

**MODERATING ROLE OF PRICE ON SALES PROMOTION AND CONSUMER SWITCHING BEHAVIOUR IN  
NIGERIAN TELECOMMUNICATION INDUSTRY**

**BY**

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**Abstract**

*The issue of consumer switching behaviour has become one of the major factors affecting business profitability, especially in the telecommunication sector. In view of this, the study examined the Determinants of consumer switching behaviour in Nigerian telecommunication industry, the moderating role of price. Data were collected from the students of tertiary institutions in Borno state, North eastern Nigeria using a cross-sectional study design. The study adopted Krijcie and Morgan rule of thumb and arrived at 382 respondents and questionnaires were distributed and collected through the personally-administered method. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) was used to test the study hypothesis. This study finds that Sales Promotion have significant influence on consumer switching behaviour. The results of this study provide important insights to managers, mobile operators and researchers to further understand the factors that influence consumers to switch from one service provider to another in the Nigerian telecommunication industry. Mobile operators should concentrate on factors like sales promotion so as to attract more customers to their network.*

**Keywords: Consumer Switching Behaviour, Sales Promotion**

**Introduction**

Consumers' switching behaviour (CSB) has recently become stepping stones for technology innovation market and it brings the attention of many researchers within the different research field (Leng, 2014). CSB is the process by which a consumer abandons his/her relationship with a current service/product provider and replaces it with a competitor partially or entirely for a given period. CSB is sometimes resulted from the dissatisfaction with the incumbent and leads, subscribers to search for new suppliers with higher service satisfaction (Lee, 2014). Losing existing consumers is synonymous to reduction in sales, thereby reducing profitability and sustainability of the company (Isibor, Agbonifoh & Odia, 2019). CSB is a very complex issue in this competitive market because the consumers are now technology-friendly and have easy access to know about different service providers. They are the end-users of the service, therefore satisfying them and creating a favourable impression about the service provided should be the priority of any company. The Nigerian telecommunication industry is facing one of the major effects of CSB, with consumers constantly changing their service providers to meet their needs (Malhotra & Batra, 2019). This has not only affects profitability but also threatening sustainability of the industry. In fact, Ghaxami and Olyaei, (2012) reported that it costs five times more to attract a new customer than it is to sustain and retain the current profitable one. Marketers understand that every effort invested in marketing communication was aimed towards the attracting of new customers and creating superior and lasting value for them (Kotler and Keller, 2006).

Statistically, about 220,096 telecom subscribers change their service provider in 2015, 211,749 in 2016, 170,715 in 2017, 77,554 in 2018 and 121,154 in 2019 (NCC, 2020), this is attributed to network failures; drop calls, high tariffs, poor service quality, poor customer care and unsustainable promotions (Nwakanma, Udunwa, Anyiam, Ukwunna, & Obasi, 2018). The contribution of the telecommunication to the GDP also keep fluctuating from 9.85% in Q4 2018 to 10.11% in Q1 of 2019, 11.39% in Q2 of 2019 and 9.20% in Q3 of 2019 (NCC, 2020). Some of the likely factors causing this routine change by customers are network failures; drop calls, high tariffs, poor service quality, poor customer care and unsustainable promotions. (Nwakanma, Udunwa, Anyiam, Ukwunna, & Obasi, 2018). Other factors influencing the customers to resort to switching, as considered by the researchers include network problems, poor coverage by the network, high call rates and the influence of family and friends (Satish, Kumar, Naveen, & Jeevanantham 2011). However, Chaharsoughi & Yasory (2012) argued that sales promotion is the most serious factor causing CSB especially among the youth in Nigeria. In fact Alvarez & Casielles (2005) and Frederick (2017) emphasized that sales promotion plays a significant role in CSB. Sales promotions are activities that directly encourage consumers to prefer brands by providing them with the incentives to do so. Marketers spend more on sales promotions than on advertising (Pride & Ferrell 2010). Furthermore, Chandranath (2015) agrees that

sales promotions cost more money than advertising, and are now a bigger business. Sales promotions include price reductions, gifts, coupons, special displays and points of sale.

Frederick (2017) assessed the factors that influence youth to switch phones. The results showed that majority of switchers are influenced by sales promotion. Similarly, in a study carried out by Abdul (2007), the showed that sales promotions do not affect post promotion brand preferences. Likewise, Mondal and Samantaray (2014) argued that sales promotions do not influence brand preferences. Thus, this study clearly shows that the relationship between sales promotion and consumer switching behaviour is inconsistent and that makes it to be inconclusive. Hence, there is the need to conduct research to ascertain this relationship. Therefore, these inconsistencies in the literature need to be examine further relationship between consumer switching behaviour. Price was identified as the key reason for the customers to switch over to other providers (Lee and Murphy, 2005). The consumers become less sensitive to satisfaction levels as switching costs increase (Kim, Park, & Jeong, 2004; Hauser et.al, 1994). Therefore, it is expected that price would moderate the relationship. The goal of this study is to examine the moderating role of price on the relationship between sales promotion and consumer switching behaviour in the Nigerian telecommunication industry, with a view to reducing the switching behaviour among the telecom consumers.

## **Literature Review**

### **Consumer Switching Behaviour (CSB)**

Keaveney (1995) developed the model for understanding the switching behaviour of the consumer. This model helps the researchers in order to see the behaviour of the consumer in the service industry. Customer switching behaviour (CSB) remains an important research area in the relationship marketing literature (Chiu, Hsieh, Li, & Lee, 2005). Given the well-established differences between goods and services, it is generally accepted that reasons for switching in the service market differ from those responsible for switching in the market for goods (Keaveney, 1995). With respect to service, switching behaviour denotes exchanging or replacing a current service provider with another provider and is the opposite of customer loyalty (Jung et al., 2017; Njite, Kim, & Kim, 2008; Wieringa & Verhoef, 2007). As with most concepts, a number of definitions exist for CSB in the marketing literature. Ranganathan, Seo, and Babad (2006) defined it as the migration of consumers from one service to another. More recently, Nimako (2012), arguing from a number of perspectives, defined CSB as a process by which consumers abandon their relationship with a current service/product provider and replace it with a competitor partially or entirely for a given time period. This definition emphasizes that CSB is a process and also underscores the multiple typologies and multifaceted nature of CSB. This comprehensive definition suggests several dimensions and typologies of the CSB phenomenon, notably, the fact that switching is a process and could be partial or total.

### **Sales Promotion**

Generally, sales promotion is defined to be a part of marketing campaigns consisting of a collection of incentive providing tools which are short term marketing strategies designed to stimulate quicker purchase of product from consumers (Kotler, 2003). Thus, specific attractive packages are implemented as baits to attract customers to want more of the product into consideration. George (1998) reflects on the nature of the content of the incentive by adding that sale promotion entails short term incentives to urge customer purchasing, reseller's support and sales force efforts. Others such as Belch and Belch (2003) stress on the marketing potential of sale promotion by defining sale promotion as marketing activities, not based on personal selling, that encourages buyers purchasing and traders' effectiveness like displays and exhibitions, and demonstration. Belch and Belch (2003) also argued that sale promotion is expanded to sell products and services to promulgate causes, market, political applicants and deals with social cankers like drug abuse. It could also be defined as supervised incentives that produce additional benefit of the product to the sale market, suppliers and the consumer (George 1998). Consequently, sales promotion is perceived as an additional option for action to attract the attention of consumers and is seen as one of the ways firms use to deliver product information to the people. Sales promotions are activities that directly encourage consumers to prefer brands by providing them with the incentives to do so. Marketers spend more on sales promotions than on advertising (Pride & Ferrell 2010).

Mondal and Samantaray (2014) argue that sales promotions do not influence brand preferences, but simply prompt brand switching amongst consumers, especially those most affected by-product prices. In the theoretical literature, promotion is regarded as a key element of the marketing mix that aims to inform, encourage and remind the target market about a product or service offered in an attempt to influence the consumers' feelings, perception and purchasing decisions (Stanton et al., 2007). In other words, promotion programs are used by organizations to communicate the benefits of certain products or services to a group of potential and existing customers (Reibstein,

1985). Sales promotion is widely accepted as an important component in marketing campaigns for inspiring and stimulating quicker and effective response (comprising purchase quantity and speed) to the sales of particular products or services.

### **Sales Promotion and Consumer Switching Behaviour**

Numerous studies have been conducted to examine the responses of consumer to sales promotion. For example, Shujaat et al. (2015) explore the brand switching behaviour of consumer in telecommunication sector among students from various universities in Karachi, the findings reveal that price, and brand image, network quality, value-added services and promotional activities directly influence consumer switching behaviour among youngsters. The study shows that promotional activity is among the variable that can influence brand switching among students. Frederick (2017) assesses the factors that influence youth to switch phones, the results show that Majority of switchers are influenced by sales promotion, personal and internet factors. Although the study was conducted among phone users, it still shows the influence of sales promotion in the communication industry. Omotayo (2011) examine the effect of sales promotion on customer loyalty in the telecommunication industry in Nigeria. The paper found that there is a positive relationship between sales, promotion and customer loyalty. More importantly, it was discovered that non-loyal customers are more prone to switch to competing products as a result of sales promotion than loyal customers.

Abdul (2007), in his literature review, however, cites studies which showed that sales promotions do not affect post promotion brand preferences in general. He explains that depending on features of sales promotion and the promoted product or service, sales promotion can either increase or decrease preference for a brand. He adds that the results of a prior study had shown that a very successful promotion did not have any positive or negative longer-term effect on the brand, however it did expand the total category for the retailer, though temporarily. He further cites studies relating to the impact of promotion on brand switching which showed that sales promotion has a strong effect on brand switching. Furthermore, Dangaiso (2014), in his study which sought to determine the effectiveness of sales promotion strategies on company performance with special reference to TelOne Zimbabwe, showed that sales promotion has an important role and influences in marketing management of the telecommunication sector in Zimbabwe. This, he notes, is evinced by a significant sales volume increase as a result of price-off promotion. Several studies have been conducted on sales promotion. For example, Shujaat, Syed and Ahmed (2015) explore the brand switching behaviour of consumer in telecommunication sector among students from various universities in Karachi. The findings revealed that promotional activities directly influence consumer switching behaviour among students. The results showed that majority of switchers are influenced by sales promotion. Similarly, in a study carried out by Abdul (2007), showed that sales promotions do not affect post promotion brand preferences. Likewise, Mondal and Samantaray (2014) argued that sales promotions do not influence brand preferences. Thus, this study clearly shows that the relationship between sales promotion and consumer switching behaviour is inconsistent and that makes it to be inconclusive. Baron and Kenny (1986) Argue that when this occur, a moderating variable should be included. In view of that, Grigoriou et al. (2018), argued that we should consider price as a moderating variable because, Price was identified as the key reason for the customers to switch over to other providers (Lee and Murphy, 2005). In fact, Kollmann, (2000) stated that price plays a vital role in the telecommunication market, especially for the mobile telecommunication service providers.

### **Hypothesis**

**Ho. Price has no significant influence on consumer switching behaviour**

### **Methodology**

For this study, the researcher used survey research to meticulously gather data for this research. A cross-sectional design which is a one-shot research study at a given point of time and consists of a sample (cross-section) of the population of interest. The benefit associated with a cross-sectional study is that it is cost-effective and saves a lot of time (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010). The population of this study comprises the students of tertiary institutions in Borno state, except Arabic teachers' village Gamboru Ngala and UIIECEST Bama. These two institutions are not operating in their site, because of the insurgency, so it will be difficult to meet adequate students that will respond to the question. The schools include University of Maiduguri, Ramat polytechnic, Sir Kashim Ibrahim College of education, college of education waka Biu, College of legal and Islamic studies and College of Agriculture, each with a population of 27995, 19178, 2446, 6420, 2001, and 1380 respectively. The total population is 59,420 (Academic division, 2019). The samples of this study are students selected from the tertiary institutions in the state. The sample size for this study will be from Krejcie and Morgan (1970), table for determining sample size. This table has been

used by previous researchers and provides an adequate sample size for studies. Hence, according to Krejcie and Morgan sample determination, for a population of 50,000-75,000 the sample size is 382 (as shown in Table 3.1), therefore since the population of this study fall within that range, the sample size is 382. Cluster sampling involves dividing the population into two or more discrete groups prior to sampling based on one or a number of attributes (Saunders et al. 2009), Cluster sampling is categorized as a probability sampling method because clusters are selected randomly or the random selection of elements within each cluster (Zikmund et al., 2013).

Therefore, this study employed cluster sampling technique to divide the schools into 6 clusters. This is consistent with previous studies that divide target population according to location (Zhang & Zhang, 2012). Samples were selected randomly from each cluster based on the respective sample size (Sekaran&Bougie, 2010). Respondents were selected randomly (base on raw sitting arrangement in the class, 1-5-10.....) during GST class were students from different faculties attend lectures at the same time. Data in this study was collected through primary and secondary sources. Secondary sources were derived from journals, periodicals, books, government publications, and databases, whereas questionnaires were employed to gather primary data. The students of the selected tertiary institutions were asked to answer the questionnaire. Data for the study was analysed using inferential statistics. The Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) approach was adopted for data analysis. PLS-SEM is a statistical methodology that has been used by several researchers in various research areas in social sciences, including business research.

### Results

The study examines the moderating role of price in the relationship between sales promotion and consumer switching behaviour and employed the internal consistency approach to determine the reliabilities of all the items of the constructs used in the study (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2017) Table 1 present the Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability and average variance extracted (AVE). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient and composite reliability values are all above 0.7 which are within acceptable ranges, furthermore, the values of AVE have surpassed the 0.4 threshold.

**Table 1: Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability and AVE Values**

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
CSB	0.544	0.764	0.521
PRICE	0.715	0.769	0.464
SAP	0.749	0.833	0.504

Source: Field Survey 2021

We tested the validity of the constructs by assessing the discriminant validity using the Fornell and Lacker-, (1981) criteria. Table1 shows the AVE values for the construct to be .464 to .521 which suggests acceptable values whilst Table 2 shows the square root of AVE to be greater than AVE. Additionally; the square root of the AVE of each construct is greater than the absolute values of the standardized correlation square of the given construct. This indicates that all construct differs from one another consequently, discriminant validity is supported.

### Discriminant Validity

Table 2 compares the indicator loadings with other reflective indicators. All indicator loadings were greater than the cross-loadings, suggesting adequate discriminant validity for further analysis

**Table 2: Factor Loading and Cross Loading**

Items	CSB	PRICE	SAP
CSB1	<b>0.729</b>		
CSB4	<b>0.629</b>		
CSB5	<b>0.798</b>		
PRI1		<b>0.786</b>	
PRI2		<b>0.590</b>	
PRI3		<b>0.480</b>	
PRI5		<b>0.812</b>	
SAP1			<b>0.668</b>
SAP2			<b>0.718</b>

SAP3	0.810
SAP4	0.765
SAP5	0.560

Source: Field Survey 2021

Based on the table below, the  $R^2$  value indicates that service quality which is the exogenous variable explain 18% variance in the endogenous variable (consumer switching behaviour). Consequently, based on the assessment of the  $R^2$  of the endogenous latent variable consumer switching behaviour (.182), it is concluded that the model has moderate predictive validity.

**Table3: The coefficient of determination (R2) of the endogenous variable**

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
<b>CSB</b>	0.182	0.177

Source: Field survey 2021

We used Stone-Geisser test to assess the Q2 via blindfolding method and results on Table show Q2 value of 0.085 for CSB. This shows the relevant of the variable to the problem investigated; therefore, the result provides clear support for the model 's predictive relevance with regard to the endogenous construct.

**Table 4: Assessment of Predictive Relevance (Q2)**

Variables	SSO	SSE	Q <sup>2</sup> (=1-SSE/SSO)
<b>CSB</b>	972.000	889.140	0.085
<b>Moderating Effect 1</b>	324.000	324.000	
<b>PRICE</b>	1,296.000	1,296.000	
<b>SAP</b>	1,620.000	1,620.000	

Source: Field survey 2021

### Result of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis: Sales promotion has no significant influence on consumer switching behaviour in the Nigerian telecom industry. The result from the PLS 3.0, shows that sales promotion significantly influence consumer switching behaviour, therefore the null hypothesis is rejected. As presented in Table 5 below, the statistical analysis has proved that sales promotion is significantly related to consumer switching behaviour ( $\beta = 0.368$ ,  $t = 7.010$  and  $p < 0.000$ ), Which means sales promotion can attract consumer to telecom service provider.

**Table 5: PLS Path Analysis for Direct Effects**

hypothesis	$\beta$	S D(STDEV)	T Statistics ( O/STDEV )	P Values
<b>PRICE -&gt; CSB</b>	0.190	0.072	2.649	0.008
<b>SAP -&gt; CSB</b>	0.368	0.053	7.010	0.000

Source: Field survey 2021

Hypothesis: Price does not moderate the relationship between sales promotion and consumer switching behaviour. The result of the PLS 3.0, shows that price does not moderate the relationship between sales promotion and consumer switching behaviour, therefore the null hypothesis is accepted. Based on the results presented in the Table 6 below, price does not moderate the relationship between sales promotion and consumer switching behaviour as shown by the statistical analysis ( $\beta = -0.070$ ,  $t = 1.390$  and  $p < 0.165$ ).

**Table 6: PLS Path Analysis for In-Direct Effects**

Variables	B	SD	T Statistics	P Values	Decision
<b>Moderating Effect 1 -&gt; CSB</b>	-0.070	0.050	1.390	0.165	NotSupported

Source: Field Survey 2021

### Discussion

The first objective of the study is to examine the effect of sales promotion on consumer switching behaviour in the Nigerian telecommunication industry. In order to achieve this objective, hypothesis one, which predicted that there is no significant relationship between sales promotion and consumer switching behaviour, was statistically tested. It was found that there is significant relationship between the two construct (sales promotion and consumer switching behaviour). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected; The significant relationship shows that sales promotion attracts consumers to telecom service provider. Which means it can make consumer not to switch to another



network. This result is in consistent with the study of (Shujaat et al, 2015; Frederick, 2017; Grigoriou, 2018) For example, Shujaat et al. (2015) explore the brand switching behaviour of consumer in telecommunication sector among students from various universities in Karachi, the findings reveal that price, brand image, network quality, value-added services and promotional activities directly influence consumer switching behaviour among youngsters. The study shows that promotional activity is among the variable that can influence brand switching among students.

The second objective examine the moderating effect of price on the relationship between sales promotion and consumer switching behaviour. In order to achieved this, hypothesis two, which predicted that there is no moderating effect on the relationship was scientifically tested. The result indicated that price does not moderate the relationship between sales promotion and consumer switching behaviour. Therefore, hypothesis was accepted. These findings have the backing of the underpinning theory on the platform of which such hypotheses were formulated namely Theory of Planned Behaviour which posits that individual's intention is the immediate antecedent of customer switching behaviour. The stronger the individual's intention, the greater the likelihood of he or she will switch from one service provider to another.

### Conclusion

The main purpose of this research work is to examine the influence of sales promotion, the first objective is to examine the relationship between sales promotion and consumer switching behaviour in Nigerian telecommunication industry. This objective was achieved by testing direct relationship and indirect relationship. The study provides empirical evidence of the significant relationship between sales promotion and consumer switching behaviour and no moderating relationship.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions derived from the study, the following recommendations have been put forward:

1. The telecom service providers should give emphasis to sales promotion activities, by giving incentives like data bonus, reduce call rate, free calls, T-shirts, scholarships, free books, this would go a long way in retaining existing consumers and attract potential ones.
2. Incentives would make customers not to switch to another service provider.

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