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MARKETING COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION OF E-TAILING FIRMS IN PORT HARCOURT

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ABSTRACT

The nexus of this work was to ascertain the extent to which marketing communication strategies affects customer satisfaction of e-tailing firms in Port Harcourt. Two dimensions were studied; impersonal communication and online direct communication. Their effects on customer satisfaction were measured in the study. Descriptive research design was used and four hypotheses were formulated and tested using the data collected from 400 respondents through a five Point Likert Scale questionnaire, with the sampling frame selected through cluster sampling. Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient was adopted to conduct the inferential statistics. Findings showed that the dimensions of marketing communication strategies influenced customer satisfaction, by revealing that marketing communication strategies have a positive and significant relationship with customer satisfaction. It was therefore recommended that, e-tailing firms should engage adequately in the use of marketing communication strategies to enhance customer satisfaction.

KEYWORDS

Marketing Communication Strategies, Customer Satisfaction, E-Tailing Firms



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1.1 Introduction

With rapid growth of the Internet and globalization in business world, the e-tailing firms have become increasingly competitive and dynamic. Business and marketing activities are affected by the invention of internet advancement and is revolutionizing commerce, marketing, retailing, shopping and advertising activities of products and services (Suman & Kar, 2011). There are quite a few attractive attributes of internet to not only e-customers but also companies on time and money saving, communicate, convenience, easy accessibility, selection from a wide range of alternatives, and the availability of information for making decisions and all marketing activities can be performed via the Internet efficiently. In this era of globalization, shopping firms are using the internet technologies to reach out to valued customers and to provide a point of contact 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

It is worthwhile to note that in a competitive online marketplace where e-tailing firms are competing for customers, customer satisfaction is often seen as a key differentiator; this phenomenon has increasingly become a key element of the e-tailing firms' strategy (Xiang et al., 2005) in that customer satisfaction defines the image of products/services as well as the e-tailing firms which customers have in mind. Bigné et al.(2003) interpreted satisfaction as "consumers' evaluative judgments based on both cognitive and affective responses as an emotional response over the products acquired". Fečiková (2004) defined customer satisfaction as "a feeling which results from a process of evaluating what was acquired against that expected, the purchase decision itself and/or the fulfilment of needs/want". Marketing is one of the key function and aggregation of processes in an organization aimed at creating and delivering something of values to the customers. It creates effective relationships with the customer besides successful communication on behalf of the company with her customers (Tuli & Bharadwaj, 2009). To create awareness about product attributes/benefits to customers in order to gain customers attention, the marketing communication strategies play a vital role. However, it is instructive to note that e-tailing firms select the right marketing communication strategies in order to make marketing communication effective. Thus, marketing communication aims at creating an overlap between what the sender (marketer) is trying to get across and what the receiver (customer) expects and understands.

Kotler and Keller (2006) defined marketing communication strategies as "a set of mechanisms that interact and incorporate together to achieve the firm's promotional objectives in the context of the prevailing marketing orientation". The marketing communication has a significant role in e-tailing development because it is related to efforts in communicating e-tailing potential to the target market. Marketing communication becomes a strategic alternative solution in promoting a business to audiences in winning a very tight competition given the market share (Gorlevskaya, 2016). Thus, marketing communication, especially through the internet, has a positive impact on e-tailing firms (Lim et al., 2012). In an e-tailing business, marketing communication has the role of providing information, persuading, and reminding consumers directly or indirectly about the products sold to the customers or end users (Kotler & Keller, 2009). Marketing communication performs many functions for e-tailing firms to customers or target markets, especially to inform and show how and why the product is used, who the target market is, as well as where and when the product can be acquired or obtained (Sahin & Sengün, 2018; Tichaawa et al., 2017).

Marketing communication strategies is classified as one of the backbones of e-tailing firms' marketing strategies, which is used to increase the consumers' purchasing behaviour through awareness, persuasion and reminding. It has shown that among the competitive businesses, marketing communication strategies is an essential factor to a new product/service, e-tailers and present product/service to continue surviving in the market shelf (Abdalnaser et al., 2011). Marketing communication strategies such as public relations, advertising, sales promotion, personal selling and direct marketing have all contributed immensely in showcasing the e-tailing firm's products/service to consumers. It is clear that the whole range of marketing communication options offers brands many communication opportunities to deliver a positive experience to consumers, while remaining true to contemporary marketing values, such as customer orientation, long-term-relationship focus, customer co-creation and extended stakeholder or multiple audiences (Mbogo, 2013).

Plethora of researchers such as Mbogo (2013) investigated on promotion mix strategies and customer growth of Pathologists Lancet Kenya using advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, public relations, and direct

marketing; Irene et al., (2016) investigated the effect of promotional strategies on branded preference in Kenya Co-operative Creameries, Uasin Gishu County, Kenya using sales forces, impersonal communication, sales promotion, direct marketing; Ofosu-Boateng, and Agyei, (2020) investigated the effect of customer satisfaction and marketing communication mix on customers' loyalty in the Ghanaian banking industry: independent variables: public relations, advertising, sales promotion and the dependent variable: customers' loyalty. Abdalnaser et al., (2011), Forti (2012) and many other scholars carried out a study on marketing communication strategies on the growth of customers using the following dimensions: sales promotions, public relations, advertising, personal selling, sponsorship, internet marketing, publicity and direct marketing, but none was done in e-tailing firms in Port Harcourt. The present study therefore, adopts the dimensions used by Irene et al., (2016): impersonal communication and online direct communication and customer satisfaction: intention-to-rebuy and e-advocacy. It is for this reason that the study seeks to establish the influence of marketing communication strategies on customer satisfaction of e-tailing firms in Port Harcourt.

1.2 Statement of The Problem

Over the years, the Nigerian retail industry is one that has grown significantly and gradually moving from the traditional bricks-and-mortar systems to the present modern click-and-mortar systems. The former involves buying and selling at open-air markets in both urban and rural areas of Rivers State. E-tailers have a major role of ensuring that customers' satisfaction is meant. It is important for e-tailing firms to understand the dynamism of customer satisfaction and their potential power towards marketing communication strategies and how this milieu might influence consumers' satisfaction. Controlling customer data are problems faced by e-tailing firms in properly handling their consumer data. Secondly, problems with online payment system through the credit card are also totally alien to some customers.

Most of them do not avail themselves of the transaction facilities offered by the credit cards and other means. Thirdly, full cost disclosure is another challenge facing e-tailing firms. It is easy to compare the basic price of an item online, it may not be easy to see the total cost up front as additional fees such as delivery are often not mentioned and customers are not satisfied with it. Also, delivering the goods cost-effectively, quickly, cheaply and conveniently remain another challenge to customers. The existing mode for home delivery works well for letters and flat packages but not for e-tailing as it encompasses with high volumes and wide variety of package shapes and sizes.

However, failure of e-tailing firms to develop an effective marketing communication strategy has impacted negatively in customer satisfaction. Customers are unaware of the existence of some e-tailing products in the market, due to lack of effective marketing communication strategy. This perceived trend may negatively affect the survival of the firm in Port Harcourt and thus, diminish the customer satisfaction. This formed the basis for carrying out this study on marketing communication strategies and customer satisfaction of e-tailing firms in Port Harcourt.

1.3 Aim and Objectives of The Study

The aim of this study was to investigate the marketing communication strategies and customer satisfaction of e-tailing firms in Port Harcourt. Based on the aim, the specific objectives are as follows;

- i. To determine the relationship between impersonal communication and customer satisfaction of e-tailing firms in Port Harcourt.
- ii. To determine the relationship between impersonal communication and customer satisfaction of e-tailing firms in Port Harcourt.

2.0 Literature Review

Theoretical Foundations

2.1 AIDA Theory: AIDA is an acronym that represents Awareness, Interest, Desire and Action. According to AIDA model, e-tailing firms should commence by winning attention of the customers or gaining awareness, establishing interest for the customer to like their products/service, creating desire and precipitating the action or purchase for the prospects in order to enable its products to be accepted by the target audience, (Kimmel, 2005

as cited in Mbogo, 2013). The AIDA model creates a detailed impression about the entire mechanism of how impersonal communication influences consumer purchase behaviour and decisions. It elucidates how online personal selling works and shows a set of ladder's like stages, which elucidates the process leading a potential customer to make a purchase. It also gives details of how sales promotion and online direct marketing could be utilized to command adoption of the firm offerings. Attention as the first element, describes the phase in which the e-tailing firm manages to gain the attention of the potential/actual online users through the available channel of marketing communication mix that he/she has come into contact with (Mbogo, 2013).

Therefore, adoption of the theory by e-tailing firms and marketers promote tremendous growth of the firms and countries in terms of performance both financial and non-financial matrices (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000). They all have three general stages in common, even though the amount or names of sub-stages might differ in application, which are: cognitive stage (that is, what the receiver knows or perceives), affective stage (that is, receiver's feelings or affective level), behavioural stage (that is, consumer's action) (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000).

Conceptual Review

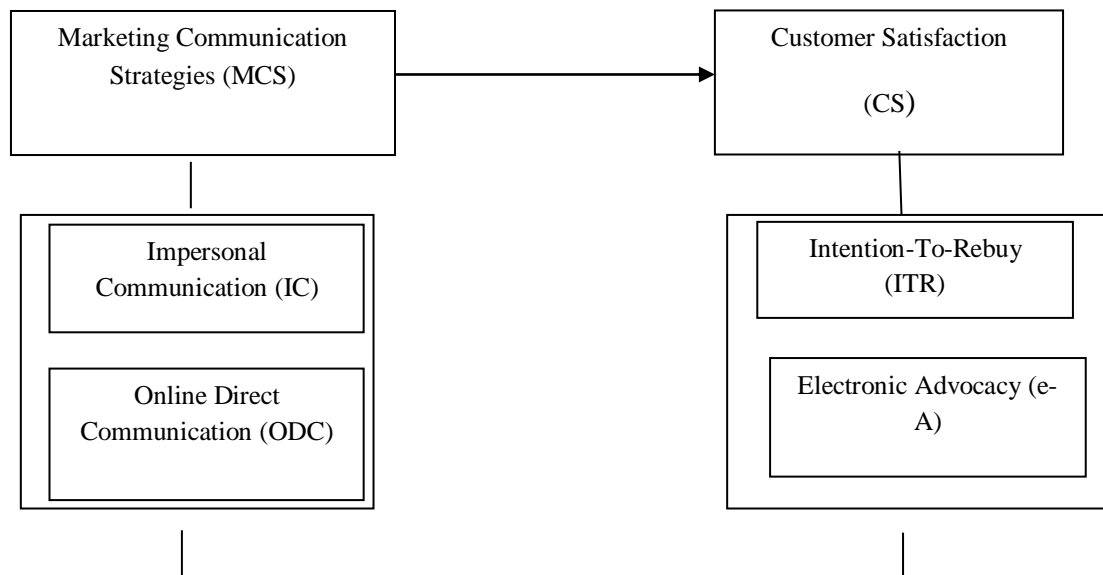


Figure 1: Conceptual framework of the relationship between Marketing Communication Strategies and Customer Satisfaction of e-tailing firms Port Harcourt.

Source: Desk Research, 2021; adopted Irene et al., (2016), Yap et al. (2012); Wu et al. (2011)

Conceptual Review

2.2 Marketing Communication Strategies

Marketing communications are of two major concepts, marketing and communication and any attempt to define it must integrate the meanings of the two concepts together. According to Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM-UK) marketing is defined as “the management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying customer requirements profitably”. Communication on the other hand is the process by which information is exchanged and understood by two or more people, usually with the intent to motivate, persuade or influence purchase behaviour (Lindstrom, 2003). Therefore, ‘marketing communications is commonly defined as a management process through which an organization enters into dialogue with its various audiences. Based upon an understanding of the target audiences’ communications environment, an organization develops and presents persuasive or informative or reminding messages for its identified stakeholder groups, and evaluates and acts on the feedback. Al-Qarni et al. (2013) defined marketing communication as a type of accurate reinforcement to persuade or motivate customers to transfer the information and inform others about the

organization's offerings (Owomoyela et al., 2013). The objective of the process is to (re) position by influencing the perception and understanding of the establishment and or its offerings, with a view to generating attitudinal and behavioral feedbacks or responses' (Fill, 2002). Shimp (2010) defines marketing communication "as the approach marketers use in an attempt to notify, persuade, convince and remind customers, at once or ultimately, about their offerings."

Marketing Communication is the process of delivering messages by a marketer to the target audience, to tell, change attitudes, opinions or behavior either directly orally or indirectly through the media. In this marketing communication requires a reciprocal relationship between the delivery of messages and recipients namely communicators and communicants (Hasbullah, et al., 2018). Marketing communication strategies is defined as a combination of the best strategies of advertising variables, personal sales, and other promotional tools, all of which are planned to achieve marketing objectives of the sales program (Stanton, 2008). Marketing communication strategies is one of the determining factors for the success of a marketing program that can provide motivation and persuasion (Font & McCabe, 2017; Gil-Saura, 2011).

Marketing communication strategies refer to the communications between a company and its customers which highlight the benefits and unique differences of a particular offering with purchase intention as the objective (Westberg & Jason, 2004). According to Forti (2012) marketing communication strategies is the combination of various promotional tools that are used by e-tailer to communicate the promotional message to the customers or market. According to Brassington and Pettitt (2000), marketing communication strategies is the direct way in which an organization communicates the offering to its target audiences.

2.3 Customer Satisfaction

The concept of customer satisfaction originated from Japanese company's customer satisfaction strategy for the first time, it is proposed based on the following two different meaning: based on the personal view, customer satisfaction is an emotional reflection of customers from the consumption of a product or service experience, this satisfaction is not only reflected in a service or on a product, but also reflected the expression of satisfaction on a system or regulations; from the enterprise perspective, customer satisfaction is a set of customer-oriented indicators, which provides all consumer experience evaluation of the actual and expected in the course of product or service condition provided by an enterprise (Srinivasan et al., 2002). Customer satisfaction can said to mean a process or an outcome. The rate at which e-tailing firms' products are purchased by consumers and quality online practices have resulted to customer satisfaction, retention, huge patronage and loyalty to organization (Han & Ryu, 2009). Once a customer is satisfied he/she is likely to remain loyal to the company's offerings and will repeat purchase, he will also went further to spread the good experience to potential customers (WOM) (Gustafsson et al., 2005).

Through satisfaction of customers organizations achieve their corporate goals. Customer satisfaction is believed to be an individual's feeling of pleasure or disappointment which is as a result of comparison of a product perceived performance in relation with his or her offering expectations (Kotler, 2003). If performance evaluation is less than expected customer will be dissatisfied but if performance evaluation is more than expected the customer will be satisfied. Customers will be in neutral phase if perceived expectations met performance. Rosemond et al., (2013) averred that customer satisfaction is the product users' evaluation of performance to date. Sales process, after-sale service, customers' expectation and whether customer is satisfied after consuming a product depends on the offering of the product and customer expectation. Expectation can be form by customers from their past experience after using a product, friends, associates advice, marketers, competitors' information and promises Kotler (2007). Customer satisfaction can be defined as the feeling of liking or displeasure as a result of linking the outcomes of consuming a brand with expectations (Lally, 2010).

2.3.1 Intention-To-Rebuy : Customers in this contemporary are targeted by mass media and this change their way of thinking through emotions, needs, wants and demands. Market researchers and organizations spent billions of dollars on consumer research to identify important factors that are capable of influencing on their purchase decisions (Kotler, 2010; Thapa, 2011). Customers can select from various product/service

characteristics, ending up with a final product that is assembled on the basis of their individual preferences and needs. The term intention is defined as the antecedents that stimulate and drive consumers' patronising a firm offering (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2010). One of the most common antecedents undertaken by retailing firms in gaining an understanding about consumers' actual buying behaviour is through studying their individual and aggregate intentions (Blackwell et al., 2006; Ghalandari & Norouzi, 2012).

Intention-to-rebuy represents the possibility that consumers will plan or be willing to repurchase a certain offering in the future and it is considered as the exactly precedent step from indulging in the actual buying behaviour (De Magistris & Gracia, 2008; Wu et al., 2011). Intention-to-rebuy measurements actually reflect future buying behaviour, they are inexpensive, easily understood and interpreted and thus, used in sales forecasting by an establishment (Armstrong et al., 2000). The buying process to purchase a particular offering is affected by various factors such as price of the product, design, packaging, knowledge about product, quality, celebrity endorsement, fashion and sometimes family relation as well (Shafiq et al., 2011). Intention-to-rebuy is the preference of consumer to buy the product or service available to him/her in the future. In another words, intention-to-rebuy has another aspect that the consumer will purchase a product after thorough evaluation. Many factors affect the consumer's intention-to-rebuy while selecting the product and the critical decision depends on consumers' intention with large external factors (Keller, 2001).

2.3.2 Electronic Advocacy: The advancement of information technology and the emergence of social media sites have profoundly changed the way information is exchanged and have transcended the traditional limitations of advocacy (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Magalhaes & Musallam, 2014). Nowadays users of a firm's offerings can share their product-related experiences with their family and friends on the internet through email, bulletin boards, chat rooms, forums, fan clubs, brand and user groups (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Wu, 2013). This new trend is named electronic advocacy (e-advocacy), the studies demonstrated that e-advocacy has a critical role on consumer' preferences and behavioral intentions (Severi et al., 2014). Lin et al. (2013) shows that e-advocacy may have higher credibility, empathy, and relevance than marketer-created sources of information. Tariq et al. (2013) opined that early scholars defined it as an oral, person to person communication between a receiver and a communicator whom the receiver perceives as non-commercial, concerning a brand, a product or a service conducted via the internet. e-Advocacy is defined as an informal, person-to-person communication between a perceived non commercial communicator and a receiver regarding a brand, a product, an organization, or a service via the internet (Chan & Ngai, 2011).

Among the definitions introduced to describe e-advocacy, Hennig-Thurau et al., (2004) defined e-advocacy as "any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about an offering or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the internet". Also, Litvin et al., (2008) defined e-advocacy as "all informal communications directed at consumers through internet-based technology related to the usage or characteristics of particular offerings or their sellers". These include communication between producers and consumers as well as those between consumers themselves, are both integral parts of the advocacy flow and both distinctly differentiated from communications through mass media (Litvin et al., 2008; Magalhaes & Musallam, 2014).

2.4 Empirical Review and Hypotheses Development

2.4.1 Linkage between Marketing Communication Strategies and Customer Satisfaction

The role of marketing communication strategies has been redefined into managing long-term relationships with carefully selected customers, including construction of a learning relationship where e-tailer attains a dialogue with an individual customer (Dawes & Brown, 2000). Investing money in e-tailer marketing communication strategies brings no guarantee of success. The key challenge for e-tailers seeking to gain competitive advantage through marketing communication strategies is to choose a marketing communication tool which is suitable for the offering and organization that they manage and the market within which it exists and to execute the promotion flawlessly (Rahmani et al., 2012). E-tailing business is one of the economic variables that attract the attention of investors and researchers both in the developed and developing countries in the last two decades. Interests in the e-tailing business continue to be in the forefront of policy debates in the developing countries,

especially Nigeria (Abdul-Kemi, 2016).

The study conducted by Gunger et al. (2012) formulated a hypothesis on the relationship between the key dimensions of marketing communication strategies on SME's innovative performance. The study subjected seven hypotheses to test, as a result, collected sample from 560 manufacturing SMEs in Turkey. The study revealed that marketing communication strategies especially within the SMEs is the path way to achieve performance. Similarly, Tang and Hull (2012); Tang et al. (2013) opined that the marketing communication strategies has a lasting impact on firm performance. There are several other studies that have investigated the relationship between and performance (e.g. Lumpkin & Dess, 2001; Wiklund & Shepherd, 2005; Hult et al., 2003). The result of the investigation unveiled that marketing communication strategies is positively related to firm performance. Also, Mahmood and Hanafi, (2013); Zainol and Ayadurai, (2011) agreed that marketing communication strategies is a significant contributor to a firm's success and contribute to a healthier business performance.

2.4.2 Relationship between Interpersonal Communication and Customer Satisfaction

Impersonal communication is a type of marketing communication premeditated to convince an audience (viewers, readers or listeners) to buy or take several purchase actions upon goods, ideas, or services that are paid for by an identified sponsor. It includes the nomenclature of a product or service and how that product or service could do well to the target user; to convince a target market to get hold of or to consume that particular offering. Pride et al. (2012) in their paper defined it as "a paid non-personal communiqué about an organisation and its offerings passed to a target audience". Also, Kotler and Keller (2006) in their book defined it as "any non-personal communication means of transmitting ideas or products by using mass communications media such as television, newspapers, magazines, cinema, radio; it is implemented through a specific or identified sponsor, for a fee paid to influence or convince consumer purchase behavior".

According to Brassington and Pettit (2000), impersonal communication is defined as any paid form of non-personal communication designed towards the target audiences and transmitted through various means of mass media in order to promote and present a product, services or idea. The key difference between advertising and other marketing communication strategies is that, it is impersonal and communicates with mass audience through paid media channels by an identified sponsor. According to Meidan (2011) an organization can use its impersonal communication to achieve her firm's objectives either for short-term or long-term bases as far as it meant the purpose upon which it was design for. E-tailing firms attempting to create a long-term customer relationship and interactions should build up of its name by using institutional advertising, while e-tailing firms interested in promoting its brand name and its differentiated products would use an impersonal communication policy (Mbogo, 2013). Meidan (2011) categorized impersonal communication in two forms; institutional and brand impersonal communication. The institutional impersonal communication consists of marketing communication of the firms' corporate image as a whole and promotion of the products offered with extra emphasis on the specific firm's organizational name (Meidan, 2011). Based on this backdrop, the following hypotheses were formed:

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between impersonal communication and intention-to-rebuy of e-tailing firms in Port Harcourt.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between impersonal communication and electronic advocacy of e-tailing firms in Port Harcourt.

2.4.3 Relationship between Online Direct Communication and Customer Satisfaction

According to Brassington and Pettit (2000) online direct communication is an interactive system of marketing, using one or more media to achieve measurable response anywhere, forming a basis for creating and further developing an on-going direct relationship between an organization and its customers, to be able to create and sustain quality relationship with sometimes hundreds or even thousands of individual customers, an organization needs to have as much information as possible about each one, and needs to be able to access, manipulate and analyze that information, thus, the database is crucial to the process of building the relationship via the internet. Furthermore, the Internet technology also makes it possible to follow individual customer usage. Belch and Belch (2003) claim that as computer literacy and the availability of computers increase and the costs decrease.

Through the internet, e-tailers can identify their customer interests. Furthermore, the Internet technology also makes it possible to follow individual customer usage of offerings. With the information gathered in an integrated database, it is possible to read the customers' needs and satisfy them. This knowledge can be used for different kinds of online direct communication (Lee, 2002). Online direct marketing encompasses passing information about the product, sale and the offer among other communications concerning the offering. In contrast to most impersonal communication, direct mail allows one-on-one communication thus increasing the number of prospects targeted (Mbogo, 2013).

Customers are believed to have the right to receive the right information interaction of giving personal data and taking preference of the offerings. It is essential that the information received inspire confidence in the consumers since the information carry direct promotion messages on the offering availability and features in the market. Communication messages passed to customers need to be personalized in terms of the way they like to be addressed and the method used to communicate (Mbogo, 2013). Direct mail involves the sending of information about a special offer, product, sale announcement, service reminder, or other type of communication to a person at a particular street or electronic address via the internet (Berry & Wilson, 2004). It encompasses a wide variety of communication materials such as brochures, catalogues, postcards, newsletters, and sales letters rather include social media sites, e-mailing, g-mailing, and others. In contrast to most marketing communication tools, direct mail allows one-on-one communication thus increasing the certainty that the targeted customer will be reached via the internet (Berry & Wilson, 2004). High levels of control over online direct communication resources exist as to who receives the message, when it is delivered, and the number of customers targeted (Lesonsky, 2013). The study therefore hypothesize that:

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between online direct communication and customer retention of e-tailing firms in Port Harcourt.

H₀₄: There is no significant relationship between online direct communication and intention-to-rebuy of e-tailing firms in Port Harcourt.

3.0 Materials and Methods

The study employed a descriptive research design. This design was preferred because it guides the study, describe the area of research and explain the collected data in order to investigate the differences and similarities with the studied variables within a given period of time (time of research). The population of this study are the customers of the nine (9) selected registered e-tailing firms in Port Harcourt which are Jumia, Konga, OLX, Jiji, Alibaba, Kara.com.ng, Mystore, Yudale and Amazon. This study lacked sufficient and working customers' database of these aforementioned e-tailing firms in Port Harcourt which could have served as the target population. Due to this limitation, the population of Port Harcourt was used as our target elements from which the sample size was derived. The city has an estimated population of 1,947,000 as at March, 2015 (www.takemetonaija.com). Port Harcourt is divided into five (5) areas; Diobu, Borokiri, New GRA, Old GRA and Port Harcourt City. Each of these areas has her population as shown in the table 1 below.

Table 1: Areas in Port Harcourt and its population

Area	Population	Respondents
Diobu	421,389	87
Borokiri	411,275	84
New G.R.A.	215,208	44
Old G.R.A.	384,600	79
Port Harcourt City	514,528	106
Total	1,947,000	400

Source: Researchers Desk, 2021 (adopted from www.takemetonaija.com)

The study adopted Taro Yamen formula for Sampling Size Determination in determining the sample size for this study and we have 400. In determining the distribution of research instrument to each of the e-tailing firms operating in Port Harcourt, the Bowleys (1964) formula was utilized to allocate the 400 to various areas. Because of this, Cluster sampling will be adopted for this study. Cluster sampling is a technique which involves identifying the clusters of informants that represent a sample and including them in the study in order to increase levels of efficiency of sampling while reducing costs (Amin, 2005). Descriptive statistics will then be run which consisted of frequencies, percentages and means to summarize the data. Spearman rank correlation coefficient was used to test the hypotheses formulated in the study. Well constructed questionnaires were used to administer to the respondents. The instrument adopted a five-point scale which includes: SA=Strongly Agree(5), A=Agree(4), U=Undecided(3), Disagree(2), Strongly Disagree(1).

4.0 Data Analysis and Presentation

This section represents data analysis and interpretation. The researcher relied heavily on data gotten through questionnaires distributed to respondents. This chapter will also test the hypotheses and discuss the relationship thereafter.

Table 2: Questionnaire Distribution and Retrieval

Questionnaire	Frequency	Percentage %
Distributed	400	100
Retrieved	383	95.7
Not retrieved	17	4.3
Retrieved usable	378	98.7
Retrieved not usable	5	1.3

Source: Survey data, 2020.

From the table above, 400 copies of questionnaire were distributed, 383(95.7%) were retrieved, and 17(4.3%) were not retrieved. Out of the 383 retrieved 378(98.7%) were usable, and 5(1.3%) were not usable.

The demographics showed the ages, 115(30.4%) were between the ages of 20-29 years, 127 which represents 33.6% were between the ages of 30-39 years, 105 which represents 27.8% were between the ages of 40-49 years, 31 which represents 8.2% was between the ages of 50-59 years. 204 which represent 54.0% were married and 174 which represent 46.0% were singles. 71 which represent 18.8% were M.Sc/MBA holders, 273 representing 72.2% were B.Sc/B.A holders and 34 which represent 9.0% were Ordinary and Higher National Diploma holders.

Table 3: Correlation showing the relationship between impersonal communication and intention-to-rebuy and electronic advocacy

		Impersonal Communication	Intention-To-Rebuy	E-Advocacy	
Spearman's rho	Impersonal Communication	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.812**	.833**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000
		N	378	378	378
	Intention-To-Rebuy	Correlation Coefficient	.812**	1.000	.818**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000
		N	378	378	378
	E-Advocacy	Correlation Coefficient	.833**	.818**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.
		N	378	378	378

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

From Table 3, Spearman Rank Correlation was used to analyze the association between impersonal communication and measures of customer satisfaction. The results illustrates that impersonal communication at ($P < 0.05$) and $Rho = 0.812$ and a P -value = 0.000 significantly relates with intention-to-rebuy; impersonal communication also has a significant relationship with electronic advocacy at a $Rho = 0.833$ and a P -value = 0.000. These results ascertained that impersonal communication has a significant and positive relationship with customer satisfaction of e-tailing firms in Port Harcourt. We therefore reject H_{01} and H_{02} because, p -value (0.000) is less than the level of significant at 95% (0.05) as established in the decision rule.

Table 4: Correlation showing the relationship between online direct communication and intention-to-rebuy and electronic advocacy

		Online Direct Communication	Intention-To-Rebuy	E-Advocacy	
Spearman's rho	Online Direct Communication	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.881**	.805**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000
		N	378	378	378
	Intention-To-Rebuy	Correlation Coefficient	.881**	1.000	.818**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000
		N	378	378	378
	E-Advocacy	Correlation Coefficient	.805**	.818**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.
		N	378	378	378

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

From Table 4, Spearman Rank Correlation is used to analyze the association between online direct communication and measures of customer satisfaction. The results illustrates that online direct communication at ($P < 0.05$) and $Rho = 0.881$ and a P -value = 0.000 significantly relates with intention-to-rebuy; online direct communication also has a significant relationship with e-advocacy at a $Rho = 0.805$ and a P -value = 0.000. These results determine that online direct communication have a significant and positive relationship with customer satisfaction of e-tailing firms in Port Harcourt. We therefore reject H_{03} and H_{04} because, p -value (0.000) is less than the level of significant at 95% (0.05) as established in the decision rule.

4.1 Discussion of Findings

Relationship between impersonal communication and customer satisfaction (intention-to-rebuy and electronic advocacy)

The research hypotheses stating the relationship between impersonal communication and the measures of customer satisfaction such as intention-to-rebuy and electronic advocacy sought to determine the relationship existing between them as it affects e-tailing firms in Port Harcourt.

Hypothesis one and two (H_{01} and H_{02}) aimed at examining the significant relationship between impersonal communication and intention-to-rebuy and electronic advocacy of e-tailing firms in Port Harcourt. The two hypotheses were tested using Spearman rank Correlation Coefficient. The analysis revealed a positive and strong significant relationship between impersonal communication and intention-to-rebuy and electronic advocacy of e-tailing firms in Port Harcourt. ($Rho = 0.812$ and 0.833 respectively). This means that, impersonal communication had a positive and strong relationship with employee productivity. Our findings was in agreement with the work of Kumar (2015) who found that, advertising was positively correlates with brand equity perception. Mbogo, (2013) study, concludes that promotion strategies (advertising, sales promotion, public relations, personal selling and direct marketing) positively influence customer growth. The study conducted by Gunger et al. (2012) revealed that entrepreneurial marketing especially within the SMEs is the path way to achieve performance. Irene et al. (2016) study found that there was a significant relationship

between impersonal communication and brand preference ($p=0.000$). The result of the study is in consonant with the work of Yeneneh et al. (2018) whose study found a significant positive relationship between impersonal communication and customer loyalty using commercial bank of Ethiopia as the case study. Also, the work of Cengiz et al. (2007) found a positive relationship between impersonal communication and customer loyalty in Turkish banks.

Relationship between online direct communication and customer satisfaction (intention-to-rebuy and electronic advocacy)

The research hypotheses stating the relationship between online direct communication and the measures of customer satisfaction such as intention-to-rebuy and electronic advocacy sought to determine the relationship existing between them as it affects e-tailing firms in Port Harcourt. Hypotheses three and four (H_{03} and H_{04}) aimed at examining the significant relationship between online direct communication and intention-to-rebuy and electronic advocacy of e-tailing firms in Port Harcourt. The hypotheses were tested using Spearman rank Correlation Coefficient. Our analyses revealed a positive and strong significant relationship between the variables which resulted to ($Rho= 0.881$ and 0.805 respectively). Our findings was in agreement with the work of Irene et al. (2016) that there was a significant relationship between direct promotion and brand preference ($p=0.000$). Ofosu-Boateng, and Agyei, (2020) study revealed a strong positive relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in the Ghanaian banking industry. Also, the study showed a moderate but significant relationship between direct marketing and customers' loyalty in the Ghanaian banking industry.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

The aim of this research was to determine the relationship between marketing communication strategies and customer satisfaction of e-tailing firms in Port Harcourt. Based on the responses given by the selected premium e-tailing firms on their understanding of the concepts, the summary of our conclusion is therefore presented: that e-tailing firms attract customer satisfaction when they engage in the use of marketing communication strategies to evaluate customer satisfaction, because when firms know that they are being watched by customers, they tend to render excellent service to all their customers without preference. Finally, from our findings and discussions, the study discovered that the value marketing communication strategies; impersonal communication and online direct communication positively affect customer satisfaction.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. E-tailing firms should continue to strive to achieve customer satisfaction by fulfilling customers' needs and wants since it can engender intention-to-rebuy and electronic advocacy. This can be done by understanding all the factors affecting customer satisfaction
2. Online direct communication must be strengthened to complement the other marketing communication mix to help encourage customer satisfaction in the Nigerian retailing industry
3. The use of impersonal communication as a mass media which helps to attract consumers' attention must be encouraged however, advertising appeal must meet the needs and wants of consumers.
4. Sales promotion should be blended well with the other marketing communication mix to dissuade consumers' perception of inferior products in the e-tailing sector.
5. The e-tailing firms need to engage in assertions that leans toward the customer, trying to find a solution to the customer's problem, rather than only persuading him to purchase the products or brand.
6. E-tailing firms should provide customers with relevant information about their products and service and also while shopping online.

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