

Moderating Effect of Corporate Websites on the Relationship between Sales Promotional Strategies and Marketing Performance

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Abstract

The focus of this study was to examine the moderating effect of corporate websites on sales promotional strategies and marketing performance of fast-food firms in Port Harcourt Metropolis. The study adopted the cross-sectional survey research design. The population of the study comprises twenty fast food firms in Port Harcourt Metropolis. The study used a structured questionnaire instrument to collect data from the respondents. The study used the stepwise regressions to test the hypotheses. The findings of the study revealed that: corporate websites strongly moderate between promotional strategies and marketing performance of fast-food firms in Port Harcourt. The study recommends that fast food firms should constantly develop and keep updating their corporate websites as it has a significant effect on the perception of customers about the firms. It also serves as a conduit to better inform prospective customers and existing customers about the brand.

Keywords: Corporate websites, Sales Promotional Strategies, Marketing performance

INTRODUCTION

Websites are becoming key components of an organization's survival in the globalized competition. Website represents an organization, communicating its organizational culture, values, and vision to the entire world. Website acts as a delivery mechanism for service that facilitates various tasks a stakeholder needs to perform. The website also serves as a platform through which an organization can interact with its stakeholders. Organizational websites have different purposes, designs and implementations that indicate their focus or priority. Moreover, the value an organization attaches to a website is reflected in the operations and content of the website. Scholars like (Abdullahi *et al.* 2013; Booth & Matic 2011) are all in agreement that the majority of global companies now communicate and shape their corporate identity across countries via their corporate websites.

Foroudi and Dennis (2018) posit that the corporate website is a primary vehicle for corporate visual identity and plays an essential role in the way that an organization portrays itself to internal and external stakeholders. Okoli (2011) assert that the essence of setting up a business organization is to make a profit. Without profit, a business is bound to fail. Which, would necessitate that firms would regularly deploy sales promotional strategies to drive sales volume.

Earlier scholars like Loudon and Bitta (2002) argue that sales promotion plays a significant effect on decisions which help in achieving organizational objectives. It has been argued that corporate websites can be used to change the way potential the way people think about them. It can transform unhappy customers into happy customers especially when queries raised via the corporate websites are attended to promptly. The sales process involves good advertising, because, it mainly decides how the products and services will be positioned in the market, and the corporate website is one channel to display that message succinctly.

Also, in today's fast-paced competitive markets, fast food firms have taken the customer-centric position rather than the product-centric position. In Port Harcourt fast food firms have been deploying various sales promotional strategies to achieve their marketing objectives. For example, Genesis is currently offering a 50% discount on their meals on Wednesdays across all its outlets. Also, several fast-food firms now have corporate websites where they constantly interact with their customer as well as prospects who visit their websites to glean information. The corporate website is also an avenue to resolve queries and issues raised by the customer over a product or service. Some customers even place orders via the corporate websites. The websites is equally an avenue for the fast food firms to deploy several sales promotional strategies cheaply. The fast-food industry is characterized by high switching behaviour from customers, coupled with intense competition. Extant literature has attempted to highlight the effect of corporate websites on marketing performance.

Scholars like (Alhudaithy & Kitchen, 2009; Beatty *et al.*, 2001; Foroudi *et al.*, 2017; and Koiso-Kanttila, 2005) have emphasized favourable corporate websites as an essential strategy for company success in the marketplace. While Abduallahi and Kitchen's study (as cited in Ageeva *et al.* 2018) did observe that corporate websites offer the marketer the opportunity to utilize a wide range of cues, such as colours, images, and sounds to attract consumers and generate favourable attitudes. Suh and Amine (2007) as cited in Ageeva *et al.* (2018) stated that favourability is a function of the good perception the consumer has about the company. Thus, Ageeva *et al.* 2018) are of the view that the appeal that a corporate website has to the customer is a function of the favourable perception of the customer about the company. However, no study has been undertaken to investigate the moderating effect of corporate websites on sales promotional strategies and marketing performance of fast-food firms in Port Harcourt. It is on this note that this study seeks to investigate the moderating effect on sales promotional strategies and marketing performance of fast-food firms in Port Harcourt

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of the study is to examine the moderating effect of corporate websites on sales promotional strategies and marketing performance of fast-food firms in Port Harcourt Metropolis

Research Hypothesis

In view of the purpose of the study, the hypothesis is stated in the null form:

- Ho₁: Corporate websites does not significantly moderate between sales promotional strategies and marketing performance

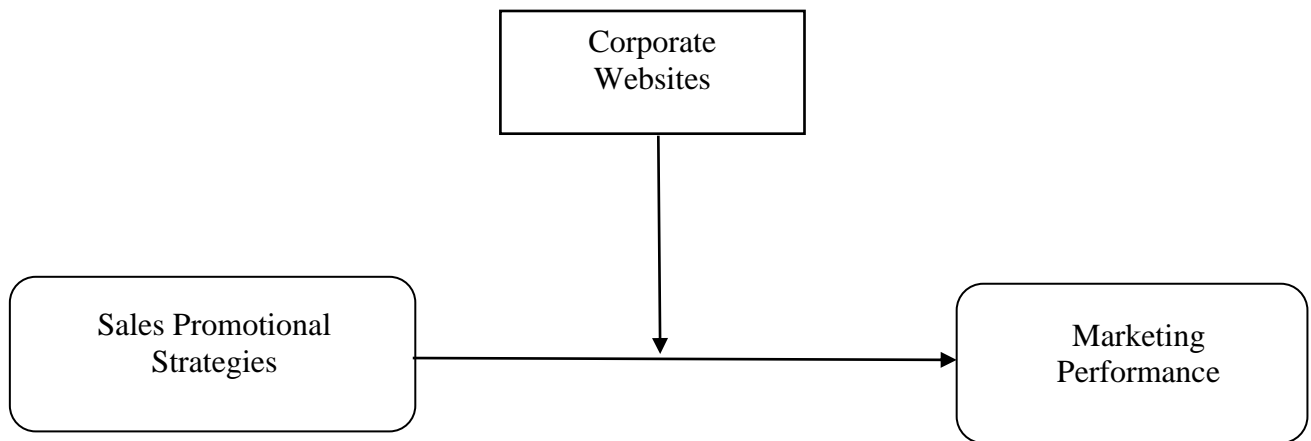


Fig 1.1: Conceptual Framework for the Moderating Effect of Corporate Websites on Sales Promotional Strategies and Marketing Performance.

Concept of Sales Promotional Strategies

Orji *et al.* (2021) described sales promotion as techniques that are aimed at increasing sales in the short run, meaning that they are mostly used for a short period of time. They surmised that sales promotions offer control and the costs can be much lower than advertising. They also, assert that the major feature of sales promotion is that it offers better value for money and strives to create an immediate response from the consumer. The basics of sales promotion strategy involve delivering the communicational message(s) from the producer (or company) to the consumer. The object of the message is to persuade the audience to purchase the product or service. Therefore, the consumer needs to be receptive to the message and to be able to interpret it in such a way that it influences him/her to purchase the product.

As Orji *et al.* (2021) observed sales promotion is certainly one of the critical elements in the marketing mix and tool kit for marketers. Orji *et al.* (2021) revealed that statistics for packaging companies show that sales promotion comprises nearly 75% of the marketing budget. To Makala (2014), as cited in Okoye-Chine, (2021) promotion represents the collection of all the elements in an organization's marketing mix that facilitate exchange by establishing shared meaning with the organization's customers or clients. Okoye-Chine (2021) stated that promotion in marketing is aimed at creating an awareness of the organization and its products and/or services in order to increase sales and make a profit. American Association of Marketing (AMA) defines sales promotion as those marketing activities other than personal selling, rebates and publicity, which stimulate consumer purchasing and dealer effectiveness, such as display, shows and exposition, demonstrations and various nonrecurring selling efforts not in the ordinary routine.

Marketing Performance

Alhamdi (2020) defined marketing performance in the context of competition as the achievement of performance level in comparison to competitors while focusing on strength utilization and eliminating weaknesses. Richer (2012) defined market performance as the effectiveness of suppliers in a market/industry in utilizing economic resources to their maximum efficiency and to the ultimate benefit of consumers. Hashem, (2019) argues that marketing performance includes the achievement of gaining, retention and sustaining the consumer's preferences and satisfying the stakeholders from the perspective of customers. Marketing performance according to Dezhkam (2017) is the marketing results or output compared to the set objectives. Morgan, (2012) argues that measuring marketing performance

has been in the front burner of academic discussion and it is also of utmost importance to organizations as well. To Ferrelly (2013) performance is the aggregation of basic stages of action from intention to result.

Bain (2011) surmised that marketing performance can be judged by many different constituencies, resulting in many different interpretations of successful performance. Performance management can take many forms from dealing with issues internal to the organization to catering to stakeholders or handling issues in its environment. Performance management involves the use of both quantitative and qualitative techniques and paying due attention to the human side of the enterprise (Arie, 2015). Lamberti and Noci (2010) stated that an important marketing performance management is the set of processes and tools that deal with evaluating the performance influenced or driven by marketing. Marketing managers work to improve marketing performance through customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Performance metrics can be categorised into financial and non-financial (Hacioglu & Gök, 2013). Market share, sales and cash flow and profitability are some of the financial marketing performance metrics, and non-financial marketing performance metrics include customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, and brand equity (Clark, 1999). Homburg's study (as cited in Gao 2010) defined marketing performance as the effectiveness and efficiency of an organization's marketing activities with regard to market-related goals, such as revenues, growth, and market share

Corporate Websites

The Internet is radically changing the traditional way that organizations interact with the public (Owoyele 2016). Accordingly, experts agree that for organizations, the web gives access to a large audience and improves operational efficiency. Websites are becoming key components of an organization's survival in the globalized competition. The website represents the organization, communicating its organizational culture, values, and vision. The website acts as a delivery mechanism for service that facilitates various tasks a stakeholder needs to perform. The website also serves as a platform through which an organization can interact with its stakeholders. Organizational websites have different purposes, designs and implementations that indicate their focus or priority. The value an organization attaches to a website is reflected in the operations and content of the website.

Scholars like (Abdullahi *et al.* 2013; Booth & Matic 2011) are all in agreement that the majority of global companies now communicate and shape their corporate identity across countries via their corporate websites. Also, Foroudi *et al.* (2014) surmised that Today's global environment is becoming predominantly online and visually oriented. Nguyen *et al.* (2016) are of the view that for companies "nowadays, the websites tell much about what we do as a company, how we strive to change the world Melewar and Karaosmanoglu (2006) as cited in Ageeva, Melewar, Foroudi and Dennis (2018) posit that the corporate website is a primary vehicle for corporate visual identity and plays an essential role in the way that an organization portrays itself to internal and external stakeholders.

Research Methodology

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design because it's descriptive in nature, describing the relationship between the variables under study. To this end, self-structured copies of the questionnaire will be distributed to retrieve important and relevant data on the parameters of sales promotional strategies and marketing performance in fast food firms in Port Harcourt metropolis.

Findings and Discussion

Distribution and Retrieval of Questionnaires

Data for this study were brought about by means of a questionnaire administered and composed from the sample of management staff of twenty (20) fast food firms. Data were collected through 33 copies of the research questionnaire administered to the respondents. Subsequently, sixty (60) copies of the questionnaire produced were distributed to the respondents. Table 1, the table shows the total number of copies of the questionnaire distributed and the response rate

Table 1: Questionnaire Distribution and Retrieval

Sex	No of Questionnaire distributed	%	No of return questionnaires	%
Male	28	46	20	33.3
Female	32	64	28	46.7
Total	60	100	48	80.0

Source: Field survey 2022

Table 4.1 shows that the number of copies of the instrument distributed to the male respondents was 28(46%) from which only 20(33.3%) were returned and 32 (64%) was distributed to the female participant from which only 28(46.7%) were returned. The return rate of the questionnaire distributed was 80% which is a high enough rate for the study.

2 Gender Distribution of Respondents

The respondents were required to state their gender as stipulated in the study instrument, the table below shows the distribution of the gender of the respondents

Table 2 Distribution of Gender of Respondents

Gender	N	%
Male	20	36.3
Female	28	63.7

Source: Research Data (2022).

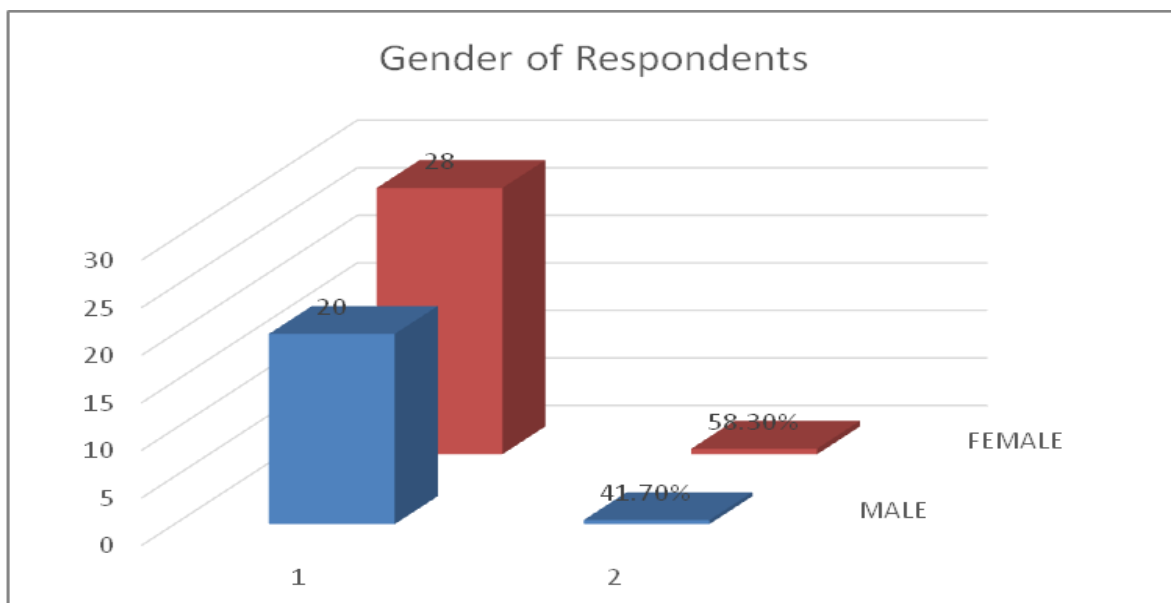


Fig 1 Distribution of Gender of Respondents

Table 2 and figure.1 shows the gender distribution of the respondents it revealed that there were 20(36.3%) of male and 28(63.7%) of female respondents this implies that more female are actively engaged the fast food sector in Rivers State.

It's interesting to note that the majority of the participants were female as depicted in table 2 and figure 1. Revealed that there were 20(36.3%) male and 28(63.7%) female respondents It was observed that the female participant was more when compared to their male counterparts in this survey. This is not surprising as is germane to note that more women would be engaged in the food business than their male counterpart

3. Corporate websites and Scores

Table 3: Mean rating on Corporate Websites

S/N	Corporate Websites	Mean	SD	95%CI	
				Lower	Upper
Q16	To what extent do you agree that the Corporate website of your firm would evoke a positive image for your customers?	3.92	1.285	1.5	2.5
Q17	To what extent would your customers Make purchase due to information Gleaned from your corporate website	4.08	1.269	7.0	8.03
Q18	To what extent would your firms Corporate website influence the perception of the image of the firm.	4.42	.942	4.1	5.3
Grand Mean		4.14	1.165	4.21	5.27

Source: SPSS Output 2022

Table 3 shows the mean (X) rating on corporate websites. The result indicates that respondents agree that corporate websites have a great influence on the perception of the image of the firm. This has a mean (X) rating of 4.42 and a standard deviation of .942 with a 95% confidence interval (CI) moving from 4.1 to 5.3. Also, respondents are in consensus that customers of the fast food firms make purchases of the product via the information they gleaned from the corporate websites. This has a mean (X) rating of 4.08 and a standard deviation of 1.269 with a 95% confidence interval (CI) moving from 7.0 to 8.03, while respondents also indicated that the corporate websites of the firms evoke a positive image for customers. This has a mean (X) rating of 3.92 and a standard deviation of 1.285 with a confidence interval (CI) moving from 1.5 to 2.5. The grand mean rating of 4.14 and a standard deviation of 1.165 shows that respondents to a high extent agree that the items explains corporate websites

Table 4 Stepwise Regression result on the influence of corporate websites on marketing performance of fast food firms

Dependent variable :(CPW)					
Variable	B	SEB	β	t	sig
CP	1080	.671	1317	.52952	000
Firm Size (FS)	1.991	.348		.997	000

Source: Author computation using SPSS version 22

$R^2 = .909$

Adjusted $R^2 = .910$

Decision Rule: if the Probability value of the coefficient is ≤ 0.05 (5%), the relationship is statistically significant but if otherwise, it is not significant. Also, the T statistics help to determine the relative importance of the predictor or the explanatory variable in the model.

When the absolute T Statistics value is greater than 2, the corresponding predictor significantly influences the explained or dependent variable in the model and thus plays a vital role in the model. As stated in Table 4 above, the t-statistics value of 5.2952 and the probability value of 0.0000 make the influence of the predictor (corporate website) significantly significant. This is also attested to by the R^2 value of 0.909. This shows that a proportionate variation in the dependent variable is explained by the predictor in the model, meaning that the model has a good fit. The Adjusted R^2 also affirms this by closely showing the goodness of fit of the model in the study population with a value of .910. With this, hypothesis H_{01} is rejected the alternate hypothesis is accepted. This means that corporate websites also has a significant influence on marketing performance of fast food firms in Port Harcourt Metropolis

The evidence from the multivariate analysis shows that there exists a significant moderating effect of corporate websites on the relationship between sales promotional strategies and marketing performance. The result suggests that corporate websites are a vital component and highly important component in marketing performance. This is true to the extent that the effect of corporate websites on the relationship between sales promotional strategies and marketing performance is positive, as it evidently strengthens the influence of sales promotional strategies and marketing performance of the fast food firms by reinforcing the perception of the customer to the corporate ambience, competence and professionalism of the fast food firm. This, therefore, implies that corporate websites are essential to the goal of achieving market leadership by the firms. This is explained by the fact that sales promotional strategies are used to promote the fast food firms and give a customer the perception of quality that the firm seeks to project

Conclusion and Recommendation

The study examined the extent to which corporate websites moderated between sales promotional strategies and marketing performance of fast food firms in Port Harcourt Metropolis. The result from our analysis revealed a significant and positive moderating effect of corporate websites on sales promotional strategies and marketing performance in fast food firms in Port Harcourt. We therefore conclude that, corporate websites significantly and positively moderate between sales promotional strategies and marketing performance in fast food firms in Port Harcourt. We also recommend that fast food firms should constantly develop and keep updating their corporate websites as it has a significant effect on the perception of customers about the firms. It also serves as a conduit to better inform prospective customers and existing customers about the brand.

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