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MARKETING MANAGEMENT AS AN INTEGRATIVE PROCESS OF RESEARCH, PRODUCTION, AND SALES ACTIVITIES IN NIGERIAN

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ABSTRACT

Marketing management is the process of planning, organizing, directing, and controlling an organization's marketing activities to ensure that products and services satisfy customer needs while achieving organizational objectives. It integrates market research, production, and sales to create value for customers and enhance organizational profitability. As a fundamental management function, marketing is as important as finance, production, and human resource management because it focuses on understanding customer needs and developing products that effectively meet market demand. Marketing is often confused with selling; however, while selling emphasizes persuading customers to purchase products, marketing adopts a broader approach by identifying customer needs, creating demand, and building long-term customer relationships through strategic planning and communication. As Peter Drucker noted, the objective of marketing is to understand customers so well that products or services meet their needs and effectively sell themselves. Consequently, effective marketing management enhances customer satisfaction, competitiveness, and sustainable organizational growth.

Keywords:

Marketing Management, Market Research, Production, Sales, Customer Satisfaction.

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1. Introduction.

Marketing is a complex and dynamic discipline that continues to evolve in response to changes in consumer behaviour, technology, competition, and the business environment. In Nigeria, the marketing landscape is shaped by factors such as rapid urbanization, digital transformation, economic fluctuations, cultural diversity, and changing customer preferences (Barango-Tariah & Oguru, 2024). These realities make it difficult to provide a single universal definition of marketing that fully captures its principles, functions, and practical applications across different sectors of the Nigerian economy. According to the marketing management theory proposed by Philip Kotler, marketing is viewed as a business philosophy that focuses on identifying and satisfying customer needs more effectively than competitors. This concept is highly relevant in the Nigerian context, where businesses must continuously adapt to the demands of diverse consumer markets. Nigerian companies, ranging from small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to large corporations, achieve sustainable growth by understanding the needs and preferences of their target customers and delivering products and services that provide superior value (Okechukwu et al., 2024).

For example, successful Nigerian businesses such as banks, telecommunications companies, and fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) firms invest heavily in market research, customer relationship management, and digital marketing strategies to remain competitive. By adopting a customer-oriented marketing approach, organizations in Nigeria can improve customer satisfaction, build brand loyalty, and achieve their long-term business objectives despite the country's dynamic economic environment. Looking beyond Kotler's classification of marketing concepts, several perspectives have emerged that further explain the nature and purpose of marketing. At its core, however, the central question remains: *What is the marketing concept?* According to Kotler, the marketing concept can be summarized through practical expressions such as “identify customer needs and satisfy them,” “produce what customers are willing to buy rather than trying to sell what has already been produced,” and “prioritize customers over products.” These expressions emphasize that customers should be the focal point of every business decision (Anderson et al., 2006).

In the Nigerian context, this customer-centered philosophy is increasingly important as businesses operate in a highly competitive and rapidly changing environment. Organizations must understand the unique preferences, purchasing power, cultural diversity, and consumption patterns of Nigerian consumers before developing products and services. For instance, many

Nigerian firms have adapted their products, pricing strategies, and distribution channels to meet the needs of different income groups and geographical locations. This customer-focused approach enables businesses to remain competitive while building long-term relationships with their customers (Madhani, 2020). Kotler argues that the primary focus of the marketing concept is the continuous study of target customers to understand their needs, wants, and expectations. Consequently, organizations are expected to integrate and coordinate all their business activities, including production, pricing, promotion, and distribution, to maximize customer satisfaction. In Nigeria, this approach is evident in industries such as banking, telecommunications, retail, and e-commerce, where companies continuously innovate and improve service delivery to attract and retain customers in an increasingly digital marketplace. Therefore, the essence of the marketing concept, according to Kotler, is a customer-oriented philosophy that aligns the entire organization with the goal of meeting customers' needs more effectively than competitors (Čavlin & Šmitran, 2024). This philosophy is supported by coordinated marketing efforts aimed at creating superior customer value and satisfaction, which ultimately enables organizations in Nigeria to achieve sustainable profitability, strengthen customer loyalty, and maintain a competitive advantage in both local and international markets.

2. Materials and Research Methods

The study adopted systematic, process, and situational approaches as its methodological framework. Data were analyzed using expert evaluation, structural analysis and synthesis, systems analysis, and decision-making techniques to examine the role of marketing management in organizational performance. The study was anchored on established literature in marketing management, management theory, organizational theory, systems theory, operations (production) marketing, and business process reengineering, drawing from both national and international scholarly works.

3. Discussion

The marketing concept has evolved over time in response to changing customer needs and business environments. It emphasizes customer orientation, arguing that organizational success depends on understanding and satisfying customer needs more effectively than competitors. According to Kotler and Keller (2022), the evolution of marketing can be explained through five major concepts: the production concept**,** which focuses on production efficiency; the product concept, which emphasizes product quality and innovation; the selling concept, which relies on aggressive promotional efforts; the marketing concept, which prioritizes customer satisfaction; and the societal marketing concept, which balances customer needs, organizational profitability, and societal welfare. These concepts illustrate the transition from production-oriented business practices to customer- and society-oriented marketing strategies that promote sustainable organizational performance.

Kotler argues that the evolution of marketing concepts reflects changes in business environments and consumer expectations over time (Kotler, 1994). He explains that the production concept (Durovich, 2015) and the product concept (Kostoglodov & Savvidi, 2009) dominated the period before the Second World War, when organizations focused primarily on increasing production efficiency and improving product quality. Following World War II, the selling concept and the marketing concept emerged in response to intensified market competition and the growing need to satisfy customer needs through target marketing (Kireev et al., 2016). More recently, the societal marketing concept (Tsvetkova, 2014) has gained prominence as the most progressive approach, encouraging organizations to achieve their marketing objectives while considering the long-term interests of customers and society. This concept emphasizes ethical business practices, sustainable development, and the integration of social responsibility into marketing decisions, thereby enhancing both organizational performance and societal well-being.

3.1. The Concept of Production Improvement

The production concept is one of the earliest philosophies of marketing management. It is based on the assumption that consumers prefer products that are readily available and affordable. Consequently, organizations adopting this concept concentrate on increasing production efficiency, achieving economies of scale, and establishing effective distribution systems to make products easily accessible to customers. The underlying objective is to produce large quantities of goods at lower costs while ensuring widespread market availability. The production concept is particularly applicable in situations where demand exceeds supply or where production costs are relatively high. Under such conditions, managers focus on improving operational efficiency, increasing productivity, and reducing production costs through technological advancement and process improvement. In the Nigerian context, this concept is evident in industries such as cement, beverages, and consumer goods, where companies such as Dangote Cement Plc, BUA Group, and Nigerian Breweries Plc invest heavily in large-scale production facilities and efficient distribution networks to meet growing market demand while maintaining competitive prices. Although the production concept enhances efficiency and product availability, organizations must also remain responsive to changing customer preferences and market dynamics to achieve long-term competitiveness (Gunasekaran & Cheng, 2008).

3.2. The Product Improvement Concept

The product concept is founded on the belief that consumers prefer products that offer superior quality, performance, innovative features, and reliability. Unlike the production concept, which emphasizes efficiency and availability, the product concept focuses on the continuous improvement of products to meet evolving customer needs and expectations. Organizations adopting this philosophy invest in research and development, product innovation, and quality enhancement to gain a competitive advantage and strengthen customer satisfaction (Berawi, 2004).

This concept is most effective in competitive and mature markets where customers have a variety of alternatives and make purchasing decisions based on quality rather than price alone. In the Nigerian context, companies such as Innoson Vehicle Manufacturing (IVM), Dangote Industries Limited, and Nestlé Nigeria Plc continuously improve their products through innovation, quality assurance, and customer feedback to remain competitive (Madichie & Nkamnebe, 2025). However, while product quality is essential, organizations must also ensure that product improvements align with customer preferences, affordability, and market demand, as superior quality alone does not guarantee market success.

3.3. The Third Marketing Concept: Intensification of Commercial Efforts

The selling concept is based on the assumption that consumers will not purchase sufficient quantities of products unless organizations undertake aggressive promotional and selling efforts. This philosophy emphasizes sales promotion, advertising, personal selling, and other persuasive marketing activities to stimulate demand and increase sales. It became more relevant as markets became saturated with products of comparable quality, making competition increasingly dependent on effective marketing communication rather than production efficiency alone (Baker, 2008).

The selling concept is particularly applicable in highly competitive markets where consumers have numerous product alternatives. In the Nigerian context, industries such as telecommunications, banking, insurance, and fast-moving consumer goods (FMCGs) extensively employ this approach. For example, companies such as MTN Nigeria, Airtel Nigeria, Access Bank, and Guinness Nigeria Plc regularly use advertising campaigns, promotional offers, customer loyalty programmes, and digital marketing to attract and retain customers (Ikpe, Uwa, & Okurebia, 2025). While the selling concept can increase market share and revenue, organizations should complement it with a customer-oriented marketing strategy to build long-term customer satisfaction, loyalty, and sustainable business growth.

3.4 The Marketing Concept (Target Marketing Concept)

The marketing concept is founded on the principle that organizational success depends on understanding and satisfying customer needs more effectively than competitors. Unlike the production, product, and selling concepts, it places the customer at the centre of business decisions by emphasizing market research, customer satisfaction, value creation, and long-term relationships (Mainardes & dos Cerqueira, 2015). In Nigeria, organizations such as MTN Nigeria, Access Bank Plc, GTCO Plc, Nestlé Nigeria Plc, and Nigerian Breweries Plc apply this philosophy by conducting market research, segmenting customers, and developing products and services that meet the needs of different market segments. This customer-oriented approach enhances customer loyalty, strengthens competitive advantage, and promotes sustainable business growth (Bhat, & Darzi, 2016).

The marketing concept has evolved into the societal marketing concept, which extends organizational responsibility beyond customer satisfaction and profitability to include environmental sustainability, ethical business practices, and social welfare (Kunelbayev et al., 2016). Consequently, many Nigerian organizations integrate corporate social responsibility into their operations through investments in education, healthcare, environmental conservation, and community development. This approach balances organizational profitability, customer satisfaction, and societal well-being while strengthening corporate reputation.

Pricing remains a critical element of marketing because it directly influences demand, profitability, and competitive positioning. Effective pricing strategies require organizations to consider production costs, customer purchasing power, competitor actions, and prevailing market conditions. In Nigeria, inflation, exchange rate volatility, and rising operating costs make flexible pricing strategies essential for maintaining competitiveness and customer value.

Marketing activities involve analysing the business environment, understanding customer behaviour, developing products, managing distribution, promoting products, and establishing appropriate pricing strategies. Organizations must also comply with legal, technical, and ethical standards while continuously monitoring market changes to improve marketing performance. The successful execution of these activities depends on collaboration among manufacturers, distributors, retailers, service providers, and customers.

The marketing process begins with identifying customer needs and ends with delivering value that satisfies those needs. It therefore represents a continuous process of creating, communicating, and delivering value while building long-term customer relationships. Marketing management encompasses the planning, implementation, monitoring, and control of marketing activities to achieve objectives such as increased sales, market share, profitability, and customer satisfaction (Kotler et al., 2011).

Modern organizations integrate strategic and operational marketing into their corporate planning. Strategic marketing focuses on identifying market opportunities, selecting target markets, positioning products, and creating long-term competitive advantage, whereas operational marketing translates these strategies into day-to-day decisions relating to product management, pricing, promotion, distribution, and customer relationship management. Nigerian firms such as Dangote Group, MTN Nigeria, and Nestlé Nigeria Plc combine both approaches to enhance competitiveness and sustain long-term growth.

4. Marketing Main Methods: Segmentation, Differentiation, Creation of Competitive Advantages

Target marketing enables organizations to concentrate their resources on customer groups whose needs can be satisfied more effectively than competitors, thereby enhancing customer satisfaction and competitive advantage (Hunt & Arnett, 2004). Unlike mass marketing, which assumes a single offering suits all consumers, target marketing recognizes differences in customer needs, preferences, and purchasing behaviour. It therefore involves three key activities: market segmentation, target market selection, and market positioning.

Market segmentation divides a broad market into relatively homogeneous groups based on shared characteristics, enabling organizations to design products and marketing strategies that address the specific needs of each segment (Uchenova et al., 2014). Consumer markets are commonly segmented using geographic, demographic, psychographic, and behavioural variables. Geographic segmentation classifies customers by location; demographic segmentation considers factors such as age, gender, income, education, and occupation; psychographic segmentation focuses on lifestyles, values, and personalities; while behavioural segmentation groups' customers according to purchasing behaviour, usage patterns, and benefits sought, and brand loyalty.

In Nigeria, market segmentation has become an essential marketing strategy. For instance, MTN Nigeria and Airtel Nigeria provide customized data and voice plans for students, professionals, corporate organizations, and rural communities. Similarly, Access Bank Plc and GTCO Plc offer specialized financial products for retail customers, SMEs, corporate clients, and high-net-worth individuals. Such segmentation enables firms to allocate resources efficiently and deliver greater customer value.

Following segmentation, organizations evaluate the attractiveness of each segment, select the most profitable target markets, and develop positioning strategies that create a distinctive image in customers' minds. Closely related to positioning is product differentiation, through which firms distinguish their offerings based on product quality, service excellence, employee competence, or corporate image. As technological innovations become easier to imitate, competitive advantage increasingly depends on superior customer service, skilled personnel, and strong brand reputation. Nigerian firms such as GTCO Plc, Access Bank Plc, and MTN Nigeria have strengthened their market positions through digital innovation, quality service delivery, and strong corporate branding (Olaniyan & Ojeade, 2026).

Effective marketing also focuses on creating superior customer value, defined as the difference between the benefits customers receive and the costs they incur. Customer satisfaction occurs when product performance meets or exceeds expectations, resulting in repeat purchases, brand loyalty, and positive word-of-mouth. Consequently, many Nigerian organizations adopt relationship marketing through loyalty programmes, personalized services, digital engagement platforms, and after-sales support to strengthen customer retention.

To sustain customer satisfaction, organizations increasingly embrace Total Quality Management (TQM) by continuously improving products, services, and operational processes. They also conduct regular competitor analysis by assessing competitors' products, pricing, promotional activities, distribution channels, and customer service practices. Such analysis enables firms to identify market opportunities, anticipate competitive actions, and formulate effective marketing strategies (Ugwu, 2024).

The choice of competitive strategy depends on an organization's market position and strategic objectives. Market leaders focus on innovation and defending market share, challengers compete aggressively to expand their presence, followers adopt proven strategies with minimal risk, while niche marketers concentrate on specialised market segments overlooked by larger competitors. In Nigeria, many SMEs have successfully adopted niche marketing strategies by offering specialised products, localised services, and strong customer relationships, thereby achieving sustainable growth despite intense competition (Chinelo, Ihuoma & Nkiruka, 2025).

5. Conclusions

To remain competitive in today's dynamic business environment, organizations increasingly rely on marketing as a strategic tool for expanding market share, satisfying customer needs, and achieving sustainable growth. Marketing has evolved beyond a sales function to become an integral component of organizational strategy, influencing product development, customer relationship management, and long-term business performance. As competition intensifies across industries, organizations must adopt customer-oriented marketing practices that create value and enhance competitiveness. The rapid growth of the service sector has further increased the importance of marketing (Verma, 2012). Industries such as banking, insurance, telecommunications, healthcare, tourism, education, and professional services now recognize marketing as a critical driver of customer acquisition and retention. In Nigeria, the expansion of digital technology, financial services, e-commerce, and private healthcare has reinforced the need for organizations to develop effective marketing strategies that respond to changing customer preferences and market conditions.

Modern marketing emphasizes understanding customer needs before developing products and services. Rather than producing goods and attempting to sell them, organizations are expected to identify market needs through research and design offerings that satisfy those needs effectively. This customer-centered philosophy is reflected in the popular marketing principle of “producing what customers need rather than trying to sell what has already been produced.” Contemporary marketing also extends beyond product development, pricing, and distribution to include the establishment of long-term relationships with customers. Organizations must communicate effectively with both existing and potential customers through integrated marketing communication, digital platforms, customer relationship management (CRM), and after-sales services to strengthen customer loyalty and enhance brand equity (Buttle & Maklan, 2019).

The successful implementation of marketing strategies is equally important as their formulation. Marketing implementation involves translating strategic marketing plans into specific operational activities that achieve organizational objectives. It defines who is responsible for implementing marketing programmes, what activities should be undertaken, when they should be executed, where they should be carried out, and how available resources should be utilized. Effective implementation, therefore, ensures that marketing plans are executed efficiently, organizational resources are optimally deployed, and strategic marketing goals are successfully achieved (Osuolale et al., 2025).

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