



In-Store Sampling Unique Market Penetration Strategy for Consumer Goods

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Available online at: www.isroset.org

Received: 05/Aug/2021, Accepted: 20/Sept/2021, Online: 30/Sept/2021

Abstract— The study examined in-store sampling as a unique penetration strategy for consumer goods. Four hundred and forty-four customers' opinions were sought for the period of six weeks in different outlets located across the study area through survey. In the process of collecting the data, the study leverage the in-store sampling program implemented in the outlets with the help of the director of the program and outlet managers. ANOVA test analysis was used to test the differences between the groups. Descriptive statistics and probit regression models were used to analyze the responses. Results revealed fifty percent, twenty seven percent, thirteen percent, fifteen percent, and tree percent of respondents prefer in-store sampling as a penetration strategy, sales promotion, advertisement, direct marketing, and publicity respectively. Chi-square test established that in-store sampling and consumer buying behavior have a positive relationship at zero point zero two percent. In-store sampling is the most preferred promotional technique for a new consumer product.

Keywords— In -store sampling, marketing communication, strategy, consumers, buying behavior

I. INTRODUCTION

Economically, consumers' needs are multi-variant, divergent and insatiable. Getting consumers' attention, loyalty and total commitment have become a serious concern for manufacturing and retailing organizations. Because different factors influence consumers, products may influence some, the price may induce some, while placement or promotions mix may trigger consumers' intention towards a particular product. Chris and Barbara [7] posited that organizations used different marketing communication tools such as Sales promotions, personal selling, advertising, public relations, direct marketing, and publicity, sponsorships, branding and packing to attract the target audiences.

Every marketing communication elements is with exceptional qualities that influence certain roles and functions in Integrated Marketing Communication. Sales promotions, one of the tools or mix used by the organization is referred to as any extra incentive that retailers, manufacturers, and not for profit firms used to modify a brand's supposed price, or products worth for the time being at the same time sell products benefits [42]. Meanwhile, statistically, the best tools or means of introducing a new product or developing the existing one has not been proven or established. Therefore, the study examined the in-store sampling one of the sales promotion mix as a unique market penetration strategy tool.

Sales promotion as marketing tools has been differently defined. [45] affirmed that sales promotion is the

marketer's efforts that deliver necessary information in a manner that seduced and get customers' positive responses. Also, Promotional Products Association International (2004) acknowledged that a highly effective communication strategy is sales promotions, with a 76% recall rate compared with advertisement on television with a 54% rate of recall. Meanwhile, [4]hose factors like declining brand loyalty, the growing power of major retail chains and an increase in consumer deal proneness as responsible for Fast Moving Consumer Goods organizations (FMCG) gradually shifting from advertising to promotional activities. Promotions beginning with the formulation of marketing budget, at the same time marketers are concerned with the adoption of suitable and proper promotional tools while targeting certain segments of the market, [4]

Although every promotional strategy is about volume generation, the strategy is distinctive with specific goals like encourage trials, influence repeat buying, encourage brand switching, encourage consumption of existing products among others. [4]. Moreover, a promotional strategy may be used to shield existing customers, with the intention that the promotion is a reward for supporting the brand.[12]. Regardless of any motives, sales promotion is a tool that wields serious influence on the buyer's attitude and through it; the organization always gets positive action from customers. [12]. Meanwhile, [24] categorized promotional into three types that is retail promotions, trade promotions, and consumer-oriented promotions

The most preferred most efficient and effective sales promotional tools have not been established due to individual differences, differences in organization objectives and promotional objectives. It has now become a serious challenge for the organization to identify suitable marketing penetration strategies that will get the consumer's attention at the same time translate to increase sales volume to achieve organizational and promotional objectives. The study focused on consumer promotions which refer to direct incentives to organization customers and their potential. [33] affirmed that promotions are used to stimulate consumers' decision processes. A promotional strategy like premium, coupons, free samples, complementary products and price reductions increase and induced instant sales, most time it also leads to future sales. [9] acknowledged that sale promotions are still referred to as value-added strategies because it offers future, immediate and tangible value to companies' brands.

Though early studies established the most effective sales promotion strategy that will best get customers' attention, the primary objective of this study is to analyses in-store sampling as a marketing penetration strategy used by organization among other tools. Since the strategic objective of any promotions is to encourage buying pattern of consumers through different incentives that will trigger action towards the offers, though incentives are always for a limited time, while the targeted consumers are influenced to take immediate and quick action

II. RELATED WORK

[4] acknowledged that in-store sampling, which can still be referred to as free samples is a trial unit of a product, just for customers to have experience of such product at no cost, in order to influence buying. For example, a cup of new 5alive pupil juice served, or a small box of toothpaste included in the package when buying children textbooks. [34] posited that in-store sampling allowed consumers to enjoy and experience firsthand, the benefit of the products. It is a situation where both customers and potentials consumers have free access to experience products before committing their value.

Generally, consumers professed a certain level of risk during products trying. Meanwhile, in-store sampling help lessen risk in that it allows the consumers to experience the products before commitment [27]. Sampling can be through door-to-door's delivery, street distributions, mailing distributions, attached to other products, inside retail outlets among others. [5] its benefits including really demonstrations to the customers, it also restores declining products. [9]. Consumers experience satisfaction and enjoy real value for their exchange for the organization offers. The Previous offering has always been one of the instigating factors influencing consumer's willingness to have a taste of the products desired or sought for purchase. On the other hand, an organization wants to win the loyalty of its prospects and retains the confidence of the existing customers, therefore, it deploys different strategies to

retain, and build customer loyalty. It also develops different marketing messages in order for them to gain customers' confidence, increase patronage and gained market acceptability with a premonition that different factors influenced customers buying decisions.

However, [4][36][38] posited that few of these promotional techniques are effective as free samples for generating initial trial and repeat buying. Furthermore, in-store sampling is presented at the point of purchase (POP) and it always has a greater impact on purchasing behavior. Researchers revealed that many organizations, most especially those dealing in fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG), engaged in in-store sampling as a unique technique to register their offering in the mind of consumers and potential customers. But it has not been scientifically proved if it is an appropriate strategy for the Nigerian market. The high level of competition, economic instability, consumers' different level of orientation and several factors that influence categorized consumers in our society trigger the organization struggling for market shares.

In an attempt by various firms to retain consumers' loyalty, encourage consumers to switch their brand loyalty, selling products benefits to consumers and prospects, the organization was forced to develop a different strategy that will launch and established the benefits of their offering in the memory of both consumers and the prospects. These challenges have been the inspiring factors to the organization, and they were gingered to develop the best-selling strategy that sells the benefits of the products, position the organization and its products as the best. Identification of the best strategy and tools that will influence consumers now becomes a great concern. Because different factors ranging from products, price, placements, and promotion have its influence on consumers' buying behavior.

Therefore, the study examined in-store sampling as a product penetration strategy. While the organization positions itself to achieve set objectives through effective policy implementation, it must strategize on how to become "market leaders". To achieve this, best and appropriate routes to the market must be implemented {[25][17] [4]}

[23] reported that marketing managers are aware that product trial has a significant effect on the behavioral experience of consumers towards repeat buying; it implies that the strategy is results-oriented. [41] acknowledged that free samples influenced consumer's buying behavior while [11] posited a different view that free sample is positively related to immediate sales of a particular product. [28] stated that in-store sampling is a marketing communication process that involves a face-to-face exchange between the consumer and the person distributing the sample. This activity allows the consumers to have a taste of the products most time for the very first time. Though consumer's opinion about in-store sampling always differs,

while many marketer will see it as a unique strategy to introduce their products, others may see it as a way of giving out waste products. But the fact is, this is a unique way of getting consumer's commitments and attention for the products by dishing out in-store sampling "free samples". This will allow consumers to be updated about a particular offer.

The availability of free samples to consumers at the point of purchase is an avenue to have the products taste as a trial; In-store sampling may influence the consumer's attitude to make buying decisions in order to favor the company sharing such samples [8]. Meanwhile, consumers may be feeling guilty if he or she is unable to buy the sampled products [13]. But the feelings of reciprocity and /or being culpable may augment the willingness to buy, so also guilt may have long term negative effect on repeat buying and brands. [1][32]. Moreover, it has not been proved, in this part of the world, the authentic effect of in-store sampling on repeat buying in the long run.

In-store sampling has another characteristic over other tools because most times the consumers determine the mode of distribution. For example, a salesperson may be instructed by the manager to distribute in-store sampling in a selected sales territory, automatically the beneficiaries will be controlled. Meanwhile, only available customers during the exercise will benefit from such. More so, most of the beneficiaries are usually biased when relating needed information about the sampling. Therefore, the primary objectives of the program may be defeated among the targeted population. Therefore, the organization should have a better understanding of in-store sampling respondents, and their attitude towards the program. Though in-store sampling is an instrument to increase store traffic and it may increase shopping commitments, it is a significant tool to increase retail sales, due to its uniqueness. Therefore, more research work is required to establish its uniqueness.

There are several studies on in-store sampling influence on consumer buying behavior. [19] in, United State researched the influence of wet sample on consumer trial and purchasing. Data from six different products free sampling field survey programs were experimented for six weekends by a US grocery chain store. Data collected includes consumer purchasing and products trials behavior concerning free sampling, attitudes towards free samples on a particular day, and general customers' attitude towards free sampling promotion.[29][22]), posited that 92 percent of respondents will get the sample in the stores and 70 percent will assess the sample if approached. Also, it was revealed that sampling promotions yielded 500percent sales boost during the periods. Therefore, sampling was established as a tool to augment sales during promotional periods anywhere as acknowledged from 37– 50 percent. Possibly it is the reason retailers like Great Harvest Bread and Co. succeeded using sampling to established competitive advantage.

[26][20] studied in-outlets free samples' impact on short and long term buying behavior. In-outlets respondents were grouped into segments based on motives for sampling: "Opportunists," "Information seekers", and "Party Goers," different outlet was used for the experiment in Midwestern city, using self-perception theory and it was established that both short and long term shopping attitude differed according to segments. Feedback of the exercise suggested that merchandisers should be well trained on how to distribute free samples "in-store sampling" because it has a positive effect on sales both in the short term and long term.

[21] examined the effectiveness of sales promotion between South African students. The study determined the most effective promotional techniques (coupons, bonus packs, discounts, free samples) that influenced brand switching, brand loyalty, stockpiling, purchase incremental and product experimental in the FMCG sector of South Africa. Descriptive statistics and a one-sample t-test were used to analyze the data. It was revealed that South African students have positive behavior towards diverse sales promotion techniques and these tools have a positive and significant influence on consumers. Furthermore, the study established that consumers preferred "buy one get one" offers to other tools, which also influenced the students buying behaviors more than the other sales promotion tools. Though in Nigeria, there are infinitesimal studies on free samples. Nevertheless, none of the studies has its focus on using In-store sampling as a unique strategy of introducing new products into the market.

Previous researches suggest that consumer react differently towards sales promotion even free or in-store sampling. Reasons for the variations effectiveness were suggested, which includes individual difference, preference, cultural and ethnic differences, demographics, the timing and value of promotional offerings, product or service promoted as well as accessible alternatives {[16][2][19][44][18]}. Moreover, scholars still established that consumers respond in a different way towards the different promotional mix. [43] affirmed promotional preference has a positive and significant impact on consumers' behavioral patterns and purchases satisfaction always.

While, [31] submitted that promotional strategies that offered instant rewards (such as buy one get one free and free samples deals) always resulted in impulse buying than another sales-promotional mix. Moreover, behaviorist provides a theoretical explanation on in-store sampling s such as operant conditioning theory, cognitive theory, self - perception theory and attribution theory.

In operant conditioning theory, free products always influence repeat buying behavior as it relatively influences desire behavior [4]. Free sampling indicates the seller's confidence in the product. It is a strategy of displaying product quality as it is being advertised. Subsequent patronage of the brand may trigger desired buying behavior, provided the perception of the tasted sampling is

impressive [4]. Although, Peter and Nord [33] argued that mail sampling does not influence consumers’ responses because it is part of the normal purchasing chain; that is checking the mailbox is the act that will be influenced. It can contend; however, that free sampling can influence advertising or other exposures to a brand.

Self-perception theory, on the other hand, [30] suggested that, before consumers will buy again they will search their mind for the “Reasons for initial purchase. If what to buy was due to external causes (like merchandiser gives free sampling influenced the buying, It was due to promotional display among others) rather than usual causes (such as the likeness of the brand or taste) then, the reason for initial buying will be ignored. Moreover, if the buying was due to internal influence, then there will be repeat buying.

More so, [4] stressed that the level at which consumers attributed internal influence to buying behavior is directly correlated with their experience in the category. However, [32] emphasizes cognitive behavioral learning theory to assert “the reinforcement” of a tested quality product will be much more inspiring, than any form of commercial jingle. Although, consumers are exposed to various products sampling both of the existing and new products, manufacturers also believe that the best strategy to get consumers’ attention or get them addicted to their offering is through in-store sampling. Producers and manufacturers of consumer goods are now directing their marketing efforts toward sampling of different kinds. Meanwhile, most of the organization’s sampling research is confidential and for commercial purposes, it is difficult to ascertain the authenticity of the claim that organization success is based on in-store sampling. This study presents the finding for the effectiveness and efficiency of in-store sampling as a strategic marketing penetration technique for consumer goods in the southwestern part of Nigeria and tried to establish if any relationship exists between in-store sampling and consumer buying behavior

III. METHODOLOGY

This study investigates in-store sampling as a strategic market penetration tool for consumer goods in the southwestern part of Nigeria which comprises Six (6) States (Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Oyo, Osun, and Ekiti). ANOVA test analysis was used in testing the group if there are differences between them. An in-store sampling experiment was conducted for six weeks at different outlets located across the study area. In the process of collecting the data, the study leverages the in-store sampling program implemented in the outlets with the help of the director of the program and outlet managers. Customers’ opinions were sought, through a survey conducted by merchandisers about their motives for taking the in-store sampling. Four hundred and forty-four (444) consumers intercepted participated in the exercise.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table A.1: Demographic Characteristics of the respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	163	36.81
Female	281	63.19
Total	444	100.00
Age		
<=30	200	45.14
31- 40	188	42.36
41-50	43	9.72
51-60	13	2.78
Total	444	100.00
Occupation		
Civil servant	117	26.39
Public servant	09	2.08
Artisans	290	65.28
Students	28	6.25
Total	444	100.00
Frequency of patronage		
More than 2years	247	55.56
Always	111	25.00
Once in a while	68	15.28
Of recent	9	2.08
First timers	9	2.08
Total	444	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table A. 2: ANOVA test of difference

	In-store sampling makes consumer value the product more	I buy more because of the higher quality it presents	In-store sampling is the best to present a new product of a particular brand
Utilitarian	3.14**	3.42*	4.33**
Hedonic	2.98**	3.22	3.51*
Opportunist	3.26*	2.31*	2.25**
F-cal	2.46	2.96	3.11

Source: Field Survey, 2021 * significant at 1%, and ** significant at 5%

Table A. 3: Bonferroni multiple comparison tests

	In-store sampling makes consumer value the product more	I buy more because of the higher quality it presents	In-store sampling is the best to present a new product of a particular brand
Utilitarian	0.408955(0.023)	0.896632(0.000)	0.93271(0.013)
Hedonic	0.544776(0.152)	0.800523(0.004)	2.42024(0.002)
Opportunist	0.589552(0.096)	0.935616(0.043)	1.10857(0.053)

Source: Field Survey, 2021

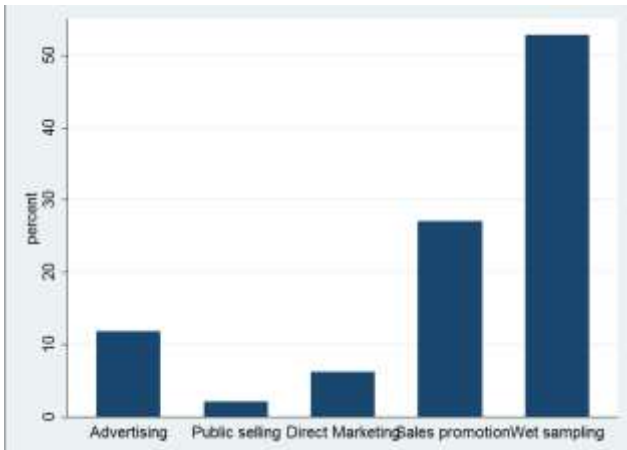


Fig. A.1: Preferred strategic marketing penetration technique
Source: Author's Result



Fig. A.2: Consumer buying behaviour
Source: Author's Result

Discussion

Table A.1 showed that 63.19% of the respondents were female and 36.81% were male. Almost half (45.14%) of the total respondents were not more than 30 years of age, 42.36% ages lie between 31 -40 years, 9.72% ages are between 41-50 years and only 2.78% were between 51-60 years the average age of the respondents was estimated. This implied that most of the respondents were young. The result further showed that 65.28% were artisans, 26.39% were civil servants, 6.25% were students and only 2.08% were public servants. About 56% had been patronizing the shop for more than 2 years, 25% reported of frequent patronage to those shops, 15.28% admitted that they only patronize those shops once-in-a-while, and 2.08% were first-timers

Table A.2 revealed Suggested populations for the study were categorized into three segments, using their motives of participation: hedonic (emotional, social) motives or opportunistic (self- gratifying) motives and utilitarian (rational, information) motives. ANOVA analysis result showed that the response varied over the three segments. However, a post estimation of ANOVA is required to know the exact difference in mean of each category of the consumer sampled

Table A.3 The significant F value of 2.46, 2.96 and 3.11 of in-store sampling as a strategic marketing penetration technique for the utilitarian, hedonic and opportunist insinuate that at least one treatment effect differs from zero, i.e. the means are not all equal. Though, the difference is not established. Therefore, Bonferroni tests were used to establish these differences, because it examines the differences between each pair of means.

A chi-square test was done to find out if there was a relationship between consumer buying behavior and in-store sampling. The result showed that there is a significant relationship between in-store sampling and consumer buying behavior in the study area. The test shows a value of 0.02 level of significance to a standard value which is 0.05, so there is a relationship between the variables. However, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative is accepted i.e. there is a significant relationship between in-store sampling and consumer buying behavior in the study area.

Figure A.1 presents the respondent's opinions based on their preferred strategic marketing penetration technique. The figure showed that more than 50% of the respondents prefer in-store sampling, about 27% choose sales promotion, and 13% prefer advertisement while about 15% like direct marketing and only 3% choose public selling. The result implied that a larger percentage of consumers prefer in-store sampling as a strategic marketing penetration technique. This result is in-line with previous studies, it revealed that most consumers preferred in-store sampling because they will be opportune to have first-hand access to taste and experience the products before any financial commitments. Secondly, their view will also be sought as feedback for corrective measures. The result still implies that if the organization trains its merchandisers, sales promoters and other sales executive very well and equipped them with benefits of the products, their attitudes when applying or serving in-store sampling will go along way with consumers or prospects and it will lead to a positive and significant effect.

V. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE SCOPE

Based on the findings of this research work, it is evident from the study that in-store sampling is the most preferred promotional mechanism for introducing a new product to the market; it also influences consumer buying decisions. Consumers that tried the product samples were considerably more likely to switch to sampled brands than those that did not try the samples. In other words, trial positively influenced consumer's conversion to the newly introduced brands. This finding accords closely with the cognitive tradition that treats direct experience through product sampling as a very significant source of brand information [43][45] Given that there is proper brand awareness during the sampling exercises, it could also maintain that sampling-induced strategy is more influential than advertising or another communication mix [41]. The impact of sampling on conversion also supports the

behaviorist view that the benefits gained from sampling reinforce continued usage of a brand.

Moreover, the behaviorist Prediction that subsequent product purchase and sampling further reinforce desired behavior was also supported by this study. Consumers that bought the sampled brands after trying the samples were much more likely to convert to them over the long term than consumers who did not initially purchase the sampled brands after trying the samples. Because the purchase is thus so closely related to conversion, it is incumbent on marketers directly to encourage consumers to buy sampled brands in the short term, perhaps by offering introductory money-off coupons or other inducements. Because sampling is very often used in new product launches. However, [39] emphasized the role of sampling could be interpreted to be tautological; consumers that were induced through samples would naturally be more likely to buy the sampled brands than those that did not want to try the Samples in the first place.

The study clearly showed that there is a significant relationship between in-store sampling and consumer buying behavior, i.e. free sample (in-store sampling) significantly influenced consumer buying decisions. The result further showed that there exists a significant difference between the buying decision of the rational buyer (utilitarian), emotional buyers (hedonic) and the self-gratifying buyers (opportunist). However, there is a need to identify more inducing factors for market penetration and designing an appropriate marketing mix to entail optimal consumer satisfaction in the study area. These dynamic marketing endeavors will certainly lead a firm to comprehend consumer buying behavior in order to introduce products better.

The results of this study indicated that the product samplers may be stuck between the benefit of generating high rates of sampling and the problem of high rates of rejection. Marketers need more effective ways of translating sampling and first purchase into repeat purchases. In competitive and brand-proliferated markets, a conversion may be best achieved by accurately sampling products with flair and imagination. Marketers also need to ensure that other elements in the marketing mix, packaging, price, placement, and advertising, are consistently better than competing products to maintain brand loyalty

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