

IMPACT OF ELECTRONIC WORD-OF-MOUTH MARKETING ON CONSUMER BUYING DECISION PROCESS

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Abstract

The traditional, face-to-face, direct and word-of-mouth is shifting to electronic and digital media. Thus, marketers have begun to harness the power of the internet to encourage communication with customers in a more effective way. The fact remain that preponderant number of firms in Nigeria continue to use the brick and mortar marketing due either to lack of awareness or poor understanding of the mechanism of electronic word of mouth marketing. Consequently, they fail to reap maximum benefits in terms of customer loyalty and brand awareness. This study investigated the impact of word of mouth marketing on the buying decision process. The study population for this research is fifteen thousand (15000) students of Kwara State University, Malete, who were sampled to determine the impact of word of mouth marketing activities of selected telecommunication service providers on their purchase decisions. 390 sample size was gotten using Taro Yamane formula. A Questionnaire based on the 5-point psychometric Likert Scale was adopted to collect data and analysed using Multiple Regression. Findings showed that buzz and evangelism marketing strategies have a significant effect on customer loyalty and brand awareness. This study recommended that in order to build their loyalty, consumers should trust only service providers who give accurate and honest information about their products. The study concludes that consumers should rely on brand evangelists because they provide honest, accurate and useful information.

Keywords: Word of Mouth Marketing, Buzz Marketing, Evangelism Marketing, Awareness and Customer Loyalty

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of word-of-mouth marketing communication is about customers discussing their experience on a product or service and recommending it to family members, friends and contacts. It has been around for many years but become more prominent from the early 1990s when the US military relinquish its control of the internet. The traditional, analogue, face-to-face, direct brick and mortal marketing then started shifting to electronic and digital media.

According to Kim and Johnson (2015), electronic word of mouth indicates statement about a particular product, service or brand published in the online context by potential, actual or former customer. Electronic word of mouth marketing is extremely powerful since it is perceived as credible and authentic. In a competitive world, companies need to make their business, customer-centred, and to discover ways to run it more efficiently for themselves and more effectively for the customers, (Peter, 2014). Word of mouth marketing technique such as buzz marketing and evangelism marketing have become important tools marketers employ to win and retain customers in recent times. According to Hovnanian (2013), brand evangelists are customers that can't praise you enough, that comes to your defence in discussion forums, Twitter streams, and Google+ posts. They are superfans that share your posts, promote you whenever possible and actively seeks to make your product or service better. Marrs (2019) observed that traditional word of mouth marketing refers to the verbal endorsement, today, however, Word of Mouth marketing can be found in Facebook links, Twitter ad, Amazon reviews, Yelp reviews ad, Similar sites, Blog pod etc.

However, many organizations seem not to understand how to use these techniques to reap maximum benefits from their investments in marketing. This study is, therefore, an investigation into the impact of these techniques on purchase decision of telecommunication service consumers in Nigeria. The specific objectives of this study are to:-

- i. Examine the influence of buzz marketing on consumer loyalty
- ii. Determine how evangelism marketing affect customer loyalty in the telecommunication service industry
- iii. Examine the effect of buzz marketing on brand awareness
- iv. Determine the extent to which evangelism marketing has effect on consumer brand awareness

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Buzz marketing is a new form of word of mouth marketing communication which is used to capture consumer's attention using the recipient's office address, home address and other contacts to generate an excitement and cheerfulness (Buzz) through event or an activity around a product or a brand, thereby leaving the actual advertising to the customers (Tripathi, 2014). It is a type of publicity spread among customers and consumers in society, causing excitement and anticipation of the product or service that is being marketed. Other types of communication such as face to face demonstrations, telephone calls, e-mails and Short Message Service (text messaging) are all inducted into the buzz marketing campaign which purpose is to spread the product rapidly, efficiently and effectively with a low cost. Nigerians are

excited about any funny videos, pictures and write-up irrespective of the sender or maker, it will surely be shared as long as it is pleasing. When executed effectively, viral marketing campaigns can create an instantaneous buzz and help to boost the promotion of brands, products and services (Dobele, Lindgreen, Beverland, Vanhamme, & Van Wijk, 2007). Buzz marketing's targeted persons are often opinion leaders with central hub positions in their social networks e.g. (Facebook, Friendster, Twitter, Whatsapp, Instagram, Skype and Google Plus), Blogs, Video sites (YouTube, MSN video) and User forums, to exponentially increase brand awareness similar to an epidemic spreading.

A popular Nigerian buzz marketing scenario is the recently concluded Big Brother Naija show powered by MTN Nigeria and other sponsors, a competition worth N25 million (about \$70 thousand) and other endorsement benefits. The programme lasted for 3 months, 20 people were selected and were asked to live in the same house, where they were given different task. Contestants were evicted from the Big Brother Naija's house as a result of offence and low votes from viewers. Raheem (2018), disclosed that 170 million votes and over N5.1 billion in revenue were realized just from N30 per SMS (Short Message Service) after 3 months. The Big Brother Naija Show spread the buzz surprising viewers by bringing back evicted housemates and everyone kept voting and the billions kept churning in (Raheem 2018).

According to Kotler, Kartajaya and Setiawan (2017), if you want to reach the customer, you need to rely on friends, colleagues, social networks and so on as people are no longer paying attention to TVs ads and mass mailing. The Mobile phone is a great advantage to markets because people spend more time on their cell phones than television or computer. So, social media has taken evangelism marketing from the traditional face to face to online. Albeit, when all marketing is online, competing for off-line becomes a winning strategy.

According to Becerra and Badrinarayanan (2013) members that demonstrate high brand identification towards their brand community would contribute to brand evangelism. A study by Becerra and Badrinarayanam (2013), among 325 members of the brand community indicated that feeling of brand attachment would influence positive brand referral and oppositional brand referral. In reality, word-of-mouth or brand referral could be positive or negative. Hence, it is important to understand how customer especially members of online brand community perceived the organization's brand. According to Collins, Glabe, Mizerski and Murphy (2015), most companies encourage brand evangelists to pass brand information along to their friends, family and colleague who have an interest in the product or service. If the information is accurate and helpful customers always find it easy telling friends and others at no cost so this will save a lot of advertising cost to the company.

Loyalty is defined as a deeply held commitment to rebuy or repertoires a preferred product or service in the future despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behaviour (Kotler and Keller, 2009). Clearly, one can see that loyalty enters the consumers behaviour model at the post-purchase behaviour stage because the level of post-purchase satisfaction will determine the degree to which a consumer will be loyal and committed to a product or services.

The currently youthful and future generations Nigerians show less receptiveness to the traditional media, less brand loyalty are harder to approach, conforming to the exposition of Genoveva, (2015). Some of the reasons why firms must develop a long-term relationship with their customers can range from the fact that it cost more to acquire new customer, loyal customers tend to spend more; they recommend company services or product to others. It is generally concluded that social media are the most effective platforms to approach today's and future consumers, however, that cannot be done in traditional ways (Genoveva, 2015; Michael, 2016).

The new buyer's journey described in Kotler et al (2017) explained the new journey of the user from the moment he becomes aware of his brand until the moment he starts to defend and represents it. Court, Mulder, & Vetvik (2009), identified 4 phases in consumer decision making process, representing potential battleground where marketers can win or lose; initial consideration, active evaluating, closure and post-purchase. However, the first and the last form the foundation of the independent variables in this study. According to this team of researchers from McKinsey, in the brand consideration stage, "Brand awareness matter" brands in the consideration sets which Jobber (2004) called "awareness set" can be up to three times more likely to be purchased eventually than brands that aren't in it.

Social media advertising is great for creating brand awareness. The Mobile phone is a great advantage to markets because people spend more time on their cell phones than television or computer (Kotler, et al, 2017). The theoretical underpinning for the variables discussed in this study is based on the theory of consumer behaviour. Consumer behaviour can be defined as the behaviour which individuals, groups and organization display in searching for, selecting, buying, using, evaluating and disposing of goods, services, ideas or experiences to satisfy their needs and wants (Kotler & Armstrong, 2001).

The model of consumer behaviour shows how consumers respond to various marketing stimuli. The marketing stimuli are of two types; those under the control of the marketer, which consist of the four Ps: product, price, place and promotion; and other stimuli in the buyer's environment consisting of economic, technology, political, and cultural factors. These stimuli enter the buyer's memory (the black box) to produce certain responses. The buyer's black box has two parts; one part consists

of the buyer's characteristics such as cultural, social and psychological factors. These factors determine how the buyer react to the stimuli. The other part is the buyer's decision process.

This part has been given different appellations by well-informed authorities in recent times. For example, Kotler et al (2017) called it 'the new buyer's journey', a team of McKinsey researchers called it 'the consumer decision journey' (Court et al 2009). Consumers passes five stages in the decision process which are problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision and post-purchase decision. Each stage in the buying process constitute an outcome variable, the marketer must pursue separately. For example, information search in the buying decision process and the awareness stage in the innovation adoption model both calls for a decision on appropriate communication mix that can effectively move the consumers from the stage of relative unawareness to that of awareness. This is partly what this research is all about i.e. low cost and effective ways to enter the awareness set of prospective consumers. This research is also about building customers loyalty. Loyalty is defined as a deeply held commitment to rebuy or repatronise a preferred product or service in the future despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behaviour (Kotler and Keller, 2009). Clearly, one can see that loyalty enters the consumers behaviour model at the post-purchase behaviour stage because the level of post-purchase satisfaction will determine the degree to which a consumer will be loyal and committed to a product or services.

Kotler and Armstrong (2001) made the point that consumers get satisfaction from searching for information. This information can be obtained from several sources which include personal or social sources, commercial sources, public sources and experiential sources. The most effective source tends to be social or personal sources such as professional, family, friends, neighbours, acquaintances e.t.c. (Etzel, Walker & Stanton 1997; Kotler and Armstrong 2009), the reason being that people are more likely to trust information spread by word of mouth communication than from advertising or from salespeople. Word of mouth confers legitimacy on the product for the buyer. Word of mouth is the only promotion method that is of consumers, by consumers, and for consumers (Kotler and Armstrong, 2001).

According to Jobbler (2004), the objective of the information search is to build up the "awareness set"- that is the array of brands that may provide a solution to the problem. Etzel, Walker and Stanton (1997) asserted that purchase decision requires information. Consumers need to know what products and brands are available, what features and benefits they offer, who sell them, their prices and where they can be purchased. Kotler and Keller (2009) made the point that if the target audience is unaware of the object, the communication task is to build awareness. They advised that awareness can be built by placing stories in the media.

From the above exposition, one can conclude that electronic word of mouth marketing has gain importance as a mechanism that differentiates brands from their competitors, due to its independence and credibility

Word of mouth marketing could be beneficial to the Nigeria consumers in their purchase decision journey. Consumers can use the digital process to obtain information to increase brand awareness and loyalty levels rather than the traditional word of mouth.

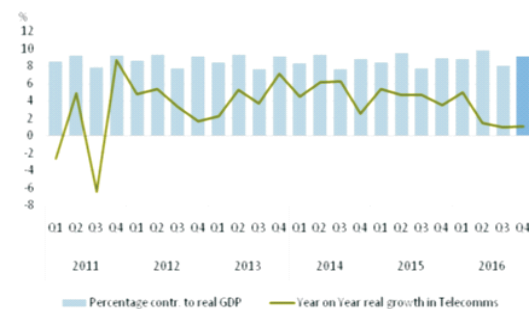
Background Information on Nigerian Telecommunication Companies

The advent of Global System for Mobile (GSM) Communications in August 2001 marked a dramatic shift in Nigeria's telecommunication industry. The telecommunication sector was officially deregulated in 1992 with the establishment of the Nigeria Communication Commission (NCC), which issued various licenses to private telecommunication operators (NCC, 2016). The inability of the Nigeria Telecommunication Limited (NITEL) to meet the communication needs of the people before 2001, lead to the introduction of Global System for Mobile (GSM) communication service providers that were licensed to operate in 2001. With this introduction in a growing population of about 120 million people, the industry became highly competitive market with market share spread of 43.93% (MTN), 22.36% (Glabacom), 20.16% (Airtel) and 13.29% (Etisalat) and 0.26% Mtel, (NCC, Report, 2015), and it has contributed significant increase of 6.73% to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), (National Bureau of Statistics, NBS, 2014).

According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the number of telecoms subscribers was 148.74 million in the first quarter of 2016 (NBS, 2016). This rose to 172.8 million in the fourth quarter of 2018. Global System for Mobile (GSM) operators in Nigeria are making conscious effort towards establishing and maintaining good relationship with their customers in the country, with the aim of winning their loyalty and increasing profitability. Halpern (2010) mentions that the ability of service businesses to develop service innovation is critical to satisfying customer satisfaction.

Telecommunication in GDP and Growth

Figure 2. Percentage Contribution of Telecommunication to constant price GDP, and annual growth



Source: National Bureau of Statistics /Nigerian Communication Commission, (2016)

From Figure 2, in real terms, the telecommunications sector contributed N 1,663 billion to GDP in the fourth quarter of 2016, or 9.1%, which represents an increase of 1.1% points relative to the previous quarter. The share of telecommunications in total real GDP had declined throughout 2010 to 2014 (NCC 2016), however, in 2015 and 2016, the telecommunications sector fared better than the overall economy, and therefore the share of telecommunications in real GDP increased in both years, and was 8.9% in 2016. In contrast with the overall economy, real year on year growth in the telecommunications sector remained positive throughout 2016, and in the final quarter, telecommunications growth increased slightly, from 0.95% to 1.03%. The extant written record had shown that the global telecommunications market is really growing and changing (ITU Publications, 2002). According to the National Communication Commission (2015), the telecom industry is probably Nigeria's most vibrant and competitive industry after the petroleum sector. In their opinion, the most prominent of these brands are the Global System for Mobile Communication, (GSM) companies: MTN, Globacom, Airtel and Etisalat (9Mobile). Among these corporate brands is shared a whopping 95% of the Nigeria telecommunications business, valued at over 2 Trillion Naira, and an enviable subscriber base of 140,822,483, (NCC, 2015). In what is seen as a hot contest to win more subscribers on their networks, each of the major operators is always on their toes in introducing new offerings to the market.

Empirical Review

Martensen and Jan (2016) investigated how WOM mediates the relationship between the 4Ps and consumers responses using Partial Least Square on survey data obtained from an online research panel comprising 25,000 members, from which a stratified sample of 2,663 persons between 18 and 55 years of age was selected. An e-

mail invitation was sent to this sample. In total 1,547 members was obtained. A total of 379 valid interviews were conducted and the sample was representative. Their findings showed that the 4Ps influence consumer responses directly and that this effect is leveraged when WOM mediates the relationship. This according to the researchers, underlines the necessity to add PWOM as a fifth P, so the different marketing activities' effect can be amplified by the power of WOM and brands can be created as much out of PWOM as out of marketing activities. The study concluded that WOM partially mediates product quality and advertising content. PWOM mediates store location completely (mediation share .03), i.e., only when other consumers tell positive things about the firm's stores and where they are located, does it influence brand attitude. NWOM partially mediates product quality. The consumers discuss the negative elements and experiences about the product, which then enhances the product quality's negative impact on brand attitude.

An empirical study was carried out by Nawaz, Vveinhardt, and Ahmed (2013) on the Impact of Word of Mouth on Consumer Buying Decision. They collected and analysed primary data from different areas of Karachi city of Pakistan from students of colleges, universities and households. Their findings revealed that for purchasing, most consumer trust on word of mouth marketing has an impact on consumers' decision. However, negative word of mouth or any negative comments about anything influence strongly than positive.

A study by Low, & Goh, (2009) titled Viral Marketing Communication: The Internet Word-of-Mouth; consumer perception and consumer response showed how advancements in communication technology have given rise to viral marketing which they describe as a new electronic form of word-of-mouth tactic. The objective of their thesis was to explore consumer receptivity, perception and behavioural response to this relatively new marketing strategy. With the use of a structured questionnaire conducted with 236 respondents and in-depth interviews conducted with 15 consumers, they analyzed response and perception with regards to five different platforms on which viral marketing can take place on the internet, namely E-mail, Video, Blog, Social networks and Forums. Employing a pluralistic approach as their research methodology, both the quantitative and qualitative results worked hand in hand in the analysis of their hypotheses and provided valuable findings regarding the way consumers view and reactions towards word-of-mouth. Their main findings showed that VMC helps to raise consumer awareness but does not significantly impact their purchasing decisions. Negative VMC has a stronger influence on consumers than positive VMC and Monetary incentive is not the strongest motivator in influencing consumers to actively spread messages.

Hudges (2005) reported in his book Buzz Marketing, how he got 300 million dollars offer from eBay for Half.com only six months after launching and how eBay used it

to grow from zero to eight million users within three years of its debut. He also reported several other cases where Buzz indeed generated a positive campaign. For example, he reported how Mark Cuban, the billionaire entrepreneur constantly creates controversial messages online that gets people's attention. Another classic example of how buzz generate massive attention is 'will it blend' at blentec.com

The new phenomenon of entrepreneurial marketing which is currently the subject of many academic investigations is still relatively under-investigated in Nigeria. It is therefore worthwhile to fill the gap in literature by examining the extent to which customer awareness, loyalty, commitment, advocacy, complaint behaviour, satisfaction and trust of the Global System for Mobile (GSM) companies is determined by word of mouth marketing with the view to finding out the perception of consumers concerning these variables and how they relate to customers preference for a particular service provider in the country.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The cross-sectional survey research design was adopted. The target population were students at Kwara State University, Malete. The justification for the choice of respondents is that the students represent the youthful population of Nigeria who are sensitive to marketing strategies used by the service provider. Young people are more open to new technologies and will be responsible for the testing and evaluating product's (Kotler et al, 2016). If company can convince them, and if they are thrilled with your satisfaction, they will disclose to friends, colleagues and older people.

The target population is 15000 according to the University Registrar. The sample size of 390 was obtained through Taro Yamane formula at the 5% significance level. Questionnaires were administered to randomly selected students by the researcher to ensure immediate attention and response from respondents. The instrument used for collecting data was designed and subjected to validity and reliability test (Cronbach's Alpha > 0.7). Data were analysed through Multiple Regression.

Discussion and Results

Table 4. Multiple Regression Results

Test of Hypothesis One

Ho₁ Buzz marketing has no significant effect on customer loyalty

Independent Variables	Coefficients	Standard Error	T	P-value
Social media	0.578	0.228	2.540	0.012
Sending exciting messages	0.374	0.214	1.751	0.081
Controversial stories	0.264	0.215	1.227	0.221
Building suspense around new services	0.695	0.241	2.884	0.004
Sending accurate information	0.906	0.200	4.531	0.000
Positive emotions	0.416	0.212	1.960	0.051

Dependent Variable: Customer Loyalty

Source: Research's Survey, 2019

The result shows that buzz marketing which are (social media, building suspense around new services and sending accurate information) have positive and significant effects on customer loyalty. This is shown by their probability value (0.012, 0.004 and 0.000) which is less than the chosen 0.5% significance level. The result also shows a positive but not significant effect of sending exciting messages, controversial stories and engaging customer's emotions in a positive way on customer loyalty. A composite picture of all independent variables shows that buzz marketing to a large extent has a significant effect on customer loyalty of telecommunication service. This finding did not provide sufficient evidence to reject the hypothesis.

Test of Hypothesis Two

Ho₁ Buzz marketing has no significant effect on brand awareness

Independent Variables	Coefficients	Standard Error	T	P-value
Social media	0.274	0.226	1.212	0.226
Sending exciting messages	0.318	0.213	1.496	0.136
Controversial stories	0.415	0.214	1.937	0.054
Building suspense around new services	0.703	0.240	2.932	0.004
Sending accurate information	0.816	0.199	4.104	0.000
Positive emotions towards	0.667	0.211	3.158	0.002

Dependent Variable: Brand Awareness

Source: Research's Survey, 2019

The result shows that buzz marketing campaign mechanism such as building suspense around new services, sending accurate information, and positive emotions have positive and significant effects on brand awareness. This is shown by its probability value (p-value; 0.004, 0.000, and 0.002) being less than the chosen 5% significance level. The result also shows that buzz marketing campaign mechanisms such as social media, sending exciting messages and controversial stories have positive but not significant effects on brand awareness at the 5%, significance level (0.05). A composite picture of the p values suggests the null hypothesis should be rejected.

Test of Hypothesis Three

Ho₃ There is no relationship between evangelism marketing technique and customer loyalty

Independent Variables	Coefficients	Standard Error	T	P-value
Rebroadcasting messages	0.202	0.197	1.025	0.306
Online trending expressions	0.454	0.227	1.997	0.047
Convincing other customers	0.487	0.209	2.334	0.020
Replying comments	0.693	0.287	2.418	0.016
Spreading positive news	0.046	0.201	0.227	0.821
Better services	1.240	0.204	6.071	0.000

Dependent Variable: Total Customer Loyalty

Source: Researcher's Survey, 2019

The result shows the independent variable i.e. evangelism marketing (online trending expressions, convincing other customers, replying comments and better services) have a positive and significant relationship with the dependent variable customer loyalty. This is shown by their p-value (0.047, 0.020, 0.016 and 0.000) being less than the chosen 5% significance level (0.05). Other independent variables such as (rebroadcasting messages and spreading positive news) have no significant relationship with customer loyalty. This is shown by each of their p-value (0.306 and 0.821) being more than the chosen 5% significance level (0.05). This reveals that there is a significant relationship between evangelism marketing technique and customer loyalty. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Test of hypothesis Four

Ho₄ Evangelism marketing technique has no effect on brand awareness

Independent Variables	Coefficients	Standard Error	T	P-value
Rebroadcasting messages	0.345	0.204	1.690	0.092
Online trending expressions	0.577	0.236	2.449	0.015
Convincing other customers	0.549	0.217	2.533	0.012
Replying comments	0.593	0.297	1.995	0.047
Spreading positive news	0.071	0.209	0.342	0.733
Better services	0.752	0.212	3.547	0.000

Dependent Variable: Brand Awareness

Source: Researcher's Survey, 2019

The result showed independent variable i.e. evangelism marketing (online trending expressions, convincing other customers, replying comments and better services) had a positive and significant effect on the independent variable (brand awareness). This is shown by their probability value (0.015, 0.012, 0.047 and 0.000) being less than the chosen 5% significance level (0.05). Other independent variables such as (rebroadcasting messages and spreading positive news) had no significant effect on brand awareness. This is shown by its p-value (0.092 and 0.733) being more than the chosen 5% significance level (0.05). This implies that making online trending expressions, convincing other customers, replying comments online and better services from the telecommunication firms influence consumer buying behaviour. But rebroadcasting messages to friends and spreading positive news for telecommunication firms to their customers doesn't encourage customers to patronize them as a result of unfavourable past experience. Since a preponderant number of the variables were significant at the 5% level, the null hypothesis is rejected.

4.0 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS.

The findings show that buzz marketing has a relationship with brand awareness of telecommunication service. Also, respondents agreed they need to send exciting and accurate messages about their services, engaging customer's emotion in an appositive way, they should fulfil their promises in terms of quality services, and brand identity increases their customer patronage and encourage audience participation on social media during promotion. This is also in agreement with the findings of Hughes (2005), who affirm buzz marketing can harm the brand by generating a negative and uncontrollable buzz due to the non-appreciation of the brand or the message it tries to broadcast.

A critical issue for the continuity of any organizations is its capability to retain current customers while making them loyal to its brands (Achour, Pujawati & Boerhannueddin, 2010). In this study, it was observed that there is a relationship between word of mouth marketing as expressed in Buzz and Evangelism marketing techniques and customer loyalty as well as awareness. Respondents assert they spread messages they received from GSM service providers to their friends and make online expressions on trending services. This is in line with the works of Kaser (2007), who posited that to remain effective buzz marketing should be permanently creative, mixing fantasy and reality and Morrissey (2007) who asserted that the consumer must have a sense of freedom, the desire for involvement and interaction for a successful buzz marketing campaign. This finding is also supported by Kotler and Armstrong (2012) who asserts that companies can achieve a desirable loyalty base from their customers by the fulfilment of their expectations, with the expectation coming from the experience of previous purchases by them, the opinions of friends and relatives, information from the marketer or a competitor. Consumers tend to have a positive attitude towards heartwarming advert. Jahanzeb, Fatima & Khan (2011) argued that commitment to rebuy or re-patronize a preferred product or service consistently in the future may be hurt by situational influences and negative marketing efforts, having the potential to cause switching behaviour.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Buzz and evangelism are recent techniques in marketing that may be used to create brand loyalty and awareness for products and services. Both are word-of-mouth marketing communication processes orchestrated through targeted actions to reach a large number of consumers. This study helped to highlight the extent to which word-of-mouth marketing technique affect consumer behaviour as well as the difficulties and other risks associated with the implementation of the technique in Nigeria.

Based on the findings in this study, one can conclude that buzz marketing has the capacity to increase customer loyalty and brand awareness. However, making up interesting, imaginative and creative stories and designing more promotional services are critical factors that need to be considered for a successful buzz marketing campaign. The general attitude towards buzz marketing, from the point of view of consumers, is that the information provided should be honest and accurate for users making purchasing decisions. More positive news needs to be spread by the telecom companies in order to encourage consumers to become crusaders and the firm's advocate. The findings in this study have important implications for GSM service providers in Nigeria. Based on the findings, the following recommendations are hereby suggested.

- i. In order to build their loyalty, consumers should rely more on social media and trust only service providers who give accurate and honest information about their products. They should pay less attention to messages that create excitements and controversies.

- ii To increase brand awareness, consumers should search online for service providers who give accurate information about their services, build suspense around their new services and create positive emotions in their customers
- iii Finally, consumers should rely on brand evangelists as the authentic source of information as they provide honest, accurate and useful information and provide replies to queries based on their experience.

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