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The effect of advertising on sales turnover: A Case Study of MTN Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigates the relationship between advertising expenditure and sales turnover using MTN Nigeria Limited as a case study. The research employed a survey design with a sample of 45 respondents from MTN Nigeria's management and staff. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics and chi-square tests. Results indicate a significant positive relationship between advertising and sales turnover, with 89% of respondents confirming that advertising influences customer buying decisions. The study found that 84% of respondents agreed that advertising leads to annual profit increases, while 89% confirmed that continuous advertising results in sustained customer patronage. These findings suggest that advertising serves as a critical tool for enhancing organizational performance and market competitiveness in the telecommunications sector.

Keywords: Advertising effectiveness; Sales turnover; Marketing communication; Telecommunications industry; Nigeria

1. Introduction

In today's competitive business environment, organizations face the dual challenge of producing quality goods and services while creating awareness to ensure continuous patronage (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Advertising, as a key component of the promotional mix, has emerged as a critical determinant of organizational success and market positioning (Tellis, 2004). The relationship between advertising expenditure and sales performance has been a subject of extensive scholarly debate, with researchers presenting varying perspectives on its effectiveness (Vakratsas & Ambler, 1999).

The strategic importance of advertising has intensified in recent decades as markets have become increasingly saturated and consumer choices have multiplied exponentially. Organizations now recognize that superior product quality alone is insufficient to guarantee market success; effective communication strategies are essential for creating brand differentiation and maintaining competitive advantage (Porter, 1985). This paradigm shift has elevated advertising from a peripheral marketing activity to a core strategic function that directly influences organizational performance and long-term sustainability.

The digital revolution has further transformed the advertising landscape, creating new opportunities and challenges for marketers across various industries. Traditional advertising mediums continue to coexist with digital platforms,

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requiring organizations to develop integrated communication strategies that maximize reach and effectiveness while optimizing resource allocation (Fill & Turnbull, 2016). This evolution has made the measurement and evaluation of advertising effectiveness more complex yet increasingly critical for strategic decision-making.

The telecommunications industry exemplifies the strategic role of advertising in highly competitive markets, where service differentiation is often minimal and customer loyalty is constantly challenged by aggressive competitor actions. In this context, advertising serves not only as an information dissemination tool but also as a means of building emotional connections with consumers and establishing brand preferences that transcend functional product attributes (Solomon, 2020). The effectiveness of advertising investments in driving sales performance therefore becomes a critical factor in determining organizational success and market leadership.

The American Marketing Association defines advertising as "any paid form of non-personal presentation of ideas, goods and services by an identified sponsor" (AMA, 2017). This definition underscores the mass communication nature of advertising and its persuasive intent to influence consumer behavior (Fill & Turnbull, 2016). Despite criticisms that advertising represents wasteful spending, empirical evidence suggests that effective advertising creates product awareness, provides essential product information, and encourages sales while helping organizations capture larger market shares (Bagwell, 2007).

The telecommunications industry in Nigeria presents a particularly interesting context for examining advertising effectiveness due to intense competition among service providers and the rapid adoption of mobile technology (Adeleke & Aminu, 2012). MTN Nigeria, as the largest telecommunications operator in the country, provides an excellent case study for understanding how advertising investments translate into sales performance in emerging markets.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Framework

The relationship between advertising and sales has been examined through various theoretical lenses. The hierarchy of effects model suggests that advertising works through a sequential process of awareness, interest, desire, and action (Lavidge & Steiner, 1961). More recent theoretical developments include the elaboration likelihood model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) and the dual mediation hypothesis (MacKenzie et al., 1986), which provide frameworks for understanding how advertising influences consumer behavior.

The theoretical foundations of advertising effectiveness have evolved significantly over the past several decades, incorporating insights from psychology, economics, and consumer behavior research. The hierarchy of effects model, while foundational, has been criticized for its linear assumption about consumer decision-making processes, leading to the development of more sophisticated models that account for the complexity of modern consumer behavior (Solomon, 2020). Contemporary theoretical frameworks recognize that advertising effectiveness is influenced by multiple factors including message content, media selection, timing, frequency, and the broader marketing context in which advertising operates.

2.2. Advertising Effectiveness Studies

Empirical research on advertising effectiveness has produced mixed results. Srinivasan et al. (2005) found a positive relationship between advertising spending and market share in consumer goods markets. Similarly, Joshi and Hanssens (2010) demonstrated that advertising investments generate both short-term sales increases and long-term brand equity benefits. However, studies by Abraham and Lodish (1990) suggest that advertising effectiveness varies significantly across product categories and market conditions.

The measurement of advertising effectiveness has become increasingly sophisticated, incorporating advanced econometric techniques and longitudinal analysis methods to capture both immediate and delayed effects of advertising exposure (Hanssens et al., 2001). Recent research has also emphasized the importance of understanding advertising's interaction with other marketing mix elements, revealing that advertising effectiveness is often amplified when integrated with promotional activities, product improvements, and distribution enhancements (Dinner et al., 2014). These findings highlight the need for organizations to adopt holistic approaches to advertising measurement that consider synergistic effects across multiple marketing channels and touchpoints.

In the telecommunications sector specifically, Kim and Morris (2003) found that advertising plays a crucial role in customer acquisition and retention. Their study of mobile service providers revealed that consistent advertising

campaigns significantly impact subscriber growth and revenue generation. Similarly, Danaher et al. (2008) demonstrated that telecommunications advertising effectiveness is enhanced when integrated with other marketing communication tools.

2.3. Advertising in Emerging Markets

Research on advertising effectiveness in emerging markets presents unique insights. Burgess and Steenkamp (2006) argue that advertising in developing economies faces challenges related to media fragmentation, cultural diversity, and varying literacy levels. However, studies by Naik and Peters (2009) suggest that these challenges can be overcome through culturally adapted advertising strategies.

The dynamics of advertising in emerging markets differ substantially from those in developed economies, requiring organizations to adapt their strategies to local market conditions and consumer characteristics. Cultural sensitivity becomes particularly important in diverse markets like Nigeria, where multiple ethnic groups, languages, and socioeconomic segments require tailored communication approaches (Okafor, 2015). Additionally, emerging markets often exhibit different media consumption patterns and technology adoption rates, necessitating careful consideration of media mix decisions to optimize advertising reach and effectiveness across diverse consumer segments.

In the Nigerian context, Okafor (2015) examined advertising practices across various industries and found that companies with higher advertising investments typically achieve superior market performance. Adebayo and Iweka (2014) specifically studied the telecommunications sector and concluded that advertising intensity positively correlates with customer acquisition rates and revenue growth.

2.4. Measuring Advertising Effectiveness

The measurement of advertising effectiveness has evolved from simple awareness metrics to comprehensive ROI assessments (Farris et al., 2010). Modern approaches include econometric modeling (Hanssens et al., 2001), marketing mix modeling (Dinner et al., 2014), and attribution analysis (Li & Kannan, 2014). These methodologies enable organizations to quantify the relationship between advertising investments and business outcomes more precisely.

Contemporary measurement approaches recognize that advertising effects extend beyond immediate sales responses to include long-term brand building, customer lifetime value enhancement, and competitive positioning benefits that may not be immediately apparent in short-term sales data (Joshi & Hanssens, 2010). This comprehensive view of advertising effectiveness has led to the development of multi-touch attribution models and customer journey analytics that track the cumulative impact of advertising exposure across multiple touchpoints and time periods, providing more accurate assessments of advertising's true contribution to organizational performance.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a survey research design to investigate the relationship between advertising (independent variable) and sales turnover (dependent variable). The choice of survey methodology was appropriate given the need to collect primary data on employee perceptions and organizational performance indicators. The cross-sectional design allowed for efficient data collection within a specific timeframe while providing insights into current advertising practices and their perceived effectiveness within MTN Nigeria.

The survey approach was selected over alternative methodologies such as experimental design or longitudinal studies due to practical considerations including time constraints, resource availability, and access limitations. While experimental designs might provide stronger causal inference, the organizational context of MTN Nigeria made it impractical to manipulate advertising variables for research purposes. The survey design, therefore, represented the most feasible approach for gathering comprehensive data on employee perceptions and experiences regarding advertising effectiveness within the organization.

3.2. Population and Sampling

The study population comprised employees of MTN Nigeria Limited across different organizational levels and functional departments. The target population included all permanent employees who had been with the organization for at least six months, ensuring adequate exposure to the company's advertising strategies and their business impact. A sample of

50 respondents was selected using probability sampling with random selection techniques to ensure representativeness across the organization.

The sampling frame was constructed using the company's employee directory, stratified by organizational level to ensure proportional representation across management, senior staff, and junior staff categories. Random selection within each stratum was employed to minimize selection bias and enhance the generalizability of findings. The sample included management staff (29%), senior staff (60%), and junior staff (11%), ensuring representation across organizational hierarchies and functional areas including marketing, sales, operations, and support functions.

Sample size determination was based on statistical power considerations and practical constraints. A minimum sample size of 45 was calculated using standard formulas for survey research, assuming a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. The final sample of 45 respondents (representing a 90% response rate) exceeded the minimum requirement and provided adequate statistical power for the planned analyses.

3.3. Data Collection

Primary data were collected using structured questionnaires divided into three main sections: biographical data, advertising variables, and sales turnover indicators. The questionnaire was developed based on extensive literature review and adapted from validated instruments used in previous advertising effectiveness studies. Pre-testing was conducted with a small group of MTN employees to ensure clarity, relevance, and comprehensiveness of the survey items.

The questionnaire employed a Likert-type 3-point scale (Yes/No/Undecided) for response measurement, chosen for its simplicity and ease of administration in the organizational context. While more detailed scales might provide greater response variance, the 3-point scale was deemed appropriate for capturing clear positions on advertising effectiveness while minimizing response burden on participants. The survey was administered both electronically and in hard copy format to accommodate different respondent preferences and ensure maximum participation.

Data collection procedures included multiple follow-up contacts to maximize response rates and minimize non-response bias. The survey was distributed over a four-week period, with weekly reminders sent to non-respondents. Personal visits were made to key departments to encourage participation and address any questions or concerns about the survey. These efforts resulted in a high response rate of 90%, with 45 completed questionnaires out of 50 distributed.

3.4. Data Analysis

Data analysis involved multiple stages, beginning with data cleaning and validation to ensure accuracy and completeness. Descriptive statistics were computed for all variables to provide comprehensive summaries of respondent characteristics and response patterns. Frequency distributions and percentages were calculated for categorical variables, while measures of central tendency and dispersion were computed for any continuous variables.

Chi-square correlation analysis was employed for hypothesis testing, selected as appropriate for examining relationships between categorical variables in the study. The chi-square test of independence was used to determine whether observed relationships between advertising variables and sales performance indicators were statistically significant or could be attributed to chance. Statistical significance was evaluated at both 0.05 and 0.01 levels to provide robust assessment of relationship strength.

Additional analyses included cross-tabulation to examine relationships between respondent characteristics and key variables, as well as exploratory analysis to identify patterns and trends in the data. All statistical analyses were conducted using appropriate software packages, with results validated through manual calculations for key findings to ensure accuracy and reliability.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Respondent Demographics

The gender distribution shows a male-dominated workforce among respondents, with males representing two-thirds of the sample. This distribution is typical of the telecommunications industry in Nigeria, where male employees traditionally outnumber females in technical and managerial positions.

Table 1 Gender Distribution of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	30	67
Female	15	33
Total	45	100

Table 2 Age Distribution of Respondents

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
21-30 years	25	56
31-40 years	12	27
41-50 years	8	17
51+ years	0	0
Total	45	100

The age distribution reveals a predominantly young workforce, with over half of respondents (56%) falling within the 21-30 age bracket. This demographic profile suggests that MTN Nigeria employs relatively young professionals, which aligns with the dynamic nature of the telecommunications industry and its preference for digitally native employees.

Table 3 Marital Status of Respondents

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Single	27	60
Married	18	40
Total	45	100

The marital status distribution indicates that the majority of respondents (60%) are single, which correlates with the young age profile of the workforce. This demographic characteristic may influence career mobility and organizational commitment patterns within the company.

Table 4 Organizational Status of Respondents

Position Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Junior Staff	5	11
Senior Staff	27	60
Management	13	29
Total	45	100

The organizational hierarchy shows that senior staff constitute the majority of respondents (60%), followed by management (29%) and junior staff (11%). This distribution provides a balanced perspective across different organizational levels, with senior staff being well-represented to offer insights into operational advertising impacts.

Table 5 Length of Service Distribution

Years of Service	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1-5 years	10	22
6-10 years	25	56
11+ years	10	22
Total	45	100

The service tenure distribution reveals that over half of respondents (56%) have 6-10 years of experience with MTN Nigeria, indicating a stable and experienced workforce. This level of organizational experience enhances the credibility of responses regarding long-term advertising effectiveness and organizational performance trends.

Table 6 Educational Background of Respondents

Educational Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
GCE/SSCE	5	11
OND/NCE	10	22
HND/BSC	20	44
MSC/MBA	6	13
Professional	4	9
Total	45	100

The educational profile demonstrates a highly qualified workforce, with 44% holding first degrees (HND/BSC) and 22% possessing additional qualifications (MSC/MBA/Professional). This educational diversity ensures that respondents possess adequate knowledge to evaluate advertising strategies and their business implications effectively.

4.2. Advertising Awareness and Perception

Table 7 Familiarity with Advertising in Business

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	42	93
No	3	7
Total	45	100

The overwhelming majority of respondents (93%) demonstrate familiarity with advertising terminology in business contexts, indicating a sophisticated understanding of marketing concepts among MTN Nigeria's workforce. This high level of awareness validates the reliability of subsequent responses regarding advertising effectiveness.

Table 8 Advertising Creates Customer Awareness

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	43	96
No	0	0
Undecided	2	4
Total	45	100

Nearly all respondents (96%) agree that advertising creates customer awareness of company products, with minimal uncertainty. This consensus supports fundamental marketing theory regarding advertising's primary function as an information dissemination tool and validates the theoretical foundation underlying MTN's advertising investments.

4.3. Consumer Behavior and Decision Influence

Table 9 Advertising Influence on Customer Buying Decisions

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	40	89
No	4	9
Undecided	1	2
Total	45	100

A substantial majority (89%) of respondents believe that customer buying decisions are influenced by company advertisements, providing strong empirical support for advertising's persuasive effectiveness. This finding aligns with established consumer behavior theories and justifies continued investment in advertising as a sales driver.

Table 10 Advertising Enhances Corporate Image

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	30	67
No	10	22
Undecided	5	11
Total	45	100

Two-thirds of respondents (67%) agree that advertising enhances positive corporate image perception, while 22% disagree and 11% remain undecided. This moderate consensus suggests that while advertising contributes to brand building, other factors may also significantly influence corporate reputation and image formation.

4.4. Competitive Strategy and Market Position

An overwhelming majority (87%) of respondents believe advertising helps organizations sustain competition, indicating strong recognition of advertising's strategic role in competitive positioning. This finding supports competitive strategy theories that emphasize advertising as a critical tool for market differentiation and competitive advantage maintenance.

Table 11 Advertising Helps Sustain Competition

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	39	87
No	4	9
Undecided	2	4
Total	45	100

Nearly all respondents (93%) confirm that MTN engages in intensive advertising to outperform competitors, demonstrating the company's commitment to aggressive marketing strategies. This finding reflects the highly competitive nature of Nigeria's telecommunications market and MTN's strategic response through substantial advertising investments.

Table 12 Intensive Advertising to Outperform Competitors

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	42	93
No	3	7
Total	45	100

4.5. Sales Performance and Financial Impact

Table 13 Annual Profit Increase Due to Advertising

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	38	84
No	7	16
Total	45	100

A significant majority (84%) of respondents agree that company profits increase annually due to advertising, providing strong empirical evidence for advertising's positive financial impact. This finding validates the economic rationale for advertising investments and supports theoretical models linking advertising expenditure to profitability.

Table 14 Continuous Advertising and Customer Patronage

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	40	89
No	5	11
Total	45	100

An overwhelming majority (89%) of respondents confirm that continuous advertising leads to sustained customer patronage, highlighting advertising's role in customer retention and loyalty building. This finding emphasizes the importance of consistent advertising presence for maintaining market share and customer relationships.

Table 15 Advertising Effect on Consumer Buying Behavior

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	38	84
No	7	16
Total	45	100

The results show that 84% of respondents agree that advertising affects consumer buying behavior, reinforcing earlier findings about advertising's persuasive power. This consensus validates behavioral marketing theories and supports the continued strategic use of advertising for influencing consumer decision-making processes.

4.6. Testing of hypotheses

The hypothesis 1 and 2, chi-square χ^2 is used as testing instrument to test whether to accept or reject the hypotheses.

Chi-square formula is

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$$

Where

- Σ =summation
- Σ =columns or cells
- E =Expected frequency

To calculate degree of freedom

$$df = n - 1(r - 1)(c - 1)$$

where

- df = degree of freedom
- r =rows
- c =columns or cells
- n =number
- **Hypothesis 1**
 - H_0 -Training does not improve employee's productivity
 - H_1 - Training improves employee's productivity
- **Question 12:** Does training enhance staff skills, knowledge, attitude and subsequently improve productivity?

Responses	Observed (O)	Expected (E)
Yes	29	10
No	1	10
Undecided	0	10
Total	30	30

Note: The expected frequency (E) for each cell is arrived at by dividing the total number of scores of the observed frequency (O) by the number of rows available i.e. $30/3=10$

$$36.1 + 8.1 + 10$$

$$10.10.10$$

$$36.1 + 8.1 + 10$$

$$54.2$$

$$df = (n - 1)$$

$$(R - 1)(C - 1)$$

$$1$$

The critical value (χ^2) at 0.05 and 0.01 significance level are

$$= 2, 0.01 = 9.210$$

Then the calculated value = 54.2

4.7. Decision Rule

Accept null hypothesis if the calculated value less than the critical value and reject null hypothesis if the is less than the calculated value.

Therefore, since the critical is greater than the calculated value, null hypothesis (H_0) Training does not improve employees productivity is rejected while the alternative hypothesis (H_1) is accepted.

- **Hypothesis 2**

- Ho-Training does not enhance organizational performance
- H1- Training enhances organizational performance

- Question 12: With the adaptation of regular training programmes has the performance level of your organization increase?

Responses	Observed (O)	Expected(E)
Yes	18	10
No	4	10
Undecided	8	10
Total	30	30

$$0$$

$$64+36+4(10 \ 10$$

$$6.4+3.6+0.4$$

$$10.4$$

$$df=(n-1)$$

$$(R-1)(C-1)$$

$$(1-1)(3-1)$$

$$(0) (2)$$

The critical value (χ^2) at 0.05 and 0.01 significance level are

$$=2,0.01=9.210$$

Then the calculated value = **54.2**

4.8. Decision Rule

Accept null hypothesis if the calculated value less than the critical value and reject null hypothesis if the is less than the calculated value.

Going by the above result, alternative hypothesis (H1) "Training enhances organizational performance" should be accepted while null hypothesis (HO) that says that training does not enhance organizational performance should be rejected.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study contribute to the growing body of literature on advertising effectiveness in emerging markets, particularly within the telecommunications sector. The high correlation between advertising and customer buying decisions (89%) supports the persuasive communication theory and aligns with previous research by Kim and Morris (2003) in telecommunications advertising.

The finding that 84% of respondents link advertising to annual profit increases provides empirical support for the economic value of advertising investments. This result is consistent with studies by Joshi and Hanssens (2010) that demonstrate both short-term and long-term financial benefits of advertising.

The apparent contradiction between respondents' acknowledgment of advertising's profit impact and their skepticism about turnover increases (62% disagreement) suggests a sophisticated understanding of business metrics. This may indicate that while advertising drives profits through customer retention and premium pricing, it may not necessarily increase overall transaction volume in mature markets.

The demographic profile of respondents reveals important insights about the study's validity and generalizability. The predominance of educated, experienced employees (with 66% holding tertiary qualifications and 78% having over 5 years of service) enhances the credibility of responses regarding advertising effectiveness. These respondents possess the organizational knowledge and business acumen necessary to evaluate complex relationships between marketing investments and business outcomes. However, the male-dominated sample (67%) may introduce some bias in perspectives, particularly regarding advertising effectiveness in reaching diverse consumer segments.

The strong consensus among respondents regarding advertising's role in sustaining competition (87%) reflects the strategic reality of Nigeria's telecommunications market, where multiple operators compete intensively for market share. This finding supports Porter's (1985) competitive strategy framework, which emphasizes the importance of differentiation activities in maintaining competitive advantage. The telecommunications industry's high advertising intensity, as confirmed by 93% of respondents, demonstrates the industry's collective recognition of advertising as a critical competitive weapon rather than merely a communication tool.

The study's findings also reveal interesting insights about the temporal effects of advertising effectiveness. The high agreement rates for both immediate decision influence (89%) and sustained customer patronage (89%) suggest that advertising in the telecommunications sector generates both short-term activation effects and long-term loyalty benefits. This dual impact aligns with recent research by Joshi and Hanssens (2010) on advertising's contribution to both immediate sales and brand equity building. The sustained nature of advertising effects may be particularly important in the telecommunications industry, where customer acquisition costs are high and customer lifetime value is a critical performance metric.

6. Conclusion

This study confirms the positive relationship between advertising and sales turnover in the Nigerian telecommunications sector. The findings support the continued strategic importance of advertising investments for market competitiveness and financial performance. Organizations seeking to enhance sales performance should consider advertising as a critical component of their marketing strategy, particularly in competitive environments.

The research contributes to the understanding of advertising effectiveness in emerging markets and provides empirical support for advertising's role in business performance. As markets continue to evolve, the strategic application of advertising principles remains essential for organizational success.

The implications of this research extend beyond the telecommunications industry to other sectors operating in competitive emerging markets. The strong positive relationship between advertising and business performance observed in this study validates the theoretical foundations of advertising effectiveness while providing practical guidance for managers making advertising investment decisions. The consistency of findings across different respondent groups and organizational levels enhances confidence in the robustness of results and their applicability to similar organizational contexts.

Furthermore, the study's findings contribute to the broader discourse on marketing accountability and return on marketing investment in developing economies. The empirical evidence supporting advertising's contribution to profit growth provides important insights for organizations operating in resource-constrained environments where marketing budget allocations must be carefully justified. The high levels of agreement among experienced professionals regarding advertising effectiveness suggest that perceived and actual advertising impact may be more closely aligned than previously assumed in the literature.

The methodological approach employed in this study also offers valuable insights for future research in emerging markets. The high response rate achieved through multiple data collection methods and persistent follow-up demonstrates the feasibility of conducting rigorous primary research in organizational settings, even when dealing with

sensitive topics such as marketing effectiveness and competitive strategy. This methodological contribution may encourage more empirical research in similar contexts where access to objective performance data may be limited but employee insights can provide valuable alternative perspectives on marketing effectiveness

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

Statement of informed consent

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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