

Customer Service Strategies and Marketing Performance of Automobile Firms in South/South Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigated customer service strategy and marketing performance of automobile firms in South-South, Nigeria. The researcher adopted the correlational research design. The population of the study consisted of customers of 197 automobile dealers registered with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry in the six (6) states of South-South, Nigeria 2017/2018 edition. See appendix 3 for list of automobile dealers. The sample size of 132 was used. The researcher adopted the convenience sampling technique in selecting members of the sample. The customers of 132 automobile dealers in South-South, Nigeria who must have had buying relationship with the dealers for at least 15 years were accessible for the study. The study adopted convenience sampling technique. The validity of the scale adopted in this study was presented for content and construct validity. To ascertain the authenticity of the instrument, the questionnaire was submitted to experts with knowledge on the subject in the Department of Marketing, University of Uyo, Uyo, and a business consultant in order to ensure that the questions raised adequately represent the exact view of what it is intended to measure before the final copy of the questionnaire was administered to respondents. The data obtained was used to compute reliability coefficient as shown $.971 > .71$ which implied that the instrument used was highly reliable. All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance with $p < 0.05$ indicating statistical significance. To enhance data analysis, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, version 22.0) was used to analyze the data. The results of the study showed that customer service influenced the metrics of performance of automobile dealers. The results implied that when marketing strategies is adequately implemented and improved upon, it will enhance customers satisfaction, loyalty, retention, patronage and more specifically, long term financial performance for the automobile dealers. Based on the findings of the study, the study concluded that marketing strategies play important role in the performance of automobile dealers and should be employed as a broad commercial logic for meeting customers' needs at a profit and also as a tool for gaining sustainable competitive advantage in the target market. The study recommended among others that automobile dealers should leverage on the knowledge acquired through their relationship with customers in the use of customer service strategy to shape offerings, reap customer's lifetime value and achieve competitive advantage for the organization.

Keywords: Customer service strategy, Marketing Performance, Automobile Firms, South/South Nigeria.

Introduction

The accomplishment of any organizational goal in the business world depends generally on the capacity of firms to deliberately outperform their rivals. Outsmarting rivals depends on the capacity of a firm to deliver superior offerings in the market, the capacity to ceaselessly enhance the quality

of the product and also the ability to adopt strategies that will empower the firm to gain competitive advantage in the target market.

Regardless of the size of a firm, it has rivals in the business and the strategies of these contenders influence the strategies adopted by individual firms. Rivalry is an acknowledged component of corporate life for a profit driven organization. Understanding an organization's rivals helps it to find its shortcomings and recognize openings and dangers in the marketplace. While defining an organization's technique, managers must think about the system of its rivals, because without paying attention to what the rivals are doing, it ends up flying blind into the battle (Adom *et al.*, 2016). Rivalry breeds competition, stimulates innovations and ensures excellence. As automobile dealers are open to rivalry due to innovative and technological advancement in vehicle, there is need to create vital means of survival. To remain significant, an organization must be able to offer leading-edge products to customers. As indicated by Porter (2005) firms that want to be outstanding should effectively look for ways to enhance their capacity. Such capacities will help them compete effectively and outperform their rivals by adapting and making improvements in their businesses. The automobile dealers in Nigeria engage in stiff competitive warfare in order to remain afloat and be relevant in the business world. Due to features and uniqueness that are identical to automobiles, customers rely on value, efficiency, excellent service, fuel economy, product leadership for their purchase decisions (Adefulu, 2015). Given the competitiveness of the business environment, achieving performance depends largely on the viability of key competitive weapons at the disposal of a firm in the automobile sector. The competitive weapons are often translated into marketing strategies.

Marketing Strategy means consciously choosing to carry out activities differently or to perform different activities than competitors to convey a unique mix of value (Porter, 2004). Marketing Strategy is the broad commercial logic of a business that differentiates one business from the other. Marketing strategy refers to game plan adopted by management for competing successfully in their chosen market (Porter, 2004). It involves the analysis of the market and its environment, consumer purchase behavior, competitive activities, customer needs and competencies of market intermediaries (Schere, 1984). It is also a broad range of strategies firms resort to in order to cope, beat or keep ahead of competitors and an avenue to seize strategic initiatives and maintain a competitive edge in the market (Amit and Shoemaker, 2003). Maintaining an edge over other rival firms involve developing an innovative idea on how to attain cost leadership, focus and overall industry dominance using resources at the firm's disposal. It is germane therefore, for businesses carrying out sales of cars, to design market offerings that deliver more value to the customers than the competitors with efficient and improved products and services (Kotler and Armstrong, 2014).

In the automobile sector, customers make choices of cars based on quality of the product (vehicles), convenience, excellent service, value, fuel economy, efficiency. It is imperative for automobile dealers to identify the driving force behind the purchase of car by customers and set priority in line with customer expectations and demand, and be in a better position to gain competitive edge and advantage (Bhatia, 2013).

Statement of the Problem

It is envisaged that automobile dealers operating in South-South Nigeria ought to be achieving significant success and performance in business due to the fact that the region is one of the major economic hubs in the country. Investors from both within and outside the country are always

attracted to do business in the oil rich region. These companies need automobiles (cars) in their day-to-day business activities and this has given most automobile dealers reasons to stay in business. Surprisingly, it has been observed that most automobile dealers are experiencing abysmal decline in performance in this industry; The automobile industry is not immune to instances of poor performance that characterize product and service deliveries (NBS, 2015). It may not be out of place to suspect that automobile dealers have not enshrined strategies that deliver superior performance which have resulted to the steady decline in customer satisfaction, customer patronage, positive word of mouth and loyalty expected to be experienced by dealers in the industry. Perhaps these automobile dealers have not utilized the various marketing strategies that could enhance performance such as operational excellence strategy, customer service strategy and product quality strategy. Given these uncertainties, this study has a purpose to figure out the effect of marketing strategies on the performance of automobile dealers in South-South, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The objective of the study was to investigate customer service strategy and marketing performance of automobile firms in Rivers State with the following specific:

- i. Examine the relationship between customer service and the performance of automobile dealers in South-South, Nigeria.
- ii. Determine the effect of operational excellence, customer service, and product quality on the performance of automobile dealers in South-South, Nigeria.

Research Questions

Based on the objectives of the study, the following research questions were raised to guide the study.

- i. What is the influence of customer service on the performance of automobile dealers in South-South, Nigeria?
- ii. What is the influence of operational excellence, customer service and product quality on the performance of automobile dealers in South-South, Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

Based on the objectives of the study, the following hypotheses were formulated.

H₀₁: There is no significant effect of customer service and the performance of automobile dealers in South-South, Nigeria.

H₀₂: There is no significant effect of operational excellence, customer service and product quality on the performance of automobile dealers in South-South, Nigeria.

Literature Review

Marketing Strategies and Performance.

A strategy is the broad commercial logic of a business. It defines how a business is better than those of the competitors. The rationale for adopting strategies is to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage and thereby enhance business performance (Bharadwaj *et al.*, 2012). The purpose of marketing strategy is customer satisfaction, retention and more specifically to enhance the long-term financial performance of the firm. Marketing strategies serve as a key instrument of improving financial performance of a firm through the route of sustainable advantage. Sustainability of positional advantage leads to superior long-term market and financial performance. For organizations to gain sustainable competitive advantage they must have resourceful skill that will

enable them to be valuable, rare among competitors, be imperfectly imitable and there must not be any strategically equivalent substitute for their resourceful skills.

Earlier research demonstrated that firms that set out a clear strategy, for example: a quality, differentiation or a cost leadership strategy, will outperform those firms that engage a mixed strategy. Amongst the many strategies implemented in firms, marketing strategy has been proven as an essential tool globally for any business to remain in the competitive market environment and gain superior performance.

Marketing strategies have relationship marketing as one of the key functionalities in enhancing, business performance. It is the identification, establishment, maintenance, modification and termination of relationships with customers in order to create value for customers and profit for organization by a series of relational exchanges that have a history and a future (Kanagal, 2009). The success of marketing strategy has been evaluated by either financial outcomes such as Return on Investment (ROI), and market share or by customer outcomes such as customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Such behavioural outcomes lead into superior performance as measured by financial metrics.

Kotler and Armstrong (2014) noted that, to gain competitive advantage in winning over customers with efficient and improved products and services, companies must adequately appreciate market value design that can deliver more distinguished offerings to customers than the competitors. Companies are therefore required to develop marketing strategies with respect to competition and changes in the business environment as a process for gaining competitive advantage by delivering superior value to the customers. Successful marketing strategy is one that is supposed to develop effective response to changing market environments by defining market segments, developing and positioning product offerings for those target markets.

Customer Service Strategies

Fauzi (2017) posited that, customer services are all customer provider interaction other than core product offering that facilitates the firm's relationship with its customers. It includes the manner in which the core and supplementary elements are delivered but it does not include the product itself. Marketers of both products and services offer customer services sometimes referred to as facilitating service. Facilitating firms promote product and services transaction. In many instances firms compete based on these facilitating services, especially in situations where the core product is easily matched to become a standard product. Firms can then use their facilitating services that supplement the core to create competitive advantage. Firms can win or lose customers based on how well they provide customer service.

However, excellent customer service cannot compensate for a poor core product. Unfortunately, even a well-designed system for providing services for a firm's core product sometimes fail. Steps must be taken to win back customers who experience service failure.

According to marketers, there are three levels of product, the core benefits or service which constitutes what the buyer is buying, the tangible product or the physical product or service itself and the augmented product which includes benefits that are secondary to but an integral part that enhances the tangible product that the customer is buying. All customers' service interactions provide valuable sources of information about customer's needs. When captured into a database, the information gleaned from customer service interaction can assist in the planning and marketing decision making to enhance segmentation and positioning decision effectiveness.

In a demand driven and service-centric market where companies face ever increasing competition, leveraging business relationships to achieve a competitive advantage is a key business strategy (Tuominen *et al.*, 2004). One of the most important goals of every organization is to serve customers as best as possible (Desbordes, 2011). In order to accomplish this important objective, customers must be considered as kings and co-creators in the production and service delivery processes.

Performance of Automobile Firms

Performance is central to success in today's fast-moving competitive markets, and measuring organizational performance is critical to managing it effectively. Performance is a measure of how efficiently and effectively managers use, available resources to satisfy customer and achieve organizational goals. Performance increases in direct proportion to increase in efficiency and effectiveness. *Performance focuses on the measurement of the aggregate effectiveness and efficiency of the organization.* It is a recognized standard that ascertain operational efficiency and external performance of marketing activities as regards automobile dealers (Owonte, 2016).

There are different types of performance measurement. There are monetary and non-monetary organizational performance variables. The monetary variables include market share, sales volume, and profit margin, while the non-monetary include customer satisfaction, positive-word-of-mouth, customer patronage loyalty and retention Velnampy (2013). Performance is concerned with how metrics are formed and determined to monitor market and performance trend using marketing dash boards to manage organizational performance (HalachinandBouckart, 2005).

The goal of performance management is to achieve key outcomes and objectives to optimize individual, group or organizational performance. More specifically it focuses on measuring, managing and analyzing organizational performance to maximize effectiveness and optimize Return on Investment (ROI) of marketing. Three elements play a crucial role in managing organizational performance, these include data, analysis and metric (Hooley *et al.*, 2012).

To properly determine reliable effectiveness of a market, appropriate data must be collected. The gathering of adequate data and its accuracy is crucial in measuring organizational performance (Lebens and Euske, 2010). It is known that no single measure of performance could fully account for all aspects of firm performance (Snow and Hrebiniak, 1980; Masa'deh, 2015). Firms adopt different performance measures to suit the objective of the business. Researchers measure performance objectively and/or subjectively, where objective measurements depend upon profit and financial data, and subjective measurements rely on managerial assessments.

Methodology

The researcher adopted the correlational research design to examine the relationship between marketing strategies and the performance of automobile dealers in south-south, Nigeria.

This study covers the automobile dealers in the six (6) states of South-South, Nigeria; namely: Akwa Ibom State, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo and Rivers. The population of this study consists of customers of 197 automobile dealers registered with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry in the six (6) states of South- South, Nigeria 2017/2018 edition.

To extract a sample size from the entire population, a sample size determination formula by Taro Yamene was used because the total number of automobile firm is known. It is stated as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2} \quad \text{Sample Size}$$

$$\begin{aligned}
 N &= \text{Population} \\
 e &= \text{Level of Significance} \\
 &= \frac{N}{1+N(0.05)^2} \\
 &= \frac{N}{1+197(0.05)^2} \\
 &= \frac{197}{1+197(0.0025)} \\
 &= \frac{197}{1.49} \\
 &= 132
 \end{aligned}$$

This study focused on customers of 132 automobile dealers in the six (6) States of South-South, Nigeria. Two customers who must have had a buying relationship with the automobile dealers for at least 15 years were selected proportionately from each of the identified dealer because of their direct involvement in purchase related issues. On the whole, information from the customers of the 132 dealers showed a total of 264 customers of automobile organizations in the six (6) States of South-South, Nigeria. All were

The researcher adopted the convenience sampling technique in selecting members of the sample. The customers of 132 automobile dealers in South-South, Nigeria who must have had buying relationship with the dealers for at least 15 years were accessible for the study. The underlying factors in the use of convenience sampling technique is the availability, readiness and accessibility of the sampling units that were selected for the study.

The structured questionnaire was adopted for the study. The questionnaire was divided into 3 sections. Section A consists of 5 items on demographic characteristics of respondents. Section B consists of 12 items which focused on marketing strategies, four questions each on each of the (3) test variables. Section C consists of 4 items which focused on the performance. All items in sections B - C were measured on a four point Likert scales of (Strongly Agree (SA) = 4 Agree (A) = 3, Disagree (D) = 2, to Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1.

The validity of the scale adopted in this study was presented for content and construct validity. To ascertain the authenticity of the instrument, the questionnaire was submitted to experts with knowledge on the subject in the Department of Marketing, University of Uyo, Uyo, and a business consultant in order to ensure that the questions raised adequately represent the exact view of what it is intended to measure before the final copy of the questionnaire was administered to respondents. A pilot test was administered to selected automobile dealers outside those under study. Cronbach Alpha method was used to ascertain the reliability status of the research instrument. 264 questionnaires were administered to marketing managers and customers care managers of 132 automobile dealers in South-South, Nigeria using a test -retest method. The data obtained was used to compute reliability coefficient as shown .971>.71 which implied that the instrument used was highly reliable.

Data obtained from the respondents were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics such as tables, frequency, graphs, charts, percentage, mean and standard deviation. The inferential statistics was done using Spearman Rank Correlation with Multi linear regression to test the hypotheses formulated for the study. All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance with $p < 0.05$ indicating statistical significance. To enhance data analysis, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, version 22.0) was used to analyze the data.

Results

Customer Service

Table 4.7 shows the analysis and interpretation of frequencies on items of customer service as a dimension of marketing strategies.

Table 4.7: Customer Service as a Dimension of Marketing Strategies (n=200)

S/N	Items	Frequencies / Percentages			
		SD (1)	D (2)	A (3)	SA (4)
1	My dealer considers customers as king and involves them in co-creation process in sales and service delivery.	- 0%	34 16%	61 31%	105 53%
2	My dealer develops and maintains intimate relationships with current or new customers on one on one basis.	- 20 10%	102 31 15.5%	244 53 26.5%	525 96 48%
3	My dealer delivers the correct products and services to customers on specification	4 5 2.5%	93 10 5%	185 65 32.5%	480 120 60%
4	My dealer precisely offers tailor made products and services that satisfies customers	10 4 2%	30 41 20.5%	260 66 33%	600 39 44.5%
		8	123	264	445

Source: Research Data, (2021).

Table 4.7 shows the frequencies of customer service as a dimension of marketing strategies as presented for automobile dealer's customers studied. My dealer considers customers as king and involves them in co-creation process in sales and service delivery strongly disagree recorded no response, 34 (17%) was recorded for disagree, 61 (30.5%) as agree, and 105 (52.5%) as strongly agree. On my dealer develops and maintains intimate relationships with current or new customers on one on one basis, strongly disagree presented 20(10%), disagree 31 (15.5%) agree 53 (26.5%), and 96(48%) for strongly agree. The item that concerns my dealer delivers the correct products and services to customers on specification presented 5(2.5%) for strongly disagree, 10(5%) for disagree, 65(32.5%) for agree, and 120(60%) for strongly agree. The item on my dealer precisely offers tailor made products and services that satisfies customers 4(2%) for strongly disagree, 41(20.5%), for disagree, 66 (33%) for agree and 89(44.5%) for strongly agree. This implies that customer service is a major activity in the automobile in South-South, Nigeria.

Performance

Table 4.9 shows the analysis and interpretation of frequencies on items of Performance.

Table 4.9: Performance (n=200)

S/N	Items	Frequencies/Percentages			
		SD (1)	D (2)	A (3)	SA (4)
1	My dealer's performance has been enhanced by providing customers with reliable products and service at competitive prices with minimal difficulty or inconvenience.	5	11	64	120
		2.5%	5.5%	32%	60%
		10	33	244	600
2	The performance of my dealer is directly related to excellent services offered to customers.	2	55	68	75
		1%	27.5%	34%	37.5%
		2	165	272	375
3	My dealer delivers products and services speedily whenever and wherever they are required by customer.	4	41	66	89
		2%	20.5%	33%	44.5%
		8	123	264	445
4	The quality of my dealer's products and services meets and exceeds customer's expectation.	8	31	59	102
		4%	15.5%	29.5%	51%
		16	93	224	510

Source: Research Data(2021).

Table 4.9 shows frequencies of performance as presented by automobile dealer's customers studied. My dealer's performance has been enhanced by providing customers with reliable products and service at competitive prices with minimal difficulty or inconvenience. 5(10%) as strongly disagree, 11 (5.5%) as disagree, 64 (32%) as agree, and 120 (60%) as strongly agree. The performance of my dealer is directly related to excellent services offered to customers. Strongly disagree presented 2(1%) for strongly disagree 55 (27.5%), for disagree, 68 (34%) for agree and 75 (37.5%) for strongly agree. The item on my dealer delivers products and services speedily whenever and wherever they are required by customer presented 4 (2%) for strongly disagree, 41(20.5%) for disagree, 66 (33%) for agree, and 89(44.5%) for strongly agree. The item on the quality of my dealer's products and service meets and exceed customer's expectation gave 8 (4%) for strongly disagree, 31(15.5%), for disagree, 55 (27.5%) for agree and 102 (51%) for strongly agree. This implies that the automobile dealers record high performance in South-South, Nigeria. This is because the automobile dealers provide their customers with products and services that carry the highest customers' value at competitive prices.

Test of Hypotheses

Decision Rule

Significant/probability value (Pv) < 0.05 (level of significance = conclude significant influence.

Significant probability value (Pv) > 0.05 (level of significant = conclude insignificant influence.

H₀₁: There is no significant effect of customer service on the performance of automobile dealers in South-South, Nigeria.

Table 4.14: Effect of customer service on performance (N=200).

Model R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the estimate
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1	810	.656	.653	.50668
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a. Predictors: (Constant), Customer service

b. Dependent Variable: Performance

Source: Researcher's Computation (2019).

The sum of performance was regressed with the sum of customer service. The value of R is 0.810. The R² value of 0.656% represents the correlation between customer service and performance. It represents a strong correlation between customer service and performance. The R² is 0.656. This means that 66% of the change in performance is spelt out by the independent variable. It shows that customer service makes a contribution of 66% to every change in performance, while 34% of the changes are not spelt out.

Since for hypothesis two, the significant is .000 which is less than 0.05; there is a significant, effect of customer service on performance.

Table 4.15: One way ANOVA for the difference in mean between customer service and performance (N=200).

Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	55.771	1	55771	281.139
Within Groups	23.849	199257		.0000
Total	100.94	200		

a. dependent variable: performance

b. Predictor: Customer service

Source: Researcher's Computation (2021).

The sufficiency of the model can also be explained by the value 281.139 (F-ratio), at $p < 0.05$. This implies that there is proof to extrapolate that customer service is linearly related to performance. This proposes that the model is measured to be fit and that customer service has substantial influence on performance.

Ho₂: There is no significant combined effect of marketing strategies component (operational excellence, customer service and product quality) on performance of automobile dealers in South- South, Nigeria.

Table 4.18: Effect of Combined Marketing Strategies Components on Performance (n=200)

Model Summary

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change in F	Change in Sig.F	Change in Statistic
Durbin Watson	0.861	0.741	0.60080	0.741	4.375	0.002
						1.609
a. Predictors (constant), Operational Excellence, Customer Service and Product Quality						

Source: Researcher's Computation (2021).

The Coefficient of correlation (R) can be considered as a measure of the quality of the prediction of the dependent variable. The value of 0.861 indicates a good level prediction. The Coefficient of determination (R-square) is the proportion of variation in the dependent variable (performance) that is explained by the independent variables. Hence, 74.1 percent of the variation in performance can be explained by independent variables in the model. The adjusted R-square is used to test the overestimation of R square. The estimates show an error of 0.060080, which cannot be considered as very large. The Durbin – Watson statistic $d = 1.609$ lies between the two critical values of $1.5 < d < 2.5$, and therefore it can be assumed that there is no first order linear autocorrelation data of multiple linear regression model. Hence, it can be concluded that the overall model is statistically significant, or that the variables have a significant combined effect on the dependent variable. The operational excellence, customer service and product quality variables exact significant influence on performance since the significant value (or p-value) is .002 which is below the 0.05 level of significance. Table 4.19 shows the effects of the individual predictor or independent variables.

Discussions of Findings

Basically, marketing strategies are substantive factors that affect performance. Marketing strategies are significant as pointers that enhance performance. A very vital step in guaranteeing organizational success is to understand marketing strategies status and address it appropriately. As revealed by our findings, marketing strategies has significant influence on performance.

Relationship between Customer Service and Performance

The study established that 84% of customers are being treated and considered as King, 72% on maintaining intimate relationship with current customers on one on one basis, 92% on providing customers with products according to their specification and 77.5% on offering tailor made products to satisfy customers. This according to the respondents is because they leverage on the knowledge acquired through their relationship with customers to shape offerings to satisfy them in order to enhance their performance.

In the second hypothesis, it was hypothesized that there is no significant relationship between customers' service and performance. Our finding confirms a significant influence of the use of customer service on performance. If organizations display sound knowledge of the positive effect of the use of customer service towards performance, they will certainly achieve optimal performance. Thus, knowledge of the positive impact of the use of customer service on performance should be persistently considered and reflected upon by all stakeholders in the automobile industry.

Our research finding is supported by Akçura and Srinivasan (2005) who found that firms require detailed information from customers before an intimate relationship can be established with their customers our finding is also in line with Hoffman (2001) findings that customer intimacy based on; communication, social interaction, compromise, and customer participation affect customer knowledge, perceived expectations, shared knowledge and trust.

Relationship between Customer Strategy and Marketing Performance

The study established that 82% automobile dealers provides customer with products and reliable services with minimal difficulty, 71.5% of the performance of dealers is directly related to excellent services offered to customers, 77.5% delivery of products with speed whenever and wherever they are required by customers and 80.5% of their products meet and exceeds customers' expectation.

According to the respondents, performance is central to their success in today's fast-moving competitive markets and it's enables them to achieve key outcomes in meeting with their objectives. Our finding shows a significant effect of marketing strategies components on performance. When operational excellence, customer service and product quality are combined and regressed with performance, a strong and significant effect was revealed. Our finding shows that the combined marketing strategies components influence performance. This implies that when firms noticed that the business terrain is becoming tough for them to operate; they introduce well-articulated combined marketing strategies to endear performance. The findings of the analysis section of this study reports that the null hypothesis (H_{04}) was rejected, while the alternative hypothesis (H_4) supports the theoretical rationale that associates the combined effect of marketing strategies components on performance. The relationship is statistically significant. Operational excellence, customer service and product quality can be powerful marketing strategies that facilitate competitiveness that will revolutionize performance positively. The results of our study support Oon Fok-Yew *et al.* (2013) assertion that companies need a high level of integration of their strategies, actions, programs, practice, and performance to remain competitive.

Conclusion

The study was on the marketing strategies and performance of automobile dealers in South-South, Nigeria. The results of this study showed that customer service influenced the metrics of performance of automobile dealers. The results imply that when marketing strategies is adequately implemented and improved upon, it will enhance customers satisfaction, loyalty, retention, patronage and more specifically, long term financial performance for the automobile dealers. Based on the findings of this study, it is therefore, concluded that marketing strategies play important role in the performance of automobile dealers and should be employed as a broad commercial logic for meeting customers' needs at a profit and also as a tool for gaining sustainable competitive advantage in the target market.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, we proffer the following recommendations

- i. Automobile dealers should leverage on the knowledge acquired through their relationship with customers in the use of customer service strategy to shape offerings, reap customer's lifetime value and achieve competitive advantage for the organization.
- ii. Automobile dealers should offer customers streams of leading-edge products with unique solutions and superior features beyond the offerings of competitors by effectively and efficiently utilizing available resources at their disposal to satisfy customers. This strategy will enable them to push beyond limits to discover and invent new ideas that will amaze customers and become a source of competitive product differentiation in the industry.

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