

Effect of Electronic Marketing on Customer Retention: A Study of Selected Foods and Beverages Firms in Southwestern Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined electronic marketing and customer retention in selected food and beverages firms in Southwestern Nigeria. This was done to determine the effect of e-marketing on customer retention among selected foods and beverages firms in Southwestern Nigeria. Descriptive research survey based on cross-sectional mode was adopted. Data were collected from six purposively selected companies from Nigerian Exchange Group. The findings showed that e-marketing have a significant effect on customer retention in the selected food and beverages firms in Southwestern Nigeria. It is concluded that firms in the manufacturing sector should emphasise the usage of combined channels of e-marketing rather than deploying them individually, otherwise optimal benefit would become a mirage.

Keywords: Electronic marketing, Customer retention and Foods and Beverages Firms
JEL Classification codes: M31, M31, P42

1. Introduction

Customers are highly mobile in the current information age where practically every business and human activity is going and operating with digitalised orientation. In this circumstance, any business that fails to catch up with the new condition that technology has programmed mankind into may find it uneasy to meet up with competition. There are a number of ways through which sellers connect to their buyers: among which hawking and warehousing are popular. In the contemporary times, increase in the number of producers cum sellers has necessitated devising newer technique to reach and keep customers; especially the distant ones in which internet is representing one prominent device. With the internet, electronic marketing becomes possible and e-commerce is promoted. However, research is yet to adequately unravel the extent of which e-marketing ensures retention of customers in foods and beverages sector. (Ajayi, 2021).

Exchange process has become more convenient than ever with little or no barrier between customers and manufacturers, producers of goods and services. Failure to connect with customers on one click from any electronic platform tends to spell doom for any enterprise that neglects the initiative of not embracing electronic marketing. There has been an increase in the use of electronic marketing within the last decades by both small and large businesses. It is widely acknowledged that it brings about different opportunities for organisations, business outlets and satisfaction to customers. The internet has improvised the entire world

for better living, there is now an easy access to information, and communication with people have also become easy and speedy. With the advent of internet, articles can be shared, photos and all manner of graphics which were hitherto difficult or impossible before. The conventional way of marketing has been upgraded for better performance by electronic marketing thereby making entire human life beautiful.

In an effort to examine the contribution of e-marketing to customer retention the study seeks to answer this question: how does e-marketing have effect on customer retention among the selected foods and beverages firms in Southwestern Nigeria? In the light of this, the objective is to determine the effect of e-marketing on customer retention among selected foods and beverages firms in Southwestern Nigeria. Further to this, it is hypothesised that e-marketing does not have a significant effect on customer retention in the selected food and beverages firms in Southwestern Nigeria.

2. Literature Review

2.1 E-marketing

E-marketing is a medium for achieving and serving target market objectives, and achieving marketing objectives through deployment of technology (Smith & Chaffey, 2005; McDonald & Wilson, 1999), reaching out to target market for maximum satisfaction and achieving organisational goals electronically Strauss & Frost (2001). Similarly, Reedy and Schullo (2004) recognised it as business transactions carried out over networks. McDonald and Wilson (1999) pointed out that e-marketing is the usage of mobile phones to access messages sent by manufacturer to desire target audience in order to facilitate sales transaction.

2.1.1 E-Mail Marketing

It is designed to send messages on marketing promotional activities to a focused set of both actual and potential beneficiaries electronically (Galgano & La Mesa, (2006). It drives creation of marketing schemes that utilizes electronic means to interact with both actual and potential customers. It is cheaper to run for advertisers because regular communication and contact with their customers is possible. The assumption resides in the cost factor that upholds it as advertising apparatus. According to Merisavo and Raulas (2004), e-mail makes countless promoting desires to be achieved like advertising to customers, product promotion, brands set up, give information in regards to organization websites, to create awareness for the customers as new entrants and to inform them about their request position. E-mail marketing makes customer purchasing ability to be progressed and might be forced to react and at last occupied with exchange procedure with organisation. It occupies important advertising means to showcase organisations' items (Pramai, 2010).

2.1.2 Internet Marketing

Internet marketing is an all-inclusive term for marketing products and services online. This is one of the significant parts of e-marketing that has transformed the nature and qualities of broadcasting and communications in a special way that has never occurred in the past decades. This has changed the whole world into Global Village (McLuhan, 2009). Over the years, Internet has been described as a predominant premise that has changed and rebuilt the manner in which businesses are carried out and the mode, we relate to each other.

Researchers' extensive discussion submitted that e- marketing has a less expensive means of reaching customers and customer data bank which in turn facilitates market research

(Fagerstrom & Ghinea, 2010). Internet marketing rolled out essential improvements in organizations as well as in person's behaviour. It furnished the organisation with information to comprehend the necessities of customers removing place and time limitations. They further documented that it decreased the charge of product by discarding many unnecessary exchange and distribution charges (Sheth & Sharma, 2005).

In two decades now, the internet became famous for its boom. This time range improved the manner in which organisations are doing transaction with their customers. The advent of Internet brought the existence of numerous organisations to question that their survival become threatened because they failed to upgrade technologically. The most important advantage is that it serves as an avenue where selling and buying take place, serves as a medium for communication, as a channel of distribution as transactions are easily routed through this channel.

2.1.3 Mobile Marketing

Mobile Marketing is a structure designed to reach customers through their mobile device (Will kenton, 2021). Mobile marketing results from explosive growth in mobile technology consisting of (SMS) Short Message Service, (MMS) Multimedia Messaging Service, (WAP) Wireless Application Protocol, banner advert and others. Electronic devices like mobile phones and its registered applications are increasingly in use for different transactions at any point in time and for majority of individuals. Kaplan (2012) queried what life would look like without these gadgets Pavlou and Stewart (2000) submitted that quick selection of cell phones brought up the way that individuals have acknowledged this innovation and now it has become significant vehicles of communication. As cell-phones permitted messages in altogether new structure, so it has additionally impacted on organizations. Organisations are utilising it as an instrument for association among customers and promoters. Presently, advertisers can without much of a stress quickly connect at once with customers throughout the world.

2.1.4 Extranet Marketing

Vlosky, Fontenot and Blalock (2000) characterized extranet marketing as a platform where business associates are connected together via the internet for business transaction. Outside partners, for example customers, suppliers and co-workers are instances of the kinds of individuals who earn proceeds from Extranets as a sort of networks that are private.

This business stakeholder can trade immensely on information utilising Electronic Data Interchange (EDI), share entire information, pool resources together on combined business adventures, and make contributions to share service and training arrangements between different firms or businesses. In light of that, an Extranet is bound to go about as a method for conveying and sharing business information safely without any fear of divulge. Pass word, user name and finger print could be used as a safeguarding measure. Vlosky, et al (2000) discovered that interaction between customers and suppliers is expressly permitted electronically in extranet marketing which in turn facilitates sales transaction.

2.1.5 Intranet Marketing

El-Gohary (2009) characterized intranet marketing as a private network contained within an enterprise that is used to securely share company information and computing resources among employees. An intranet marketing can also be used for working in groups and teleconferences. Intranets marketing encourage communication within an organization. It allows employees to easily access important information, links, applications, forms and

databases of company records. A database that includes all the usernames of employees who have access rights to the network is often used to maintain intranet security. Strauss and Frost (2001) pointed out that intranet marketing also consist of many interlinked local area networks (LANs), as well as leased lines connecting to wide area network resources the intranet's web server uses TCP/IP, HTTP and other internet protocols. Typically, an intranet includes connections through one or more gateway computers to the outside internet and external resource.

2.2 Customer Retention

According to Gerpott *et al.* (2001), customer retention is referred to as the activity engaged by the company to assist in monitoring the relationship between parties involved in business transaction. He also broke the word customer contract into two words and defined customer as the extension of contract of customer with its provider of service over a particular period of time and retention as the customer's ability to practise repeat purchase of goods and services from the supplier. In addition, it is referring to customer, refraining from termination of its contract with a particular business partner (Gerpott, *et. al.*, 2001).

It is also seen as lessening the abandonment rate by 5% and which will produce 85% benefit. Moreover, the faithful are less likely to switch their specialist organisations because of charging and estimating factors. Besides, faithful or retained customers additionally will in general prescribe the business to different companions, family and group of friends through oral conversation according to (Reichheld, *et. al.*, 1989; Santouridis & Trivellas, 2010). This research tends to concentrate on retention of customer with the concentration centres on factors that can influence customer relation in beverages and food firms. Previous studies have dealt sufficiently with quality of service, trust and observed value in retention of customer. Different factors, for instance, habit, motivation, marketing blend variables, consumer loyalty affect the retention of customer.

As indicated by Yap and Kew (2007), the kind of quality service rendered by firm to customers enhances repeat purchase. It is observed that retained customer's serves as a mouth piece of advertisement to others as a result of benefit enjoyed from the service rendered by the company. (Sharmeela-Banu, *et. al.*, 2012). After sale service, right price, efficient customer relationship increases customers' attention. (Reinartz & Kumar, 2003; Kim, *et. al.*, 2004).

Price, a vital determinant factor of consideration by customer for acquisition (Bolton, *et. al.*, 2004). The professionals, the analyst pointed out that pricing strategies utilized in gaining customers can also influence customers' retention for a longer period of time and lifetime value with the firm (Polo, *et. al.*, 2011). It is ascertained that customers 'price awareness, for example, low equitable price among service provider sometimes is the main reason for post purchase gratification thus it pushes customers to repurchase again. Consequently, customer loyalty for repeat purchase of firm performance and provision without intention to switch over because of cost is noted as fascinating force for firm retention strategy. Notwithstanding their disappointment with the firm, some customers will in general remain longer with the firm mainly because of increments in the switching costs (Kim *et al.*, 2007). In accordance with this, Han, *et. al.* (2009) had found out that the switching costs would positively impact the amount of retained clients that a firm has.

3. Data and Methods

The study used survey method based on cross-sectional mode. It was a survey carried out among firms in the foods and beverages companies in southwestern, Nigeria. 14,387 consisting of employees and customers (distributors) was obtained from the annual reports of the companies. Yamane (1967) was adopted to determine sample size of 197 and 192 of employees and customers respectively totalling 389. Questions were validated and the reliability test of the instrument obtained using Cronbach Alpha that ranged between 0.736 and 0.862 for proxies of e-marketing while customer retention had an alpha of 0.914 meeting the condition of Cresswell (1994) and Zikmund (2003). Likert scale of 4 was used. The instrument used was adapted from previous studies (El-Gohary, 2009; Omondi, 2017; Qashuo & Saleh, 2018). Multiple linear regression was employed to investigate the effect of e-marketing on customer retention among the selected firms.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion of findings

4.1 Respondents Bio-Data

Bio-data considered in this study included age group, educational qualifications among others. Tables 4.1 showed that minority of the respondents were females (46.4%) while the males were (53.6%). The foods and beverages sector were male gender dominated.

Majority of the respondents were within very active and productive ages; those whose age were less or equal to 20 yrs. This also showed that majority of the respondents were mature individuals with matured minds who are expected to give sound ethical judgement and responses in answering the research questions. The highest educational qualifications of the respondents were HND/B.Sc. (40.4%), Masters (20.6%), PhD (3.2%), OND (24%), while 11.9% of the total respondents have less than OND. Thus, majority of the respondents were educated individuals who understood the contents, constructs and importance of supplying honest informed answers to the research questions which further justified the validity and reliability of the gathered data.

On ownership type 49.1% majority of the businesses was sole proprietorship, followed by 41.4% for limited liability Company, while 9.5% were in partnership businesses. Concerning the number of employees in each company, those with less than 50 employees were 36.1%, 51 – 100 were 40.4%, and 101 – 150 were 19.3% and 151 and above were 4.2%. Among the sampled respondents, those with less than a year experience was 21.6%, 1 – 5 years is 31.4%, and over 5 years was 47%. This further strengthened the validity of the study because majority of the respondents had enough years of experience to actually supply accurate answers to the research questions.

Table 1: Respondents Bio-Data

Characteristics		Frequency	Percentages (%)
Gender	Male	176	46.4
	Female	203	53.6
	Total	379	100.0
Age group	Less than 20	32	8.4
	21 – 30	165	43.5
	31 – 40	114	30.1
	41 and above	68	17.9
	Total	379	100.0
Educational Qualification	Less than OND	45	11.9
	OND	91	24.0
	HND/BSc	153	40.4
	Masters	78	20.6
	Ph.D.	12	3.2
	Total	379	100.0
Type of Business	Sole proprietorship	186	49.1
	Partnership	36	9.5
	Limited Liability Company	157	41.4
	Total	379	100.0
Number of Employees	less than 50 and below	137	36.1
	51 – 100	153	40.4
	101 – 150	73	19.3
	151 and above	16	4.2
	Total	379	100.0
Years of experience	Less than a year	82	21.6
	1 – 5	119	31.4
	over 5 years	178	47.0
	Total	379	100.0

Source: Authors' Computation (2021)

4.2 Electronic Marketing and Customer Retention

Table 4.1 examined the relationship between electronic marketing and customer retentions among foods and beverages firms in Southwestern, Nigeria. Proxies of e-marketing were examined viz: email marketing, internet marketing, mobile marketing, intranet marketing, and extranet marketing.

The analyses established that 64.9% agreed that email marketing allows for ease of accessing customers, while more than 66% agreed that email marketing is easy to use. Also, more than 65.2% agreed that email marketing can be used by anyone regardless of literacy level.

With regard to internet marketing, e-marketing is cost effective 66.2%, and could be very expensive at times 64.4%. On the overall, e-marketing via email marketing and internet marketing among foods and beverages manufacturing companies in southwest were above average (Mean = 3.13) and (Mean = 3.37) respectively.

On mobile marketing, majority confirmed that use of e-marketing is more reliable (67%), safer (66%), and efficient in reaching customers (63.1%). In summary, e-marketing via mobile marketing was above average (M = 3.09) in the foods and beverages companies within the studied area. Regarding the extranet marketing, 71.5% majority attested that e-marketing allows for wider coverage. Regardless of location, the use of e-marketing allows firms to reach large number of customers (67.5%), as well as enhanced better customer retention (68.9%). In essence, the overall e-marketing through intranet were above average

(M = 3.48).

The analysis also revealed that the use of e-marketing allowed better and efficient customer feedbacks (67.5%), built better customer-client relationship (69.9%), and facilitate good and efficient customer services (71.2%). On the aggregates, the customer service and feedbacks via the use of intranet marketing was also above average (M = 3.19) among foods and beverages manufacturing firms in southwestern, Nigeria. The use of extranet marketing generates more relevance to firms in the industry; the average result of 3.48 obtained from the analysis is well above other e-marketing channels then it benefits firms more in terms of wider coverage in relation to customer retention.

Table 2: Electronic Marketing and Customer Retention

E-Marketing	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	Mean
E-Mail Marketing					
e-mail marketing allows for ease of retaining customers	2.6	3.7	64.9	28.8	3.13
e-mail marketing is easy to use for customer retention	3.4	5.3	66.0	25.3	
e-mail marketing can be used by anyone regardless of literacy level to retain customers	4.2	8.2	65.2	22.4	
Internet Marketing					
Cost of using internet marketing is relatively cheaper than the conventional marketing for retaining customers	4.0	6.1	23.7	66.2	3.37
Internet marketing saves cost for customer retention	4.2	6.3	26.4	63.1	
Cost of internet marketing to retain customers is relatively high	4.5	6.3	64.4	24.8	
Mobile Marketing					
The use of mobile marketing is more reliable for customer retention	2.6	5.0	67.0	25.3	3.09
Use off mobile marketing seems safer for customer retention	3.4	7.4	66.0	23.2	
The use of mobile marketing is efficient in retaining customers	5.5	9.0	63.1	22.4	
Extranet Marketing					
Extranet marketing allows for wider coverage for customer retention	0.5	4.2	23.7	71.5	3.48
Regardless of location, the use of extranet marketing allows firms to reach large number of customers for their retention.	1.1	5.0	26.4	67.5	
Better customer retention strategy	2.1	4.2	68.9	24.8	
Intranet Marketing					
The use of intranet marketing allows for better and efficient customer feedbacks to enhance retention	0.5	2.6	67.5	29.3	3.19
Better customer-client relationship is built using intranet marketing for retention purpose	1.6	5.3	69.9	23.2	
Intranet marketing facilitates better customer-client interactions to aid their retention	1.6	4.7	71.2	22.4	

Source: Authors' Computation (2021)

4.3 E-marketing and customer retention

The analysis from Table 3 showed a multiple regression of the relationships between e-marketing and customer retention within the foods and beverages firms in Southwestern Nigeria. The customer retention was significantly predicted at $R^2 = 0.210$, $F = (5, 372) = 16.531$, $p < 0.05$. The multiple coefficients of variation (R) 0.459 depicted a positive relationship between e-marketing and customer retention.

The Durbin Watson statistic was used in discovering evidence of serial correlation. A Durbin Watson value of less than 1.5 is an indication of serial correlation. A value greater than 1 or less than 3 is recommended (Field, 2009). The result of the Durbin Watson (DW) was satisfactory at 1.551 indicating no autocorrelation between the residuals from the regression model. The multicollinearity of the model was further verified by Tolerance (Tol.) which showed satisfactory values for all variables (all greater than 0.1). Also, the outcome of Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) was satisfactory for all variables (all less than 10).

Based on these results, the overall effect ($F = 16.531$, $p < 0.05$) showed a positive influence on customer retention. Therefore, e-marketing has a significant effect on customer retention in foods and beverages firms in Southwestern Nigeria.

Table 3: Multiple Regression Showing the Effect of E-Marketing on Customer Retention

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)						
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Significance	
Regression	3122.051	6	520.342	16.531	.000 ^b	
Residual	11709.638	372	31.478			
Total	14831.689	378				
Coefficients						
Independent variables	Beta	T	Significance	Collinearity Statistics		
				Tolerance	VIF	
EMM	-.138	-2.413	.016	.648	1.544	
IM	-.139	-2.703	.007	.798	1.253	
MM	-.114	-2.068	.039	.694	1.441	
ITM	-.251	-4.684	.000	.737	1.357	
EM	.031	.583	.560	.741	1.350	
Correlational Statistics						
Dependent variable	Multiple R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	S.E of Estimate	Durbin Watson	
CUR	.459 ^a	.210	.198	5.61048	1.551	

Source: Authors' Computation (2021)

4.4 Discussion of Findings

This study evaluates the effect of e-marketing on customer retention in Southwestern Nigeria. The study used primary data with the sample size of three hundred and eighty-nine (389) employees and customers of foods and beverages firms in Southwestern, Nigeria.

This study showed that all the foods and beverages firms in the Southwestern Nigeria are familiar with all the stated e-marketing strategies. The study also revealed that all the stated e-marketing strategies have been adopted to a very great extent except 'blogging, and e-mail marketing' with low adoption and usage. This massive adoption of e-marketing among foods and beverages firms in Southwestern, Nigeria is in agreement with the study of Tsekouropoulos *et al.* (2011) where it was concluded that the rate of adoption of e-commerce in Greece could be a valuable model for the designers of websites that promote ecommerce activities within the wider area in the country. The findings further agreed with Srinivasan, Bajaj, and Bhanot (2016) who used social media participation and social media marketing strategies. They concluded that social media participation has an influence on

brand awareness and brand trust. The study further showed a positive correlation between sales and amount of time spent on social media.

The study further showed that e-marketing has influenced customer retention to a very great extent among the foods and beverages firms in Southwestern, Nigeria. This finding agreed with Srinivasan *et al.* (2016) whose study further revealed that e-marketing has a very great influence on customer acquisition and retention. Also, Ali *et al.* (2015) stressed that through e-marketing, a positive consumer view could be enhanced.

On the relationship between e-marketing and customer retention, the mean of all the stated concepts is far above average. This implied that customer retention has been influenced by e-marketing to a very great extent. This was in line with Riz (2013) whose study was done majorly to establish the relationship between various online marketing tools (Online chat, WOM, and Email) and their effects on the brand perception. The study showed that Karachi residents are active internet user who prefer e-marketing over the other two variables. Also, Tarighi, *et al.*, (2017) whose focus was on the development of e-marketing capacity of Professional Sports Federation in Kenya; concluded that various identified factors have a very high influence on e-marketing capability of Professional Sport in the country.

Finally, the findings showed that e-marketing have a significant effect on customer retention in foods and beverages firms in Southwestern Nigeria was in agreement with Adede, *et al.*, (2017) who studied Electronic Marketing activity and its performance in telecommunications firms in Kenya and concluded that there is significant relationship between e-marketing practices and organizational performance. In the same direction, Qashuo and Saleh (2018) concluded that e-marketing has a positive significant impact on marketing performance. Thus, this study has established that e-marketing is a must for any business firms that wish to survive the technological wave of the 21st centuries.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

It is concluded that that e-marketing has influenced customer retention to a very great extent among the foods and beverages firms in Southwestern, Nigeria. The study recommended that effort should be made to educate and create platform for companies so as to garner the individual benefit of each channel by unbundling the combined benefit wrapped in the e-marketing as medium to retain customers for small and medium firms.

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