

## EFFECTS OF SALES PROMOTION STRATEGIES ON CUSTOMERS CHOICE OF TELECOMMUNICATION FIRMS IN NORTH CENTRAL, NIGERIA

**DR. EZE**, Ikechukwu Bernard<sup>1</sup> **DR. GBAGOLO** M.O. Henry<sup>2</sup>

Department Of Management Science, Nigeria Police Academy Wudil, Kano

EMAIL: [bernardeze9@gmail.com](mailto:bernardeze9@gmail.com), Phone: +2347037674493

### Abstract

Today, it is difficult in Nigeria for one month to pass without the market witnessing consumer sales promotion activities with varying degrees of incentives both financial and non-financial. Companies that engage in the promotion believe that the promotion incentives influence customers choice of their products and services, and enhance their profit level. This study assessed the effects of promotion strategies of telecommunication firms on customer choice of the firms in North Central, Nigeria. A survey design anchored on mixed research was adopted for the study. The population for the research was 27,476,820 active customers of the telecom firms according to Nigerian Communication Commission year 2023 report with a sample size of 384 customers raised from the population with the help of Research Advisor (2006) sample size determination table. The customers were distributed and selected from the study area with judgmental and convenience sampling techniques. Data for the research were collected with questionnaire and analyzed with Spearman Rank Order Correlation. The result revealed that promotion strategies have positive effects on customers choice of telecom firms and therefore concluded that they are strong determinant of which firm customers patronize. Managers of the firms were advised to give attention to promotion strategies in their marketing plan in order to attract more customers to patronize their services.

**Key Words:** Discount strategies, premium strategies, bonus strategies, repeat purchase, loyalty

### Introduction

Preference or choice is the bedrock in any human relationship be it business or social relationship. Myers (2010) opined that choice is the range of different things from which one can select from. Choice is all about the freedom to choose between or among alternatives. In the words of Patel (2020), consumer choice refers to the ability or freedom of a consumer to decide which company or business outfit to patronize or which product or service to purchase among a range of possible alternatives. Explaining further, Patel explained that the real power of choice architecture is not its ability to coerce but its ability to persuade people or consumers that this is the best way to choose. He therefore asserted that the marketer's skills are tested when positioning a brand or offer within the context in which the consumer will experience the options to choose among available options.

In a competitive market environment, several factors influence the choice of consumers for one firm, product or service over another and sales promotion is one of them. Sales promotion is one of the elements in the promotional mix that can significantly influence consumers' choice for a product or service. Sales promotion uses both media and non-media marketing communication for a pre-determined, limited period to increase consumer demand or improve product availability. According to Eze (2013), sales promotion consists of those marketing activities other than personal selling, advertising, public relations, and publicity that stimulate consumers' purchasing and all media and non-media marketing pressures applied for a pre-determined limited period at the consumers in order to stimulate trial or increase consumers' demand. Speaking in line with Eze (2013), Yin and Jin-Song (2014), stated that sales promotion includes several communication activities that attempt to provide added value or incentives to consumers to stimulate immediate sales. Explaining further, Yin and Jin-Song opined that these efforts when effectively implemented can stimulate consumers' product interest, trial or purchase. They explained that sales promotion is implemented to attract new customers, to hold present customers, to counteract competition, and

to take advantage of positive opportunities that are revealed by market research. Interestingly, the practical and significant relationships on how sales promotion strategies affect customers buying behaviour in terms of choice or preference for products and services have been examined and documented by many researchers in various perspectives in the past from different countries. For example, Shekhawat et al. (2020) in their study in Maharashtra, India assessed the impact of sales promotional discount price on consumers buying behaviour.

At the end of the study, the result revealed that discount price has positive influence on the buying behaviour of the consumers. Ochieng (2014) conducted research in Nairobi, Kenya. There, he examined the influence of sales promotion strategies on consumers' behaviour in the alcoholic spirits industry. The researcher specifically assessed the influence of consumer sales promotion strategies such as gifts, extra products, reduced price, free samples, and sweepstakes on consumers buying behaviour with reference to alcoholic spirits. The result of the research showed that all the sales promotional tools – gifts, extra products, reduced price, free samples, and sweepstakes investigated in the research positively influenced the buying behaviour of consumers of the alcoholic spirits in Nairobi Central Business District. Shahzad et al. (2020) conducted research in Karachi, Pakistan where they measured the effects of sales promotion on consumers buying behaviour with garments industry as their case study. They specifically assess the effects of discount price, coupon, and buy-one get-one free strategies on consumers buying behaviour. The result showed that discount price, coupon, and buy-one get-one free sales promotional strategies have positive and significant effects on consumers buying behaviour with respect to the garment industry. An assessment of the researches cited here shows that none of them was done in Nigeria and also the industries where the researchers concentrated on were quite different from the telecom industry that is being focused on in this research. This clearly underscores the necessity and uniqueness of the current research and highlight its contribution to knowledge when completed.

The problem of this research emanates from the recent noticed poor customer choices of telecom firms in North Central Nigeria. The problem is assumed to have occurred as a result of frequent bombardment of the market with sales promotion strategies by the telecom firms – Mobile Telephone Networks (MTN), Global Communication (Globacom), Airtel Networks (Airtel), and Emerging Markets Telecommunication Services (9mobile) which rightly or wrongly believed by many market observes to have been distorting and creating confusion in the minds of their customers with the presumption that these now prevent them from making intelligent choice of which telecom firm and service to patronize. These unconfirmed assumptions call for questions that only well-organized research can answer. It is an attempt to verify the authenticity of these assertions about the effects or impacts of sales promotion strategies on consumers buying decisions that this study examines the effects of sales promotion strategies on customers choice of telecom firms and their services in North Central Nigeria and by extension Nigeria in general.

The aim of this research is to ascertain the effects of sales promotion strategies on customers' choice of telecommunication firms in North Central, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to; examine the effects of discount strategies on customers repeat purchase of the telecom firms' services; to assess the effects of discount strategies on customers' loyalty to the telecom firms; to ascertain the effects of premium strategies on customers repeat purchase of the telecom firms' services; to evaluate the effects of premium strategies on customers loyalty to the telecom firms; to determine the effects of bonus strategies on customers repeat purchase of the telecom firms' services and verify the effects of bonus strategies on customers loyalty to the telecom firms.

### Literature Review

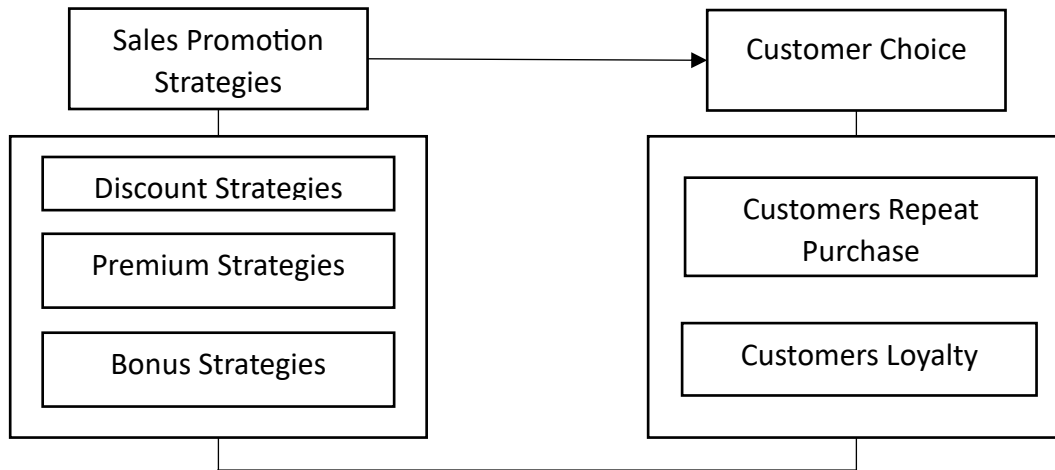


Figure 1.1: A conceptual framework illustrating the effects of sales promotion strategies on customers choice of telecom firms in North Central Nigeria.

Source: Adapted from Miles & Huberman (1994).

### Conceptual Review

#### Sales Promotion Strategies

Bagavathi (2020), opined that consumer sales promotion strategies consist of those marketing activities other than personal selling, advertising, public relations, and publicity that stimulate consumers' purchasing and all media and non-media marketing pressures applied for a predetermined limited period of time at the consumers in order to stimulate trial, and increase consumers' demand for defined products and services. Jobber (2019), explained that consumer sales promotion strategies boost sales during the promotion period because of the incentives effect. Jobber pointed out that the increase is often followed by a small fall in sales to below normal level because some consumers have stocked up on the product during the promotion and this only represent the short-term effect of the promotion. Buttressing his points, Jobber posited that the long-term sales effect of the promotion could be positive, neutral, or negative. He asserted that if the promotion has attracted new buyers, who find that they like the brand, repeat purchases from them may give rise to positive long-term effects. On the other hand, if the promotion has devalued the brand in the eyes of the consumers, the effect may be negative. Jobber concluded by arguing that where the promotion has caused consumers to buy the brand only because of the incentive value, with no effect on underlying preferences, the long-term effect may be neutral.

In a competitive market environment, there are many dimensions through which a company can design and implement its consumer sales promotion strategies to attract buyers and increase sales volume and profit. In this research, the dimensions adopted by the researcher are discount, premium, and bonus strategies.

**Discount Strategies.** Discount pricing is a type of promotional pricing strategy where the original price for a product or service is reduced with the aim of increasing customer traffic, moving inventory, and driving sales. Sustisna (2022), explained that price discount is a reduction in the price of a product or service from a normal price for a certain period. Mishra and Mishra (2020) in their contribution asserted that price discount is a price-based promotion strategy in which

customers are offered the same product but at reduced price. Explaining further, Mishra and Mishra emphasized that price discounts can be offered as a reduction in terms of a percentage of the original price.

**Premium Strategies.** In the area of business, premiums are sales promotional items such as toys, collectables, souvenirs, and household products that are linked to a product or service and often requires proofs of purchase in order to acquire or access them. Berman (2021) explained that premium strategy is an inducement for customers to buy more products or services. He asserted that at times, it is designed for loyal customers and sometimes to attract new customers. Whichever way, the ultimate aim is to increase sales volume and profit.

**Bonus Strategies.** A bonus pack is a company's sales promotion technique of giving the buyer an extra quantity of a product at the usual price. According to Shimp (2021), bonus packs are extra quantities of products given by a company or a seller to buyers at normal prices. Belch and Belch (2022) in their contribution, posited that bonus packs offer consumers an extra quantity of a product at a normal price.

### **Customer Choice**

In the area of marketing, customer choice refers to the ability or freedom of a consumer to decide which company to patronize or which product or service to purchase and use among the available alternatives. In business, an understanding of the buying behaviour of existing and potential consumers in terms of how they make choice between or among alternative products or services and the variables that are used to measure the intensity of the choice is essential to marketers. In business environment where companies struggle not only to attract customers to buy their products and services but equally to retain them for future transactions, rate of repurchase and degree of loyalty are some of the factors business people use to measure or determine the level of customers choice for their products and services.

**Customer Repeat Purchase.** A repeat purchase is the purchase by a consumer of the same brand as bought on a previous occasion. A repeat purchase is an indicator of the degree of customer loyalty to a brand which is a function of the satisfaction the customer derives from the consumption or usage of the product. Jin and Huang (2023), explained that a smart business person can turn new customers to repeat customers by offering quality products, providing great services, and offering price incentives once in a while to attract and retain them.

**Customer Loyalty.** Customer loyalty describes an ongoing emotional relationship between a company and its customers manifesting itself by how willing the customers are to engage with the company in terms of repeat purchase of its products instead of competitors' products. Loyalty is the by-product of customers' positive experience and trust with a company and its products. Thakur (2021) opined that loyalty is a customer's intent or predisposition to buy from the same seller or buy the same brand again and again which according to Thakur is as a result of the assumption that the value received from the said seller or brand is greater than the value obtainable from other competitors or competitive brands. We therefore formulate these research hypotheses:

Ho<sub>1</sub>: There are no significant effects of discount strategies on customers repeat purchase of the telecom firms' services.

Ho<sub>2</sub>: There are no significant effects of discount strategies on customers' loyalty to the telecom firms.

Ho<sub>3</sub>: There are no significant effects of premium strategies on customers repeat purchase of the telecom firms' services.

Ho<sub>4</sub>: There are no significant effects of premium strategies on customers' loyalty to the telecom firms.

Ho<sub>5</sub>: There are no significant effects of bonus strategies on customers repeat purchase of the telecom firms' services.

Ho<sub>6</sub>: There are no significant effects of bonus strategies on customers' loyalty to the telecom firms.

### **Empirical Review**

The attention of this area is on some extant researches that dealt on the effects or influence of sales promotion strategies on consumers buying behaviour. Shamsi and Khan (2023) conducted research on the efficacy of consumer sales promotion strategies with respect to their influence on different aspects of consumers' purchase behaviour in the area of readymade garments. The researchers examined the impact of price discount, product display, and buy-one-get one free strategies on the buying behaviour of the customers of the readymade garments. The research was carried out in New Delhi, India. The sample size for the research was 415 consumers drawn from New Delhi – NCR. Questionnaire was the data collection instrument for the research while the data collected were calculated and analyzed Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The results of the study showed that all the selected consumer sales promotion techniques affected consumers buying behaviour differently. Specifically, that price discount was the most effective sales promotion technique that affected consumers' buying behaviour for readymade garments followed by product display and buy-one-get one free strategies.

Della et al. (2020) did research in the area: The influence of discount price, bonus pack, and in-store display on impulse buying at supermarkets. The research was conducted at Padang, West Sumatera Indonesia. The aim of the research was to investigate and analyze the effects of price discounts, bonus pack, and in-store display on consumers' impulse buying behaviour at supermarkets in Padang City. The researchers adopted quantitative survey method as their research design. The sample size for the research was 96 respondents and they were selected through simple random sampling technique. Questionnaire was the data collection instrument for the research while the data collected were analyzed with multiple linear regression. The results of the research showed (a) that price discount, bonus pack, and in-store display have positive and significant effects on consumers' buying behaviour with regard to impulse buying although their individual effects are not the same (b) that price discount and in-store display have partial positive and significant effects on impulse buying and (c) that bonus pack has positive but not significant effect on impulse buying. Based on the findings, the researchers advised the managers of supermarkets in Padang City to improve on the impulse buying of their products and services through the provision of price discounts and in-store displays that will not only attract buyers to the supermarkets but stimulate them to buy more as this will increase their sales volume and profitability of their business.

Jewel et al. (2021) organized research on the influence of price promotion (price discount and rebate) on customer loyalty with emphasis on the buying behaviour of customers of retail industry in Ghana. The researchers used Shoprite Shaishie Accra Mall as a case study. The research was descriptive survey research. The population for the research was 1,748,514 consumers which was the population of Shaishie district where the Shoprite was located. The sample size for the research was 60 respondents chosen from the customers of Shoprite Shaishie Accra Mall and their individual selection done with convenience sampling technique. The data collection instrument for

the research was questionnaire. 60 copies of questionnaire were administered to the respondents and they were successfully filled and collected back by the researchers. At the end of the research, the following findings were made (a) that price promotion (discount and rebate) are the most essential elements that attracted customers to the Shoprite, and (b) that majority of the respondents strongly agreed that price promotion (discount and rebate) did not only influence their patronage or choice of Shoprite but also influenced their decisions to make repeat purchase at the Shoprite.

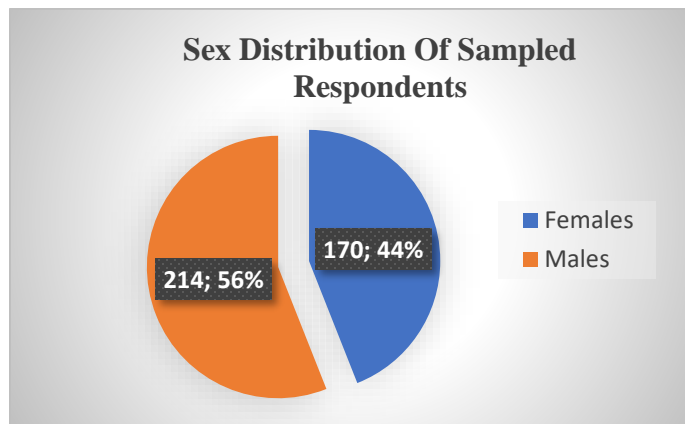
### Methodology

The study is survey research anchored on the philosophy of mixed research method. The firm population for the research consists of four (4) telecommunication firms registered with the Nigerian Communication Commission and operationally active in the study area as at year 2023 and these are MTN, Glo, Airtel, and 9mobile while the customer population is made up of 27,476,820 active customers of the telecom firms in the study area according to Nigerian Communication Commission year 2023 report. See appendix 3.1 attached for a detailed information on the active customers population according to Nigerian Communication Commission year 2023 report. The sample size is 384 customers raised from the population with the help of Research Advisors (2006) sample size determination table. See appendix 3.2 attached for a detailed information on the sample size according to Research Advisors (2006) sample size determination table. With judgmental non-probability sampling method, the 384 customers were distributed to the six states and Federal Capital Territory (FCT) that make up the North Central Nigeria with each state having 54 customers while FCT had 60 customers because it is the federal capital that host people from the 36 states of the federation. Individual customers for the study were selected through convenience sampling technique. The data for the research were collected with questionnaire while the collected data were analyzed with Spearman Rank Order Correlation with the aid of SPSS version 22.

### Data Presentation, Analysis and result

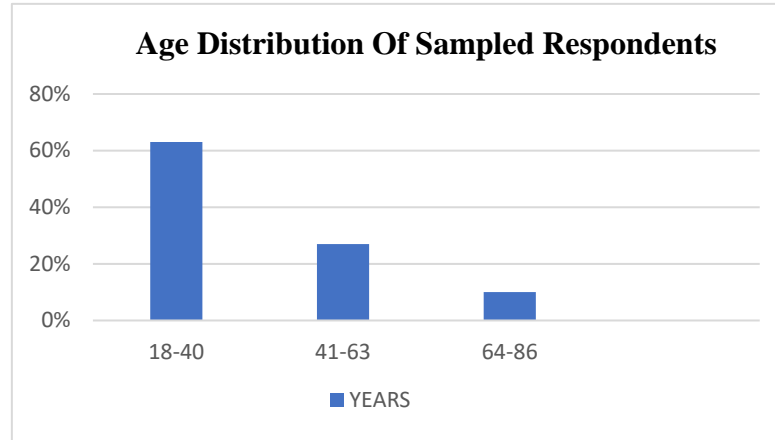
A total of 384 copies of questionnaire were distributed to respondents in this research and they were adequately filled and returned back. Therefore, the decisions on the research were based on information from these 384 valid copies of questionnaire.

#### Biodata Analysis of Sampled Respondents



Information from the pie chart above indicates that 214 respondents which represent 56% were males while 44% made up of 170 respondents were females.





From the above bar chart, 240 of the respondents that constitute 63% are within the age bracket of 18-40 years while 104 that represent 27% are within 41-63 years. 40 of them made up of 10% are within 64-86 years.

### Bivariate Analysis of sampled Data i.e. Hypotheses Testing

A total of six hypotheses covering were tested in the research and the test done with Spearman Rank Order Correlation with the aid of statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 22.

#### Hypothesis 1

H<sub>01</sub>: There are no significant effects of discount strategies on customers repeat purchase of the telecom firms' services.

**Table 4.1: Result of bivariate analysis between discount strategies and customers repeat purchase.**

			Discount Strategies	Customers Repeat Purchase
Spearman's rho	Discount Strategies	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.814**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.
		N	384	384
	Customers Repeat Purchase	Correlation Coefficient	.814**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.
		N	384	384

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

Source: SPSS-generated Output

The bivariate analysis result on table 4.1 above indicates that discount strategies have very strong positive correlation with customers repeat purchase ( $\rho = .814^{**}$ ) and the symbol  $^{**}$  signifies that this correlation is significant at 0.01 level. Therefore, H<sub>0</sub> is rejected and H<sub>1</sub> accepted.

**Hypothesis 2**

Ho<sub>2</sub>: There are no significant effects of discount strategies on customers' loyalty to the telecom firms.

**Table 4.2: Result of bivariate analysis between discount strategies and customers' loyalty**

			Discount Strategies	Customers Loyalty
Spearman's rho	Discount Strategies	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.612**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.
		N	384	384
	Customers Loyalty	Correlation Coefficient	.612**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.
		N	384	384

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

Source: SPSS-generated Output

Information from table 4.2 demonstrates that the result of bivariate analysis carried out between discount strategies and customers' loyalty to the telecom firms in the North Central, Nigeria is strong and positive ( $\rho = .612^{**}$ ) and this correlation is significant at 0.01 level as indicated by the symbol \*\*. Based on this, the null hypothesis HO is rejected and the alternative HI accepted.

**Hypothesis 3**

Ho<sub>3</sub>: There are no significant effects of premium strategies on customers repeat purchase of the telecom firms' services.

**Table 4.3: Result of bivariate analysis between premium strategies and customers repeat purchase**

			Premium Strategies	Customers Repeat Purchase
Spearman's rho	Premium Strategies	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.843**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.
		N	384	384
	Customers Repeat Purchase	Correlation Coefficient	.843**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.
		N	384	384

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

Table 4.3 result indicates that premium strategies have very strong positive correlation with customers repeat purchase of the telecom firms' services ( $\rho = .843^{**}$ ) and this correlation is significant at 0.01 level as indicated by the symbol \*\*. Therefore, HO is rejected and HI accepted.



**Hypothesis 4**

Ho<sub>4</sub>: There are no significant effects of premium strategies on customers' loyalty to the telecom firms.

**Table 4.4: Result of bivariate analysis between premium strategies and customers' loyalty**

			Premium Strategies	Customers Loyalty
Spearman's rho	Premium Strategies	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.576**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.
		N	384	384
	Customers Loyalty	Correlation Coefficient	.576**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.
		N	384	384

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

Source: SPSS-generated Output

The result from table 4.4 above reveals a moderate positive correlation between premium strategies and customers' loyalty ( $\rho = .576^{**}$ ) and this correlation is significant at 0.01 level as indicated by the symbol \*\*. HO is hereby rejected and HI accepted.

**Hypothesis 5**

Ho<sub>5</sub>: There are no significant effects of bonus strategies on customers repeat purchase of the telecom firms' services.

**Table 4.5: Result of bivariate analysis between bonus strategies and customers repeat purchase**

			Bonus Strategies	Customers Repeat Purchase
Spearman's rho	Bonus Strategies	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.687**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.
		N	384	384
	Customers Repeat Purchase	Correlation Coefficient	.687**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.
		N	384	384

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

Source: SPSS-generated Output

The result on table 4.5 indicates a strong positive correlation between bonus strategies and customers repeat purchase of the services of telecom firms in the North-Central, Nigeria ( $r = .687^{**}$ ) and this correlation is significant at 0.01 level as indicated by the symbol \*\*. HO is rejected and HI accepted.

### Hypothesis 6

Ho<sub>6</sub>: There are no significant effects of bonus strategies on customers' loyalty to the telecom firms.

**Table 4.6: Result of bivariate analysis between bonus strategies and customers' loyalty**

			Bonus Strategies	Customers Loyalty
Spearman's rho	Bonus Strategies	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.467**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.
		N	384	384
	Customers Loyalty	Correlation Coefficient	.467**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.
		N	384	384

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

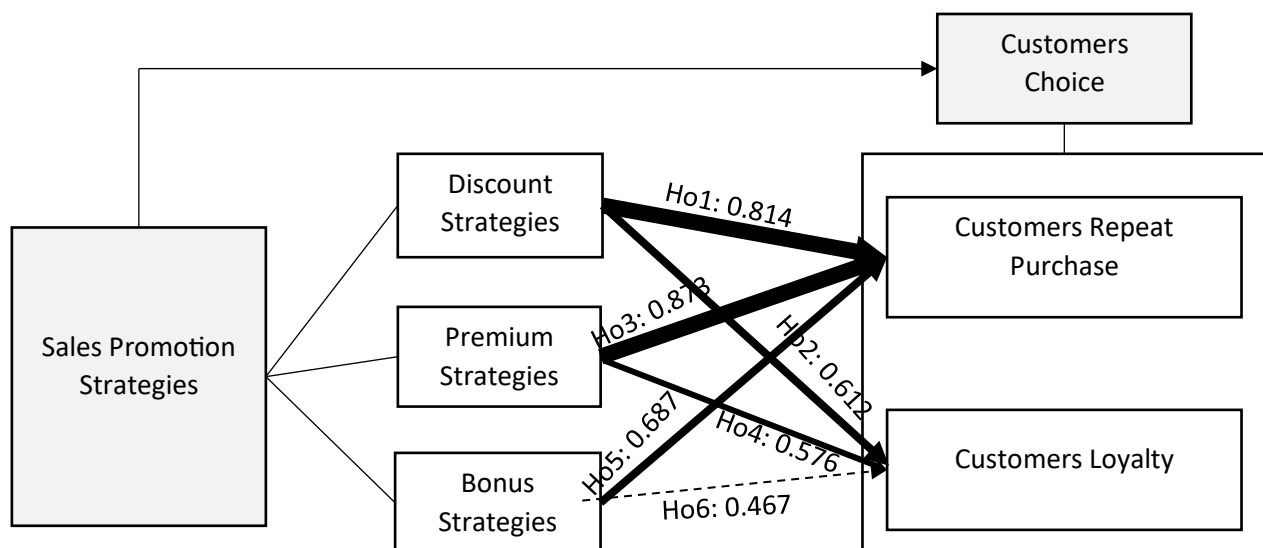
Source: SPSS-generated Output

The bivariate result on table 4.6 reveals that there is weak positive correlation between bonus strategies and customers' loyalty to the telecom firms in the North Central, Nigeria ( $r = .467^{**}$ ) and this correlation is significant at 0.01 level as indicated by the symbol \*\*. HO is hereby rejected and HI accepted.

### Results





At the end of analysis and interpretation of results, the research reveals that all the variables under investigation – discount, premium, and bonus strategies positively and significantly affected the buying behaviour of customers of the telecom firms in the North Central Nigeria in terms of their choice for one telecom firm over another.

But the degree of their effects on customers repeat purchase and loyalty also differs significantly. While the effects of some of the variables are positive and very strong, others displayed strong and moderate positive effects. Some even exhibited only weak positive effects. The variation in the effects of the variables on customers choice of the telecom firms is diagrammatically demonstrated with a heuristic model below.



**Figure 4.1: A heuristic model of the effects of sales promotion strategies on customers choice of telecom firms in North Central Nigeria.**

### Key Interpretation:

- Thicker Arrow (  ) very Strong positive and significant effects
- Thick Arrow (  ) Strong positive and significant effects
- Normal Arrow (  ) Moderate positive and significant effects
- Broken Arrow (  ) Weak positive and significant effects

### Decision Rule:

- 0.70 - 1.00 – Very strong effects
- 0.60 - 0.69 – Strong effects
- 0.50 – 0.59 – Moderate effects
- 0.40 -.49 – Weak effects

### Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings, the research therefore concluded that there are positive and significant effects of sales promotion strategies (discount, premium, and bonus) on customers choice of the telecom firms – MTN, GLO, AIRTEL, 9mobile and their services in the North Central Nigeria and by extension Nigeria in general although statistically, the effects are not the same in terms of customers repeat purchase and loyalty to the firms. Standing on the conclusion, the managements of the telecom firms were advised to give adequate attention in their business decisions to sales promotion strategies planning and implementations as a short-term measure to attract and convince customers to patronize their services in order to remain in business because of the present economic depression Nigeria finds herself but were equally strongly encouraged to engage in viable research and development efforts to improve the quality of their services as a long-term measure in order not only attract customers but also to retain them for future transactions.

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