buying decision process in the Egyptian market. Future analysis may be accomplished on entirely different industries within the various markets, and specific organizations and customers. The method used in arriving at the sample size is unknown and the study population is not given.

Personal Selling and Consumer Buying Decision

Ho-Taek, et al (2021) studied effects of sales-related capabilities of personal selling organizations on individual sales capability, sales behaviors and sales performance in cosmetics personal selling channels. Data was collected from 151 salespeople, their sales organizations, and their visiting customers, in South Korea. The proposed hypotheses were tested through the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) technique. The study found that both types of sales-related capabilities (sales force management capabilities and personal selling capabilities) have significant positive effect on the individual sales capabilities, respectively. Further, the individual sales capability of salespeople has a stronger impact on customer-oriented sales behavior than on selling-oriented sales behavior. Similarly, selling-oriented sales behavior has a negative effect on customer satisfaction while customer-oriented sales behavior has a positive effect. It would be necessary to study more diverse organizational capabilities that affect sales capabilities at the individual level.

Sanjay and Subhadeep (2020) examined “sales strategies of banks: an empirical study of select private sector banks in India”. This is an empirical study based on exploratory research design. Self-administered questionnaire was designed separately for customers as well as employees of the banks. Responses were collected from 100 samples of customers and 100 samples of employees of the five selected private sector banks of the region, using convenience sampling. The study revealed that personal selling is important for the banks as well as customers. It helps the banks to understand customer needs very easily and at the same time it helped the customers to resolve all their queries and doubts due to face to face interaction with bank employees. This study failed to indicate its method of data analysis, thereby voiding the reliability of its outcome.

In their research investigation to establish the impact of direct selling strategies on customer loyalty in the Nigeria banking sector, (Egbule, et al., 2017) found that face – to – face commutation (personal selling), sales technology, sales force relationship – all elements of interactive or direct marketing strategies, have significant and positive effect on customer loyalty. The study was carried out on selected commercial banks with presence in Asaba, Delta State of Nigeria. The study adopted the use of cross-sectional survey design method. The multiple regression method of analysis was used to test the hypothesis; while structured questionnaire was used in data collection from a sample size of 226 staff of selected commercial banks. In conducting this type of research, it is more advisable to adopt the use of survey research design rather than cross sectional survey design. Cross sectional survey research design is best suited for researches that cut across different organizations, sectors and groups, in the society or community.

Planned Behavior Theory (PBT)

Ajzen (1991) developed the Planned Behavior Theory. He showed a model that had been widely applied in diverse studies on behavioral intention (Lee et al., 2010; Fraser et al., 2010). PBT explains that voluntary human behavior is preceded by a preconceived intent to engage in such behavior. This can be shown in the figure below, adapted by Ajzen to explain this model.

This theory postulates that behavioral intention, in turn, is determined by three significant determinants; Attitude towards behavior (AB), Subjective norm (SN) and Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC).

According to Ajzen, “this means that the degree to which individuals see a certain behavior positively (that is, attitude), or foresees that substantial others want them to engage in the behavior (that is, the subjective norm) and believe that they are capable of carrying out the behavior (that is, perceived behavioral control), serve as direct determinants of the extent of their intention to perform the behavior”.

The PBT is one of the best-supported social psychological theories for predicting human behavior. The central premise is that behavioral decisions result from a reasoned process in which the action is influenced by attitudes, norms, and perceived behavior control (Smith et al., 2007). This theory is largely useful in Marketing Communication discourse because marketing can affect one or more of the factors that this theory describes, to control potential consumers' intentions to use a product, and by extension, perceive and plan control of potential patronage decisions.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the cross-sectional research design. Data was collected with the aid of a five-point likert questionnaire from a conveniently selected sample of 384 consumers in FCT Abuja. The sample figure was gotten using the Cochran sample size determination formula since the population is infinite. The questionnaire items were adapted from the works of Wahyudi and Melinda (2018) and designed using likert scale ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree” The data were analyzed using the multiple regression analysis with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

$$\text{CBD} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{DMK} + \beta_2 \text{PSL} + e \quad \text{--- (i)}$$

Where: CBD = Consumer Buying Decisions, DMK = Direct Marketing, PSL = Personal Selling, e = Error term (5% = 0.05), β_0 = Intercept, $\beta_1\beta_2$ = Coefficient of independent variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study distributed a total of 422 copies of the questionnaire which is a 10% increase in the sample size to provide for attrition. Out of the 422 distributed, a valid response of 396 representing 94% was received and used for the analysis subsequently. At 94% return of answered questionnaire, this is substantial or adequate enough to analyze the responses. However, the profiles of the respondents were not made available to the public, thereby keeping away the quality and integrity of the responses or respondents.

Table 1: Correlations

		DMK	PSL	CBD
DMK	Pearson Correlation	1	.048	.041
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.415	.486
	N	396	396	396
PSL	Pearson Correlation	.048	1	-.053
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.415		.374
	N	396	396	396
CBD	Pearson Correlation	.041	-.053	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.486	.374	
	N	396	396	396

Source: SPSS Output, 2023

Direct marketing (DMK) showed a weak and positive relationship with personal selling (PSL) which stood at 0.048 which is insignificant at 5% level of significance. DMK showed a weak but positive relationship with consumer buying decision (CBD) which stood at 0.041 and is insignificant at 5% level of significance. Also, PSL showed a weak and negative relationship with CBD which stood at -0.053. All the variables under study satisfy multicollinearity as though none of the independent variable is strongly related to another.

Table 2: Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.263 ^a	.513	.511	1.243	1.933

a. Predictors: (Constant), PSL, DMK

b. Dependent Variable: CBD

Table 3: ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	167.344	2	.934	13.605	.000 ^b
	Residual	158.863	393	1.544		
	Total	326.207	395			

a. Dependent Variable: CBD

b. Predictors: (Constant), PSL, DMK

Table 4: Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	3.296	.271		4.792	.000		
	DMK	-.053	.058	-.055	-.924	.356	.993	1.007
	PSL	.054	.121	.031	7.445	.000	.993	1.007

a. Dependent Variable: CBD

Source: SPSS Output, 2023

The result, as shown in the tables above revealed an R-square value of 0.513 which signifies that 51.3% of the variation in consumer buying decision (CBD) is explained by the combination of direct marketing and personal selling. The remaining 48.7% variation could be explained by other factors or variables not included in this study. The f-statistics stood at 13.605 and also the probability of the f-statistics was found to be significant at 5% level of significance ($p < 0.000 < 0.05$) which therefore, indicates that the model is fit to measure the association between the variables under study.

Test of Hypotheses

From the regression table above, the result indicates an insignificant effect of direct marketing (DMK) on consumer buying decision as seen in the p-value of 0.356 which is greater than 0.05 level of significance and hence the study accepts the null hypothesis and accepts the alternative one which states that direct marketing has no significant effect on consumer buying decision of locally-made consumer goods in FCT Abuja. However, the result revealed a significant effect of personal selling on consumer buying decisions as seen in the p-value of 0.000 which is less than 0.05 level of significance and as such the study accepts the alternative hypothesis which states that personal selling has significant effect on consumer buying decisions of locally-made consumers goods in FCT Abuja.

Discussion of Findings

This study examined the effect of digital marketing and personal selling on consumer buying decisions of locally made consumers goods in FCT Abuja. Firstly, the study found a negative and insignificant effect of direct marketing on consumer buying decisions of locally made consumers goods in FCT Abuja implying that direct marketing efforts via digital platforms directed towards customers did not yield the desired impact on their decision to purchase products. This could also be a result of perception of online marketing by customers as being dubious and non-reliable as such, efforts made by these firms via digital platforms may have met same treatment. This finding agrees with that of Amira and Nermine (2020) who found negative effect of digital marketing on consumer buying decision but disagrees with the study of Abdel-Fattah and Khaled (2021) who found positive effect of digital marketing on buying decisions.

However, the findings from the second hypothesis revealed that personal selling has a positive and significant effect on consumer buying decisions of locally made consumers goods in FCT Abuja. This implies that direct engagements using sales representative has significantly influenced consumers' decision to purchase a product. This finding agrees with the findings of Ho-Taek, et al. (2021) and Egbule et al. (2017) who both found positive and significant effect of personal selling on consumer buying decisions.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on its findings, the study concluded that personal selling was essential in promoting consumer buying decisions on local brands. However, it has not stimulated buying decision on local brands to the desired level due to the deficiency observed in direct marketing undertaken by the firms. The study therefore concluded that all promotional mix elements were important and should be implemented correctly in uniformity, to achieve a favorable outcome. Based on this, the study recommends as follows:

- i. That local consumer goods firms should employ the use of verified social media accounts in interacting with customers. This will create a sense of trust in the customer as only authentic brands are verified by media handlers. They may also engage the use of verified public figures as their brand ambassadors, and also train prospective buyers in digital verified social media handling
- ii. That local consumer goods should expand the scope of the personal selling by employing the services of more skilled and abled hands as sales representatives who will cover more geographical locations, convince more customers to patronize their products.

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