

## TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE DELIVERY AND STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION: EXPLORING CUSTOMER-CENTRIC HEDGE IN OSUN STATE, NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

*In Nigeria's highly competitive telecommunications sector, brand communication strategies play a vital role in brand differentiation, consumer engagement, and market positioning. However, despite substantial investment in marketing efforts, customer dissatisfaction, service switching, and engagement challenges persist. While scholars have examined competitive strategies and their impact on the performance and consumer satisfaction, there is a dearth of study on service delivery and strategic communication from the consumer perspective. This study thus, examined brand communication strategies use by telecommunication companies in Nigeria with a view to assessing the level of influence that the strategies have on consumer engagement and brand loyalty. Guided by Porter's generic competitive strategies model, this study adopted a descriptive survey research design. A structured questionnaire was administered to 345 respondents across selected local government areas in Osun State, Nigeria, with responses analysed using SPSS. Findings showed that SMS was the dominant communication strategy used by telecommunication companies to reach their customers, followed by mobile ads and social media. Promotional discounts were the most engaging strategy, while celebrity endorsements and sponsorships were the least effective. Further findings indicated that most respondents found telecommunication advertisements informative. The study concluded that while telecommunication companies in Nigeria employ aggressive marketing strategies, network quality and customer service are stronger drivers of consumer loyalty than promotional efforts. Companies must move beyond over-reliance on SMS marketing and adopt a hybrid communication approach that integrates personalised digital engagement and traditional media to maximise customer satisfaction and retention. It is recommended that telecom firms improve service delivery, refine marketing strategies to reduce message fatigue and adopt more customer-centric communication techniques for long-term competitiveness.*

**Keywords:** Telecommunications Service Delivery, Strategic Communication, Customer-Centric Hedge, Exploring, Osun State.

### INTRODUCTION

In today's highly competitive business environment, effective communication strategies are crucial for sustaining market relevance, building brand loyalty, and gaining a competitive edge (Paterman, 2018). The Nigerian telecommunications industry is one of Africa's largest and fastest-growing sectors, with major players such as MTN, Glo, Airtel, and 9mobile constantly innovating their communication approaches to attract and retain customers. Given the increasing demand for mobile and internet services, companies must adopt strategic and dynamic communication techniques to differentiate their brands, engage consumers effectively, and maintain market leadership (Aaltonen & Ikavalko, 2019).

According to Steiner (2019), communication strategies in competitive markets involve a combination of advertising, public relations, customer engagement, digital marketing, and corporate branding.. However, as customer expectations evolve and digital technologies reshape the marketing landscape, Aaltonen and Ikavalko (2019) believe that telecom companies must continuously adapt their communication strategies to remain relevant and competitive.

Thus, existing studies on Nigeria's telecom sector, such as Adegboyega (2018), Ologunde (2016), and Aaltonen & Ikavalko (2019), have largely focused on service quality, customer perception, and industry regulations, with limited emphasis on how communication strategies shape market competition. Given the critical role of communication in brand positioning and customer retention, there is a need to examine how telecom firms leverage strategic communication to navigate competition and consumer demands. This study aims to breach this by analysing the influence of communication strategies adopted by telecom companies in Nigeria and their impact on competitive performance. Findings will provide insights into consumers' perceptions of telecommunications service delivery and strategic communication and will also provide these communication strategies influence brand differentiation, brand loyalty, and engagement among consumers.

### **Objective of Study**

The objectives of the study are to:

- i. Find out respondents perceived communication strategies espoused by telecommunication companies in Nigeria to gain competitive edge.
- ii. Ascertain how consumers perceive and respond to the communication strategies used by telecommunication companies in Nigeria.
- iii. Know the extent digital and traditional media channels influence customer engagement and brand loyalty in Nigeria's telecommunication sector.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Telecommunication**

Telecommunication refers to the devices and systems that facilitate the transmission of electronic or optical signals over long distances (Chong, 2017). It enables people to connect globally, instantly access information, and communicate remotely. The process involves a sender transmitting information to one or more recipients through technological systems, such as telephone networks, it allows individuals to send and receive messages across cities, countries, and even outer space. Additionally, it serves as a vital medium for delivering news, data, information, and entertainment (Adegboyega, 2018). Telecommunication networks utilise both wired and wireless technologies to facilitate voice communication between individuals and data transmission between computers (Awino, 2019).

### **Brief History of the Nigerian telecommunications industry**

The history of Nigeria's telecommunications industry dates back to 1886 when the British firm Cable & Wireless Ltd. laid the first telegraphic submarine cable. By the time Nigeria gained independence in 1960, the country had approximately 18,724 fixed telephone lines (Adeniyi, 2014). During this period, the telecommunications sector was dominated by the Nigerian Telecommunications Limited (NITEL), a government-owned monopoly (Ologunde, 2016).

NITEL provided services such as fixed telephone lines, telegraph (Gentex), and payphones (Muhamme & Kazeem, 2019). Its primary objective was to coordinate external and internal telecommunications services, liberalize investments in the sector, and ensure accessible, efficient, and affordable services for Nigerians (Ologunde, 2016).

Between 1987 and 1992, NITEL struggled to meet consumer demands, with little significant improvement in its performance (Adeniyi, 2014). This prompted the Federal Government to introduce market-oriented reforms, leading to the partial liberalisation of the telecommunications sector that officially began in 1993 with the creation of the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) through Decree 75 of 1992. (Ologunde, 2016). Nonetheless, some market segments remained under NITEL's monopoly (Muhamme & Kazeem, 2019). This monopoly ended in 2001 when it was placed under the regulatory oversight of the NCC and was formally licensed as an operator.

The reappearance to democracy in 1999 marked a turning point for Nigeria's telecommunications industry, leading to full liberalization and the empowerment of the NCC as an independent industry regulator (Adeniyi, 2014). From the early 2000s to the present, Nigeria has experienced a telecommunications revolution, characterised by rapid growth, increased competition, and significant technological advancements.

### **Communication Strategy**

Communication strategy is a structured plan organisations use to effectively convey messages to their target audiences. For Nigerian telecommunication companies, an effective communication strategy is crucial in engaging customers, enhancing brand awareness, managing public perception, and maintaining a competitive edge in the rapidly evolving industry. In the Nigerian telecommunications sector, Ologunde (2016) observe that communication strategies encompass various approaches, including advertising, public relations, corporate social responsibility (CSR), digital marketing, and customer service. These strategies help telecom companies build strong relationships with consumers, regulators, and other stakeholders while reinforcing their market position.

Given the highly competitive nature of the industry, companies such as MTN, Glo, Airtel, and 9mobile invest in unique messaging and promotional campaigns to highlight their competitive advantages, such as network coverage, affordability, data speed, and value-added services Muhamme & Kazeem, (2019).

Another critical component is crisis communication and reputation management, as revealed by Aaltonen and Ikavalko (2019). Given the sensitivity of network disruptions, billing issues, and regulatory compliance matters, Ologunde (2016) believes telecom firms deploy proactive communication strategies to address customer concerns and mitigate potential reputational damage. Moreover, Adeniyi (2014)

### **Customer Satisfaction**

Customer satisfaction, as defined by Bruhn (2019), is a measure of how well an organisation's products and services meet or exceed consumer expectations. It serves as a key differentiator and has increasingly become a crucial aspect of business strategy in competitive markets

Adeniyi (2014) noted that telecommunications companies now recognise that retaining existing customers is often more profitable than constantly seeking new ones. Many established brands

with significant market shares focus their strategies on reinforcing customer perceptions of product superiority (Bruhn, 2019). As a result, managers of consumer brands design advertisements to reassure customers of sustained high quality.

According to Muhammed and Kazeem (2019), customer satisfaction can be further enhanced when companies provide additional information or services that promote proper and effective product usage. Chandler and Williamson (2017) argue that product satisfaction is a key factor in the long-term market dominance of many brands. However, maintaining customer satisfaction is an ongoing challenge, as competitors often introduce comparable products and services, offering additional features, lower prices, and aggressive marketing campaigns (Muhammed & Kazeem, 2019).

Bigler (2019) highlights that consumers increasingly seek environmentally friendly products without compromising on performance and value. Customers are value-driven and tend to patronise businesses that offer the highest perceived value. In assessing quality, customers compare a firm's products or brands with those of competitors based on key functional attributes that influence their purchasing decisions, such as durability, availability of spare parts, repair services, and additional support features (Ologunde, 2016; Bigler, 2019).

### **Competitive Strategy**

At its core, competitive strategy defines how a company positions itself to compete effectively within a particular industry. According to Awino (2019), strategy is the alignment between an organisation's internal resources and the opportunities, risks, and threats posed by the external environment. It aids a crucial link between an organisation's objectives and the policies that guide its activities. A company may have a single overarching strategy or multiple strategies operating at different levels within the organization (Bigler, 2019).

Bourne (2015) defines strategy as a practical approach to resource allocation and competitive advantage. The selection of target markets determines the customer segments a company serves, the geographical scope of competition, and the business environment in which it operates. Ologunde (2016) notes that strategic decision-making is often complex, as no single alternative consistently outperforms all others on every criterion. Therefore, once critical success factors are identified, management must objectively assess the company's strengths and weaknesses relative to both current and potential competitors. Paterman (2018) emphasizes that "the purpose of business is to create and retain customers."

Adeniyi (2014) conducted a study on competitive strategies and their impact on the performance of selected telecommunication companies in Nigeria. The study aimed to examine how various competitive strategies adopted by telecommunication firms influence their overall performance. Additionally, the research explored how these tactics could be effectively executed to enhance customer contentment, retention, and loyalty. To achieve these objectives, the study formulated three null hypotheses to test the relationships between lower pricing and customer satisfaction, continuous trunk services and customer loyalty, and customer complaint handling and retention. A total of 125 questionnaires were circulated to 20 local governments in Lagos State. The findings indicated a significant relationship between competitive strategies and customer satisfaction, retention, and loyalty. Based on these findings, the study suggested that Universal Mobile Telecommunications System (UMTS) operators should integrate competitive strategies into their operations to enhance market performance and customer satisfaction.

Furthermore, Mohammed and Kazeem (2019) conducted a study on the impact of competition in the Nigerian telecommunications industry. The research, employing a doctrinal approach, assessed the effects of competition on the sector while also examining competition law, various forms of competition, the legal and regulatory framework, and the application of Porter's Five Forces Model in the industry. The study analysed the competitiveness of the Nigerian telecommunications market and concluded that, despite its oligopolistic nature, the industry has experienced significant and progressive growth compared to its earlier monopoly era. Key areas of improvement identified include market penetration, subscriber growth, increased number of operators, and reduced cost of service.

The study found that competition policies have played a crucial role in driving these changes, leading to increased private investment and lower service costs. The study recommended regular market assessments, reduced internet subscription fees to enhance the adoption of Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) as a competitive alternative, and the strategic implementation of Porter's Model to strengthen industry competitiveness.

Similarly, Ayaga and Nnabuko (2019) conducted a study on competitive strategies and customer satisfaction in Nigeria's telecommunications industry, with a focus on the mobile phone sector. The objective was to look at the impact of competitive strategies on customer satisfaction. The study was carried out in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, with a target populace of 1,727,866 GSM customers. The findings revealed important constructive bond between competitive strategies and customer satisfaction, indicating that well-implemented competitive strategies enhance customer experience and loyalty. Based on these findings, the researchers recommended that GSM service providers should develop customer-centric competitive strategies to improve overall satisfaction and maintain a competitive edge in the industry.

Mwaniki (2023) conducted a study on competitive strategies and firm performance in Kenya's telecommunication industry. The study aimed to examine the impact of cost leadership, market center, modernisation, and difference strategies on the presentation of telecommunication firms in Kenya. A descriptive research design was adopted, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The study focused on a population of six telecommunications companies in Kenya and employed simple random sampling to select 384 employees directly involved in competitive strategy implementation and firm performance. Regression analysis was applied to establish relationships between variables, while quantitative data was analysed using percentages, frequencies, means, and standard deviations with the assistance of SPSS software. The findings revealed that Kenyan telecommunications companies adopted three primary competitive strategies: differentiation strategy, market focus strategy, and cost leadership strategy. The study concluded that there was a positive and significant relationship between these competitive strategies and the overall performance of telecommunications firms in Kenya. Based on these results, the study suggested that telecommunications firms should continue investing in advanced technology and innovative product development to sustain competitive differentiation. Additionally, firms were encouraged to benchmark their differentiation strategies against leading service industry players and prioritise continuous innovation, product development, and aggressive marketing to enhance long-term competitiveness.

### **The current situations of the four telecommunication companies in Nigeria:**

According to Mordon (2025) The Nigerian telecommunications sector has witnessed significant growth, with MTN Nigeria maintaining its dominance. By January 2025, MTN held

51.7% of the market, with 87.5 million subscribers. Airtel Nigeria followed, increasing its share to 34.1% with 57.6 million subscribers. Globacom (Glo) experienced fluctuations due to audits and the NIN-SIM linkage exercise but showed signs of recovery, reaching 20.5 million subscribers. Meanwhile, 9mobile has suffered a steady decline, holding only 3.2 million subscribers as of January 2025. These trends highlight the competitive dynamics of the sector and the need for policies that foster market stability and consumer confidence.

### **Theoretical Framework-**

This study applies generic competitive strategies model developed by Porter (1980), which asserts that firms must adopt a distinct strategy to gain a competitive advantage—either through cost minimisation or product differentiation. The model identifies three core strategies: cost leadership, differentiation, and focus strategy. Porter (1980) emphasises that firms must consistently invest in their chosen strategy to sustain their market position and prevent competitors from eroding their advantage. Strategic management literature offers various typologies explaining how firms develop and sustain competitive strategies. Scholars such as Hambrick (1983) and Miles & Snow (1978) have extensively examined firms' strategic orientations, focusing on operational efficiency, cost reduction, and market uniqueness. A fourth strategy, known as the hybrid approach, combines elements of both leadership and differentiation, allowing firms to maximise efficiency while maintaining uniqueness. Several studies (Campbell-Hunt, 2000; Dess & Davis, 1984; Kotha & Vadlamani, 1995; Ward & Duray, 2000) have linked Porter's model to organisational, environmental, and performance-related factors. While Porter (1996) argues that firms must choose between cost leadership and differentiation to avoid strategic conflicts, research by Oyedijo (2012), Parnell (1997), and Proff (2000) suggests that businesses can integrate both strategies successfully, creating synergies that enhance firm performance. In the context of Nigerian telecommunication companies, communication strategies play a pivotal role in defining competitive positioning. These companies leverage marketing differentiation, service innovation, and customer engagement to gain an edge in the highly competitive market. As Porter's model suggests, factors such as customer satisfaction, loyalty, and retention are directly influenced by a firm's competitive strategy. Telecommunication firms that effectively align their communication strategies with their broader competitive approach can strengthen their brand identity, enhance consumer trust, and drive long-term success.

### **METHOD AND MATERIALS**

This study made use of descriptive research design. A survey was conducted to generate quantitative data. The survey method was used to determine the systematic gathering of quantitative information on consumers' experiences with telecom services and to gain access to particular quality characteristics including responsiveness, dependability, and strategic communication enhancements.

A purposive sampling technique was used to select four telecommunication companies in Nigeria because these four provide telecommunication services of about 98% of headset handlers in Nigeria (Ayaga & Nnabuko, 2019). These companies are MTN Nigeria Communication PLC, Airtel Nigeria, Globacom LTD and 9Mobile. Existing studies have not given Osun State enough attention as previous study on competitive tactics in Nigeria, concentrated on Abuja and Lagos. The distinct socioeconomic and media environment of Osun is different from that of large metropolitan areas, which may have a significant impact on consumer behaviour. Learning about Osun will help to understand how its people react to strategic communication and media narratives. Regional differences in consumer behaviour



**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION****Table 1: Demographic of respondents**

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Options</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
Gender?	Male	188	54.4
	Female	154	44.6
	<b>Total</b>	342	100.0
Age group?	18 – 25 years	158	46.1
	26 – 35 years	86	25.1
	36 – 45 years	62	18.1
	46 years and above	36	10.5
	<b>Total</b>	342	100.0
What is your highest level of education?	Primary education	88	25.7
	Secondary education	183	53.5
	Tertiary education	71	20.7
	<b>Total</b>	342	100.0
Which telecommunication network(s) do you use?	MTN	118	54.9
	Airtel	62	18.4
	GLO	98	28.6
	9mobile	65	19.0
	<b>Total</b>	342	100.0
How long have you been using your current primary telecom provider?	Less than 1 year	21	6.1
	1 – 3 years	58	16.9
	4 – 6 years	100	29.2
	More than 6 years	163	47.6
	<b>Total</b>	342	100.0

*Researcher's field survey, 2025*

Table one provides the demographic data of respondents. The results show more male participants in the study than female participants. Further findings showed that most respondents (46.1%) fall within the 18–25 years age bracket, followed by 26–35 years (25.1%). Also, more than half of the respondents (53.5%) have attained secondary education, while 20.7% have tertiary education. As indicated in the table, MTN is the most widely used network among respondents, with over half (54.9%) relying on it. This finding implies that MTN has better coverage, reliability, or affordability in the study area. To further understand the duration of network usage, findings showed that nearly half of the respondents (47.6%) had used their telecom provider for more than six years, indicating brand loyalty and satisfaction with service quality. However, the presence of new users (6.1% for less than a year) implies that there would have been a potential switching behaviour at some point, which could be influenced by service quality, pricing, or promotional offers.

**Table 2:** *Communication Strategies of Telecom Companies*

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Options</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
How often do you receive advertisements or promotional messages from your telecom provider?	Daily	220	64.3
	Weekly	76	22.2
	Monthly	33	9.6
	Rarely	5	1.4
	Never	8	2.3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>342</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Which communication channels does your telecom provider use to reach you?	SMS		45.6
	Emails		4.0
		156	
		14	
	Social media	40	11.6
	Television	33	9.6
	Radio ads	22	6.4
	Billboards	15	4.3
	Mobile Ads	62	18.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>342</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
Which of these strategies do you find most engaging?	Discount offers and promotions.	284	83.0
	Customer loyalty rewards.	31	9.0
	Celebrity endorsements.		0.5
		2	
	Good Customer service	19	5.5
	Sponsorship of events/sports	6	1.7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>342</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Do you think your telecom provider's marketing strategies are effective in keeping you engaged?	Very effective	119	34.7
	Somewhat effective	83	24.2
	Not very effective	95	27.7
	Not effective at all	45	13.1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>342</b>	<b>100.0</b>

*Researcher's field survey, 2025*

The data from Table 2 provides insights into the communication strategies employed by telecom companies and how these strategies influence customer engagement. Thus, findings revealed that most respondents (64%) receive telecom advertisements or promotional messages daily, indicating a high level of direct marketing. These findings further suggest that telecommunication companies in Nigeria prioritize frequent customer communication, which could enhance brand recall. Observing the communication channels used by telecommunication companies in Nigeria, findings showed that SMS is the dominant communication channel (45.6%), showing that telecom companies mostly engage in direct and personalized text messaging. This is because Mobile ads (18.1%) and social media (11.6%) also play a role, but traditional media (TV, radio, and billboards) are less utilized.

Further findings indicated that the most engaging marketing strategy is discount offers and promotions (83.0%), which implies that price incentives are the most effective engagement tool for customers. However, loyalty rewards (9.0%) have some influence, but strategies like celebrity endorsements (0.5%) and sponsorships (1.7%) are far less effective, indicating that customers prioritize financial benefits over brand association or endorsements. While 58.9% of respondents combining "very effective" and "somewhat effective" find telecommunication marketing strategies effective, a significant 40.8% feel that these strategies are not very effective or not effective at all. These findings imply that while frequent promotions and SMS marketing are effective for some, many customers remain disengaged, possibly due to overexposure to text messages or a lack of personalization in marketing messages.

**Table 3:** *Consumer Perception and Response to Communication Strategies*

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Options</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
How do you generally feel about the advertisements from your telecom provider?	Informative	223	65.2
	Annoying	39	11.4
	Entertaining	47	13.7
	Misleading	33	9.6
	<b>Total</b>	342	100.0
Have you ever switched from one telecom provider to another due to their marketing or communication strategies?		289	84.5
	Yes		
	No	53	15.4
Which factor influences your decision to remain loyal to your telecom provider?	<b>Total</b>	342	100.0
			4.6
		109	31.8
	Network quality	91	26
	Customer service	80	23
	Pricing and tariffs		
	Promotional offers	33	9.6
How likely are you to recommend your telecom provider to others based on their communication and marketing efforts?	Brand reputation	29	8.4
	<b>Total</b>	342	100.0
	Very likely		28.9
	Somewhat likely	99	16.0
		55	
	Not likely	100	29.2
	Not at all	88	25.7
	<b>Total</b>	342	100.0

*Researcher's field survey, 2025*

Table 3 presents data on consumer perception of telecommunication companies' communication strategies, their response to these strategies, and factors influencing customer loyalty and recommendations. Findings revealed that most respondents (65.2%) find telecommunication advertisements informative, indicating that marketing strategies effectively deliver relevant information. However, 11.4% consider them annoying, suggesting possible overexposure and 9.6% see them as misleading, which could harm brand trust. A smaller

percentage (13.7%) find them entertaining, implying that telecom companies could improve engagement by incorporating more creative or interactive content. Further findings also indicated that most (84.5%) respondents had switched telecom providers due to marketing or communication strategies. These findings imply that poor or ineffective marketing can lead to customer churn, reinforcing the need for telecommunication companies to adopt consumer-friendly, transparent, and engaging communication tactics. Meanwhile, network quality (31.8%) was indicated to be the most critical factor in customer retention, followed by customer service (26%) and pricing (23%). While 44.9% of respondents combining "very likely" and "somewhat likely" are inclined to recommend their telecom provider based on communication strategies, a significant 54.9% are unwilling to do so. These findings imply that customer dissatisfaction still exists despite aggressive marketing, particularly regarding service delivery.

**Table 4:** *Influence of Digital and Traditional Media on Consumer Engagement and Brand Loyalty*

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Options</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
Which communication platform influences your engagement with your telecom provider the most?	Social media	55	16.0
	SMS messages	191	55.8
	Emails	52	15.2
	Television	17	4.9
	Radio	22	6.2
	Billboard	5	1.4
	<b>Total</b>	342	100.0
How often do you interact with your telecom provider on social media?		160	46.7
	Frequently	169	49.4
	Occasionally	8	2.3
	Rarely		
	Never	5	1.4
	<b>Total</b>	342	100.0
In your opinion, which media platform is more effective in keeping telecom customers engaged?	TV	59	17.2
	Radio	89	26.0
	Newspapers	45	13.1
	Billboards	33	9.6
	Social media	116	33.9
	<b>Total</b>	342	100.0
How do telecom advertisements influence your buying decisions?	Strongly influence my decisions	111	32.4
	Somewhat influence my decisions	89	26.0
	Have no influence on my decisions	69	20.1
	I ignore them completely	73	21.3
	<b>Total</b>	342	100.0

*Researcher's field survey, 2025*

Table 4, as shown above, examines the influence of digital and traditional media on consumer engagement and brand loyalty in the telecom sector. The result shows that SMS messages are the most influential platform for customer engagement. Also, findings indicated that social media and emails also play significant roles, while traditional media like TV, radio and billboards have minimal influence. These findings imply that direct and personalized messaging is the most effective strategy and that telecommunication companies should focus on mobile and digital strategies over traditional media for customer engagement. Further findings showed that many customers interact frequently or occasionally with telecommunication providers on social media, implying that social platforms are becoming a key customer engagement tool. Similarly, social media is discovered to be the most effective media platform for keeping customers engaged. Finally, on the influence of advertisements on buying decisions, findings showed that 58.4% of respondents acknowledge that telecom advertisements impact their purchasing decisions, while 41.4% do not find ads persuasive. These findings imply that while marketing efforts are somewhat effective, there is room for improvement in crafting more compelling and personalized advertisements to increase conversion rates.

### **Discussion of Findings**

This study examined communication strategies in competitive market with a focus on telecommunication sector in Nigeria. First, findings showed that telecommunication companies in Nigeria primarily use SMS as their main communication channel, followed by mobile ads and social media. The most engaging marketing strategy as indicated from the findings of the study is discount offers and promotions, while strategies such as celebrity endorsements and sponsorships are less effective. Similarly, frequent promotional messages are common, with most of the respondents receiving daily advertisements. Meanwhile, the dominance of SMS aligns with Aaltonen & Ikavalko (2019), who emphasized the importance of direct and personalised marketing strategies in competitive markets. Adegboyega (2018) similarly noted that telecommunication companies often rely on push marketing tactics, which include SMS and direct offers. Porter's Generic Competitive Strategies Model (1980) suggests that firms gain a competitive advantage through differentiation or cost leadership.

Nigerian telecommunication providers focus heavily on pricing strategies (discounts and promotions), supporting Porter's cost leadership approach. However, Ologunde (2016) argued that telecommunication firms in Nigeria struggle with developing communication strategies that truly differentiate their brands beyond price incentives. The study's findings confirm this, as promotional offers dominate but fail to build long-term brand loyalty. Paterman (2018) suggested that traditional marketing techniques may no longer be sufficient due to the rise of digital engagement. However, this study found that SMS remains the most influential communication platform, contradicting claims that digital media (such as social media and email) have completely replaced traditional messaging. The lack of effectiveness of celebrity endorsements contradicts Adeniyi (2014), who argued that influencer-driven marketing plays a critical role in consumer decision-making in Nigeria. This suggests that while endorsements may work for other industries, they are less impactful in telecommunication marketing. Therefore, telecommunication companies must move beyond price-based promotions and invest in more engaging, long-term brand-building strategies.

Second, most respondents find telecommunication advertisements informative, while few find them annoying, others consider them misleading. Similarly, the findings indicated that most of the respondents have switched providers due to marketing or communication strategies. The

findings also revealed that the primary factor influencing loyalty is network quality followed by customer service and pricing. Thus, the high switching rate supports Adegboyega (2018), who observed that customer dissatisfaction leads to frequent churn in Nigeria's telecommunication sector. Aligning with this argument Configuration Theory (Mintzberg & Miller, 1978) states that companies must align their strategies with consumer expectations and external conditions. The study's findings show that while telecommunication firms invest in communication strategies, customer dissatisfaction leads to high switching behaviour. Adeniyi (2014) emphasized that customers remain loyal when companies balance competitive pricing with excellent service delivery. However, this study finds that pricing is less critical than network quality and customer service, challenging the assumption that cost leadership alone ensures loyalty. Bruhn (2019) argued that customer satisfaction is primarily driven by marketing and promotional activities. However, this study finds that service quality and customer experience matter more than promotional efforts, contradicting the idea that aggressive marketing alone secures consumer loyalty. Hence, the perception of telecommunication advertisements as "misleading" by few of the respondents raises concerns about ethical marketing in the sector. Bigler (2019) highlighted that misleading advertisements could damage brand trust, reinforcing the need for transparent and accurate marketing messages. While advertising helps raise awareness, telecommunication companies must prioritize service quality to retain customers rather than relying solely on promotional offers.

Finally, SMS messages are discovered to be the most influential platform for engagement, followed by social media and emails. Findings also showed that about 46.7% of respondents interact frequently with their telecom providers on social media, while 49.4% interact occasionally. Similarly, Social media is an effective media platform for keeping customers engaged, while 58.4% of respondents say telecommunication advertisements influence their buying decisions. Hence, Slater and Olson (2016) argued that an integrated media strategy enhances customer engagement, which aligns with the study's finding that both social media and traditional media play significant roles in engagement. Furthermore, Configuration Theory suggests that companies should adjust their communication strategies based on changing media consumption patterns. The study findings confirm this, as telecommunication firms must balance traditional SMS engagement with growing social media interactions. The study challenges Mwaniki (2023), who argued that digital channels completely replace traditional media. In contrast, radio remains an important engagement platform in Nigeria, indicating that telecommunication firms should maintain a hybrid media approach. Muhamme and Kazeem (2019) claimed that social media alone is the future of telecommunication marketing. However, this study finds that SMS remains the utmost dominant channel, trailed by social media, proving that traditional messaging still plays a critical role. The high level of consumer interaction on social media suggests that telecommunication providers must invest in real-time customer engagement via digital platforms, supporting Gao et al. (2017), who emphasized the shift towards digital consumer engagement. Thus, telecommunication companies must integrate social media more effectively while maintaining SMS as a core communication channel.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study investigated the brand communication strategies employed by Nigerian telecommunication companies, focusing on their impact on consumer engagement and brand loyalty.

The findings indicated that discount offers and promotions are the most effective strategies for engaging consumers, while tactics like celebrity endorsements and sponsorships are less

impactful. Based on these findings, the study concludes that the quality of network services and customer support are stronger drivers of consumer loyalty than promotional efforts.

Furthermore, both digital and traditional media play crucial roles in consumer engagement, and such companies must adopt a hybrid approach that integrates SMS, social media, and traditional media like radio to optimise engagement and brand loyalty.

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