

**INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS AND CONSUMER PATRONAGE
OF ETISALAT PRODUCTS IN UYO, NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT

This study analysed Etisalat's use of Integrated Marketing Communications tools and how these tools influence patronage of Etisalat's products in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The research technique employed was the survey method, while the instruments for data collection were the questionnaire and interview schedule. A sample of 388 respondents was drawn from five different zones across Uyo metropolis out of the 81,546 subscribers. The cluster and purposive sampling methods were employed, while the Cronbach Alpha statistical tool was used to establish reliability with a coefficient of 0.73. Findings show that Etisalat Nigeria was fully involved in integrating the five major tools of Integrated Marketing Communications to create awareness and also influence patronage of the network in Uyo. Results also indicate that subscribers of Etisalat Nigeria in Uyo are satisfied with the promotional activities of the network and rate it above those of competitors. However, sales promotion and advertising influenced patronage most among the five tools under study. It was concluded that Etisalat Nigeria has influenced patronage of the network by integrating these marketing communications tools, though other factors such as recommendations from friends and family, and low tariff also influenced patronage to an extent. Consequently, it was recommended that Etisalat Nigeria should continue with Integrated Marketing Communications with especial focus on sales promotions and advertising as well as investing in word-of-mouth advertisement. Moreover, promotional promises should be kept in full so as to encourage trust and by extension, loyalty in patronage among customers.

Introduction

The telecommunications industry in Nigeria is highly competitive with each organisation sourcing for subscribers. Etisalat Nigeria being one of the last on the Nigerian telecommunications industry, had a lot of task in order to operate profitably. Communicating with customers to retain their loyalty is a huge part of marketing of the product. Cooper (2001), explains that a product is new if it has been on the market for five years or less. Etisalat being a new product had to take some drastic measures to ensure success and, as recommended by Amue and Kenneth (2012), companies with new products should always take into cognizance consumers' personality, perception and learning when evolving new products as these would influence consumer adoption and patronage.

To this end, promotional activities, like product branding, advertisement and tempting inducement all geared towards inducing and retaining patronage of Etisalat were quickly dispersed for public consumption to ensure that Etisalat Nigeria gained the attention and patronage of as much of the target audience as possible. This work therefore, investigated how the integrated marketing

communications activities of Etisalat Nigeria have helped in increasing the customer base. Multimedia.com 2009, defines integrated marketing communications as the combination of all the promotional tools, so that they work together in harmony. Promotion being one of the Ps in the marketing mix has its own mix of communication tools which+

are result-oriented if they work together in harmony rather than in isolation. Their sum then is greater than their parts, provided they speak consistently with one voice all the time, every time.

A study conducted by Navarro, Sicilia, and Delgado-Ballester (2009), produced results that show that a strategic consistency-based integration has a more positive effect on information processing, attitude and recall of the communication campaign compared to the non-integration strategy. This study seeks to examine this statement with regard to Etisalat Nigeria.

Overview of Etisalat Nigeria

Emerging Markets Telecommunications Services (EMTS), currently trading as Etisalat Nigeria in partnership with Mubadala Development Company and Etisalat of the United Arab Emirates is incorporated in Nigeria as a private company. It acquired the Unified Access License from the Federal Government in January 2007 and officially launched into business in March 2008. Though Etisalat has been a telecommunications service provider in the United Arab Emirates since 1976 and had left a trail in several countries traversing the Middle East, Asia and Africa, it was the 6th operating and the latest entrant into telecommunications industry in Nigeria (Wikipedia, 2012). Till 2015, it was still the newest telecom company in the country. Hence, an integrated marketing campaign plan that was intended to promote this brand and its products in the country was adopted.

Etisalat as a multinational telecommunications company is currently operating in over 18 countries across Asia, the Middle East and Africa. As at February 2012, Etisalat was the 15th largest mobile network operator in the world, with a total customer base of more than 135 million. In Nigeria, it is now operating with over 14 million subscribers. Before Etisalat's business operations in Nigeria, MTN, Glo, Zain – now Airtel, Visafone, and other telecommunications companies had been fully operating in Nigeria. In its first year, Etisalat Nigeria had about 2 million subscribers, but now, after about seven years of operating in Nigeria, it has over 15,000,000 subscribers (Etisalat press release, 2013). On 16 January, 2013, Etisalat Nigeria announced that it has hit 15 million subscriber base at the start of business in the same year. This achievement represents a market share of over 15 percent in just a few years of operations. By that standard, Etisalat became one of the most successful late entrants in telecom globally. (Vanguard newspapers).

Etisalat Nigeria began commercial operations in October 2008 and launched one of the first major broadband services in Nigeria – EasyBlaze. The company is known for its innovative products and services such as the EcoSim, EasyCliq and EasyStarter which offered attractive and competitively low tariff for every call made. It is also the first network to offer special set of numbers to average Nigerians as their mobile numbers via the 0809choose campaign (Wikipedia, 2012). Currently, Etisalat Nigeria is the latest telecommunications service provider to operate in Nigeria.

Etisalat uses print advertisements featured in major national newspapers, with its slogan; 'Now, you're talking'. On most of its advertisements, the '0809ja' - is the brand signature of the company – as it goes on to subtly suggest for its users to remain using "0809ja for life". The '0809ja' signature originated from the first designated numbers for Etisalat Nigeria line which is 0809 and Nigeria, which is referred to in slang as 'Naija', advantage was taken to localize the network and make it popularly accepted by spelling it '9ja' and referring to the network as '0809ja'.

Statement of the Problem

In spite of the big telecommunications companies operating in Nigeria before its coming, Etisalat entered the market poised to compete and succeed among other telecommunications giants. It devised and combined several tools and methods in communicating messages to her audiences. Etisalat seems to have made it. Five years after, Etisalat Nigeria acquired a sizable chunk of the telecommunications market share in the country and has made a name for itself as a reliable, consumer-friendly and trendy network. Its advertisements and many promotional campaigns are uniquely stylish and attractive, blending the major tools of integrated marketing communications. Nevertheless, it is not clear if the integration of marketing communication strategies, as employed by the company, has been the major force behind patronage of its products.

At the end of the third quarter of 2013, MTN had 55,596,025 subscribers; Airtel had 22,726,698 subscribers, Globacom, 24,129,183 subscriber, Visafone got 2,438,590 subscribers; while Etisalat which only fully began commercial operations in October, 2008 had 15, 759,810 subscribers, (Nigerian Communications Commission, September, 2013). In just about 5 years, Etisalat had about 14% share of the total subscriber base of the 5 major telecommunications companies in Nigeria.

Considering this impressive showing, curiosity was aroused to investigate integrated marketing communications and its relationship with the growth of the Etisalat Nigeria network. This work therefore, sought to establish the integrated marketing communications strategies of Etisalat Nigeria in Uyo Metropolis of Akwa Ibom State and find out how these strategies have influenced customers' patronage of Etisalat's products. Moreover, it was not also clear whether the integrated marketing communications activities alone was responsible for the growth in Etisalat's subscriber figure, or whether some other factors were responsible for this growth. It is therefore pertinent to ask: To what extent has integrated marketing communications influenced the patronage of Etisalat network in Uyo metropolis of Nigeria?

Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following research questions derived from the objectives of the study:

1. What are the tools of integrated marketing communications used by Etisalat Nigeria in Uyo metropolis?
2. What is the level of awareness of the integrated marketing communications tools among Etisalat's subscribers in Uyo?
3. How do customers perceive Etisalat's integrated marketing communications tools in Uyo metropolis?
4. To what extent has integrated marketing communications influenced consumers' patronage of Etisalat Nigeria in Uyo metropolis?
5. Which tool of integrated marketing communications has influenced patronage of Etisalat's products most in Uyo metropolis?

Operational Definition of Terms

Communication: This entails all the links through which Etisalat Nigeria reaches out to persuade her customers. This could be by interactive platforms or otherwise.

Consumer: These are the users of and subscribers to the Etisalat Nigeria network.

Consumer Patronage: This refers to the support for the Etisalat Nigeria telecommunications network which leads to subscription and loyalty to the network by its subscribers.

Integrated: This refers to the use of more than one communication tool by Etisalat Nigeria in promoting patronage of her products and services.

Integrated marketing communications: This is the fusion of different communication tools in publicizing and boosting the image, products and services of Etisalat Nigeria.

Marketing: This involves the production and selling of Etisalat Nigeria's goods and services to consumers with the intention of meeting and satisfying their needs.

Integrated Marketing Communications

Marketing is the process of planning, executing, pricing and distribution, as well as promotion of ideas, goods and services to create exchanges that satisfy the perceived needs, wants, and objectives of individuals and organisations. Marketing communications refers to all planned messages that an organisation creates and disseminates to support its marketing objectives and strategies – (Arens, Weigold and Arens, 2008). Fill, (2009, p. 16) defines marketing communication as the management process through which an organisation engages with various audiences. He affirms that through an understanding of the audience's preferred communication environments, organisations would seek to develop and present messages for identified stakeholder groups, before evaluating and acting upon any response.

In marketing, the four Ps – Product, Place, Price and Promotion - are vital. Modern marketing however, goes beyond the product, a convenient place of distribution and an attractive price. Promotion, which is the fulcrum of marketing communications, is a major element of the marketing mix. It helps in actually selling the product. The marketing concepts of product, price, place and promotion are vital components of social marketing efforts. Product is the item, idea or service offered for sale though it usually refers to tangible merchandise and wares. Price is the cost of the product or service. It is what the buyer is willing to give up in exchange for the benefits of the product or service. Place is where the product or action is available for purchase or where purchase takes place. Promotion refers to the use of the media by campaign sponsors to get the message to the target audiences. Social marketing success often hinges on determining and using the proper mix of communication channels, (Wilbur, 2007).

Contemporary business organisations must visibly communicate in a synchronised format with their customers. Therefore, the entire marketing mix – product, place, price and promotion – must be properly coordinated to achieve the greatest effect. This means the product or service, the brand, packaging, display, distribution centers and promotion must be carefully organised to inspire patronage and loyalty among customers.

It is the belief among practitioners that the concept of integrated marketing communications (IMC) is an unimportant advancement in the management of marketing communications. It emerged in the field of marketing communications due to technological advancement, and the need for better results and more cost-effective promotional campaigns.

Integrated marketing communications attempts to coordinate and control the various elements of the promotional mix – advertising, personal selling, public relations, publicity, direct marketing, and sales promotion – to produce a unified customer-focused message, and, therefore, achieve various organisational objectives (Boone and Kurtz, 2007). Kotler and Armstrong (1996) define integrated marketing communications as the concept under which a company carefully integrates and coordinates its many communications channels to deliver a clear, consistent and compelling message about the organisation and its products.

Also known as corporate communications, Integrated Marketing Communications incorporates all forms of communication between organisations and their publics, both internal and external. It emerged as a result of the inter-connectedness between the organisation and its publics. Since the inception of integrated marketing communications, noteworthy changes have been observed in the relationship between marketers and consumers.

Gunaranjan (2009), asserts that integrated marketing communications combines the disciplines of public relations, advertising, direct/internet marketing etc. to provide clarity, consistency and maximum communications impact. Each tool of integrated marketing communications, though can perform reasonably well on its own, could do better when carefully and masterfully orchestrated in carefully coordinated campaign programmes. When integrating the elements of marketing communications, the following tools are available to the organisation. They are therefore explained as follows:

Advertising

As a non-personal communication channel, advertising is the structured and composed nonpersonal communication of information, usually paid for and usually persuasive in nature, about products (goods, services, and ideas) by identified sponsors through the various available media, (Arens, Weigold and Arens, 2008). Moriarty, Mitchell and Wells (2009), define advertising as a paid form of persuasive communication that uses mass and interactive media to reach broad audiences in order to connect an identified sponsor with buyers (target audiences) and provide information about products (goods, services and ideas). It is that process where business organisations let their customers and prospective customers, who are their target audience know about existing products and services offered by the organisation in order to persuade them to patronize their products and services. It is also used to display an idea to the public, convincing them to buy such idea.

Public Relations

Public relations as a tool of integrated marketing communications consists of all forms of planned communication, outwards and inwards, between an organisation and its publics for the purpose of achieving specific objectives concerning mutual understanding, (Jefkins, 1998). The World Assembly of Public Relations Associates (WAPRA), at a meeting in Mexico in 1978 settled on defining public relations as the art and social science of analysing trends, predicting their consequences, counseling organisations leadership and implementing planned programmes of action which will serve both the organisation and public interest, (Black, 2004). Achumba (2000), describes public relations as an indirect promotional tool whose role is to establish and enhance a positive image of an organization and its products/services among its various publics.

Public relations, however, may go beyond the obvious communication with the target audience and may include communicating subliminally by creating a harmonious, albeit successful impression about the organisation's atmosphere through the physical surroundings or events/exhibitions of the organisation. This is done with the express purpose of inspiring confidence in the organisation and in extension, increasing patronage towards achieving the overall marketing objectives. It is such practice that Shimp (2000) refers to as marketing public relations (MPR) which is the use of PR activities to support marketing objectives.

Sales Promotion

Sales promotion is a direct inducement that offers an extra value or incentive on purchase of the product, to the sales force, distributors or the ultimate consumer with the primary objective of creating an immediate sale, (Belch, Belch and Purani, 2010). Shimp (2000) refers to sales promotion as any incentive used by a manufacturer to induce the trade (wholesalers and retailers) and/or consumers to buy a brand or encourage the sales force to aggressively sell the product.

There are two major types of sales promotion: trade promotion and consumer promotion. Consumer promotion is designed to offer consumers an incentive (such as a lower price or a free or low-cost premium or gift) to either try a brand for the first time, switch back to it, or to repurchase

it. Trade promotion, on the other hand, has to do with financial incentives given to the traders to stock the product, to buy in larger quantity, to move merchandise from the warehouse onto the retail shelf, including offering retailer coupons etc., (Batra, Myers and Aaker, 2006). Whatever the kind of sales promotion, it should be noted that there is always an offer of a freebie on the acquisition of the product. Etisalat is renowned for its relentless offer(s) in sales promotion.

Direct Marketing

Direct marketing is one of the personal communication channels. Personal communication channels are channels through which two or more people communicate directly with each other by face to face, over the telephone, or by mail. It is mostly effective because it targets customers individually and allows for personal discourse and immediate feedback. In direct marketing, the situation is almost like taking the store with all its contents to the customer. This could be achieved electronically. All the customers need do is place their orders and have the items delivered to their homes. Direct marketing messages emphasise a focus on the customer, data, and accountability.

Personal Selling

Personal selling is a form of person-to-person communication in which a salesperson works with prospective buyers and attempts to influence their purchase needs in the direction of his/her company's product or services, (Shimp, 2000). In Fill's (2009) opinion, personal selling is an interpersonal communication tool that involves face-to-face activities undertaken by individuals, often representing an organisation, in order to inform, persuade or remind an individual or group to take appropriate action, as required by the sponsor's representative. The sales force of an organisation could also secure retailers' cooperation to use the point of purchase display of the organisation, and work with the trade to gain and maintain product distribution.

Personal Selling is a key communication mode, and the oldest form of instantaneous two-way communication, which is still a very popular way for people to gain knowledge about products and services. It is with personal selling that the most complicated of systems or explanations can be given. Through personal selling, the sales force could educate consumers, introduce new products and/or new benefits of the old to the consumers and retailers and even provide after-sale services and maintenance to the consumers.

Theoretical Framework

This study used the Social Exchange Theory and The Information Processing Theory.

The Social Exchange Theory

The social exchange theory suggests that people essentially take the benefits and discount the costs in order to determine how much a relationship is worth. Positive relationships are those in which the benefits outweigh the costs, while negative relationships occur when the costs are greater than the benefits, (Cherry, 2013). It suggests that people do not enter into a relationship that they do not feel or know will be beneficial to them in proportion to the efforts put into beginning and making such relationship work. The theory assumes that every interaction involves an exchange of goods or services, and that people try to get from others as much as they have given to them (Anaeto, Onabajo and Osifeso, 2008).

It is assumed that subscribers to Etisalat Nigeria first subscribed to the network based on promises and offers made known to them via the various integrated marketing communications tools and have maintained the network because it has been beneficial to them.

The Information Processing Theory

The information processing theory focuses on how learners mentally think about (process) new information and events and how such processes change with development. The theory focuses on “how people process, store, encode, retrieve, and manipulate information to make decisions and solve problems” – (Quizlet, 2013). The information processing theory was propounded by Williams McGuire in 1968. The theory proposes that attitude change takes place after careful consideration of the organisation’s persuasive messages. McGuire, after certain stages of refinement, settled on twelve steps of changing the mindset of consumers towards persuasion and product purchase. These are: exposure to communication messages, attending to it, liking and becoming interested in it, comprehending it, skill acquisition, yielding to it, memory stage of content and/or agreement, information search and retrieval, deciding on basis of retrieval, behaving in accord with decision, reinforcement of desired acts, post-behavioural consolidating; Anaeto et.al, (2008, p. 82).

Research Design

The survey method was adopted as the research design for this study. The method employed questionnaire and interview as instruments for data collection. This technique was considered appropriate for the study as it tested customers’ awareness and perception of Etisalat’s integrated marketing communications and how it influences patronage of the network. The survey technique is based on the premise that a given population is too large for any researcher to realistically observe all the elements in the population and is useful in helping researchers gather valuable data from the sample of a substantial population with the purpose of making valid inferences.

Population and Sample

The population of this study comprised all users of Etisalat Nigeria in the Uyo Metropolis of Akwa-Ibom State, as well as the Marketing Communications Officer of the Marketing department of Etisalat at its Zonal Headquarters in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. Altogether, eighty-one thousand, five hundred and forty-six (81,546) subscribers were recorded as customers of Etisalat in Uyo.

The Taro Yamane formula for determining sample size from a given population was adopted for this study. The Taro Yamane’s formula is:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where;

n=Sample size

N=Population size

e=Level of significance (0.05)

Using the above formula, the sample size for the study was determined as 400. This figure is deemed appropriate from the recommendation by Wimmer and Dominick (2011), that a survey using a sample of 400, if properly conducted, will usually represent the characteristics of that

population. This figure was taken from the population of Uyo metropolis, using the cluster sampling method. The purposive sampling technique was also adopted at a stage because the researchers wanted to be sure that the participants were actively Etisalat users residing within Uyo metropolis. Eighty (80) respondents were selected from each zone of Uyo metropolis. The table shows the distribution of respondents in the Uyo metropolis zone.

Table 1: Zones and Sample Size

ZONES	SAMPLE SIZE
A – Oron Road Axis	80
B – Aka Road Axis	80
C – Abak Road Axis	80
D – Ikot Ekpene Road Axis	80
E – Wellington Bassey Way Axis	80
TOTAL	400

However, 388 respondents were finally used as sample as the rest could not meet the standard for data collection and analysis.

Methods of Data Collection and Analysis

Data for this study were collected, using the questionnaire and interview schedule. Copies of the questionnaire were administered and retrieved by the researcher and 3 other trained assistants to ensure a maximum return rate. The interview was conducted with the Marketing Communications Officer of Etisalat Nigeria.

Data collected for this study were analysed, using frequency tables and simple percentages, while the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to test the two hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The qualitative explanation building method of analysis based on the research questions raised in the study was used to analyse responses from the interviewee.

Analysis of Personal Interview

The following is a descriptive analysis (explanation) of the interview with Mrs. Whitney Ubani - Head of the Corporate Communications Department, of Etisalat Nigeria's corporate offices in Port Harcourt, Rivers state.

---On the promotional activities of Etisalat Nigeria in Uyo and the length such promotional activities, Mrs. Ubani replied that Etisalat Nigeria has strategically engaged in promotional activities/campaigns using the integrated marketing communications tools of advertisements, public relations, sales promotions, personal selling and direct marketing. She added that each of these tools was introduced at different stages and that it has been the practice of the company to engage the tools of integrated marketing communications for as long as it has been in operation in Uyo.

---On how successful these activities have been, The Head of Corporate Communications said that periodic review and evaluation exercises are carried out, after campaigns to monitor the effect of promotional activities. This, she says, has helped the company to determine whether the predetermined objectives were achieved and the extent they were achieved, adding that results have shown full success in Uyo. Mrs. Ubani said that all Etisalat's promotional campaigns in Uyo had enjoyed 90% success rate in achieving set targets, according to evaluation reports.

--- When asked how Etisalat's promotional activities influenced consumer patronage in Uyo, the Head of Corporate Communications maintained that patronage in Uyo metropolis had grown, following each promotional campaign. She explained that sometimes, this growth is slow, but climbs steadily as the campaign gathers momentum. She added that there are times however, when patronage grows with a sharp leap just after a campaign. She said that there is no denying that integrated marketing communications has been successful in increasing patronage of Etisalat's products in Uyo.

---On the tools she would encourage Etisalat Nigeria to continue using, Mrs. Ubani declared that she would not change any of these tools since each tool is unique and successful in its own way. In her explanation, each tool has its own point, but maintained that since the purpose of integrating marketing communications is to influence patronage, the company combines the tools. According to Mrs. Ubani, each tool is unique, targets different audiences and encourages patronage in its own way. According to her, one tool picks up the slack of the other and all work towards gaining more customers for Etisalat.

---Speaking on the success of integrated marketing communication tools used by Etisalat, Mrs. Ubani proclaimed a 90% result as an excellent one and emphasised that the results from using the tools of integrated marketing communications in a proper blend are effective and contribute to the upward surge of Etisalat Nigeria. She reiterated her stance by restating her optimism that Etisalat Nigeria would not meet the present subscribers' base without the integration strategy.

Data Presentation in Tables

The tables reflecting the data and other related information obtained from the field using the questionnaire are presented below.

Table 2 Gender distribution of respondents

Options	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Males	210	54
Females	178	46
Total	388	100

The table shows that there were more male respondents than female, as they formed the majority of 54%.

Table 3 Age Distribution of Respondents

Options	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Below 18	26	7
18 – 25	215	55
26 – 35	92	24
36 – 45	32	8
46 – 55	12	3
56 and above	11	3
Total	388	100

In table 3, those between 18 and 25 years were 215 (55%), which formed the majority.

Table 4 Respondents' reasons for using Etisalat

Options	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
The advertisements	40	10
The sales promotion: free credit, free MBs, free SMSs etc.	145	37
Because of persuasion via Email, letters, SMS to patronize it	3	1
Because of personal contact and conviction	33	8
Friendly disposition of Etisalat salespeople/ Direct Marketing	6	2
Event sponsored by Etisalat e.g. Campus Fiesta, Nigerian Idol etc.	10	3
Cheap tariff	28	7
Because it is a reliable and efficient network	51	13
On recommendation from family and friends.	22	6
Combination of one or more of the above	47	13
Total	388	100

Data in table 4 show that respondents who subscribe to Etisalat because of sales promotion were the majority.

Table 5 Respondents' understanding of Etisalat's marketing and promotional messages

Options	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Yes	254	65
No	44	11
Somehow	90	24
Total	388	100

Data in table 5 show that the number of respondents who had full understanding of Etisalat's promotional messages were 254 (65%). This shows that most respondents understood Etisalat's messages.

Table 6 Ability of Etisalat messages to encourage respondents' patronage

Options	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Yes	245	63
No	54	14
Somehow	89	23
Total	388	100

Data in table 6 show that 245 (63%) were encouraged by Etisalat's messages to patronise the network. This means that majority were encouraged.

Table 7 Responses on whether promotional messages persuaded respondents towards continuous patronage of Etisalat network

Options	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Yes	234	60
No	58	15
Somehow	96	25
Total	388	100

Results in table 7 indicate that 60% of respondents find Etisalat's promotional messages persuasive. These are the majority.

Table 8 Most influential tool among respondents

Options	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
The advertisements	96	25
Public relations events e.g. opening of a new shop, campus fiesta etc.	18	5
Sales promotion activities: Free SMSs, Megabytes etc.	155	40
The personal selling activities of salespersons	13	3
Contact through call centers, letters, Email, SMS, press releases etc.	14	4
All of the above	66	17
Combination of two or more of the above	26	6
Total	388	100

Data in table 8 show that advertisements and sales promotion activities influence the patronage of Etisalat by respondents, meaning that the majority were influenced by these tools.

Table 9 Ability to meet promotional promises

Options	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Yes	188	49
No	54	14
Sometimes	146	37
Total	388	100

Results in table 9 indicate that 188 (49%) of respondents were of the opinion that Etisalat has fulfilled the promises contained in the promotional messages, The majority were positive, which shows that Etisalat lived up to its promises.

Table 10 Response on whether subscribers benefit from patronising Etisalat

Options	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Yes	257	66
No	54	14
Somehow	77	20
Total	388	100

Results in table 10 show that majority of respondents have benefitted from patronising the network. This shows that Etisalat had benefits for subscribers.

Table 11 Respondents' awareness of Etisalat's different marketing tools

Options	Respondents	% of Respondents
Yes	325	84
No	63	16
Total	388	100

Results in table 11 indicate that most - 84% of respondents are aware of Etisalat's various marketing tools.

Table 12 Most effective and useful tool of Etisalat communications

Options	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Advertisements	115	30
Sales promotions	53	14
Soliciting letters, e-mails, SMS	28	7
Events, game shows and parties sponsored by Etisalat	25	6
Face to face communication with Etisalat's staff	14	4
The internet	93	24
Others	12	3
Combination of one or more of the above	48	12
Total	388	100

Table 12 indicates that 30% of the respondents find the marketing tool of advertisement the most effective and useful tool of communication. This forms the greatest number.

Table 13 Whether respondents are impressed by the combination of integrated marketing communication tools of Etisalat

Options	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Yes	231	60
No	39	10
Somehow	118	30
Total	388	100

Table 13 shows that 231 (60%) of respondents admit to being impressed by the IMC tools as used by Etisalat. The rest have varied impressions.

Table 14 Respondent's perception of satisfaction with Etisalat's marketing activities

Options	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Satisfactory	226	58
Not satisfactory	37	9
Neutral	125	33
Total	388	100

Table 14 shows that 226 (58%) of respondents were satisfied with Etisalat's marketing activities. This forms the majority.

Table 15 Respondents ratings of Etisalat's marketing communications activities

Options	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Excellent	86	22
Very good	128	33
Good	128	33
Fair	32	8
Poor	14	4
Total	388	100

Table 15 shows the highest rating of Etisalat's integrated marketing communications activities by respondents as good, 128 (33%) and very good, 128 (33%) good. This shows that the rating of Etisalat's IMC activities is above average.

Discussions of Findings

This section answers the research questions posed in this study as follows:

Research Question 1: What are the tools of integrated marketing communications used by Etisalat Nigeria in Uyo metropolis?

Belch and Belch (2004), Fill, (2009), have confirmed the existence of the five tools of integrated marketing communications. These tools are Advertising, Public Relations, Sales Promotion, Direct Marketing and Personal Selling; integrated to achieve better results with the chief aim of increasing support for and patronage of an organisation. Mrs. Whitney Ubani, the Etisalat's Corporate Communications Representative, in an interview with the researchers, revealed that Etisalat Nigeria has since inception vigorously and periodically carried out marketing and promotional activities in Uyo metropolis using the tools of advertising, public relation events and activities, personal selling, direct marketing and sales promotion. She especially enthused about promotional campaigns e.g *Cliq-Fest* meant for the youth and 'yuppie' population of Uyo metropolis as well as campaigns meant for other mass markets that have made use of these tools.

This premise is further supported by the data provided in table 4 which show among that the tools of advertising, public relations, sales promotion, personal selling and direct marketing collectively had 237 (62%) respondents. This proves that all five tools were fully used by Etisalat Nigeria in Uyo metropolis.

Research Question 2: What is the level of awareness of integrated marketing communications tools among Etisalat's subscribers in Uyo?

The fundamental goal of using integrated marketing communications is the unity of all or most of the marketing communications tools to work together to create awareness and also increase sales. The consumer must first be aware that a product exists before he/she can be motivated to give attention to the product and its benefits. (Perner, 2014). Boundlessmarketing.com (2014), describes

consumer awareness as the extent to which a brand is recognised by customers and is correctly associated with a particular product.

In line with integrated marketing communications, Table 11 shows that 84% were fully aware of the marketing activities of Etisalat in Uyo metropolis. With this figure, Etisalat can be said to have succeeded in creating awareness of the brand name and products among the populace of Uyo metropolis.

Research Question 3: How do customers perceive Etisalat's integrated marketing communications in Uyo metropolis?

Tables 14 and 15 best supply the data to answer this research question. Asked about their perception of the network's marketing activities, the majority 226 (58%) adjudged it satisfactory. When asked to rate the marketing communications activities of Etisalat Nigeria, the majority, 342 (88%) rated the marketing activities of Etisalat Nigeria between Excellent and Good.

These responses from Etisalat subscribers in Uyo show that Etisalat Nigeria has succeeded in informing subscribers about the network as well as effectively promoting awareness and goodwill toward the network. From the above, it could be concluded that consumers of Etisalat network in Uyo metropolis generally have a very high opinion, good perception and healthy respect for the marketing communications activities of the Etisalat network in Uyo.

Amaoko, Arthur, Bando and Katah conducted a study in 2012 on how integrated marketing communications affects consumer patronage and loyalty and concluded that the firm which has a coordinated marketing communications strategy that also impresses the consumers would not only ensure initial patronage but a repurchase and consumer loyalty.

Research Question 4: To what extent has integrated marketing communications influenced consumers' patronage of Etisalat Nigeria in Uyo metropolis?

Data in table 4 show that although respondents have several other reasons for patronising the network, a total of 237 (61%) however, admit that the various tools of IMC convinced them to patronise the network. Tables 6 and 7 also indicate that the IMC activities of Etisalat Nigeria encourages respondents towards continuous patronage of the network. From these, it is deduced that IMC activities of Etisalat Nigeria encourages both primary and successive patronage of Etisalat network among subscribers in Uyo, Nigeria.

This corroborates the research of Martin and Kofi (2013), who recommended that organisations should use more than one tool simultaneously in promotional activities as this increases awareness and patronage of the products/services that the organisation has to offer.

Research Question 5: Which tool of integrated marketing communications has influenced patronage of Etisalat's products most in Uyo metropolis?

Although, integrated marketing communications, combines different marketing tools to influence consumer behaviour in favour of its sponsor, it is only natural that while all the tools work together in symphonic sequence to achieve campaign objectives, one or more of these could wield greater influence over a group of people than the other tools. Table 8 shows that sales promotion activities of all the integrated marketing communications tools, had the greatest ability to influence patronage as 155 (40%) of the respondents attest to this. Advertising however, came second with 96 (25%) respondents giving the credit of their patronage to this tool.

Kim and Jin (2006), also concluded that rational consumers are price conscious shoppers or buyers, who shop more frequently during promotions than other types of shoppers. The findings of their study reveal that reduction of prices during promotions propel consumers to buy and use at a very high rate. Another study by Martin and Kofi (2013), not only confirms Kim and Jin's research,

but adds that the tool of sales promotions when expended by an organisation directly generates sales and improves relationships between an organisation and its publics.

Summary of Major Findings

The main objective of the study was to investigate the state of integration in Etisalat's marketing communications activities and how it influences consumers' patronage of the network in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The work had five objectives and research questions. Survey research method was adopted with interview schedule and questionnaire as the instruments for data collection.

Data gathered in the study were evaluated with both descriptive and inferential statistics. The descriptive statistics were used to analyse all the research questions. Inferential statistics, involving the use of Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis, was used to test the hypotheses, at 0.05 level of significance.

The following were the major findings of the study:

1. Etisalat Nigeria is fully involved in integrating all five tools of integrated marketing communications in Uyo. These are advertising, sales promotion, public relations, personal selling and direct marketing.
2. Subscribers of Etisalat in Uyo are aware of the various means through which the network communicates with them. This awareness came through a combination of all the tools. Etisalat Nigeria has therefore not wasted the resources employed in her IMC activities.
3. Etisalat's integrated marketing communications activities are perceived as satisfactory and these activities are rated above average by the subscribers in Uyo, Nigeria.
4. Etisalat Nigeria has been able to influence subscribers in Uyo into initial and continuous purchase and patronage of its products/services by properly orchestrated IMC activities.
5. Of all five tools under study, sales promotion has the greatest influence on subscribers of Etisalat in Uyo. It is also regarded as the most superior tool. Despite this fact, subscribers still regard advertising as effective and useful for the organisation to communicate with them.
6. For Uyo subscribers, integrated marketing communications has considerable influence in their decision to subscribe to the network.

Conclusions

Etisalat Nigeria has fully involved integration in its marketing communications in Uyo, using five tools of advertising, sales promotion, public relations, personal selling and direct marketing. The subscribers of Etisalat in Uyo are aware of the various means through which the network communicates with/to them. This awareness came mainly through the integrated marketing communications activities of Etisalat Nigeria.

Etisalat's integrated marketing communications activities are perceived as satisfactory and the subscribers rate these activities as superior to that of the other Nigerian telecommunications companies. As a result, Etisalat Nigeria has been able to influence subscribers into both initial and continuous purchase of its products/services. By involving in integrated marketing communications activities, Etisalat Nigeria has, to some extent, influenced and encouraged patronage of the organisation's products.

Sales promotions influenced patronage of Etisalat Nigeria's products the most, hence they feel Etisalat should engage in more of sales promotion activities and advertisements. Integrated marketing communications alone is not responsible for the growth of the Etisalat Nigeria network. Other factors like word of mouth recommendations and other benefits such as being on a dependable and efficient network contribute to luring subscribers to the network.

Recommendations

Given the findings and conclusions reached, the following recommendations are put forward.

1. Etisalat Nigeria should continue with integrated marketing communications as it is productive. Special attention should also be given to sales promotional activities and advertisements as they both seem to create awareness and evoke great response from subscribers.
2. Etisalat Nigeria should put an end to hidden charges on the promotional items offered the customers and these freebies should have a longer period of usability before its expiration.
3. Beyond promotional activities, Etisalat Nigeria should work towards providing cheaper tariff and data bundle plans to subscribers.
4. For Public Relations activities, it is recommended that Etisalat Nigeria be involved in more of corporate social responsibility to the host communities by sponsoring the education of subscribers who would be determined by a prearranged method of selection either in institutions of formal learning or in the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills. Fiestas, and campus game shows however should continue.

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