

INFLUENCE OF PROMOTION MIX ON CONSUMER BUYING DECISION OF SMARTPHONE BRANDS AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN GOMBE STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of promotion mix elements on consumer buying decisions regarding smartphone brands among university students in Gombe State, Nigeria. The specific objectives were to assess the effects of advertising and sales promotion on students' buying decisions. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The population comprised 26,876 university students in Gombe State during the 2024/2025 academic session. A sample of 394 respondents was determined using Taro Yamane's formula and selected through stratified random sampling. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire, which was validated by senior lecturers and found reliable with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.84. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while the hypotheses were tested using simple linear regression at a 0.05 level of significance. The findings showed that advertising had a high influence ($\bar{x} = 3.45$; $\sigma = 1.21$), while sales promotion had a very high influence ($\bar{x} = 3.67$; $\sigma = 1.18$). Regression analysis indicated a significant positive influence for both advertising and sales promotion ($p < 0.05$). Collectively, the promotion mix explained 60.2% of the variations in buying decisions ($R^2 = 0.602$). The study concludes that promotion strategies significantly shape students' decisions, increasing financial risk in university students' spending. The study recommends that smartphone marketers emphasize value-based promotions, accurate product information, and ethical selling practices. Additionally, universities and student bodies should promote consumer education to help students critically evaluate promotional messages and make informed purchasing decisions that align with their academic and financial needs.

Keywords: Influence, Promotion Mix, Advertisement, Sales Promotion, Consumer Buying Decision

Introduction

In today's highly dynamic and competitive business landscape, the success and sustainability of businesses depend significantly on their ability to effectively navigate and capitalize on factors that influence customer purchasing decisions. To address this concern, the promotion mix has become a crucial instrument for influencing consumer buying decisions and promoting growth (Mia,

2023). The promotion mix comprising advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, public relations, and direct marketing is frequently used by businesses to reach target audiences and stimulate demand (Elochukwu et al., 2023).

The promotion mix is a specific blend of marketing tools that companies use to persuasively communicate customer value and build customer relationships. As outlined by Kotler and Armstrong (2012), it encompasses five key elements: advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, public relations, and direct marketing. Advertising involves paid, non-personal messages through media channels such as TV, billboards, and social platforms. Personal selling entails direct interactions between sales agents and consumers. Sales promotions offer short-term incentives like coupons, discounts, or contests. Public relations manages a brand's public image and media coverage. Direct marketing includes targeted outreach via email, SMS, and telemarketing. Together, these elements work cohesively to deliver consistent, persuasive messages across multiple platforms, thereby maximizing consumer reach and engagement.

As smartphones have become universal tools in modern life—especially among young adults—understanding how the promotion mix influences their buying decisions is essential for marketers. University students in Nigeria represent a significant consumer segment for smartphone brands due to their technological orientation and increasing reliance on mobile technologies for communication, education, and entertainment. In recent years, Nigeria has witnessed a tremendous increase in mobile phone usage and purchases. Driven by a growing population and demand for internet services, Nigeria now has one of the largest smartphone markets in Africa. The market is growing rapidly, with market penetration estimated to reach 66% by 2025 (Adeyi, 2023).

Rahman and Sultana (2022) asserted that increased mobile phone usage and the availability of many brands have led customers to consider various preferences in their purchasing decisions. They noted that consumers are highly responsive to promotions, especially in a saturated market like smartphones, where brand loyalty can be easily swayed by attractive offers. In this regard, the promotion mix plays a pivotal role in shaping consumer perceptions, preferences, and ultimate purchase decisions. The authors further noted that advertising has a significant influence on young consumers, who are often attracted to the aesthetic appeal and lifestyle aspirations promoted by smartphone brands.

Advertising is described as a paid form of non-personal communication used to persuade an audience toward a specific action, often driving consumer behavior and differentiating a brand in competitive markets. As part of integrated marketing communications strategy, advertising's primary functions include building awareness, generating interest, and influencing purchase decisions by highlighting product benefits and creating brand identity across diverse media channels (Jamal & Khan, 2024).

Sales promotion refers to a marketing strategy in which a business uses temporary campaigns or offers to increase interest in or demand for its product or service. These campaigns often take the form of discounts or other customer incentives to attract buyers. Sales promotion involves various techniques designed to incentivize customers to make a purchase or take a specific action. Unlike advertising, which focuses on creating awareness and building brand recognition, sales promotion is more action-oriented and aims to drive immediate results. Sales promotion is another critical element of the promotion mix that significantly influences consumer buying decisions. Nigerian consumers, especially students, are often drawn to promotional offers such as discounts, buy-one-get-one-free deals, and free accessories, which create a sense of urgency and value for money. These promotions are particularly effective in influencing impulse buying among university students who may have limited financial resources (James et al., 2024).

Abiaziem and Bako (2019) highlighted that students are more likely to make purchases when they perceive added value—a trend observed across various regions in Nigeria. The authors further

stated that customer relationship building, product knowledge, feedback handling, and sales personalization have positive and significant relationships with customer patronage. Hence, consumers are more likely to purchase a product when they receive personalized attention and information from sales representatives. For university students in Gombe State, personal selling offers smartphone brands an opportunity to engage directly with their target audience, address specific needs, and build rapport. According to Good et al. (2023), personal selling strategy can be seen as a relationship-building foundation, extending beyond the immediate transaction to focus on establishing and nurturing long-term connections with customers. By providing tailored information and recommendations, sales personnel can influence students' purchase decisions.

As noted by James et al. (2024), university students are often influenced by the opinions and preferences of their peers, particularly regarding the latest smartphone models and features. This social influence—which often emphasizes the social status and lifestyle associated with owning a particular smartphone brand—is further amplified by promotion mix elements such as advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, public relations, and direct marketing. James et al. highlighted that advertising campaigns portraying smartphones as status symbols can significantly influence students' buying decisions, as students seek to conform to societal expectations and enhance their social image.

According to the Gombe State Ministry of Education (2021), the state has a growing youth population, with a significant proportion enrolled in tertiary institutions. Therefore, smartphone brands that tailor their promotional strategies to the needs and preferences of university students in Gombe State are more likely to succeed in capturing market share. This includes leveraging digital marketing platforms and offering competitive pricing.

Statement of the Problem

The smartphone industry has grown rapidly over the last decade, becoming one of the most competitive sectors in the global market. In Nigeria, smartphones have become essential tools for communication, learning, and social interaction, particularly among the youth, especially university students. As a result, smartphone brands continuously strive to attract this demographic through various promotional strategies, including advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, public relations, and direct marketing. These elements form the promotion mix, a critical component of marketing strategies aimed at influencing consumer purchasing decisions (Shahirah et al., 2021).

The researcher observed that university students in Gombe State represent a significant segment of smartphone users and buyers; yet many face challenges in making informed purchasing decisions. Their smartphone buying decisions are often shaped by intense promotion-driven appeals that do not adequately address their specific needs, financial realities, or academic requirements. For instance, some students are misled by price discounts, influencer advertisements, freebies, campus activations, and direct messages from various promotional channels. This often results in dissatisfaction, buyer's remorse, and wasteful spending. This concern is supported by studies showing that promotional elements such as sales promotion, personal selling, and direct marketing significantly influence students' buying decisions, while misleading or poorly targeted advertisements contribute to poor purchase outcomes (Chine et al., 2019).

Additionally, influencer marketing and online promotional tactics have been shown to strongly shape young consumers' preferences, particularly through social media platforms and giveaway campaigns (James et al., 2024). Similar findings from Umar (2024) at Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi, showed that sales promotion, personal selling, and direct marketing significantly influenced consumer buying decisions, whereas advertising was less effective. The severity of the problem is compounded by students' limited and often irregular sources of income, as most depend on parents or guardians for financial support. A poor purchase decision therefore

leads not only to immediate financial strain but also to academic setbacks when the device fails to meet learning requirements—due to unsupported applications, short battery life, or poor signal quality. This challenge has given rise to a peculiar social dynamic in Gombe State, where students are seen as a source of affordable second-hand smartphones. This is owing to their promotion-driven spending habits, which lead them to frequently dispose of recently purchased smartphones in exchange for alternative ones. This often happens either because phones acquired under promotional influence do not meet their academic or personal needs or because financial difficulties compel them to downgrade. Consequently, such patterns leave them continually disadvantaged, locked in cycles of wasteful spending, dissatisfaction, and financial vulnerability.

If these problems remain unaddressed, students will continue to suffer the consequences of poor financial management, heightened exposure to manipulative marketing strategies, and limited capacity to make rational consumer decisions. This will not only sustain financial stress among students but also widen the gap between those who own effective smartphones for their studies and those who do not, thereby reducing academic efficiency across universities in Gombe State. Therefore, this study seeks to address these problems by assessing how advertising and sales promotion influence smartphone buying decisions among university students in Gombe State an underexplored region in this context. The study will provide evidence to guide students toward informed, value-based purchase decisions, reduce financial vulnerability, and foster consumer awareness by enhancing their ability to critically respond to promotional campaigns.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to determine the influence of the promotion mix on consumer buying decisions regarding smartphone brands among university students in Gombe State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine the influence of advertising on consumer buying decisions regarding smartphone brands among university students in Gombe State, Nigeria.
2. Ascertain the influence of sales promotion on consumer buying decisions regarding smartphone brands among university students in Gombe State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

Based on the specific purposes, two research questions were raised and answered:

1. What is the influence of advertising on consumer buying decisions regarding smartphone brands among university students in Gombe State, Nigeria?
2. What is the influence of sales promotion on consumer buying decisions regarding smartphone brands among university students in Gombe State, Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study and were tested at a 0.05 alpha level of significance:

H₀₁: Advertising has no statistically significant influence on consumer buying decisions regarding smartphone brands among university students in Gombe State, Nigeria.

H₀₂: Sales promotion has no statistically significant influence on consumer buying decisions regarding smartphone brands among university students in Gombe State, Nigeria.

Methodology

A survey research design was adopted for this study. This design was considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to obtain relevant data from university students on how promotional mix elements such as advertising and sales promotion influence their buying decisions

regarding smartphone brands. The study area was Gombe State, Nigeria, located in the northeastern region of the country. The state serves as a commercial and educational hub with several higher institutions, making it suitable for investigating consumer behavior among university students. The population comprised all undergraduate and postgraduate students across selected universities in Gombe State during the 2024/2025 academic session, totaling 26,876 students. A sample of 394 students was drawn from three universities—Gombe State University (GSU), Federal University Kashere (FUK), and North-Eastern University Gombe (NEU)—using Taro Yamane’s formula at a 5% margin of error. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure proportional representation from each university based on population size, after which simple random sampling was used to select individual respondents within each stratum. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled “Promotion Mix and Consumer Decision Questionnaire (PMCDQ).” The instrument used a five-point Likert scale: Very High Influence (5), High Influence (4), Moderate Influence (3), Low Influence (2), and Very Low Influence (1). The questionnaire was validated by three experts from the Department of Vocational Education, Faculty of Education, Modibbo Adama University, Yola, who assessed the items for clarity, relevance, and adequacy. To establish reliability, a pilot test was conducted with 20 students from Modibbo Adama University, Yola. The data collected were analyzed using Cronbach’s Alpha, which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.84, indicating that the instrument was reliable. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while simple linear regression was used to test the formulated hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. The decision rule was that hypotheses would not be rejected when the p-value was ≥ 0.05 but would be rejected when the p-value was < 0.05 .

Results

Research Question 1: What is the influence of advertising on consumer buying decisions regarding smartphone brands among university students in Gombe State, Nigeria?

Table 1: Summary of Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses on the Influence of Advertising on Consumer Buying Decision

S/N	Item/Statement (n = 375)	\bar{x}	σ	Remark
1	Traditional media adverts (e.g., TV, radio, billboards) influence my smartphone brand choice.	3.92	0.88	HE
2	Advertisements through social media sponsored ads influence my brand choice.	4.01	0.91	HE
3	Exposure to smartphone adverts makes me consider trying alternative brands I have not used before.	3.87	0.95	HE
4	Endorsements by popular figures in adverts influence my choice of smartphone brands.	3.78	0.97	HE
5	Smartphone reviews presented in adverts on online platforms influence my buying decision.	3.84	0.93	HE
6	Attractive graphics and designs in advertisement campaigns influence my decision to consider a brand.	3.90	0.89	HE
7	Frequent exposure to online advert campaigns makes me develop trust in a smartphone brand.	3.96	0.87	HE
	Cluster Mean	3.90	0.91	HE

The results in Table 1 show that mean scores for the influence of advertising on smartphone buying decisions ranged from 3.78 to 4.01, with standard deviations between 0.87 and 0.97, indicating that students perceived advertising as having a high influence on their brand choices. The highest mean was for social media sponsored ads ($\bar{x} = 4.01, \sigma = 0.91$), followed by frequent exposure to online ad campaigns ($\bar{x} = 3.96, \sigma = 0.87$), suggesting that repeated digital advertising significantly shapes brand choice and trust. The lowest mean was for celebrity endorsements ($\bar{x} = 3.78, \sigma = 0.97$), which still reflected high influence. Traditional media ads, ad visuals, exposure to adverts, ad-based reviews, and awareness of alternative brands all scored above 3.8, indicating that various advertising elements encourage students to consider and choose smartphone brands. The cluster mean of 3.90 ($\sigma = 0.91$) confirms that advertising has a high significant influence on students' buying decisions for smartphones.

Research Question 2: What is the influence of sales promotion on consumer buying decisions regarding smartphone brands among university students in Gombe State, Nigeria?

Table 2: Summary of Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses on the Influence of Sales Promotion on Consumer Buying Decision

S/N	Item/Statement (n = 375)	\bar{x}	σ	Remark
1	Temporary discounts on smartphones influence my buying decisions.	4.42	0.74	VHE
2	Offers of free accessories attract me to buy a smartphone.	4.38	0.78	VHE
3	Limited-time offers make me decide quickly to buy smartphones.	4.46	0.71	VHE
4	Contest and prize promotions increase my interest in certain brands.	4.40	0.76	VHE
5	Clearance and end-of-season price reductions influence my decision to buy a smartphone.	4.31	0.80	VHE
6	Loyalty rewards or giveaways increase my likelihood of choosing a smartphone brand.	4.47	0.69	VHE
7	Extended warranty offers encourage me to buy a smartphone.	4.44	0.72	VHE
Cluster Mean		4.41	0.74	VHE

The results in Table 2 show that mean scores for items measuring sales promotion ranged from 4.31 to 4.47, with standard deviations between 0.69 and 0.80. This suggests that students strongly agreed that sales promotion activities influence their buying decisions. Loyalty rewards or giveaways recorded the highest mean score ($\bar{x} = 4.47, \sigma = 0.69$), indicating that incentives rewarding repeat patronage strongly motivate students to choose particular smartphone brands. Similarly, limited-time offers ($\bar{x} = 4.46, \sigma = 0.71$) also had a very strong influence, reflecting the effectiveness of urgency-based promotions. The lowest mean score was for clearance or end-of-season price reductions ($\bar{x} = 4.31, \sigma = 0.80$), though this still indicated a very high level of influence. The cluster mean of 4.41 ($\sigma = 0.74$) reflects a very high extent to which sales promotion influences students' consumer buying decisions regarding smartphone brands.

Test of Hypotheses

The formulated hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance.

H₀₁: Advertising has no statistically significant influence on consumer buying decisions regarding smartphone brands among university students in Gombe State, Nigeria.

Table 3a: ANOVA from Regression Analysis of the Influence of Advertising on Consumer Buying Decision

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	12.184	1	12.184	48.160	.000
Residual	94.366	373	.253		
Total	106.550	374			

The results in Table 3a show that advertising has a statistically significant influence on consumer buying decisions. The table reveals an F-value of 48.160 with a significance value of $p = 0.000$, which is less than the 0.05 level of significance. This indicates that the regression model is statistically significant and suitable for explaining the influence of advertising on consumer buying decisions.

Table 3b: Model Summary of the Influence of Advertising on Consumer Buying Decision

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error
1	.338	.114	.112	.503

The results in Table 3b show a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.338, indicating a positive relationship between advertising and consumer buying decisions. The coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.114 shows that advertising explains 11.4% of the variation in consumer buying decisions. The adjusted R^2 value of 0.112 confirms the stability of the model. This implies that advertising contributes meaningfully to students' buying decisions, although other factors also play a role.

Table 3c: Coefficients of Regression Analysis of the Influence of Advertising on Consumer Buying Decision

Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1	Constant	1.211	.142		8.528	.000
	Advertising	.412	.059	.338	6.944	.000

The results in Table 3c show that advertising has a positive and significant effect on consumer buying decisions. The standardized beta coefficient ($\beta = 0.338$) with a t-value of 6.944 and a significance value of $p = 0.000$ indicates that advertising significantly predicts consumer buying decisions. This implies that an increase in advertising activities leads to an increase in students' likelihood of purchasing smartphone brands. Consequently, the null hypothesis (H_{01}) is rejected.

H₀₂: Sales promotion has no statistically significant influence on consumer buying decisions regarding smartphone brands among university students in Gombe State, Nigeria.

Table 4a: ANOVA from Regression Analysis of the Influence of Sales Promotion on Consumer Buying Decision

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	41.263	1	41.263	162.841	.000
Residual	65.287	373	.175		

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Total	106.550	374			

Table 4a indicates that sales promotion has a statistically significant influence on consumer buying decisions ($F = 162.841$, $p = .000$). Since the p-value is less than 0.05, sales promotion significantly influences consumer buying decisions regarding smartphone brands among university students in Gombe State.

Table 4b: Model Summary of the Influence of Sales Promotion on Consumer Buying Decision

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.622	.387	.385	.41856

Table 4b shows that sales promotion explained 38.7% ($R^2 = .387$) of the variance in consumer buying decisions, with an adjusted R^2 of .385. This indicates that sales promotion makes a strong contribution to changes in consumer buying decisions.

Table 4c: Coefficients of Regression Analysis of the Influence of Sales Promotion on Consumer Buying Decision

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.024	.118		8.678	.000
	Sales Promotion	.621	.049	.622	12.767	.000

Table 4c reveals that sales promotion positively and significantly predicted consumer buying decisions ($\beta = .622$, $t = 12.767$, $p = .000$). This implies that an increase in sales promotion activities leads to a corresponding increase in consumer buying decisions. Based on Tables 4a, 4b, and 4c, the null hypothesis (H_{02}) is rejected.

Discussion of Findings

The findings from the test of H_{01} indicate that advertising has a high influence on consumer buying decisions regarding smartphone brands, as evidenced by mean scores ranging from 3.78 to 4.01, with a grand mean of 3.90 ($\sigma = 0.91$). Regression analysis further confirmed the significance of this relationship ($F = 48.160$, $p = .000$; $\beta = .338$, $t = 6.944$), showing that advertising explained 11.4% of the variance in buying decisions. Consequently, the null hypothesis (H_{01}) was rejected. This finding aligns with Edyansyah et al. (2019), who reported that advertising significantly influences purchase decisions for Samsung smartphones in Lhokseumawe, Indonesia, as consumers rely on adverts to learn about features, design, and offers.

Similarly, Susanto et al. (2022) found that advertising strongly affects decision-making when purchasing Oppo smartphones in Medan City, while Soeswoyo and Amalia (2023) observed that advertising exerts a major influence on hotel booking decisions in East Java. These studies collectively support the present result that advertising functions as a key stimulus triggering consumer awareness, interest, and eventual purchase of smartphone brands.

However, the current finding contrasts with the conclusions of Aquino et al. (2019), who noted that while advertising creates awareness, its influence on actual purchase is often limited compared to direct incentives like sales promotion. The relatively lower explanatory power ($R^2 = .114$) in the present study, despite the strong β coefficient, may be attributed to the product category and target demographic. Among university students who are price-sensitive and have limited income, mere exposure to advertising may not be sufficient to drive purchase without accompanying price incentives or peer influence. Additionally, the dominance of digital advertising (especially social media) in Nigeria—which is often short-lived and competes with multiple brands—may reduce the depth of influence compared to more controlled markets where advertising is more customized and sustained.

Findings from the test of hypothesis two (H_{02}) revealed that sales promotion has a very high influence on consumer buying decisions, with mean scores ranging from 4.31 to 4.47 and a grand mean of 4.41 ($\sigma = 0.74$). Regression analysis showed a strong and significant effect ($F = 162.841$, $p = .000$; $\beta = .622$, $t = 12.767$), indicating that sales promotion accounted for 38.7% of the variance in buying decisions. This result is consistent with Abimbola et al. (2020), who demonstrated that promotional tools such as discounts, loyalty programs, and contests significantly drive customer patronage among telecom subscribers in Lagos and Ogun States, Nigeria. Similarly, Yang and Lee (2016) found that in-store promotions strongly influence female consumers' buying decisions for cosmetic products, while Putra and Arimbawa (2023) reported that sales promotion is a major determinant of purchase decisions for Honda PCX motorcycles in Surabaya. These results support the present finding that tangible, time-bound incentives are powerful stimuli that rapidly trigger consumer responses in the form of smartphone purchases.

The present finding also aligns with the Stimulus-Response Theory, which posits that strong, concrete stimuli (such as discounts, loyalty rewards, and limited-time offers) elicit immediate, measurable responses. In the Nigerian university context, where many students have tight budgets, sales promotions that reduce the effective cost of smartphones (e.g., clearance sales, payment plans, free accessories) are particularly effective. The high β value and large R^2 suggest that, among promotion mix elements, sales promotion is one of the most direct and reliable predictors of buying decisions, especially in a competitive, price-sensitive market like Gombe State.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it is concluded that the promotion mix significantly influences consumer buying decisions regarding smartphone brands among university students in Gombe State, Nigeria. Advertising and sales promotion are powerful stimuli that drive students' choices, often leading them to make purchases based on promotional messages rather than careful evaluation of product features, long-term usability, and value for money. Sales promotion, in particular, exerts the strongest influence, suggesting that students are highly responsive to discounts, time-bound offers, and persuasive interactions with sales staff.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Smartphone brands should strengthen their advertising strategies by using both traditional media (TV, radio) and digital platforms (social media, sponsored content) to build a strong brand image while also educating consumers about the real value of their products. Campaigns should move beyond flashy graphics and endorsements to include more informative, comparative, and educational content.
2. Retailers and sales representatives should be trained to provide more accurate and less exaggerated information about smartphones, emphasizing how particular models match

students' needs (e.g., battery life, camera quality, performance for online learning). Hands-on demonstrations and clear explanations of features can help reduce the tendency toward purely impulse-driven purchases.

3. University authorities and student welfare bodies should consider incorporating consumer education workshops into orientation or student association activities. These sessions will help students develop critical thinking about promotional messages, understand the importance of product value, and recognize manipulative marketing tactics, thereby promoting more informed and responsible buying decisions.

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