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Effectiveness of MTN'S Public Relations Strategies on Subscribers' Perception of MTN Service

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Abstract

The paper investigated the effectiveness of MTN's public relations strategies on subscribers' perception of MTN services. This study relied on Immanuel Kant's theory of perception and customer relationship management theory. The researchers utilised the survey research design with a population of 4,278,898 subscribers from which a sample size of 385 was derived using calculator net online sample size calculator. Multistage sampling technique was employed, while questionnaire served as the instrument for data collection. Findings indicated that community-based projects; sponsoring of public events like concerts and sports; engagement on social responsibility programmes; use of media channels in image promotion; and engagement with customers on social media were the public relations strategies employed by MTN in promoting the brand's corporate image. At a mean of 3.1, the majority of the respondents have positive perception about MTN's services. From the results, the researchers concluded that, MTN's PR strategies are effective in shaping positive customer perceptions of its services. The researchers recommended that, MTN should deepen their PR campaigns by incorporating more interactive and participatory PR efforts such as live Q & A sessions, and community outreach programmes that offers customers the opportunity to voice their needs so as to feel more connected to the brand. Also, there is need for MTN to constantly evaluate the effectiveness of their PR strategies through key performance



indicators such as media impressions, sentiment analysis, and customer loyalty scores so as to provide insight for improvement.

Keywords: Effectiveness, MTN Service, Perception, Public Relations, Strategies.

Introduction

In the current competitive landscape of the telecommunications sector, companies are perpetually seeking effective methods to market their services and cultivate a favourable reputation. One particularly effective approach that has demonstrated significant value is the strategic implementation of public relations (PR). By utilising PR within their telecommunications operations, businesses can improve brand visibility, build trustworthiness, and foster a dedicated customer following. Public relations is essential in the telecommunications field. It is tasked with shaping the public's perception of the company, managing potential crises, and sustaining a positive brand image. As technology evolves rapidly, the importance of effective PR becomes increasingly vital. With a continuous influx of new products and services, telecom firms must depend on PR strategies to successfully convey these advancements to the public (Raj, 2025). Wali (2020) emphasises that the cordial relationship or mutual understanding between an organization and its clientele is significantly enhanced through the implementation of public relations strategies.

As highlighted by Afolabi and Ojo (2015), the success or failure of any GSM service provider is contingent upon the nature and scope of its strategies. If the network formulates and implements effective strategies, it is likely to achieve greater success, resulting in significant sales and profits. Conversely, if the network fails to deploy sufficient strategies or products, it will struggle to attract and retain a substantial market share. According to Ucheet al. (2021), the swift increase in the number of subscribers to telecommunication services has intensified competition within the industry. Consequently, managers are confronted with the challenge of adopting effective public relations strategies that will promote their telecom services. Hsieh and Li (2008), as referenced in Kılıçet al. (2023), indicate that the relationship between public relations perception and customer loyalty is a crucial factor in business management. Public relations perception influences customer loyalty by shaping a positive brand image.

According to Nwaforet al. (2022), effective public relations strategies bolster investor interest, facilitate customer acquisition, enhance financial performance, and improve the organisation's positive perception, thereby fostering growth. They further argue that public relations plays a crucial role in the accurate dissemination of information, shaping public opinion, and maintaining a positive organisation image, even in challenging times. This assertion is particularly relevant in the context of intense competition and organisational repositioning, where market dynamics are in constant flux. Omale also asserts that public relations strategies are essential tools for strengthening credibility, skillfully addressing challenges, and driving sustainable growth trajectories (Omale, 2007) as referenced in (Emikeet al., 2024).

Consequently, MTN implemented public relations strategies, including press releases, media outreach, social media engagement, event sponsorships, corporate social responsibility initiatives, and awards and recognition programs, which are commonly utilized by telecommunication companies to improve their public image and enhance customer satisfaction. These strategies have a direct or indirect impact on service efficiency (Nwezeet al., 2020). Furthermore, social media platforms such as the X platform, formerly known as Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp, have significantly increased MTN's visibility. This enables them to disseminate news, provide updates, promote their services, and engage with customers directly through comments and messages. By offering these various channels, MTN seeks to facilitate convenient and accessible communication for customers, allowing them to connect effectively, receive assistance, and remain informed.



However, Raj (2025) asserts that public relations is crucial for telecommunications firms because of the industry's ever-changing nature and fierce competition. It was for this reason that Wali (2020) contends that the fierce rivalry among telecommunications companies for increased market share has compelled these firms to adopt various marketing strategies, including public relations practices, as a viable means to attract more consumers. Many organizations are losing a significant number of customers to their competitors on a daily basis. Additionally, some companies are on the brink of failure, while others have already ceased operations. This situation arises from the inadequate focus on the effective implementation of public relations strategies and tools.

There may also exist a disparity between the MTN's intended brand image and the perceptions held by many subscribers concerning service quality, reliability, and customer engagement. Therefore, this situation prompted this investigation about the efficacy of MTN's PR strategies in shaping subscribers' perception about the GSM service provider's services among consumers in Imo State. Specifically, the study aimed to:

1. Identify MTN's public relations strategies used in promoting the brand's corporate image.
2. Assess the perception of MTN subscribers in Imo State about the brand's services due to their PR strategies.
3. Examine the effectiveness of MTN's public relations strategies on the subscribers' perception of the services.

Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on Immanuel Kant's theory of perception and customer relationship management theory (CRMT). Customer Relationship Management Theory (CRMT)

CRMT was proposed by Berry in 1995. The theory is rooted in relationship marketing theory proposed by Berry in 1983. According to Rael (2018), CRM is one of the most globally accepted philosophies that focus on long lasting engagement between firms and their customers for the mutual benefit of all parties. As a business philosophy, CRM is a comprehensive strategic process concerned with identifying, satisfying, retaining, partnering and maximizing the value of customers by effectively managing the relationship between parties (Rael, 2018). Management of relationships between firms and their customers is critical to the survival of firms and all activities should focus on value creation as opposed to transactions. Customer relationship management (CRM) is important to organisations because it is vital in acquiring new customers, retaining the existing ones and maximising the lifetime value. The overall goal here is to find, attract and win new clients and nurture and retain those that the company already has.

This story is relevant as it emphasises on the relationship between organisations and their customers as the customers are the life wire and blood of every business organisation. No organisation will thrive in the absence of customers. The theory also is built on the tenet that CRM is vital in acquiring new customers, retaining the existing ones and maximising the lifetime value. It takes into consideration, quality of service and maintaining strong relationship with customers.

Immanuel Kant's Theory of Perception

Propounded by Immanuel Kant propounded in 1902, as postulated by Kant, imagination forms images in perception. He further opines that imagination is an essential element of perception itself (Kant, 2012). Perception could be a person's personal views or feelings about a particular product and service. As noted by Perrota (2019), perception is a cognitive process characterized by subjectivity, agency, and creativity, enabling individuals to interpret and comprehend both self and others through the attribution of significance to sensory information. According to Owoyemi (2023), perception, in its fundamental sense, refers to the cognitive process through which individuals interpret and make sense of their sensory experiences. This theory is apt for the study the study is intended to evaluate the views, reactions and



opinions of subscribers in Imo State about the public relations strategies employed by MTN in relation to MTN services.

Method

The survey research design was employed for the investigation. The population comprised telecommunications subscribers in Imo State due to the lack of statistics on MTN subscribers in Imo State. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (2020), the population of telecom subscribers in Imo State is 4,278,898. The calculator.net sample size calculator was used at a threshold of 95% confidence interval and 5% margin error to arrive at a sample size of the study given the study population. Thus, 385 was arrived at as the sample size for the study. The multistage sampling technique was employed in sampling the respondents. At stage one, three senatorial zones make up Imo State; Owerri, Orlu and Okigwe senatorial zones. At stage two: The researcher purposively selected two Local Governments Areas (Owerri Municipal, Owerri North; Orlu, Ideator North; Isiala Mbano and Okigwe respectively) from each of the senatorial zone, making a total of six L.G.A's studied. In stage three, the researcher purposively selected two communities (Umuonyima, Umuororonjo; Orji, Amakohia; Ihioma, Amaifeke; Akowa, Osina; Osu, Mbama; Umuokpara and Ihube) in each of the two LGA's in the state capital, making it 12 communities. In stage four: from these communities, the researcher applied quota sampling technique by dividing the sample size by the number of selected communities, i.e. (385/12), therefore, 32 respondents were purposively sampled in each community. The researcher purposively selected respondents who are MTN consumers. Questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. The items in the questionnaire were designed using simple English and on a 4-point Likert Scale of SA (Strongly Agree), A (Agree), D (Disagree), and SD (Strongly Disagree). Test re-test was used in establishing the reliability of instrument using Pearson Moment Correlation which indicated 0.8 (very high reliability). In order to ensure that the respondents are well protected before indulging in the exercise, their consent was sought while explaining the purpose of the research, the willing nature of their involvement, and their right to withdraw at any time without any consequences. The instrument was validated by communication and public relations scholars. The respondents' confidentiality and anonymity of their responses were guaranteed, and all data collected were used solely for the study. The data was collected on self-administration method. Meanwhile, simple percentages and mean analysis were used to analyse the data.

Findings

Data generated from the field was presented in tables using numbers, frequency and mean analysis. 385 copies of the questionnaire was distributed. From the numbers distributed, 376 (97%) copies were retrieved, 6 (2%) copies were nullified due to improper responses, while 3 (1%) copies were lost to the field, thus, found invalid for the study. This means that a total of 376 (97%) copies of the questionnaire were found valid and analyzed. This means that the return response rate was 97%.



Research Question One: What are the public relations strategies employed by MTN in promoting the brand's corporate image?

The cluster table format was used to provide answers to the question.

Table 1: Responses of respondents on the public relations strategies employed by MTN in promoting the brand's corporate image

Option	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
MTN uses community-based projects to promote its brand	194	170	8	4	3.4	Accepted
MTN sponsors public events like concerts and sports	190	171	9	6	3.4	Accepted
MTN engages in social responsibility programmes	201	160	9	6	3.5	Accepted
MTN uses media channels in promoting and improving its image	201	171	3	1	3.5	Accepted
MTN regularly engages with customers on social media	198	177	1	0	3.5	Accepted
Grand Mean					3.5	Accepted

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Decision rule: Given that the benchmark of a 4-point Likert scale for decision is 2.5, it means that if the calculated mean is 2.5-4.0, then the item in question is accepted. However, if the calculated mean is 1-2.4, then the item in question is rejected.

Result of the mean analysis indicates that, community-based projects; sponsoring of public events like concerts and sports; engagement on social responsibility programmes; use of media channels in image promotion; and engagement with customers on social media were the public relations strategies employed by MTN in promoting the brand's corporate image at mean of 3.4.

Research Question Two: What is the perception of MTN subscribers in Imo State about the brand's services due to their PR strategies?

The cluster table format was used to provide answers to the question.

Table 2: Responses of the respondents on their perception about MTN's services due to their PR strategies

Option	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
MTN services are reliable and efficient	155	136	48	37	3.1	Accepted
MTN responds to customer complaints with swiftness	141	150	53	33	3.1	Accepted
MTN cares about their customers	167	177	17	15	3.3	Accepted
I trust MTN more because of their public image	137	140	58	41	3.0	Accepted



MTN's PR strategies make me feel valued as a customer	148	119	49	60	3.0	Accepted
MTN offers better customer service experience	153	156	39	28	3.2	Accepted
Grand Mean					3.1	Accepted

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Result of the mean analysis on their perception about MTN's services due to their PR strategies indicated that at a mean of 3.1, the majority of the respondents have positive perception towards MTN's services.

Research Question Three: What is the effectiveness of MTN's public relations strategies on the subscribers' perception of the services?

The cluster table format was used to provide answers to the question.

Table 3: Responses of respondents on the effectiveness of MTN's public relations strategies on their perception of the services

Option	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
MTN's PR strategies influences my perception of their services	149	172	31	20	3.2	Accepted
MTN's crisis communication strategy improves my trust in their service	122	103	87	64	2.8	Accepted
MTN's public image influences my loyalty to the network	188	164	15	9	3.4	Accepted
MTN's engagement in community based projects influence my perception about their service	139	161	48	28	3.2	Accepted
GrandMean					3.2	Accepted

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Result of the analysis on the effectiveness of MTN's public relations strategies on the subscribers' perception of the services indicates that MTN's public relations strategies are effective to the perception of MTN services among the subscriber's at a mean score of 3.2.

Discussion

Result of the findings on the public relations strategies employed by MTN in promoting the brand's corporate image showed that, community-based projects; sponsoring of public events like concerts and sports; engagement on social responsibility programmes; use of media channels in image promotion; and engagement with customers on social media were the public relations strategies employed by MTN in promoting the brand's corporate image at mean of 3.4. This result agrees with the result from studies review. For instance, Zack (2022) identified customer relations, community relations, employee relations and corporate social responsibility as some of the public relations strategies which influence customers' preference for GSM services of MTN Nig Plc. Similarly, Emike et al. (2024) indicated that the MTN and the 9Mobile utilized public relations strategies. Also, Wali (2020) revealed that public relations tools such as advisement periodicals, press agent, and public opinion were effective public relations tools and strategies in enhancing maximum customer's satisfaction. In another corroborating result, Ekakitie-Emonena and Sado (2023) identified email communications, corporate press releases, corporate communications via newsletters, and social media relations as the public relations practices in leading banks in Nigeria employed to achieve customer satisfaction.



On the respondents' perception about MTN's services due to their PR strategies, it was indicated that at a mean of 3.1, the majority of the respondents have positive perception towards MTN's services. The respondents perceive MTN services to be reliable and efficient; MTN responds to customer complaints with swiftness; MTN cares about their customers; MTN's PR strategies make the subscribers to feel valued as customers; and MTN offers better customer service experience. Wali (2020) found out that public relations enhances customers' satisfaction by identifying their core needs and providing incentives and after-sales services.

This result underscores the theoretical framework upon which the study was underpinned. The closeness of Immanuel Kant's theory of perception to this findings is hinged on the fact that the views, reactions and opinions of subscribers in Imo State about the public relations strategies employed by MTN in relation to MTN services was evaluated and it was revealed that the respondents have a positive perception about MTN's public relations strategies.

Furthermore, the result of the analysis on the effectiveness of MTN's public relations strategies on the subscribers' perception of the services indicates that MTN's public relations strategies are effective to the perception of MTN services among the subscriber's at a mean score of 3.2. The analysis showed that MTN's PR strategies influences the respondents' perception of MTN services; MTN's crisis communication strategy improves the respondents' trust in their service; MTN's public image influences the respondents' loyalty to the network; and MTN's engagement in community based projects influence most of the respondents' perception about their service. This result corroborates with the customer relationship management theory.

Relating this result to previous studies, it aligns with the findings of Kılıç et al. (2023) which established the existence of a strong relationship between public relations and brand image, a moderate relationship between public relations and customer value, and brand image and customers value. Also, it was revealed that brand image is the most significant factor affecting customer loyalty, followed by customer value and public relations perception respectively. This result is in agreement with the findings of Ayodele and Esiti (2016) which revealed that trust, customer satisfaction, corporate image, service quality, network coverage have significant effect on customer loyalty with customer satisfaction as the strongest predictor of customer loyalty in the Nigerian GSM market. In addition, prompt customer service was seen to have no significant effect on customer loyalty.

In the same vein, Afolabi and Ojo (2015) found that various strategies adopted by the GSM providers provide a significant influence on the promotions, corporate objectives, target markets and customers satisfaction. Zack (2021) corroborates this result in which it was revealed that customer relations, community relations, employee relations and corporate social responsibility had significant positive effects on customers' preference for GSM services of MTN Nig Plc. Emike et al (2024) revealed that public relations strategies influenced MTN and 9Mobile to increase productivity in their networks. The researchers concluded that there is high acceptance level of respondents from both MTN and 9Mobile respectively affirming that the strategies have increased brand recognition, service efficiency and growth.

Also, Ekakitie-Emonena and Sado (2023) revealed that email communications have a positive and significant impact on customers' satisfaction; corporate press releases have a positive and significant impact on customers' satisfaction; corporate communications via newsletters have a positive and significant impact on customers' satisfaction. Lastly, social media relations was found to have a positive and significant impact on customers' satisfaction.



Conclusion and Recommendations

Public relations (PR) is crucial for telecommunications firms because of the sector's ever-changing landscape and stiff competition. By allocating resources to PR initiatives, companies can set themselves apart from their rivals, enhance brand recognition, and secure a competitive advantage. Additionally, PR plays a vital role in fostering customer loyalty and trust, while also appealing to prospective investors and partners. A significant advantage of PR within the telecom sector is its capacity to mould public perception. Thus, the employment of effective public relations strategies by MTN is potent in promoting and enhancing the brand's image and customer satisfaction over the network service provider's service. From the results of the findings, it suggests that MTN's PR strategies are effective in shaping positive customer perceptions of its services. The following recommendations were put forward owing to the findings of the study:

1. MTN should deepen their PR campaigns by incorporating more interactive and participatory PR efforts such as live Q & A sessions, and community outreach programmes that offers customers the opportunity to voice their needs so as to feel more connected to the brand.
2. MTN can improve transparency and crisis communication as maintaining and improving positive corporate image requires being transparent during service interruptions or controversies.
3. There is need for MTN to constantly evaluate the effectiveness of their PR strategies through key performance indicators such as media impressions, sentiment analysis, and customer loyalty scores as the result will provide insight for further improvement.

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