



Impact of sales promotion tools on consumer purchase intentions of the retailing industry in lagos: The mediating role of customer service

Edak Atokolo

Ph.D, Department of Business and Management Studies, Texila American University, Guyana

Abstract

The study investigates the impact of sales promotion tools on consumer purchase intentions of the retailing Industry in Lagos with customer service serving a mediating role. The study makes use of explanatory design. Both convenience and purposive sampling technique was used to select 240 customers of the two retail firms (Shoprite and Melcom Nigeria) in Lagos. Field survey was used to solicit data from the respondents. Questionnaire was the instruments used for the data collection. Data analysis was carried out with the use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.0. The study's findings revealed a significant relationship between bonus packs and purchase intentions of consumers. Further, the study revealed a significant relationship between coupons and purchase intentions of consumers. Practical implications for retail managers and directions for future studies were discussed.

Keywords: Sales promotion, customer service, purchase intentions, retail industry, lagos

Introduction

The advent of strenuous competition in the business environment has jostled organizations to develop meaningful marketing strategies to woo consumers to their products/services and, also retain existing ones. The need, therefore, to understand the behaviour of customers before organizations market their products in a more desirable way has become more imperative in recent times than before (Mukattash *et al.*, 2023) ^[19]. Extant literature (Lim *et al.*, 2023; Rachmad, 2024) ^[13, 24] posit that, firms understanding of consumer behaviour in the earlier time was far better in that goods/services were sold directly to consumers in shops. However, with the growth in the size of firms, opportunities of direct contact with consumers have lowered. Increasingly, firms are investing more to gain an insight on consumer behaviour. Defined as the way the consumers act or behave when looking for, buying and using products (Toha & Supriyanto, 2023) ^[34], consumer behaviour is significant to businesses as they determine the nature of the prospective buyers. In the views of Ofosu-Boateng (2020) ^[21], knowing consumer behaviour helps business organizations to develop the appropriate communication and advertising strategies to attract consumers to their products/services. According to Thehawijaya & Susilo (2023) ^[33], the use of sales promotion has gained traction among business firms in every industry and, same applies to the retail of consumer goods industry in Lagos. Thus, the use of sales promotion as a strategic marketing tool is widely used by the retailers in bid to shore up sales, attract new customers or topple the completion. In buttressing this, Khan & Ali (2023) ^[11] affirm that firms can also use sales promotions to possibly improve customers' experiences such as fun, delight and distraction, and influence their attitude toward the brand. However, Budiarto *et al.* (2023) ^[2] shared that the use of sales promotion should be complemented by good customer service. According to the Budiarto *et al.* (2023) ^[2], friendly sales staff, responsiveness to customers' calls and easily retail identifiable locations which serve as customer service elements are important during sales promotion. Jee (2021)

^[7] identified thirteen consumer promotion tools, namely samples, coupons, rebates, price packs, premiums (gifts), frequency programs, contests/sweepstakes/games, patronage awards, free trials, product warranties, tie-in promotions, cross-promotions, and point-of-purchase display used by firms to attract customers and to change their behaviours.

Interesting, literature is replete with studies on sales promotion (Kaveh *et al.*, 2021; Mahamoud, 2020) ^[9, 17] and its effects on consumer behaviour (Gorji & Siami, 2020; Naim, 2023; Rosin *et al.*, 2023). ^[5], However, few have focused same in West African countries such as Nigeria where the geographical and cultural settings are significantly different from the Western World, depicting geographical gap in knowledge. More so, there appear dearth of studies on how customer service mediates sales promotion and consumer behaviour. In the light of the aforementioned gaps in literature, the present study seeks to close the gap in knowledge by investigating the impact of sales promotion on consumer buying behaviour of the retailing industry in Lagos with the mediating role of customer service.

Scope of the Study

The study investigates the impact of sales promotion on consumer buying behaviour of the retailing industry in Lagos with the mediating role of customer service. The study is quantitative in nature with a focus in the retail industry in Lagos. Lagos was chosen because of its busy retailing business activities in relations to other states. Only three of the sales promotional tolls were examined in the study

Significance of the Study

The outcomes of the study will be significantly beneficial to marketers and retail firms as it will expose them to the nuances of sales promotion and how it impacts consumer buying behaviour. Also, retail firms will stand the chance of gaining insights into consumer behaviour.. Stakeholders such as manufactures of consumer goods are also exposed to the need to organize customer service training for retail

outlets operators and customer staff. Also, shop owners are better off to grasp a better understanding of customer service experienced by their customers in retail shops and how that affected their purchase behaviour

Literature Review

Sales Promotion

Sales promotions activities have been significantly used by marketers for a long time and have also been considered as one of the best marketing tools for short term increase in sale. Sales promotion as defined by Jee (2021) ^[7], is a diverse collection of incentive tools, mostly short term, designed to stimulate quicker and or a /greater purchase, of a particular product or services by the consumer or the trade (Ofosu-Boateng, 2020), Kaveh *et al.* (2021) consider it as “a range of tactical marketing techniques designed with in a strategic marketing framework to add value to a product or service in order to achieve specific sales and marketing objectives”. Clow & Baack (2007) categorized sales promotional tools into four, i.e Coupons, samples, rebates and bonus packs. However, many marketing analysts recently consider sales promotion as a short term tool to induce consumer purchase intention however this traditional concept that sales promotion is short term activity is becoming obsolete as extant literature (Mahamoud, 2002) avers that retailers now issue club card, loyalty card and other membership and offers card with the aim to influence long purchase.

Customer Service

A customer is a person who buys products (goods or services) from a shop or a business organization. Customer service is the provision of service being provided by the seller to customers before, during and after a purchase of any product. According to Hsu & Lin (2023), ^[7] “Customer service is a series of activities designed to enhance the level of customer satisfaction that is, the feeling that a product or service has met the customer expectation.” It is also the process of assisting another person or persons who buys goods and services from a shop (Rather, & Hollebeek, 2021). ^[27] It can be provided either directly by a sales or service representative or through automated means like internet sites. The latter means provides 24×7 services to customers.

Purchase Intentions

Purchase intention also referred to as the willingness to buy is widely defined as the likelihood of a consumer to purchase a product or service (Peña *et al.*, 2020). It is also being defined as a conscious plan made by an individual to make an effort to purchase a brand (Li & Peng, 2021). The concept of purchase intention is rooted in psychological and is extensively used in behavioral studies (Zhu *et al.*, 2023). Purchase intention is being characterized as a behavioral tendency that the consumer will purchase the product (Syed *et al.*, 2023) and as an important indicator for the actual purchasing decision (Li & Joo, 2023). In support of this Zong *et al.*, (2023) intimated that purchase intention is a common measure that usually employed to assess effectiveness of purchase behaviour

Theory and Hypotheses

The American Marketing Association has stressed that sales promotion, as a motivational tool, is designed to stimulate

consumers to purchase numerous products (Long *et al.*, 2020). Sales promotion is defined as activities that provide additional benefits for customers to encourage them to take immediate responses and usually take place during specific time periods, at certain locations or among fixed customer groups. A number of studies have found that bonus pack such as BOGO (Buy One, Get Other for free) has a direct influence on purchase intentions (Rantelina *et al.*, 2023; Suwarno, 2020). ^[26,31] However, a study conducted Salim *et al.* (2020) revealed that bonus pack did not have significant effect on impulse buying. Bonus packs could have several advantages as boosting sales in the short run in that consumers perceived some value being added to what is purchased. In the study of Darmayanti & Yulianti (2020) ^[3] bonus pack had a significant positive effect on impulse buying behaviour. Thus, if we are to better understand the effect of bonus packs in sales promotion on purchase intention, it can be deduced that the incentives derived by consumers from bonus packs in a sales promotion activity affects perceived value, and, in turn impacts purchase intention. So, it is hypothesized that:

H1: Bonus packs will have a significant relationship with purchase intentions

In the retailing settings, jostling for customers by retailers to shore up sales requires a lot strategies and skill. Coupons are one of many tools used by retailers as sales promotion technique. They are papers or certificate that save money for the customer when a purchase is made (Sugiran *et al.*, 2022). ^[30] This could be a 25% discount of the value of the product or a fixed amount like \$5 on every piece (Harmon & Hill 2023). According to Harmon & Hill (2023), nearly 79% of the US population use coupons and redeem their amount. Coupons have a lot of advantages like increasing sales in the very short period and encourage the customers to switch to another brand. Also, coupons stimulate the trial of a new product. In the study of Mustapha (2020), it was found that 70% of consumers switched brands as a result of the use of coupons. Obeng (2022) also found out that the use of coupons encouraged free trial among online shoppers. The result of Qazi *et al.* (2021) indicated that all coupons as promotional tools have positive relationships towards consumer purchase intention. We therefore hypothesize

H2: Coupons will have a significant relationship with Purchase intentions

Extant literature posits that businesses can use sample as free the trial promotional strategy to attract new customers despite fierce competition (Kung *et al.*, 2021). Consumers initially assume they do not need free sample and are prepared to pay for supplemental products for things they typically use for free. However, consumers become uneasy when they stop receiving their benefits and realize they require these extra services. Several studies have indicated a positive relationship between free sample and consumer purchase intentions. For instance, in the study of Ramadhan & Belgiawan (2023) ^[25] sample as free trial promotion strategy, was found to have a direct, positive, and significant impact on purchase intention. In another study, Yeung & Yee (2021) ^[35] results indicate that free sample tasting has a positive effect on consumers’ impulse purchase intention. So we hypothesize:

H3: sample will have a significant positive relationship with Purchase intentions

While literature is replete and indicated the positive impact of sales promotional tools on consumer purchase intentions, Hong et al. (2023) shared that paying attention to good customer service during sales promotion as a new feature may be considered as a strong tool in retails. In the retail context, the consumer and the retailer interactions is perceived to be high and therefore friendly atmosphere, smiles responsiveness and store assistance as good customer service is imperatively effective marketing tool that play a major part in the selling strategies. For example, in department stores, which offer a wide range of products and ultimate arena of free choice (Philips, 2022), a good customer service is almost always identified as one of the key success factors during sales promotion not only for increasing sales but also for retention. Studies such as (Golalizadeh et al., 2023; Ma & Wang, 2021) ^[4,34,17] have shown the significant impact of customer service on purchase intentions during sales promotion. Inferring from the literature, it was hypothesize that:

H4: customer service will mediate sales promotion and purchase intentions

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 demonstrates the conceptual framework that establishes the operationalization of the sales promotional tools and links it to purchase intentions with customer service playing a mediating role

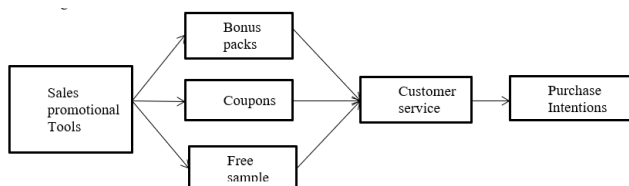


Fig 1: Author's Construct, 2024

Methodology

Research Design

The study makes use of explanatory design. According to Saunders *et al.* (2009), explanatory design helps a researcher to obtain information about a situation or problem in order to explain the relationship among variables. The use of the design is appropriate in that, it sought to ascertain the relationships between sales promotional tools such as bonus packs, coupons, free sample and purchase intentions.

Population of the Study

A population is any group of individuals that have one or more characteristics in common that are of interest to a researcher (Best & Kahn, 2007). The targeted population of the study included customers of two retail firms (Melcom and Shoprite) in Lagos.

Sampling Technique and Sample Size

Sampling techniques are population reduction methods used to restrict data collection to a subgroup of a population since it is almost impossible to collect data from every single individual or units within a population in most cases, sampling is employed. For this study, both convenience and

purposive sampling technique was used to select 240 customers of the two retail firms in Lagos to participate in the study

Sources of Data

Field survey was used to solicit data from the respondents. Questionnaire was the instruments used for the data collection.

Distribution of Questionnaires

Questionnaire administration took about twenty-one (21) days. Each respondent spent about fifteen (15) minutes in responding to the questionnaire

Data Analysis

The study employed the use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.0 for the data analysis. Presentations of the findings were tabulated and discussed with reference to existing studies to ensure easy understanding

Validity and Reliability

Reliability suggests the degree to which measurements are conducted effectively. To ensure reliability, the Cronbach Alpha (α) was used. According to Devellis (2003), the Cronbach alpha coefficient should be above 0.7. Cronbach alpha values above 0.7 are acceptable and values that are above 0.8 are preferable. The validity of the study was also ensured by pre-testing the questionnaire.

Ethical Consideration

Ethics involves the codes of behaviour adopted by the researcher. It is also the moral principles that guide researchers to conduct research without deception or intention to harm the participants of the study. Polychronidou *et al.* (2014) also shared that the participants' volunteering rights and confidentiality must be of importance to the research process. Guiding by this principle, participants were encouraged to participate at will.

Results and Discussion

Background Characteristics of f Respondents

From the study, female customers of both Shoprite and Melcom were the majority 180(75%) as against 60(25%) male customers. This was anticipated considering the fact that women in nature are characterized with shopping. Findings of the study are also consistent with prior studies (Sosu & Obeng, 2021). The results of the study with respect to age of respondents showed the age group 31-36 years (80) were the majority. This was followed by the age group 25-30(55), age groups 37-42(50), age groups 43-48(35) and age 48 and above (20) respectively.

From the study, respondents with other certificates represent the majority (150) followed by bachelor degree holders (50), diploma holders (35) whist the least being professional certificate holders (5). Findings from the study demonstrated that respondents have attained varied level of education

Reliability Statistics

In establishing the internal stability and consistency of the responses received, the study employed the use of the Cronbach Alpha (α). Devellis (2003) posits that the Cronbach Alpha coefficient should be above 0.7 and that

Cronbach Alpha of 0.7 is found reliable and values that are above 0.8 preferable. The coefficient value of Cronbach Alpha realized for the five variables of the study is 0.824 which is higher and preferable. Table 1 presents the results

Table 1: Reliability of variables

Cronbach's Number of Items	
Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
0.824	5

Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2024

Model Hypothesis

Correlation helps to identify the strength and direction relative between two or more variables (Creswell, 2007). Correlation also helps to show the relationships between two or more variables. The correlation analysis was carried in order to make the result scientific

Table 2: Bonus Packs and Purchase Intentions Relationship

Hypothesis	Independent variable	Dependent variable	Adjusted R Square	Coefficient of independent variable	Intercept	Model	T Stats	Results
1	Bonus packs	Purchase intentions	0.56	0.41	1.46	$Y=0.82x+1.64$	12.48	Accepted

Model Hypothesis

Correlation helps to identify the strength and direction relative between two or more variables (Creswell, 2007). Correlation also helps to show the relationships between two or more variables. The correlation analysis was carried in order to make the result scientific

Hypothesis Two: Coupons will have a significant relationship with purchase intentions

The adjusted R square of the result is 0.72 which explains 72.0% variation in purchase intentions as a result of coupons while about 28% remaining is the contribution of

Hypothesis 1: Bonus packs will have a significant relationship with purchase intentions

From the statistics, the adjusted R square of 0.56 explains 56.0% influence of bonus packs in purchase intentions of consumers whilst about 44% remaining is attributed to other variables. Also the coefficient of 0.41 implies that if bonus packs is increased by 1 unit, purchase intentions of consumers will have a corresponding increase of 41%. More so, the intercept has additive influence but the influence is considered meaningful only when the relationship is significant. The significance can be tested by the t-statistics results. The t-statistics result of the model is 12.48. A significant t-statistics should be above 1.96 and below -1.96 and since the t-statistics of the study is above 1.96, it can be concluded that the relationship is significant. We therefore accept the hypothesis of the study: *Hypothesis: Bonus packs will have a significant relationship with purchase intentions.* Table 2 presents the results

other variables. Also, the coefficient of 0.64 implies that if coupons are increased by 1 unit, purchase intentions will have a corresponding increase of 64%. More so, the intercept has additive influence but the influence is determined by its significance. The significance can be tested by t-statistics results. The t-statistics result of the model is 12.62. A significant t-statistics should be above 1.96 and below -1.96 and since the t-statistics of the study is above 1.96, it can be concluded that the relationship is significant. We can therefore accept the study's hypothesis **H2: Coupons will have a significant relationship with purchase intentions.** Table 3 presents the results

Table 3: Coupons and Purchase Intentions Relationship

	Independent variable	Dependent variable	Adjusted R Square	Coefficient of independent variable	intercept	Model	T Stats	Results
1	Coupons	Purchase intentions	0.72	0.64	1.42	$Y=0.64x+1.84$	12.62	Accepted

Hypothesis Three: Sample will have a significant positive relationship with purchase intentions

Findings of the statistics revealed an adjusted R square of 0.82. The adjusted R square of 82% implies that sample and trials has 82% influences on purchase intentions while about 18% influence is attributed to other variables. Also, the coefficient of 0.78 implies that if sample and free trial is increased by 1 unit, purchase intentions will have a corresponding increase of 78%. More so, the intercept has additive influence but the influence is determined by its significance. The significance can be tested by t-statistics

results. The t-statistics result of the model is 12.62. The intercept has additive influence which must be determined by its significance. The t-statistics is used to test the significance. The t-statistics result of the model is 12.64. A significant t-statistics should be above 1.96 and below -1.96. Since the t-statistics of the study is above 1.96, we can conclude that the relationship is significant. Therefore, the study's hypothesis *H3: Sample will have a significant positive relationship with purchase intentions* is accepted Table 4 presented the results

Table 4: Sample and Purchase Intentions Relationship

Hypothesis	Independent variable	Dependent variable	Adjusted R Square	Coefficient of independent variable	Intercept	Model	T Stats	Results
1	Sample	Purchase intentions	0.82	0.78	2.24	$Y=0.72x+1.86$	12.64	Accepted

Hypothesis Four: customer service will mediate sales promotion and purchase intentions

Findings of the statistics revealed an adjusted R square of 0.88. The adjusted R square of 88% implies that customer

service mediates sales promotional tools and purchase intentions of consumers 88% while about 12% is mediated by other variables. Also, the coefficient of 0.80 implies that if customer service is increased by 1 unit during sales promotion, purchase intentions will have a corresponding increase of 80%. More so, the intercept has additive influence but the influence is determined by its significance. The significance can be tested by t-statistics results. The t-statistics result of the model is 14.12. The intercept has additive influence which must be determined by its

significance. The t-statistics is used to test the significance. The t-statistics result of the model is 14.12. A significant t-statistics should be above 1.96 and below -1.96. Since the t-statistics of the study is above 1.96, we can conclude that customer service mediates sales promotion and purchase intentions significantly. Therefore, the study's hypothesis.

H4: customer service will mediate sales promotion and purchase intention is accepted Table 5 presented the results

Table 5: Sales Promotion, Purchase Intentions and Customer Service Mediation

Hypothesis	Mediation	Variables	Adjusted R Square	Coefficient of independent variable	Intercept	Model	T Stats	Results
1	Customer service	Salespromotion/Purchase intentions	0.88	0.80	1.86	$Y=0.82x+2.84$	14.12	Accepted

Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to impact of sales promotion tools on consumer purchase intentions of the retailing Industry in Lagos with customer service serving a mediating role.

The study makes use of explanatory design. Both convenience and purposive sampling technique was used to select 240 customers of the two retail firms in Lagos to participate in the study. Field survey was used to solicit data from the respondents. Questionnaire was the instruments used for the data collection. Data analysis was carried out with the use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.0

From the study, it was concluded that female customers of both Shoprite and Melcom were the majority 180(75%) as against 60(25%) male customers

Also, it can be concluded that the age group 31-36 years (80) were the majority.

More so, findings from the study demonstrated that respondents have attained varied level of education

The study's findings revealed a significant relationship between bonus packs and purchase intentions of consumers. It can be concluded that if bonus packs is increased by 1 unit, purchase intentions of consumers will have a corresponding increase of 41%.

Findings further demonstrated a significant relationship between coupons and purchase intentions of consumers. From the study, it can be concluded that if coupons are increased by 1 unit, purchase intentions will have a corresponding increase of 64%

Practical Implication for Managers

The findings have implications for practice, in particular retail. In this highly competitive industry it is important to know how to attract and retain customers (handoyo *et al.*, 2012). In the study we showed that purchase intentions are enhanced by sales promotional tools such as bonus packs, coupons samples and free trials, and also how useful customer service can mediate sales promotional and purchase intentions.

Therefore, retail managers should continue and focus on adopting sales promotional tools (bonus packs, coupons samples and free trials) as a marketing strategy to induce purchase intentions.

Retail managers should equally see the need to invest in customer service activities such as training programs for sales representatives. Courtesy, smiles, store assistance,

responsiveness must be embedded in the training programs since it is significant in mediating sales promotion and purchase intentions. This should be complement with friendly store layout and atmosphere

Direction for Future Studies

The study investigates the impact of sales promotion tools on consumer purchase intentions of the retailing Industry in Lagos with customer service serving a mediating role use. The study by nature is quantitative. Future studies could explore it qualitatively. Also, only three of the sales promotional tools were examined and delineated in the study. Therefore, future studies could look at the other tools and how they influence purchase intentions

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