



MARKETING STRATEGIES AND MARKETING PERFORMANCE OF ACTORS ON THE DISTRIBUTION CHANNEL OF INDOMIE INSTANT NOODLES IN ADAMAWA STATE NIGERIA: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF CUSTOMER LOYALTY

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ABSTRACT

This study aims at investigating the mediating role of customer loyalty on the relationship between marketing strategy and marketing performance within the distribution channel of Indomie Instant Noodles in Adamawa State, Nigeria. A literature review was conducted to find out the mediating role of customer loyalty on the relationship between marketing strategy and marketing performance. The findings revealed that marketing strategy and its characteristics (Product, Price, Place, and Promotion strategy) influence marketing performance and that customer loyalty can mediate this relationship. It is recommended thus that; organizations should make sure that they produce quality more product; charge competitive prices, position appropriately, use attractive packaging and provide other distinctive functional benefits to customers.

Keywords: Marketing, Marketing Strategy, Marketing Performance and Customer Loyalty.

Background to the Study

The consumer goods industry, particularly in the staple food sector, operates within a fast-paced and dynamic landscape, demanding a nuanced understanding of strategic elements for effective marketing performance. In this context, Indomie Instant Noodles brand has become a prominent brand in Nigeria, gaining considerable popularity. The global instant noodle market is projected to grow significantly, with the Asia Pacific region dominating at 85 percent, followed by Europe at 6percent, Latin America at 5percent, and Africa at 4percent (Market Insights, 2022).

Indomie Instant Noodles, which was introduced to Nigeria in 1988 by Indofood in partnership with Tolaram Group, has a dominant market share of 74 percent as of 2019 (Deb & Giokos,

2019. This brand has become a staple for many Nigerians, especially in urban areas, due to its affordability, convenience, taste, nutrition, and a variety of flavors (Brifo, 2022). Approximately 4.5 billion packets of Indomie instant noodles were sold annually in Nigeria, generating \$1 billion in revenue and contributing \$100 million in tax receipts to the Nigerian government (Saiesha, 2021).

In 2020, the Nigerian noodles industry was valued at N190 billion, with Indomie brand, produced by Dufil Prima Foods, holding over 60percent of the market share. Despite its economic significance, the industry faces challenges in maintaining and improving marketing performance. Marketing performance, crucial for achieving business goals, hinges on sustained marketing strategies, particularly the 4Ps of marketing – Product, Price, Place, and Promotion (Daniel, 2018). Nasution et al. (2021) defines marketing strategy as a set of goals and objectives, policies, and rules guiding a company's marketing efforts at every level, responding to constant changes and competitive pressures.

In this study, Kotler, and Keller's (2015) model incorporated marketing strategies, encompassing the 4Ps, with the product being a crucial element. Product quality is fundamental for creating a sustainable competitive advantage in the noodles industry. Pricing decisions, influenced by internal and external factors, must consider fairness and affordability to remain competitive (Singh, 2012). Place strategy involves making products easily accessible to target customers through effective distribution channels (Dang, 2014). Promotion, as a direct communication method, aims to effectively present products to the target market (Brassington & Pettitt, 2000).

Indomie market operates in a dynamic and complex economic environment in Nigeria, which posed some risks for marketing performance of actors along its distribution channel. Recently, the economy has been hit by the residual impact of spillover of COVID-19 pandemic, higher inflation, exchange rate crises, which has resulted in lower income and reduced consumer spending. These problems require adjustment in pricing, packaging, and promotion strategies to suit the economic conditions and consumer expectations. Staples food firms, such as Dufil Prima Foods may also need to strengthen their existing market, explore new markets, such as rural areas or neighboring countries, to expand its customer base and revenue streams.

Previous studies have examined various predictors of marketing performance. These include customer relationship management (Soliman, 2011), corporate social responsibility (Chahal & Sharma, 2006), eco-innovation and new product development (Pujari, 2006), digital marketing (Munir et al., 2023), etc. However, the existing studies often overlook the mediating role of customer loyalty in the relationship between marketing strategies and performance. Understanding how customer loyalty operates as a mediator is critical for gaining insights into the mechanism that explains how marketing initiatives in the channel partner's staple food sector influences their marketing performance (Oliver, 2014). While there is existing literature on

marketing strategies and performance, there is a research gap regarding the specific dynamics in the staple food sector, especially with a focus on the mediating role of customer loyalty.

In line with the following, the present study aims to fill this gap by providing a clear understanding of the interactions among marketing strategies, customer loyalty, and marketing performance using actors' on Indomie Instant Noodles distribution channel in Adamawa State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The Indomie Instant Noodles brand, a household name in Nigeria, has a distribution channel that involves various factors, including producers, major distributor (Multipro consumer products limited.) distributors, wholesalers, retailers, and consumers. However, this distribution channel has been plagued by several practical problems that have significantly affected the marketing performance of these actors.

One of the major issues is the frequency of prices increase in the price of Indomie instant noodles in the market. On a month-on-month basis, consumer prices rose by 1.7percent in October 2023, following a surge of 2.1 percent in the previous month. Food prices picked up to 31.5percent in October 2023, the highest since August,2005 from 30.6 percent in the previous month (National Bureau of statistics ,2023). The inflationary trend is attributed to removal of fuel subsidy in May 2023 and the weakening of the naira currency owing to the decision of the central bank in the intervention of the foreign exchange since June 2023 (National Bureau of statistics ,2023). The producers of Indomie instant noodles justify the increase in prices to rising cost of naira to dollar which necessitate the price increase. On the other hand, the distributor, wholesaler, retailer and consumer believe the frequent increase in price is unwarranted. (Fernando,2023)

Additionally, there is also the proliferation of low-priced noodles in the market. These noodles have provided succour to most homes that cannot afford the premium priced Indomie instant noodles thus posing a great threat to the market share of Indomie brand. (Orunko ,2023)

Added to this, is the low customer base for redistribution by the distributors. Customers are valuable assets for business. A good customer base guarantees a continuous source of revenue for the business due to repeat purchase and cross buying of other products provided by the business (Reinartz, 2006). Bearing this in mind, some of the distributors do not have a good network of customer base for redistribution. The low customer base often affects their sales volume and turnover. Thus, putting a huge burden on the limited resources of the company to help in the redistribution process which in most cases the company may not be able to achieve to the fullest.

The distribution channel for Indomie Instant Noodles in Adamawa State, Nigeria, presents a compelling area of study due to the existing practical gap that have not been adequately

addressed in current literature. Despite the popularity of Indomie Instant Noodles brand in the region, there is a notable absence of research that delves into the specific marketing strategies employed by actors within the distribution network, including major distributors (Multipro consumer products limited) wholesalers, sub distributors and retailers. This lack of insight hinders the development of effective marketing interventions tailored to the unique dynamics of the Indomie distribution network in Adamawa State, Nigeria.

Furthermore, in the increasingly competitive instant noodle market, the role of marketing strategies in driving marketing performance is well-documented (Abinav, 2023). However, the impact of predicting factors, such as customer satisfaction, product experience, and customer purchase behavioral attributes like Recency, Frequency, and Monetary Value (RFM), have been shown to significantly influence customer loyalty and, consequently, marketing performance (Lee & Jiang, 2021; Wassouf et al., 2020). Moderating factors such as market saturation and competitive intensity (Bhandari, 2021), and mediating factors such as customer loyalty, which are critical factors in the success of these strategies, is often overlooked (Carluccio et al., 2021). For instance, Indomie, the most popular brand of noodles in Nigeria, owes its success not only to its effective distribution channel, which ensures its availability and accessibility (Somuyiwa et al., 2021), but also to the loyalty of its customers. This loyalty, fostered through targeted marketing strategies, can significantly enhance the marketing performance by increasing purchase frequency or basket size (Carluccio et al., 2021). Moreover, studies have shown that customer loyalty can mediate the relationship between service quality, service orientation, and marketing mix strategy (Solimun & Fernandes, 2018). Thus, an empirical gap exists in understanding of how marketing strategies (product strategy, price strategy, place strategy, and promotion strategy), relates to marketing performance within the context of Indomie Instant Noodles distribution in Adamawa State, Nigeria. While existing studies explore the impact of marketing strategies on marketing performance (Astuti et al., 2018; Kartawinata & Wardhana, 2013; Suhandi, 2020), few incorporate the crucial mediating effect of customer loyalty (Al Karim et al., 2023). The incorporation of customer loyalty as a mediator becomes necessary because it will provide a practical insight on the need for maintaining and sustaining customer relationship which in turns has direct implication for actors willing to build brand loyalty and enhance their position in the market. There is also the need to expand the existing empirical body of knowledge by shedding light into the impact of marketing strategies on performance on actors of the distribution channels of Indomie instant noodles.

The methodological gap in the current literature becomes apparent when considering the lack of rigorous assessments, such as the Importance-Performance Map Analysis (IPMA), within the study of marketing strategies in the context of instant noodle distribution channels. IPMA offers a powerful tool for identifying and prioritizing key drivers that significantly influence marketing performance (Hair et al., 2018). Previous studies did not complement their research finding

with IPMA. Integrating IPMA into the research design will contribute to sound methodological precision required of a scientific study, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the relative importance and performance of various marketing strategies in the Indomie distribution channel in Adamawa State.

Interestingly, the studies found in the context of instant noodles were conducted mainly in Indonesia (Devina & Rahayu, 2022; Mulyaning, 2016; Tamara, 2014). The few studies found in Nigeria do not examine the link between marketing strategies and marketing performance on the distribution network of Indomie Instant Noodles, let alone employing the mediating effect of customer loyalty (Akpabio, 2008; Nnawuihe & Ogbu, 2019). To the best of the researcher's knowledge, investigation into this relationship has not been narrowed to Africa, particularly the Nigerian noodles sector. Even if such a study exists, the researcher was unable to come across it. Narrowing the study to the distribution channel of Indomie Instant Noodles will provide some basis of comparison with the previous findings. Hence, the study is contributing to the literature on marketing performance of channel partners.

However, further research suggestion that may be explored is a comparative analysis of the different instant noodles brands in Nigeria to understand the factors that contributed to the success of Indomie instant noodles and suggest areas of improvement for other brands.

Therefore, the present study will investigate the effect of specific marketing strategies on marketing performance. Empirically, the study will examine customer loyalty as mediator in these relationships. Methodologically, the study will complement its findings with IPMA. Contextually, the study will use channel partners along the Indomie Instant Noodles distribution network in Adamawa State, Nigeria.

Literature Review

The Concept of Market Performance

Marketing performance enables marketers to be able to access the effectiveness of their marketing initiative in aligning with the objective that was outlined in the marketing plan. As a result, managers and leaders of firms are interested in defining their indicators for judging the performance of marketing initiatives. Sukardi et al. (2021) demonstrated that marketing performance is a description and analysis of the outputs of marketing operations activities in the company by comparing the level of progress made to the objectives set for such activities. Goudarzi et al. (2019) defines marketing performance as the field through which its indicators determine the organization's position among competitors by adopting innovative marketing activities that help the organization to enhance its competitive position and instill the brand in the minds of its current and potential customers. The competitive theory indicates that marketing performance is a process that consists of identifying sources of superiority and core competencies related to the organization's resources and its ability to acquire, implement, and

develop business market opportunities; evaluating positions of superiority resulting from the design and implementation of innovative marketing strategies; and knowing the financial and non-financial results obtained from the exploitation of resources (Afriyie et al., 2019).

Performance is measured in its general form because of the organization's work during a specific period, which includes financial and non-financial indicators (Goudarzi et al., 2019). The current study relied on the non-financial dimensions of (customer satisfaction, product quality, Market share, brand awareness, innovations and operational efficiency) to measure marketing performance. These non-performance measures complement the financial indicators and provide a more holistic view of an organization performance.

The Concept of Marketing Strategies

There are various definitions of marketing strategy in the literature and such definitions reveal diverse perspectives (Li & Calantone, 2000). A marketing strategy is a group of goals or objectives set along with rules that provide information about the direction of each company at each level and its allocations, especially as a company guide in facing environmental competition (Harahap, 2018). Marketing strategy can be defined as a plan by a company to differentiate itself positively from its competitors, using its relative strength to better satisfy customer needs in each environment (Jain, 2004). Marketing strategies entail the set of actions designed to achieve competitive advantage and achieve better than average results by intelligent and fact-based selection among alternative leading to such advantage (Cross, 2018).

A marketing strategy outlines how to correctly position products in the market while considering both internal and external constraints (Heiner & Muhlbacher, 2010). According to Kotler and Keller (2015), marketing strategies such as product, price, place, and promotion are used by organizations to respond to market and internal forces to achieve their goals. Marketing strategies were operationalized in this study using Kotler and Keller's (2015) model of product, price, place, and promotion.

A product strategy is a high-level plan unfolding what a business hopes to achieve with its product, and how it plans to do so. Kotler and Armstrong (2018), define a product as anything that can be offered to a market for attention, acquisition, use, or consumption that might satisfy a want or need. Mohammad *et al.* (2012), also say that product is the physical appearance of the product, packaging, and labeling information which can also influence whether consumers notice a product in-store, examine it, and purchase it. Past researchers have recommended that product influences have a significant impact on business performance (Kemppainen *et al.*, 2008; Ogunmokun and Esther, 2004; Owomoyela *et al.*, 2013). In marketing, the product is an important component of marketing. Developing the 'right' product is not an easy task because of the dynamic nature of consumer needs and attitudes. The goods and/or services people buy at any given time are determined by their immediate needs and other external stimuli.

Price Strategy

Price, according to Kotler and Keller (2015), is the cost of producing, delivering, and marketing the product charged. According to pricing, on the other hand, is defined as the process by which an organization determines what it will receive in exchange for its product after considering manufacturing costs, marketplace, competition, market condition, and product quality. Companies use pricing strategies such as premium pricing, value pricing, penetration pricing, cost plus pricing, competitive pricing, price skimming, going rate pricing, geographical pricing, segmented pricing, product mix pricing, psychological pricing, and discriminatory pricing, according to Anderson and White (2019).

Place Strategy

Place refers to the methods and location you use to make your products or services easily accessible to your target customers (Dang, 2014). In marketing, place strategy includes the distribution channel through which a company gets its products and services in front of customers. According to Harsono (2017), place strategy is critical in a product or service's marketing mix. A company's place strategy outlines how and where it will place its products and services to gain market share and consumer purchases. This component of the 4Ps is also known as the distribution strategy, and it may include physical and online stores, as well as any other means by which the company can reach customers (Harsono, 2017).

Promotion Strategy

The use of advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, public relations, and direct marketing to promote organizational products is known as promotion strategy (Muchiri, 2016). Promotion, according to Brassington and Pettitt (2000), is a direct way for businesses to communicate their products or services to their target customers. According to Kotler and Armstrong (2018), promotion encompasses all activities undertaken to communicate and promote products or services to the target market. Advertising, sales promotions, personal selling, and publicity are all part of the promotional mix, according to Kotler and Keller (2015). Kamba (2019) conducted research on the effectiveness of promotion mix methods on sales in Kenyan pharmaceutical manufacturing companies. It was discovered that marketing managers should determine what combination of promotion mix will result in effective promotion programs and thus an increase in sales.

Customer Loyalty

Reichheld and Sasser (1990) define loyalty as the propensity of a customer to continue patronizing a particular product or service, driven by satisfaction and a perceived lack of viable alternatives. In contrast, Oliver (1999) emphasizes the affective and attitudinal components, characterizing loyalty as a deeply rooted commitment and preference for a brand, transcending mere repeat transactions.

Customer loyalty comprises behavioral, attitudinal, and cognitive dimensions, each offering unique insights into the depth and nature of the customer-brand relationship (Keeling, 2022). The behavioral dimension involves repeat purchases and consistent patronage (Jacoby & Chestnut, 1978). The attitudinal dimension encompasses customer satisfaction, trust, and brand preference, reflecting the emotional and psychological connection (Dick & Basu, 1994). The cognitive dimension includes elements like brand awareness and perceived quality, indicating the customer's informed decision-making process (Yi & Jeon, 2003).

Product Strategy and Market Performance

The objective of product strategy is to create a product that meets customer needs, differentiates the business from competitors, and drives growth and profitability. It involves defining the target market, identifying customer needs and preferences, and developing a product roadmap that outlines the key features, benefits, and value proposition of the product. Several studies have examined the effect of product strategy in its relationship with market performance, some of the studies that established significant positive relationship between product strategy and market performance, are: Smith et al. (2019); Chen et al. (2017); Gituma (2017); Muthengi (2017), Bintu (2017) reported a positive relationship between product strategy and market performance. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed to test the relationship:

H01: *There is no significant positive effect of product strategy on marketing performance among actors on Indomie Instant Noodles distribution channel in Adamawa State.*

Price Strategy and Market Performance

Pricing strategy has direct impact on a company's revenue and profitability. A well-articulated pricing strategy can help a company differentiate itself from competitors, attract and retain customers, and achieve its overall business objectives. Pricing strategy has been examined in its relationship with market performance some of the studies that established significant positive relationship between price strategy and market performance, are: Johnson and Lee (2018); Anas and Batool (2016); Cross (2018); Goodie – okio (2022); Hyginus, et al (2019) reported a positive relationship between price strategy and market performance. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed to test the relationship:

H02: *There is no significant positive effect between price strategy and marketing performance among actors on Indomie instant noodles distribution channel in Adamawa State.*

Place Strategy and Market Performance

The aim of place strategy is to ensure that products reach the right customers at the right time, thus increasing accessibility and market presence. A well-articulated place strategy contributes to improved customer convenience, enhanced market visibility, and ultimately, increased sales

and profitability. Place strategy has been examined in its relationship with market performance some of the studies that established significant positive relationship between place strategy and market performance, are: Anderson and White (2019); Li and Zhang (2018); Ihemereze (2020); Budi and Aditya (2013); Adekola, (2021) reported a positive relationship between place strategy and market performance. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed to test the relationship:

H03: *There is positive effect of place strategy on marketing performance among actors on Indomie instant noodles distribution channel in Adamawa state.*

Promotion Strategy and Market Performance

The purpose of promotion is to effectively communicate the value proposition of the product or service, create a strong brand presence, and ultimately, stimulate customer interest and purchase behavior. A well-articulated promotion strategy can contribute to increased market visibility, customer engagement, and overall business performance. Promotion strategy has been examined in its relationship with market performance some of the studies that established significant positive relationship between promotion strategy and market performance, are: Martinez et al. (2019); Eniola and Olorunleke (2020); Lars (2008); Pemb, et al (2017); Ibojo and Akinruwa (2014) reported a positive relationship between promotion strategy and market performance. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed to test the relationship:

H04: *There is positive effect of promotion strategy on marketing performance among actors on Indomie instant noodles distribution channel in Adamawa State.*

Customer Loyalty and Marketing Performance

The concept of customer loyalty has garnered substantial attention in the marketing literature, serving as a pivotal factor in the success and sustainability of businesses (Oliver, 1999). Within the context of marketing strategies and performance, understanding the mediating role of customer loyalty has become increasingly essential. Existing studies have acknowledged the significant influence of marketing strategies on customer loyalty (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Yoo & Donthu, 2001). However, the empirical exploration of how customer loyalty acts as a mediator in the relationship between distinct marketing strategies and overall marketing performance remains an evolving area of research.

Previous research has indicated that various marketing strategies, including product strategy, price strategy, place strategy, and promotion strategy, can directly impact customer loyalty (Rust et al., 2004; Srinivasan et al., 2002). These strategies, when effectively executed, not only contribute to enhanced customer satisfaction but also foster a sense of loyalty among consumers. For instance, a compelling product strategy that aligns with consumer needs or an attractive pricing strategy can positively influence customer loyalty (Yi & Jeon, 2003; Anderson

& Mittal, 2000). Again, studies have shown that customer loyalty had impact on marketing performance (Omodafe & Akparobi, 2013). Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed to test the relationship:

H05: marketing strategies does not indirectly affect marketing performance through customer loyalty on the distribution channel of Indomie instant noodles in Adamawa state.

Research Framework

Relying on previous empirical investigations and the relevant gaps identified in the literature, a proposed conceptual framework for the study, presented in Figure 1.

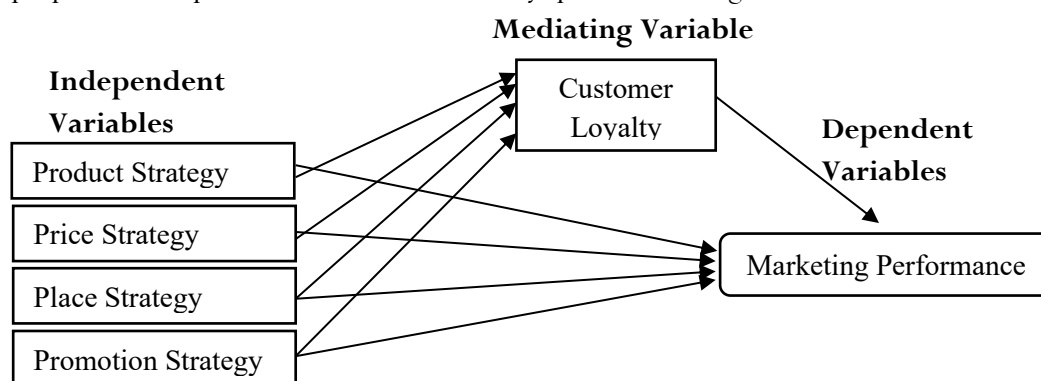


Figure 1: Proposed Research Framework

Methodology

The study will adopt the descriptive survey research design to investigate the effect of marketing strategies on marketing performance within the distribution channel of Indomie Instant Noodles in Adamawa State, Nigeria. The approach is an efficient method used in obtaining responses, specifically when the researcher knows exactly what is required and how best to measure the constructs of interest (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010). The population of this study will comprise of 748 actors that are actively involved in the distribution channel of Indomie Instant Noodles in Adamawa State. As shown in Table 1, these actors will include Sales Teams of Multipro Consumer Products Limited, Distributors, Sub-distributors, and Retail Outlets selling noodles. Given the diverse roles within the distribution channel, capturing perspectives from various segments of the population ensures a comprehensive understanding of the impact of marketing strategies on marketing performance.

Table 1: Population of the Study

| S/N | Subgroups | Population | Proportion (%) |
|-----|---|------------|----------------|
| 1 | Sales Teams of Multipro Consumer Products Limited | 38 | 5% |
| 2 | Distributors | 14 | 2% |

| | | | |
|--------------|--------------------------------|------------|------------|
| 3 | Sub-Distributors | 349 | 47% |
| 4 | Retail Outlets Selling Noodles | 342 | 46% |
| Total | | 743 | 100 |

Source: The Multipro consumer product Ltd., (2022)

In an attempt to achieve maximum representativeness, this study will employ cluster and simple random techniques. This sampling technique is will be employ because it gives each member the same probability of being selected (Hair, Money, Samouel & Page, 2007). A structured questionnaire consisting of closed ended multiple choice- questions will be use for the survey. Given that most of the items in the questionnaire are targeted to measuring the respondents' perceptions and attitudes, hence, Likert-type scale will be consider as more appropriate and reliable (Alreck & Settle, 1995; Miller, 1991). The combination of both descriptive and inferential statistics will be use as methods of data analysis. Descriptive statistics according to Babbie (1973) provide a method of reducing large data to manageable summaries to permit easy understanding and interpretation. To analyze data, this study will use the SPSS version 21 software and the Smart PLS 3.0 application (Ringle, Wende & Becker, 2015). Specifically, the SPSS software will be used to screen and clean the retrieved responses for further analysis. The proposed theoretical model will then be tested with the aid of Smart PLS 3.0 (Ringle et al., 2015).

Conclusion

This paper is based on an ongoing M.Sc thesis and the following propositions are therefore made based on the current findings on the literature reviewed so far: First, that marketing strategy have a significant impact on marketing performance; Secondly, that there are evidence that customer loyalty can mediate the relationship between marketing strategy and marketing performance. Finally, the study recommends that Firms that are operating in a dynamic business environment need to adopt a strategic marketing practice as this will make the firm to be consistent in the eyes of its customers and eventually increase effective market performance. Firms should produce quality more product; charge competitive prices, position appropriately, use attractive packaging and provide other distinctive functional benefits to customers.

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