

Evaluating the Use of Integrated Marketing Communications in Boosting Sales: A Case Study of Nation Builders Bakery, Asaba

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Abstract

The integration of marketing communications (IMC) has emerged as a strategic approach for businesses aiming to enhance sales and purchases in today's competitive marketplace. This study investigates the utilization of integrated marketing communication within the Nation Builders Bakery, Asaba and its influence on sales. Through a comprehensive analysis of IMC strategies employed by Nation Builders Bakery including traditional advertising, digital marketing, sales promotions, and experiential marketing, this study seeks to uncover key insights into the effectiveness of IMC initiatives in driving consumer engagement and purchase intent. The study was based on survey research design. It utilized a mixed method of data collection which include; Historical analysis, literature review, questionnaires and personal interviews. Content analysis of texts, journals, seminars/conference papers, official publications, magazines, newspapers and other published and unpublished works also served as source materials. The study was anchored on the theory of persuasion while the target population was the 20 staff working in the bakery. The findings of this study showed that the Nation Builders Bakery employs diverse range of IMC tactics to engage with customers across various touchpoints. Again, the study notes that analysis of sales and marketing data indicated a positive correlation between the implementation of IMC strategies and improvements in sales performance. The study provides practical recommendations for optimizing IMC practices, including enhancing integration and alignment across marketing channels, embracing digital innovation, segmenting target audiences, implementing measurement and evaluation metrics, and investing in employee training and development. By understanding the role of integrated marketing communications in boosting sales, Nation Builders Bakery can strengthen its market position, enhance brand equity, and achieve sustainable growth in the dynamic Nigerian market landscape.

Keywords: Marketing Communication, Digital Marketing, Sales, Purchases

Introduction

Integrated Marketing Communication is a strategy in which diverse communication tools work together to maximize communication impact on target consumers. By definition, it involves creating, communicating and delivering values for consumers such that the "whole is more than the sum parts" (Philip J. Kitchen, 2022). IMC addresses the voice of the association and its brands as well as technique by which it can set up a conversation and develop relationship with customers. Through the concept, buyers get to know the origin of the product and associate the brand to people, events and experiences. It increases the ability of a firm to encounter the right customer with the right message at the opportune time and in the ideal place, with the use of proper planning and execution of all types of advertising-like and promotion-like messages selected for a brand, service or company (Larry Percy, 2023).

Progress and survival have become rough and tough for consumer goods producing companies like the Nation Builders Bakery in today's highly competitive market place where consumer goods producing companies need to be at alert from all market signals. Companies mainly producing consumer goods do not look at the size of targeted market segment, but primarily they focus on returns, which they receive in form of their aggregate sales and revenues from targeted market segments. Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) has become an integral marketing instrument for small and medium scale companies such as the Nation Builders Bakery, which are engaged in consumer goods businesses. It principally involves collecting accurate and exact information about the dappled market segment through using different marketing tools and techniques to device the profitable strategies to overthrow the problems faced by them (Mukhtiar Ali Erri, Arman Khan et al, 2020). The eventual idea of IMC or contemporary marketing emphasizes the demand for possessing thorough and careful information

about the requirements, motivations, attitudes and activities carried out by consumers in targeted market segments (Mukhtiar Ali Erri, Arman Khan et al, 2020).

An acceptable level of profitability is a must for any organization through which it generates surplus for its continuity of operations. Companies that are strategically managed usually, have profitability as one of their objectives as it is through profits alone that they can survive. Higher profits also mean efficient and effective working of an organization. Companies, which cannot make desired profits, find it almost impossible to survive. Due to fierce competition the profit margins have shrunk as customers have become more aware of returns on investments hence companies will have to gear themselves for efficient management of their resources to generate -profits (Lomash, 2003).

The purpose of this study is to recognize and evaluate the significance of Integrated Marketing -Communication for improved sales, studying the Nation Builders Bakery.

Statement of the Problem

The Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) has become increasingly important for businesses aiming to enhance sales and purchases in today's competitive marketplace. However, despite its recognized potential, there remains a lack of comprehensive understanding regarding the effectiveness and implementation of IMC strategies, particularly within the context of the Nation Builders Bakery. This research seeks to address this gap by investigating the extent to which the utilization of integrated marketing communications contributes to improved sales and purchases for Nation Builders Bakery, Asaba. Specifically, the study will examine the current IMC practices employed by the company, identify any existing challenges or limitations in their implementation, and explore potential strategies for enhancing the effectiveness of IMC to drive sales and purchases within the Nigerian market. It is against this foundation that this research sets out to explore the impact of integrated marketing communication strategy for an improved sales at Nation Builders Bakery.

Integrated Marketing Communication: Towards a Conceptual Review

IMC is the planning and execution of an extensive variety of displaying correspondences required to satisfy a common course of action of goals and support advancement of a brand. The concept has grown over four key stages, starting from key coordination of selling points, redefinition of the degree of advancing correspondence and utilization of information to the financial and key strategies (Yu Xia, 2023).

The IMC increases the ability of a firm to encounter the right customer with the right message at the opportune time and in the ideal place (Larry Percy, 2017). IMC is also described as an organization thought that brings together different components of promotion disciplines rather than to work separately. Each system has its own particular contribution which can be reviewed from the results (Smith, 2002). It gives new powerful model that encourages the business to make marketing correspondence to focus on the customer (Kitchen, Brignell, Li and Jones, 2004). It influences simple accessibility and access of merchandise and enterprises, makes messages more proficient and builds confidence of the customer about the product. To Proctor, Tony, Kitchen and Philip, (2002) IMC is a program that designs and implements distinctive promoting practices with consistency so that its total impact outperforms the impact of each activity. It is a system in which specific promotional tools are combined with an aim of reaching the target population with a more powerful message. Some of these tools include;

1. Advertising

The world today is flooded with mass media e.g. Television, films, declarations, magazines, movies, music, dailies and the web. Of all the promotion tools, advertising is esteemed for its great impact on the audience as its effect is impressively broader by making the mind of a potential purchaser to take conceivable purchaser decision. Adekoya (2010) in his study on the impact of advertising on sales volume of pay TV in Nigeria found that good advertising requires competent personnel including a number of specialists to enable it thrive in the ever dynamic and competitive business environment.

2. Sales Promotion

According to Shimp (2003), promotion is any motivating force utilized by producer or retailer to incite exchange with other retailer or with other channel member or with shoppers to purchase the products. Moreau, Krishra and Harham (2001) observed that the fundamental goals of sales promotion are to present new items, draw in new clients, induce present clients to purchase more, to enable firm to stay focused, to build deals in off season among others.

3. Direct Marketing

Tapp (2008) defines direct marketing as a way of acquiring and keeping customers by providing a framework for analysis of individual customer information, strategy formation and implementation such that customers respond directly. Vander, Wiele and Hesselink (2005) in their investigation on devices to form understanding into client benefit arrangement exhorts that direct marketing if well-arranged and executed viably, can possibly be more financially savvy than other special devices in view of the exact targets that the arrangement allows. Existing

clients can be reached to familiarize them with new items and unique offers, henceforth, influencing their dedication while the new clients can be distinguished and urged to buy goods or services of a firm through direct channels.

4. Personal Selling

Weitz & Castleberry (2004) define personal selling as a relational procedure whereby a dealer tries to reveal and fulfill purchaser's needs in a mutually long term beneficial manner suitable for both parties. It is the costliest type of advancement since it includes working of relationship through correspondence with the end goal of making a business exchange. Accomplishment of the procedure relies upon how well the two groups reach a common understanding through social association.

Theoretical Framework

Theory of Persuasion

This discipline was developed by Carl Hovland in 1950. The theory posits that the more people learn and remember from an ad, the more persuasive the ad will be (AdAge 2003). It is a mass communication theory that deals with messages aimed at changing the attitudes of receivers (Radakovic 2010). Persuasion is a procedure by which individuals utilize messages to impact others. Understanding the impact of publicizing, regardless of whether positive or negative, on its group of onlookers is the point of convergence of influence hypothesis. The general idea of influence has enhanced attitudes in states of mind and has had great contribution on showcasing and publicizing research, (Shrum, Liu, Nespoli & Lowrey 2012).

Furthermore, the heart of persuasion theory lies the work of social psychologist Robert Cialdini, whose seminal book "Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion" outlined six key principles of persuasion: reciprocity, scarcity, authority, consistency, liking, and consensus. These principles provide a framework for understanding how individuals are influenced by persuasive messages in various contexts.

The principles of persuasion have profound implications for boosting sales aimed at shaping consumer behavior and driving sales. Marketers leverage these principles to craft compelling messages, design persuasive campaigns, and influence consumer decision-making processes. For example, scarcity tactics such as limited-time promotions and exclusive offers tap into consumers' fear of missing out (FOMO) to stimulate demand and encourage immediate action. Similarly, testimonials from authoritative figures or satisfied customers can enhance credibility and trust, making it more likely that consumers will choose one product over another.

In addition to traditional advertising channels, digital platforms have opened up new opportunities for persuasive communication. Social media influencers, for instance, leverage their credibility and likability to endorse products and services to their followers, often yielding significant results in terms of brand awareness and sales.

The Nation Builders Bakery

The Nation Builders Bakery was founded in 2019 as a major entrepreneurship unit of the NationBuilders College of Technology, Asaba, when the institution was founded. Its vision is "to be the biggest supplier of Bread and other bakery products in Asaba, while it generates profits for its proprietors and serving as a training ground for students and its mission slogan is "feeding the nation" The Company is owned and controlled by the Christ Holy Church International, through the NationBuilders College of Technology, Asaba. It has its registered/Head office at 1, Nwanze Ozie Avenue, Behind Road Safety Office, Asaba- Benin Express way, Asaba. The business sector activities of the company include manufacturing and marketing of bakery products such as; different flavours of bread, different flavours of cakes, puff loaf, chin-chin as well as other snacks.

The host institution, NationBuilders College of Technology (NABCOTECH), is a faith-based tertiary institution founded by Christ Holy Church International in 2018. NABCOTECH is part of the overall plans of the church administration to expand its efforts in building appropriate middle-level manpower capacity to meet the new dynamics of the time. The College of Technology is expected to bridge the gap between the low and high level manpower needs of Delta State in particular and the nation in general.

Methodology

This study employed survey research. It utilized a mixed method of data collection which include; Historic al analysis, literature review, questionnaires and personal interviews. Historical analysis and literature review were useful in collecting textual data from published and unpublished sources. The questionnaire method was quite useful in soliciting information from the Bakery Staff. Hence, the data collected for this study was a combination of primary as well as secondary data. The survey was undertaken with the help of questionnaires designed for the purpose. While designing the questionnaire, care was taken that it has the mix of closed and open ended questions. To enhance the response rate, multiple-choice questions were included in sufficient numbers. Interviews were also held with some selected staff and customers that constitute stakeholders of the Bakery. A total of 20 staff,

formulating the total number of staff at the company. The researchers carried out the administration of the research instruments in persons. Repeated checks and reviews were done on the questionnaire.

After collecting and appropriately sorting valid questionnaires, the collected data were analyzed using the mean. The reason for employing the mean is to provide a central measure that summarizes and interprets the responses from the respondents. The calculations for arriving at the mean are as follow;

Strongly agreed= 4, agreed= 3, disagreed=2, strongly disagreed=1

X=Mean

N= total number of questionnaires

Fx= total frequency

Therefore to calculate the mean $X = \frac{fx}{n}$

n

Data Analysis and Presentations

In this section, we present the respondents' opinions regarding Advertising as a factor affecting sales at the Nation Builders Bakery.

STATEMENT	STRONGLY AGREED	AGREED	STRONGLY DISAGREED	DISAGREED	TOTAL	X
Advertising of Nation Builders Bakery products can help increase profits.	10	10	0	0	20	3.5
Advertising of Nation Builders Bakery products increase the market share of its products	6	5	5	4	20	2.65
Nation Builders Bakery controls its advertising campaign to ensure effectiveness	12	8	0	0	20	3.6

Direct marketing

In this section, we present the respondents' opinions regarding Direct Marketing.

STATEMENT	STRONGLY AGREED	AGREED	STRONGLY DISAGREED	DISAGREED	TOTAL	X
Direct Marketing is a key promotional strategy at the Nation Builders Bakery.	8	8	3	1	20	3.15
Direct marketing of Nation Builders Bakery products increase profits.	6	10	2	2	20	3.2
Direct marketing of Nation Builders Bakery Products encourages new customers	15	5	0	0	20	3.75

Sales promotion

In this section, we present the respondents' opinions regarding Sales Promotion.

STATEMENT	STRONGLY AGREED	AGREED	STRONGLY DISAGREED	DISAGREED	TOTAL	X
Sales promotion at the Nation Builders Bakery stimulates quick purchase hence creating short term financial results for the company.	15	4	1	0	20	3.6
Sales promotion at the Nation Bakery increase sales volume	20	0	0	0	20	4.0
Sales Promotion at the Nation Builders Bakery helps in reaching out to the targeted customers.	10	10	0	0	20	3.5

Personal selling

In this section, we present the respondents' opinions on Personal selling

STATEMENT	STRONGLY AGREED	AGREED	STRONGLY DISAGREED	DISAGREED	TOTAL	X
Personal selling is a key promotional strategy at the Nation Builders Bakery.	3	2	10	5	20	2.15
Personal selling at the Nation Builders is a very useful communication tool for building relationships.	8	2	5	5	20	2.65

With the data gathered from the analyzed questionnaires, oral interviews and existing literature, it is generally accepted that the use of Integrated Marketing Communication, explained by the three authors plays a significant role in boosting sales at the Nation Builders Bakery, Asaba. Therefore, the management of the company, as well as other similar companies should not downplay the peculiarity of marketing communication; advertising, direct marketing, personal selling, sales promotion, among others.

Summary

This study explores the findings and implications derived from investigating the efficacy of integrated marketing communications (IMC) at the Nation Builders Bakery to enhance sales. The study seeks to investigate whether the components of integrated marketing communication used by the Nation Builders Bakery, Asaba, improved the performance of the company. The results showed that aggressive advertising enhanced customer loyalty and attracted new customers to the company. Direct marketing according to the study was most applicable in creating awareness about the Bakery's products and reminding existing customers to purchase products offered by the company. Sales promotion at the Nation Builder's Bakery was a key promotional tool according to the study and was used to create positive image of a seller's product in the minds of potential buyers. It also stimulated quick purchase hence creating short term financial results for the company. Personal selling enhanced customer loyalty

and improved on the brand image which is key in ensuring that the company remains afloat. It also increased sales volume by creating awareness about new products and reminding customers to purchase the products.

Conclusion

The study shows that Integrated Marketing Communications, as a strategy for boosting sales at the Nation Builders Bakery, Asaba, is essential, as it connotes the best way to improve sales and purchases in this decade. By adopting a strategic and cohesive approach to IMC, incorporating digital innovation, understanding consumer preferences, and addressing organizational challenges, Nation Builders Bakery can strengthen its market position, enhance brand equity, and achieve sustainable growth in the competitive Nigerian market.

The research shows that the management of Nation Builders Bakery should exploit more IMC tools as they offer tangible benefits on the performance of the company. The Company should invest further in employing well-trained staff to participate or take charge of the marketing communication tools and also improve on its on-the-job training programs to equip employees on the changing needs of the market so that the employees can engage marketing strategies that match those needs.

Recommendations

The following recommendations based on the above research findings are outlined below so as to enhance sales and purchases at the Nation Builders Bakery.

1. Enhanced Integration: There is a need for greater integration and alignment of IMC efforts across different departments and marketing channels within the bakery to ensure consistency and coherence in messaging and brand communication.
2. Embrace Digital Innovation: Given the growing importance of digital channels in reaching and engaging with consumers, Nation Builders Bakery, Asaba should continue to invest in digital marketing initiatives, including social media, content marketing, and e-commerce platforms.
3. Measurement and Evaluation: Implementing robust metrics and analytics tools to track the performance of IMC campaigns and assess their impact on sales and purchases will provide valuable insights for optimizing future marketing efforts and resource allocation.
4. Employee Training and Development: Investing in training and development programs to enhance the skills and knowledge of marketing teams involved in IMC planning and execution will ensure proficiency in leveraging emerging trends and technologies.

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