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

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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 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 communication started shifting to electronic and digital media.

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

ever, many organizations seem not to understand how to use these techniques to maximum benefits from their investments in marketing. This study is, therefore, nvestigation into the impact of these techniques on purchase decision of communication service consumers in Nigeria. The specific objectives of this y 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

LITERATURE REVIEW

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

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

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

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

g to Becerra and Badrinarayanan (2013) members that demonstrate high ntification towards their brand community would contribute to brand m. A study by Becerra and Badrinarayanam (2013), among 325 members nd community indicated that feeling of brand attachment would influence rand referral and oppositional brand referral. In reality, word-of-mouth or rral could be positive or negative. Hence, it is important to understand how especially members of online brand community perceived the on's brand. According to Collins, Glabe, Mizerski and Murphy (2015), panies encourage brand evangelists to pass brand information along to ds, family and colleague who have an interest in the product or service. If ation is accurate and helpful customers always find it easy telling friends 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 repertories 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

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

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

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

ording to Jobbler (2004), the objective of the information search is to build up the areness set"- that is the array of brands that may provide a solution to the problem. Walker and Starton (1997) asserted that purchase decision requires rmation. Consumers need to know what products and brands are available, what ures and benefits they offer, who sell them, their prices and where they can be hased. Kotler and Keller (2009) made the point that if the target audience is are of the object, the communication task is to build awareness. They advised areness 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.

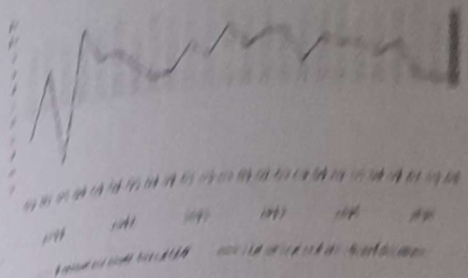
Background Information on Nigerian Telecommunication Companies

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.

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...unication in GDP and Growth
...Figure 2, Percentage Contribution of Telecommunication to constant prices ...P and annual growth



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

...n Figure 2, in real terms, the telecommunications sector contributed N 1,663 ...n to GDP in the fourth quarter of 2016, or 9.1%, which represents an increase of ...9 points relative to the previous quarter. The share of telecommunications in total ...l GDP had declined throughout 2010 to 2014 (NCC 2016), however, in 2015 and ...h, the telecommunications sector fared better than the overall economy, and ...ncrease the share of telecommunications in real GDP increased in both years, and ...d 9% in 2016. In contrast with the overall economy, real year on year growth in ...telecommunications sector remained positive throughout 2016, and in the final ...ters, telecommunications growth increased slightly, from 0.95% to 1.03%. The ...ast written record had shown that the global telecommunications market is really ...wing and changing (ITU Publications, 2002). According to the National ...munication Commission (2015), the telecom industry is probably Nigeria's ...vibrant and competitive industry after the petroleum sector. In their opinion, the ...prominent of these brands are the Global System for Mobile Communication, ...ll companies: MTN, Globacom, Airtel and Etisalat (9Mobile). Among these ...rate brands is shared a whopping 95% of the Nigeria telecommunications ...ess, valued at over 2 Trillion Naira, and an enviable subscriber base of ...22,483, (NCC, 2015). In what is seen as a hot contest to win more subscribers ...ir networks, each of the major operators is always on their toes in introducing ...fferings to the market.

...rical Review

...sen and Jan (2016) investigated how WOM mediates the relationship ...n the 4Ps and consumers responses using Partial Least Square on survey data ...ed from an online research panel comprising 25,000 members, from which a ...al 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

eight million users within three years of it debut. He also ...ral other cases where Buzz indeed generated a positive campaign. For ...e reported how Mark Cuban, the billionaire entrepreneur constantly ...commercial messages online that gets people's attention. Another classic ...ckin buzz generate massive attention is 'will it blend' at blendtec.com

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

METHODOLOGY

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

...get population is 15000 according to the University Registrar. The sample ...90 was obtained through Taro Yamane formula at the 5% significance level. ...naires were administered to randomly selected students by the researcher to ...mediate attention and response from respondents. The instrument used for ...data was designed and subjected to validity and reliability test (Cronbach's ...7). Data were analysed through Multiple Regression.

cussion and Results

le 4. Multiple Regression Results

of Hypothesis One

uzz marketing has no significant effect on customer loyalty

pendent Variables	Coefficients	Standard Error	T	*P*-value
l media	0.578	0.228	2.540	0.012
ing exciting messages	0.374	0.214	1.751	0.081
oversial stories	0.264	0.215	1.227	0.221
ing suspense around new services	0.695	0.241	2.884	0.004
g accurate information	0.906	0.200	4.531	0.000
e emotions	0.416	0.212	1.960	0.051

dent Variable: Customer Loyalty
: Research's Survey, 2019

ult shows that buzz marketing which are (social media, building suspense ew services and sending accurate information) have positive and significant n customer loyalty. This is shown by their probability value (0.012, 0.004 0) which is less than the chosen 0.5% significance level. The result also positive but not significant effect of sending exciting messages, rsial stories and engaging customer's emotions in a positive way on loyalty. A composite picture of all independent variables shows that buzz to a large extent has a significant effect on customer loyalty of unication service. This finding did not provide sufficient evidence to reject esis.

pothesis Two

narketing has no significant effect on brand awareness

nt Variables	Coefficients	Standard Error	T	*P*-value
ia	0.274	0.226	1.212	0.226
citing messages	0.318	0.213	1.496	0.136
al stories	0.415	0.214	1.937	0.054
spense around new services	0.703	0.240	2.932	0.004
urate information	0.816	0.199	4.104	0.000
otions towards	0.667	0.211	3.158	0.002

Variable: Brand Awareness
search's Survey, 2019

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ows that buzz marketing campaign mechanism such as building
of new services, sending accurate information, and positive emotions
and significant effects on brand awareness. This is shown by its
ue (p-value; 0.004, 0.000, and 0.002) being less than the chosen 5%
vel. The result also shows that buzz marketing campaign mechanisms
media, sending exciting messages and controversial stories have
significant effects on brand awareness at the 5%, significance level
osite picture of the p values suggests the null hypothesis should be

esis Three

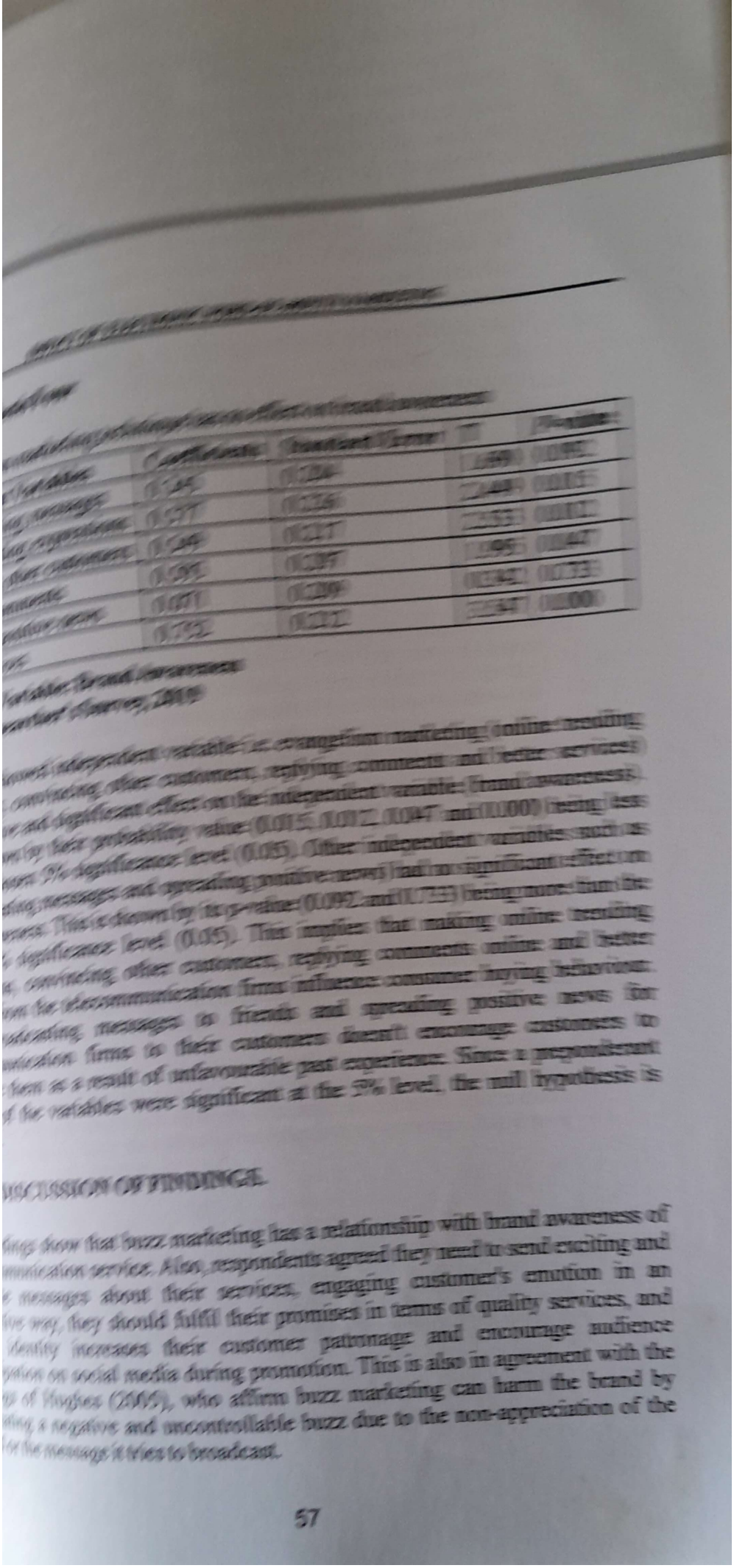
elationship between evangelism marketing technique and customer loyalty

Variables	Coefficients	Standard Error	T	P-value
g messages	0.202	0.197	1.025	0.306
g expressions	0.454	0.227	1.997	0.047
ner customers	0.487	0.209	2.334	0.020
ments	0.693	0.287	2.418	0.016
tive news	0.046	0.201	0.227	0.821
	1.240	0.204	6.071	0.000

iable: Total Customer Loyalty
cher's Survey, 2019

es the independent variable i.e. evangelism marketing (online
ions, convincing other customers, replying comments and better
positive and significant relationship with the dependent variable
. This is shown by their p-value (0.047, 0.020, 0.016 and 0.000)
e chosen 5% significance level (0.05). Other independent variables
casting messages and spreading positive news) have no significant
customer loyalty. This is shown by each of their p-value (0.306 and
re than the chosen 5% significance level (0.05). This reveals that
icant relationship between evangelism marketing technique and
Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

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

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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

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

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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