EFFECT OF SALES PROMOTION ON CONSUMER PATRONAGE OF TELECOMMUNICATION COMPANIES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study explores the effect of sales promotion on consumers' patronage of Telecommunication Company in Nigeria. The sample involves 378 active consumers of Airtel drawn from a population of 10,000 from Dutsin-ma. The study adopted a survey method to elicit responses from consumers using Likert five-point scale. Descriptive and inferential linear regression statistics were used to analyze the data. The findings show that recharge to get free data sale promotion have significantly positive influences on consumers' patronage. It also shows that recharge to get both free airtime and data sale promotion have a significant effect on consumer's patronage of other networks that offer a better promotional incentive. The study recommends that Airtel Nigeria should differentiate its various recharge to get free data and recharge to get both free airtime and data sale promotions by stating its monetary value of recharged of #100 to get free data of #250 and recharge to get free airtime and data worth #250 to enable consumers to know which

offer to patronize. It further recommends that the value of Airtel sale promotion rate on recharge to get free airtime and free data should be better than competitors to make their consumers patronize and remain with them.

***Keywords**: Sales promotion, Telecommunication, consumer patronage, Airtel.*

1.0 Introduction

There is need for telecommunication companies to increase consumer patronage for improved sales, profits and market share in order to maintain continuous business growth and remain the market leader with significant market share in the industry. To achieve this, it has to engage in aggressive sales promotion in order to attract new consumers, while keeping its loyal consumers. Consumers will patronize service that will meet their needs and offers extra value for their money. According to Ozioma and Macus (2020), consumer patronage is a situation in which an individual with a need or want to fulfill acquires something of value from a supplier in order to address the recognized lack or shortfall. Kotler and Keller (2022) define consumer patronage as the intentional and repeated purchase of product or service by consumers, influenced by various factors such as quality, price and brand loyalty. For Paswan (2016), this patronage behaviour could include loyalty intention, amount of money spent, repeat purchase, length taken, time and quantity of items purchased.

Consumers are the reason for telecommunication companies to be and remain in business and as such must be treated as "king" by offering products and services that will satisfy their needs and add extra value for their patronage. Sales promotions offer this extra value to consumers. Kumar (2022) stated that sales promotion is a marketing strategy in which a business uses a temporary campaign or offer to increase interest or demand in it product or

services. The consumer is the king of the market, marketing starts with the consumer and ends with the consumer. It is in light of this statement that services must be designed to meet consumer's taste and preferences for sustained consumer patronage. Amelia (2017) opined that service companies need to differentiate their services from competitors' own in order to increase consumers' patronage and survive in the industry. When services no longer provide the desired value sought by consumers, they will reduce their patronage, not patronize at all or may switch loyalty to another competitor service.

Much attention has been drawn by researchers to the various sales promotional variables such as samples, buy-one-to-get-one free, coupon, premium, price off, etc. on consumers' patronage, less attention is given to consumer patronage with regards to recharge to get free data and recharge to get both free airtime and data as its influences consumers' patronage, hence the need to carry out this study on sales promotion to find out the effects of these variables on consumers' patronage of Airtel.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

According to Airtel registration office, Dutsin- ma, Airtel annual report for registration and sales of simcards in Dutsin-ma declined by 10% in 2024 against an increase of 25% in 2023. The poor service of Airtel such as calls hanging, dropped calls, slow internet connectivity, callers not hearing receivers and vice versa, and disappearances of service for some minutes, hours and days among others caused a decline in patronage by both current and prospective consumers who now switch patronage to competitors services. It is a known fact that the level of consumer patronage plays a paramount role in determining a company's market share and the landscape of the business in the industry. In pursing this objective, the researcher was motivated to investigate the effect of recharge to get free data and recharge to

get both free airtime and data sales promotion on consumer patronage towards Airtel within Dutsinma.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to examine the effect of sales promotional activities on consumers' patronage of Airtel. The specific objectives are to:

(i) Ascertain the effect of recharge to get free data sales promotion on consumer patronage of Airtel.

(ii) Determine the effect of recharge to get both airtime and data sales promotion on consumer patronage of Airtel.

1.3 Research Questions

i. What is the effect of recharge to get free data sales promotion on consumers' patronage of Airtel?

ii. What is the effect of recharge to get both free airtime and datasales promotion on consumers' patronage of Airtel?

1.4 Research Hypotheses

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between recharge to get free data sales promotion and consumers' patronage of Airtel.

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between recharge to get both free airtime and data sales promotion and consumers' patronage of Airtel.

1.5 Significance of the Study

1.The study will help the management of Airtel to focus on the sales promotion variables that has more effect on consumers.

2. The study will also provide the opportunity for the consumers to give their opinions on which of the sales promotion variables appeal more to them

2.0 Literature Review

2.1Concept of Consumer Patronage

Consumer patronage is described as the repeated purchasing behavior of consumers towards a particular product, service or brand driven by satisfaction, loyalty and retention (Kotler & Keller, 2022). Consumer patronage is defined as the intentional and repeated purchase of a product or service by consumers, influenced by various factors such as quality, price and brand image (Ajayi et. al, 2022). Consumer patronage involves long-term commitment to a brand, driven by satisfaction, trust and loyalty (Yang & Liu, 2022).

Islam & Khan (2023) assert that consumer patronage is characterized by repeated purchasing and loyalty to a particular brand or services.

Sales promotion

Sales promotion is a strategic marketing tactic used to create short term incentives, stimulating consumer purchasing and driving sales growth (Kumar et al, 2022). Mbaga (2016) defined sales promotion as all as activities undertaken to communicate and promote product and services to the target market. These activities include advertising, public relation, personal selling, sales promotion, exhibition, and demonstration and many others. Furthermore, sales promotion is also known as a very effective marketing tool that assists different organizations to wax stronger in a competitive global business environment by increasing consumers' patronage leading to quicker and greater purchase.

Recharge to get free data

This is a sales promotion tool known as "Smart Recharge," where the consumers on recharge of the Airtel line get a free bonus data only to stream online, make calls and browse. This free data rate depends on the amount of airtime purchased.

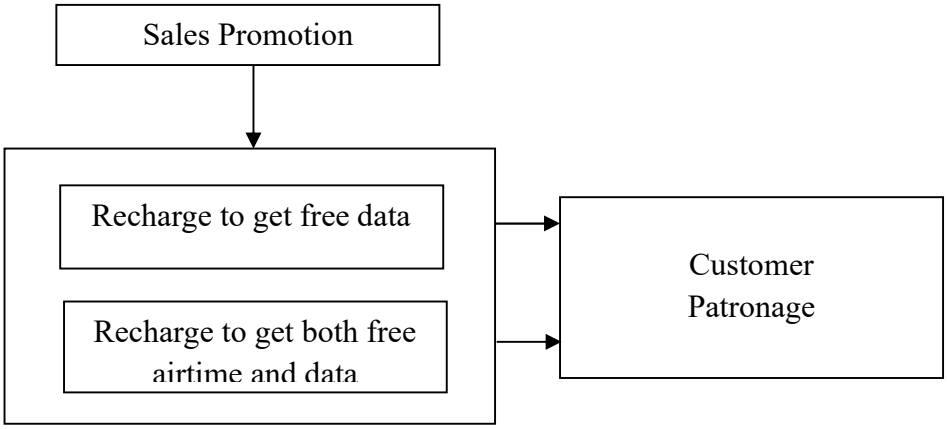
Recharge to get both free airtime and data

This is a sales promotion used by Airtel known as "Smart Recharge plus." The consumer on recharge of his or her Airtel line gets both free airtime and data in one single convenient recharge (voice, call and data call). The consumer on recharge of airtime of #100 getsfree airtime worth #250 and free data worth #250 respectively.

Proposed conceptual framework of the research

This proposed conceptual framework shows the relationship between the independent variable, sales promotion (Recharge to get free data and Recharge to get both free airtime and data} and the dependent variable (Consumer patronage).

Conceptual Model



Source: Researcher's model, (2024)

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This study adopts Awareness, Interest, Desire and Action model(AIDA) as the theoretical underpinning of the study, which was developed in 1898 by E. St. Elmo Lewis. The AIDA means awareness, interest, desire, and action acronym. According to this model, to influence consumers via communication and make them consider sales promotion product or service,

various contents are needed to attract consumers and develop their interest and desire for purchase (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018). Sales promotion acts as a stimulus, which is supposed to start the purchasing decision (Mwakasege, 2015). It is necessary to know how to attract consumers' attention and which sales promotion strategies that relate to the content of the sales promotion message, presentation, or placement are needed (El-zogliby et al 2021: Jolly, 2020).

Consequently, successful sales promotion strategies should always follow a logical pattern for it to attract a consumer to read the context of the sales promotion, and then arouse interest enough to continue reading and believe it and consequently participating in the sales promotion (Mbura& Kagaya, 2021). Hackley & Hackley (2021) suggest that the AIDA model aims to ensure that effective sales promotion strategies create awareness, stimulate interests and finally, direct consumers' desire to act by purchasing a particular product, having been stimulated by much more enlightening sales promotion information.

The AIDA model is helpful in sales promotion in particular and marketing in general by helping respective managers develop communication strategies that engender effective sending of messages (Mbura&Kagoya, 2021).

The four features of the AIDA model can be explained as follows: Awareness is the ability of the sales promotion to grab the attention of consumers. Interest requires the marketing manager to create a sales promotion capable of stirring and raising the interests of consumers by communicating the important features; benefit, merit and other attributes of the product or service. Desire is the strong want among consumers that emerges when they perceive that a product or service advertised for sales promotion will satisfy their wants and needs as a result of the communication made. Action refers to the outcome of the communications facilitated by the

sales promotion. After creating the attention, interest and desire, consumers need to act by patronizing a particular product or service.

2.3 Empirical Review

Halim, Benson, Gazie & Jude(2024) examined how sales promotion affects Guinness strong beer consumption in Abuja. This study used primary and secondary data. The Cochran formula determined the sample size of 288 respondents, multiple regression analyses using SPSS version 23 and a 5% threshold of significance were used to test the hypothesis. The study found a statistically significant and favourable association between consumer patronage in Abuja and the use of samples, discounts, rebates, price-offs premium offers contests and promotions. Based on the data, the inquiry recommends using a digital technique to distribute samples to target consumers during sales promotions. The fact that modern consumers choose digital platforms to interact with businesses supports this claim. Once again coupons should be used to promote sales as the survey participants' reactions show their practical impact on consumer patronage and other aspects.

Olubusola, Usman & Mustapha (2022) investigated the effect of sales promotion on consumer patronage of household appliances in Lagos state. The methodology used was based on a descriptive research design. Questionnaire was used as an instrument for data collection; the sample size was determined using simple random sampling technique. The sample size was 124 respondents. The datawas analyzed using multiple regression analysis. The findings revealed that there is significant effect of sales promotion on customer patronage of household appliances. The study recommended that trade in household appliances should continue investing in sales promotion activities that help the customer to keep patronizing their company and products.

George, Bamidele & Damilola (2022) investigated the effect of sales promotion tools such as free sample, rebate, contest and price discounton customer patronage of selected food beverages companies in Lagos state, Nigeria. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design. The total population of the study is 3502 staff of selected food and beverage firms operating in Lagos state. Taro Yamane sample of size calculation technique to estimate the sample size of the population to determine the sample size of the study. Questionnaire was administered and a total of 344 retrieved for analysis. The data was analyzed using multiple regression analysis. Findings revealed that sales promotion tools significantly affect customer patronage in the selected food and beverages companies in Lagos state. It was recommended that companies in Nigeria should always have a planned, structured, directed and managed sales promotion program in place as this will assist them make such promotional method successful and efficient.

Offor & Chibiko (2020) examined the effect of sales promotion on customers' patronage oftelecommunication services. A random sampling technique was employed in the data collection from Globalcom Nigeria Limited. The hypothesis was tested using chi-square. The result of the analysis showed that sales promotion has significant effect on Globalcom's turnoverand thatthere is relationship between sales promotion and customer's patronage.

2.4 Research Gaps

From the reviewed empirical studies, there is evidence that there is limited literature on sales promotion in telecommunication companies in North-Eastern Nigeria. Similarly, the reviewed works showed that sales promotion tools used, such as price discount, contest, sweepstakes, bonus gift, buy one get one (BOGO), giveaways etc., were the major sales promotion methods used. "Recharge to get free data and recharge to get both free airtime and

data" has not been used thereby creating gaps which this study seeks to address.

3.0 Methodology

A population study of 10,000 Airtel consumers in Dutsin-ma is chosen for the study because it has the most active and populated consumers. The sample size of 385 was determined using Taro Yamane formula for a moderate population less than equal to 10000.

$$\frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Where n = number of sample size
N= population of the study
I= constant
e = level of significant of error assumed to be 0.05 (5%)

Therefore

$$N = \frac{10000}{1 + 10000\ (0.5)^2}$$

$$= \frac{10000}{1 + 10000\ (0.0025)}$$

$$= \frac{10000}{1 + 25}$$

$$= \frac{10000}{26}$$

$$= 385$$

A descriptive research design was adopted for this study. Studies that are concerned with describing the characteristics of an individual or group and determining the frequency with which something occurs or its association with something else fall under this design (Kothari & Garg, 2024). To achieve this, the survey method is adopted for this study. This is because it enables the researcher to collect data through the use of questionnaire from the population.

The research utilized primary data obtained through the use of structured questionnaire on five-point Likert scale. To ascertain the validity of the instrument, content validity was adopted in which the researcher subjected the instrument to face validity by giving it to a Doctor of Philosophy PhD, who examined the items and made sure they were in line with the objectives of the study. The structure and language of the questionnaire were modified in light of his correction. Three hundred and seventy-eight (378) copies of questionnaire returnedwere used to analyze the data using descriptive and inferential linear regression statistics.

The Null hypotheses are to be tested using linear regression statistical method. The null hypotheses are to be accepted if the calculated P-value is greater than the hypothetical P-value of 0.05 and otherwise rejected if the calculated P-value is less than the hypothetical 0.05 P-value.

4.0 Results and Discussion

A total of three hundred and eighty-five (385) copies of the questionnaire were distributed, out of which three hundred and seventy-eight (378) were returned. This gave a total response rate of 98.4%. The analyses were based on the copies of questionnaires returned.

Question 1: Does recharge to get free data sales promotions by Airtel have significant relationship on consumer patronage?

Table 1 presents the results from the view of respondents on the influence of free data sales promotions by Airtel on consumer patronage

S/N	ITEM	SA % FX	A % FX	U % FX	D % FX	SD % FX	AVG	RANK
1	Airtel network that offers free data for browsing makes consumers to patronize them	169 (45%)	98 (26%)	75 (20%)	27 (7%)	9 (2%)	4.03	A
2	Offer of free data for browsing makes consumers to patronize Airtel more than other GSM service providers	78 (21%)	198 (52%)	87 (23%)	15 (4%)	0 (0%)	3.90	A
3	The free data for voice calling of loved ones is among the factors that makes consumers to patronize Airtel service	157 (42%)	88 (23%)	76 (20%)	35 (9%)	22 (6%)	3.85	A
4	Free data bonus on every recharge is one of the reason you choose other networks	32 (8%)	56 (15%)	34 (9%)	65 (17%)	191 (51%)	2.13	D
5	Consumers rush to buy other networks' line	59 (16%)	167 (44%)	79 (21%)	45 (12%)	28 (7%)	3.49	A

	that have enough free data bonus							

Source: Field survey, 2024.

The result of the findings from table 1 show that Airtel's offers of free data on recharge of lines influences consumer patronage. This fact was confirmed by 47% of sampled Airtel consumers (average = 4.03). Furthermore, 52% of sampled Airtel consumers expressed their agreement with the fact that the offer of free data for recharging makes most consumers patronize Airtel (average = 3.50). While 47% of sampled Airtel consumers strongly opined that free data offered for recharging of lines is among the factors that make consumers patronize Airtel (average = 3.45). However, 41% of the respondents strongly disagreed with the view that free data bonuses on every recharge of their lines are responsible for their patronage of other networks (average = 2.13). Finally, 44% of the respondents agreed that people buy a new line from any network that has enough free data for their consumption (average = 3.49).

Table 2: The effect of recharge to get both free airtime and data sales promotion on consumer patronage of Airtel

S/N	Item	SA 40%	A 40%	U 40%	D 40%	SD 40%	AVG	Rank
1	Other network providers that offer both airtime and data bonus at a better rate can make consumers decide to leave Airtel	158 (42%)	88 (23%)	56 (15%)	45 (12%)	31 (8%)	3.8	A
2	Airtel Consumers usually prefer to patronize other networks that provide better bonus on voice call and browsing	35 (9%)	67 (18%)	43 (11%)	157 (42%)	78 (20%)	2.5	D

3	Consumers prefer to patronize other networks that offer rates for both airtime and data for mid-night voice call and mid-night browsing	162 (43%)	77 (20%)	56(15%)	48 (13%)	35 (9%)	3.7	A
4	Network providers that offers both airtime and data at a cheaper rate for weekend can influence the patronizing of that network by Airtel consumers	45 (12%)	89 (24%)	88 (23%)	3 (1%)	153 (40%)	2.7	D
5	Consumers usually prefer network providers that offer low rate charges on both airtime and data bonus for voice call and chatting with loved ones	45 (12%)	178 (47%)	45 (12%)	90 (24%)	20 (5%)	3.4	A

Results from table 2 show the positions of respondents on the effect of recharge to get both free airtime and data on consumer patronage of Airtel in Dutsin-ma, Katsina State, Nigeria. The results reveal that 42% of Airtel sampled consumers generally agreed that those other network providers, that offer both Airtime and data at a better rate can make consumers decide to leave Airtel (average 3.8). However, the respondents were not convinced that Airtel consumers are patronizing other network providers providing better bonus rate on both voice call and browsing. This fact was confirmed by 42% of sampled consumers, averaging 2.5.

Furthermore, 43% of respondents strongly agreed that consumers prefer patronizing other networks that offer better rate for both Airtime and Data for

Mid-night voice call and mid-night browsing; averaging 3.7. 40% of respondent, averaging 2.7 agree that consumers of Airtel will patronize other network providers that offer both Airtime and Data bonus at a cheaper rate for weekend voice call and browsing. Lastly, 47%, averaging 3.4 of respondents opined that consumers will prefer to patronize other network providers that offer low rate changes on both Airtime and Data bonus for voice call and chatting with loved ones.

Test of research hypotheses

HO1: The recharge to get free data sales promotion does not have significant relationship on consumer patronage in Dutsin.-ma.

Table 3: Result of Linear Regression analysis on the effect of recharge to get free data on consumer patronage of Airtel

Model	**Unstandardized Coefficients**	**Standardized Coefficients**	**T**	**Sig.**	**Collinearity Statistics**	
B	Std. Error	Beta	Tol.	VIF		
(Constant)	2.614	.113	23.04	.000	.920	1.310
Free-Credits Sales Promo	.459	.034	.572	13.52	.000	
R	.572					
R2	.327					
Adj. R2	.325					
F. statistic	182.80					
F. sig	.000					

A: Predictors; (constant) Recharge to get Free-data

B: Dependent variable: Consumer patronage

Source Field Survey, 2024

Table 3 presents the linear regression results in the effect of recharge to get free Data sales promotion on consumers' patronage for Airtel network among consumer in Dutsin ma. It is observed from the table that the free-credits sales promotion has a coefficient value of 0.459, a p- value of 0.000, and a t-value of 13.52,which is highly significant. More so, the results on the table show an F statistic value of 182.80 with an F. sig of 0.000, which implies that the regression model is statistically significant at 5%. Furthermore, the adjusted R2-value (0.325) was calculated for the overall model fitness.

Therefore, the null hypothesis, which states that the effect of free data sales promotion by Airtel on consumers in Dutsin-mais rejected. Thus, the overall results from linear regression show a positive coefficient of 0.4539 for the free data sales promotion, which signifies that an increase in the rate at which the Airtel network is improving the free data sales promotion is likely to influence about 46% of patronage by consumers in Dutsin-ma.

HO_2: Recharge to get both free airtime and data does not have a significant relationship on consumers' patronage of Airtel, Nigeria.

Table 4: Result of linear regression analysis on the effect of recharge to get both free airtime and data on consumer patronage of Airtel Nigeria

Model	**Unstandardized Coefficients**	**Standardized Coefficients**	**T**	**Sig.**	**Collinearity Statistics**	
B	Std. Error	Beta	Tol.	VIF		
(Constant)	2.352	.108	21.72	.000	.641	1.560
Product Discount	.531	.032	.644	16.33	.000	
R	.644					
R2	.415					
Adj. R2	.413					
F. statistic	266.65					
F. sig	.000					

A: Predictors; (constant).Recharge to get both free Airtime and data
B: Dependent variable: Consumer patronage
Source Field Survey, 2024

Table 4 presents the linear regression results on the effect of recharge to get both free airtime and data on consumer patronage. It is observed from the table that the recharge to get both free airtime and data has a coefficient value of0.531, a p-value of 0.000, and a t-value of16.33, which is highly

significant. Also, the results show an F statistic value of 266.65 with an F. sig of 0.000, which implies that the regression model is statistically significant at 5%. Furthermore, the adjusted R2-value (0.531) was calculated for the overall model fitness.

Therefore, the null hypothesis, which states that the effect of recharging to get both airtime and data sales promotion by Airtel on consumers' patronage in Dutsin-ma is rejected. Thus, the overall results from linear regression show a positive coefficient of 0.531 for recharge to get both free airtime and data sales promotion is likely to influence about 53.1% of Airtel consumers patronizing other service providers.

4.1 Discussion of Findings

The finding of this study shows that the free data promotion by Airtel positively influences consumer patronage. The study further shows that free data for browsing and voice calls for every recharge influences more consumers' patronage. This finding agrees with that made by Micheal*et al.* (2013), which established a significant effect of free credit promotion on customers' choice of network in Ghana.

The findings from this study also revealed that high rate of charges on recharge to get both Airtime and data promotion by Airtel influences consumers' patronage of other network providers. Furthermore, the findings showed that the offers of low rate of recharge to get both free airtime and free data by other network providers for consumers to use for voice calls and browsing, midnight calls and browsing influence consumers' patronage of other network providers. This finding is supported by that of Ibrahim (2020) which states that in most cases, consumers conveniently patronize network providers with cheaper or low-rate charges for airtime and data.

Generally, the findings from this study confirmed that low-rate charges for airtime, and data promotions did encourage consumers to continue to patronize their chosen brand and attract potential consumers towards them. This is supported by Olukotun*et al.* (2012) that consumers are sensitive to any price discount on products and services, which raise sales and promote repeat patronage.

4.2 Implication of Findings

The study found that the rate of recharge to get free data sales promotions by Airtel significantly influences the rate of consumer's patronage. It was equally revealed that the rate of recharge to get both free airtime and data by Airtel significantly influences the rate of consumers patronizing other service providers. The implication of this finding is that Airtel stands to lose more of their consumers toother service providers when they refuse to carry out sales promotions.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

This study was carried out in Dutsin-ma on the effect of sales promotion on consumer patronage of Airtel. The study addressed the issue of recharge to get free data and recharge to get both free airtime and data. It concluded that sales promotions have positive influence on consumer patronage.

The study recommends that Airtel should make their free data promotion clear to their consumers so that they can know which of the packages to patronize. It also recommends thatthe added value from the promotion should be better than that of their competitors so as to discourage their consumers from patronizing competitors' networks.

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