

AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON BUZZ MARKETING STRATEGIES AND CUSTOMER RETENTION OF FAST -FOOD FIRMS IN SOUTH – SOUTH, NIGERIA.

¹Akwikwa, Rufus Ph.D., ²Fadare, Ramat Adeola Ph.D. and ³Ogubie, Nwanaka Ph.D.

Email: obifa4u@yahoo.com, fadare4adeolau@gmail.com, ogubienwanaka@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

This study examined buzz marketing strategies and customer retention of fast -food firms in South-South, Nigeria. Data for the study was collected through self-administered questionnaire from the seventy five (75) respondents, however, seventy five (75) returned copies of questionnaire were valid and used for the analysis. The hypotheses were tested through Pearson correlation coefficient. The findings of the study revealed that, there is significance relationship between online buzz marketing strategy and customer retention, there is significance relationship between offline buzz marketing and customer retention, there is significance positive relationship between rumour buzz marketing strategy and customer retention, and there is significance positive relationship between conversational buzz marketing strategy and customer retention. Based on the findings arising from the analyses of data and subsequent hypotheses tested for the study, the study concluded that, buzz marketing strategies impacted positively on customer retention, of fast- food firms in South – South, Nigeria. The study also recommended that, fast food firms should employ and implement more effective buzz marketing strategies to retain more customer to boost more profit in the business.

Keyword: Buzz, Marketing, Strategies, Customer, Retention

INTRODUCTION

Globally, every reputable organizations have strategies or philosophy to penetrate its target audience to actualize corporate goals and objectives. Sustainability of corporate firms depend mostly on the effective approaches adopted to reach out the target customers. Buzz marketing practice in business has significantly played an effective role therefore, buzz marketing is a viral marketing method that give attention on exploiting the word of mouth potential of a product or service. The effectiveness of this strategy is through conversation among end- user of a product or large scale discussion on the social media platform .According to Goodie-Okio (2022),buzz marketing is a viral marketing notion that attempts to meet customers who appear to be dissimilar, with automatic facts or information planned by marketing podium and presented by expert or promoters. Buzz marketing refer to the performance of social media role such as email, Facebook, Twitter etc. that increase firm’s sale volume, market share and income (Ghanbari & Ghanbari ,2017) cited in (Chi Minh etal,2022). Also asserted that buzz marketing has a positive impact on organizational businesses performance, since most of the social platform are employed for achieving their marketing objectives. Buzz marketing assist customers to generate information about products or services through family and friends, and buzz marketing create awareness through social media platforms (Ella & Emil). Buzz marketing entails creation of effective content in an effort to clutch customers’ attention, it is therefore refer to the impression that excites, intrigues, or excites consumers about organizational products or services. (Thomas, 2004). Chebli and Gharbi, (2013), described buzz marketing as a system of thoroughfare marketing which objectives are to promoting products and services to achieve word of mouth potentials .Buzz marketing method easily reach out customers in all the corner of the world and it makes companies achieve great heights (Mohr, 2017). Abina (2016), outline some buzz marketing strategies include: online strategies which involved promoting products and services through social media platform such as face book, email , twitter and others , offline strategy enhances promotion of products and services base on engaging representative for communication , rumors strategy, this strategy promote products and services through word of mouth potentials and conversational strategy, this create awareness of products and services through

conversation or discussion. Gerpott, Rams and Schindler (2001), cited in Namullan (2012), Postulated that, success of firm's sales volumes are ensured by customer retention, which can be determined by managerial action. Currently, fast-food business is integral part of business activities in Nigeria, notwithstanding the trials inherent in retailing. Nigeria as a consuming nation has significantly and directly considered operations of quick service restaurant (QSR) as a business going concern with rapid growth and as a sources of revenue generation, employment creation for the development of the economy. According to Jeremy (2022), on interview on Quick Service Restaurant (QSR), stated that fifty percent of Nigerian are into Quick Service Restaurant (QSR) operations. Despite insecurity challenge in Niger Delta Area, fast-food business has gone viral. Buzz marketing assist customers to generate information about a products and services from other groups (Holdford, 2004). The study was to examine the impact of buzz marketing strategies on Customer Retention of fast-food firms in South-South, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Growth of every business entity depend solely on the numbers of customer retained especially service firms who are into service provision. The problems facing service firms today are ineffective adoption and application of buzz marketing technique and strategies to reach out the customers, the core aim of buzz Marketing was to maximize word of mouth potential.

Conceptual Framework

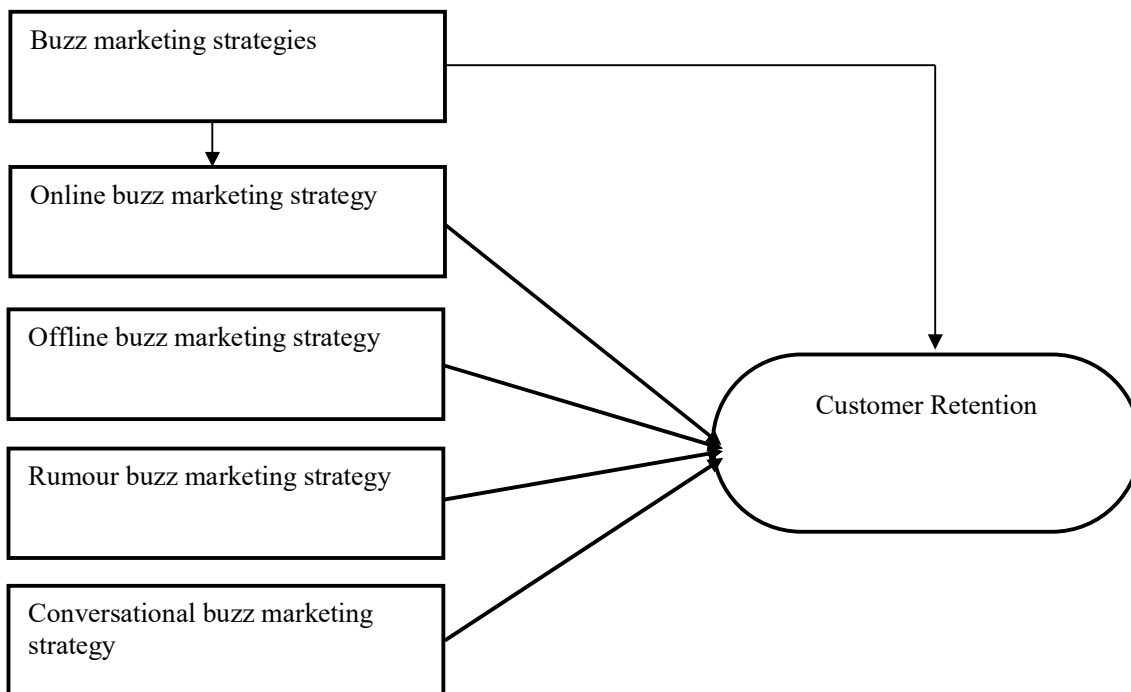


Fig 1.1: Conceptual framework of Buzz Marketing Strategies and Customer Retention.

Objectives of the Study

The study major aim was to determine the relationship between Buzz Marketing Strategies and Customer Retention of fast-food firms in South – South, Nigeria. The specific objectives include:

1. To determine the influence of online buzz marketing strategy on customer retention of fast-food firms in South – South, Nigeria.
2. To know the influence of offline buzz marketing strategy on customer retention of fast food

firms in South – South, Nigeria.

3. To investigate the effect of rumour buzz marketing strategy on customer retention of fast - food firms in South – South, Nigeria.

4. To evaluate the effect of conversational buzz marketing strategy on customer retention of fast- food firms in South – South, Nigeria

Research Questions

1. What influence does online buzz marketing strategy have on customer retention of fast - food firms in South – South, Nigeria?

2. What is the influence of offline buzz marketing strategy on customer retention of fast- food firms in South – South, Nigeria?

3. To what does rumour buzz marketing strategy affect customer retention of fast- food firms in South – South, Nigeria?

4. To what extent does conversational buzz marketing strategy affect customer retention of fast- food firms in South – South, Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

Ho₁: There is no significance relationship between online buzz marketing strategy and customer retention of fast- food firms in South – South, Nigeria.

Ho₂: There is no significance relationship between offline buzz marketing and customer retention of fast- food firms in South – South, Nigeria.

Ho₃: There is no significance positive relationship between rumour buzz marketing strategy and customer retention of fast -food firms in South – South, Nigeria.

Ho₄: There is no significance positive relationship between conversational buzz marketing strategy and customer retention of fast- food firms in South– South, Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Buzz marketing

Online buzz marketing strategy

The World nowadays has become digital era to accomplished business objectives. Online buzz marketing strategy was developed to promote organizational products and services through online platforms and it is a vital technique apply to gain attention to customers (Abina, 2016). Online buzz marketing strategy refer to the web-based channels practice used by companies to create awareness to its products and services to its potentials customers (Sela *et al*,2016).Online buzz marketing is an essential platform for campaigning firm’s products or services through online platforms and the techniques comprises face book, twitter, email campaigns, social media, advertising and more, also the core aim of online buzz marketing strategy is to reach out potential customers through the channels (Baker, 2016). Buzz refer to as a form of hype or publicity among consumers. Buzz marketing refer to the term used in word-of-mouth marketing and, it is the communication of customers and users of firms preferred products or services to intensify the original marketing message (Anghelcev,2015).

Offline buzz marketing strategy

Offline buzz marketing strategy refer to method of prompting products or services by engaging sales representatives in communicating with customer through offline platforms and the method consists of services of customer care feedback, (Abina, 2016). This process gives satisfaction to customer hoping that the products or services have required attributes, and it help the firms to improve the quality of the products or services, and offline marketing strategy work factually using channels such as print, billboards, television and radio advertisements (Artur, 2016),

Rumour buzz marketing strategy

Buzz marketing is not only done by creating leverages, but also by creating rumors about other products or services. Rumors buzz marketing strategy refer to application of word of mouth potential to spread messages about firm's products or services, and rumour can be negative or positive . Products or services can also create a negative buzz, which will automatically make customer buy the rivalry firms products or services (Nair, 2016).

Conversational buzz marketing strategy

Conversational in marketing permits for faster engagement and inspires an augmented step through the customer voyage. The term was first invented by Drift, a marketing and sales company. It changed the way companies can communicate with their prospects and consumers permitting teams to communicate faster with their website visitors and ultimately get those visitors the answers and information needed in a timely fashion and it creates an reliable knowledge among brand and consumer and often builds a stronger opening relationship (Griffin,2022).Conversational in marketing is marketing activitythat involves consumers discussion and interactions with another consumers through two-way communications in real-time about firms preferred product or services (Griffin ,2022) Conversational in marketing or conversation marketing is a feedback-oriented method to marketing used by firms to drive appointment, grow customer loyalty, grow the customer base, and, eventually, grow revenue. Conversational in marketing is based on the common sense idea of attending to the customer and potential customer's needs. Being willing to join feedback into marketing tactic and communicating with the customer on a one-to-one basis, can help to differentiate firm's brand and also encourage potential customers to engage with firm's product or service (Galetto, 2017).The rise of social media and other automatic chat tools or bots has opened up new lines of communication with customers. As a consequence, conversational marketing has taken on a whole new level of significance. More companies are leveraging social media to drive their conversational marketing program and develop their brand voice (Akanksha, 2019).

Customer Retention

In every reputable organization retention of customer is very significant and post sales services are the important drivers for customer retentions. Customers retention is refer to continuity and business relationship between the customer and the organization (Gerpott, *etal*, 2001). Hkol (2016) asserted that, customer retention is the measure of sustainability of customers' patronage for a product or service of an organization over an extended period of time. Customer retention is a measure of the resolution of customers to continue doing business with the service provider Kriss, (2015).Tong (2014), customer retention refers to a customer engaging in a contract, either formal or informal over a period of time, which includes repeated transactions.

Theoretical Framework**Word of mouth marketing theory**

Word of mouth marketing theory was propounded by George Silverman 1970.Word-of-mouth marketing is also known as word of mouth advertising varies from naturally occurring word of mouth and, it is aggressively prejudiced or fortified by firms (Ferguson, 2008). Word of mouth marketing refer to passing messages, and information about products or services , which is being passed orally from consumer to another consumer in an informal way and it is served as promotional strategy (Cheung, *etal*, 2008,).Acceding to Word of Mouth Marketing Association (2008) refer the performance of consumers providing information to other consumers. Kotler (2006), cited in Anton , (2009),defines the word of mouth impact as personal communication about a product or service amongst target audience and neighbors, friends, family members, and associates.The theory suggested that , firm's preferred products and services should be effectively and efficiently presented to the market place to gain the

attention of the target audience and , firms should employ word of mouth marketing strategy to gain the target audience.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research employed quantitative approach, explanatory type and survey method design to reveal cause and effect relationship of variables. The study population was one hundred (100) respondents (customers) from five (5) selected fast- food firms in South –South, Nigeria, the fast- food firms include : Kilimanjaro and Genesis fast- food, University of Port Harcourt branch Rivers State, Chicken Republic, Yenezue-Gene branch and Kilimanjaro fast- food,Ekeki branch,Yenagoe, Bayelsa State and Sizzlers fast- food/Restaurant Wado efinery road branch, Asaba, Delta State .Taro Yemene statistical method was used to determine the study sample size of eighty respondents eighty(80).A structured questionnaire was used in gathering relevant data from the respondents and seventy five questionnaire (75) was returned for analysis .The measurement used in the study is the Likert Scale method of summated ratings,it consist of where respondents indicate their degree of agreement on four point Likert Scale which range from strongly agree to strongly disagree were used (Strongly agree=1, Agree= 2, Disagree =, strongly disagree = 4) agree in respect of measuring scale, the reliability coefficient (Cronbach's Alpha test) of online buzz marketing strategy, offline buzz marketing strategy, rumour buzz marketing strategy, conversational buzz marketing strategy and customer retention were 0.77,0.78, 0.82,0.88 and 0.89 respectively. The scale was subjected to item analysis in other to ensure it is valid and reliable and yield reliability alphaat 0.70.The Pearson correlation coefficient and regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses and analyze the demographic data.

Data analysis, presentation and interpretation

Table 4.1: Demographic Analysis

Summary of demographic variables of the study

Demographics	Category	N	%
Age	25 -30 years	19	25
	35-40 years	27	36
	45- 50 years	29	38.6
Nature/position	Sales person	26	34.6
	Customer	49	65.0
Marriage	Widowed	7	10
	Divorced	13	17
	Married	25	33
	Single	30	40
Education	NCE/BED	12	16
	BSC	30	40
	MBA/MSC	29	38.6
	PHD	4	5.3
Gender	Male	37	49.3
	Female	38	50.6
Income	200,000 - 300,000	44	56.6
	300,000 – 400,000	15	20
	400 ,000- 5000,000	16	21.3

Fast food	Kilimanjaro	7	9.3
	Genesis	23	30.6
	Chicken Republic	40	53.3
	Sizzlers	5	6.6
Duration patronage	Less than a year	9	12
	1 – 5 years	26	34.6
	5 and above years	40	53.3

Source: Research Data, 2023

The result from table 4.1 shows the summary of demographic variables of the study. It shows that most of the respondents, 29(38.6%) were in the age bracket of 345-50 years and this was followed by those in the age bracket of 35-40 years 27 (36%). More than half of the respondents were customers, 49(65.0%) and 30(40%) were single. Majority of the respondents hold BSc 30(40%) followed by those with M.Sc. (38.6%). The females 38 (50.6%) were more in number when compared to their male counterparts 38(49.3). Most (56.6%) of the respondents earn between N200, 000.00- 3 00,000.00. Most 40(53.3%) respondents use the Chicken Republic and the most duration was three years 40 (53.3%).

Table 4. 2: Correlations

	Online buzz marketing strategy	Refer rals
Referrals		
Pearson correlation	-154	1
Sig.(2-tailed)	007	
N	75	75

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

P<.05= S

P>.05= NS

Table 4.3: Correlations

	Offline buzz marketing strategy	Refer rals
Referrals		
Pearson correlation	0.156	1
Sig.(2-tailed)	.006	
N	75	75

**

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

P<.05= S

P>.05= NS

Table 4. 4 : Correlations

	Rumour buzz marketing strategy	Refer rals
Referrals		
Pearson correlation	0.210	1
Sig.(2-tailed)	.000	

N	75	75
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** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

P<.05= S

P>.05= NS

	Conversational buzz marketing strategy	Referrals
Referrals		
Pearson correlation	-.049	1
Sig.(2-tailed)	.002	
N	75	75

Table 4.5: Correlations

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

P<.05= S

P>.05= NS

Discussion of findings

Test of hypothesis 1:

Ho₁: There is no significance relationship between online buzz marketing strategy and customer retention of fast -food firms in South – South, Nigeria,

Table 4.2 shows that, there was a strong and inverse relationship between online buzz marketing strategy and customer retention of fast- food firms in South – South, Nigeria ($r = -0.154, p < 0.007$). The null hypothesis one was rejected at .05 alpha levels.

Test of hypothesis 2:

Ho₂: There is no significance relationship between offline buzz marketing strategy and customer retention of fast- food firms in South – South, Nigeria. The result from table 4.3 shows that, there was a strong and inverse relationship offline buzz marketing strategy and customer retention of fast -food firms in South – South, Nigeria. ($r = 0.156, p < 0.006$). The null hypothesis two was rejected at .05 alpha level.

Test of hypothesis 3:

Ho₃: There is no significance positive relationship between rumour buzz marketing strategy and customer retention of fast -food firms in South – South, Nigeria. The result from Table 4.4 shows that there was a strong and positive relationship between rumour buzz marketing strategy and customer retention of fast -food firms in South – South, Nigeria. ($r = 0.210, p < 0.000$). The null hypothesis three was rejected at .05 alpha level.

Ho₄: There is no significance positive relationship between conversational buzz marketing strategy and customer retention of fast- food firms in South – South, Nigeria. Table 4.5 shows that, there was a strong and positive relationship between conversational buzz marketing strategy and customer retention of fast- food firms in South – South, Nigeria ($r = -0.049, p < 0.002$). The null hypothesis four was rejected at .05 alpha level.

hypothesis four was rejected at .05 alpha.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings arising from the analyses of data and subsequent hypotheses tested for the study, the study concluded that, buzz marketing strategies impacted positively on customer retention of fast food firms in South – South, Nigeria. The result above gotten from the hypotheses tested indicated that, implementation of effective buzz marketing strategies increased customer retention. The study also recommended that, fast food firms should employ and implement more effective buzz marketing strategies to retain more customer to increase more profit in the business.

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**APPENDIX
SECTION A**

Please respond to this section appropriately General Question

- (1) How old are you?
(a) 25 -30 years (b) 35-40 years (c) 45- 50 years
- 2) Nature and present office/position
(a) Sales person (b) customer
- 3) What is your marital status?
(a) Single (b) married (c) divorced (d) widowed
- 4) Educational attainment
(a) NCE/Bed (b) B. Sc (c) MBA/M.Sc (d)PhD
- 5) Gender: (M/F)
- 6) What is your income level?
(a) 200,000 - 300,000 (b) 300,000 – 400,000 (c) 400,000- 500,000
- 7) Choice of fast food?
(a) Kilimanjaro (b) Genesis (c) Chicken Republic (d) Sizzlers
- 8) How long have you used the fast food firm?
(a) Less than a year (b) 1 - 5 years (c) t5years and above

SECTION B

Please indicate the appropriate response from strongly agree to strongly disagree

S/N	ITEMS	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1
	ONLINE BUZZ STRATEGY				
1	Fast- food customers appreciate online buzz marketing.				
2	Online buzz marketing strategy create awareness of products or services to firm’s potentials customers.				
3	Fas- food firms advertise its brand through twitter channel.	~			
4	Fast- food firms campaign its brand through email channel.				
	OFFLINE BUZZ STRATEGY				
5	Customer prefer facial discussion to promote fast food products or services.				
6	Offline buzz marketing method prompting products or services by engaging sales representatives in communicating with customers.				
7	Fast-food firms introduce preferred brand to customer through billboard.				
8	Offline buzz marketing strategy work factually using traditional channels of advertising.				
	Rumour buzz strategy				
9	Rumour buzz marketing strategy move viral to reach out customer fast- food customers.				
10	Runour buzz marketing strategy maximise word of mouth potential				
11	Runour buzz marketing strategy is the application of word of mouth potential to spread messages about firm’s products or services.				

12	Buzz marketing strategy is not only done by creating leverages.				
	Conversational buzz strategy				
13	Conversational buzz marketing strategy permits for faster engagement and inspires an augmented step through the customer voyage.				
14	Conversational buzz marketing strategy involves consumer's discussion and interactions with another consumers about firm's product or services.				
15	Conversational buzz marketing strategy based on the common sense idea of attending to the customer and potential customer's need.				
16	Conversational buzz marketing strategy is a feedback-oriented method of marketing used by firms to drive appointment, grow customer loyalty.				

KEY NOTE:

SA = Strongly Agree

A = Agree

D = Disagree

SD = Strongly Disagree