

Brand Image and Customer Purchase Intention in Nigeria's Telecommunications Sector

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Abstract

This study examines the effect of brand image on consumer purchase intentions in the Nigerian telecommunication sector. A survey was administered to a sample of 1,000 individuals in Katsina State, Nigeria revealing their level of familiarity and knowledge of the leading telecommunication brands in the country. The survey data was analyzed using structural equation modelling to examine the effect of brand image on consumer purchase intentions in Nigerian telecommunication sector. Results showed that brand image had a positive and significant effect on consumer purchase intentions in Nigerian telecommunication sector. The findings of this study provide valuable insights into consumer behaviour and could assist marketers in developing efficient strategies to improve consumers' purchase intentions for their brand. Implications of the findings and future research directions were discussed.

Keywords: Brand image, Customer purchase intention, Theory of planned behaviour

JEL Classification: L96

1. Introduction

The telecommunication sector and related services have had phenomenal growth over the last ten years, becoming one of the most significant economic sectors in developed countries and had an increasing amount of significance in societal life (Yaseen & Mazahir, 2019). The telecom industry continues to be a major force behind innovation and growth across all sectors. With an estimated 149.2 million users, Nigeria is projected to be one of the greatest telecommunication markets in the world (Agbonifoh & Ogbeide, 2022). According to Nwakanma et al. (2018) and

Agbonifoh & Ogbeide (2002), the industry contributes around 9.1% of the nation's GDP, and the number of customers have increased dramatically each year.

Currently, MTN, Airtel, Globacom, and 9Mobile are the four major mobile phone providers in Nigeria. The telecommunications sector in Nigeria has experienced phenomenal growth and intense competition as a consequence of the growing population of the nation (Abdulazeez, 2022). Competition in the Nigerian telecom sector is at an all-time high due to the wide variety of telecommunication networks available for subscription. As a result, each telecommunications service provider strives to keep its current clientele while luring new ones in (Elegbe & Adesanoye, 2018). The identification of the factors influencing purchase intention in the telecommunications sector is critical from a marketing viewpoint for the growth of the business because of the rising contribution and competition (Abubakar, 2020). Additionally, the Nigerian telecommunications industry and its employees have not demonstrated effective customer service; rather, they treat or attend to their customers impolitely. This has negatively impacted the personification of the telecommunications brand in Nigeria and has also caused customers to have a wrong perception of the firm, destroying its corporate image (Anucha & Anaweokhai, 2022).

Purchase intention is the term used to describe consumers' future intentions to make real purchases. The desire or incentive that develops in customers' thoughts to buy a specific brand after they evaluate it, before deciding to make any purchases based on their requirements, attitudes, and perceptions of the brands, is also referred to as purchase intention (Santoso & Cahyadi, 2014; Alharthey, 2019; Madahi & Sukati, 2012; Abina, 2018; Bhakar, Bhakar & Dubey, 2015). Purchase intention is influenced by consumer behaviour, attitudes, and expectations. A crucial factor in how consumers access and evaluate each product is their purchasing behaviour. Price, perceived quality, and product value can all have an impact on the choice to buy (Rai, 2020). When purchasing products and services, clients' buying decisions are impacted by internal and external influences (Gogoi, 2013). A positive brand image influences customers to make purchases and enhances their likelihood to do so (Gbadeyan & Abina, 2017).

In the modern era, brand is an important factor for increasing the progress of the company. In recent times, people are more conscious of the various brands on the market today than they were in the past. Companies can create a strong brand image to target consumers and better understand their needs. A brand image is a perception that has grown over time about a specific brand in consumers' minds. It refers to how current and potential customers perceive and relate to the brand (Anyadighibe et al., 2023). Companies can compete in a variety of market environments by creating a strong brand image in their consumers' minds (Sultan, Hasni, & Raza, 2020). When a customer makes a decision between brands, brand image influences their selection (Stocchi & Fuller, 2017). Sallam (2014) adds that as businesses want to improve consumers' perceptions of their goods, their brand image effectively sets them apart from rivals.

Nigerians have a wide range of alternatives when deciding on a particular mobile service provider. However, it is unclear what influences people to select their

service provider. This study aims to determine if brand image influences customers' purchasing intentions in the Nigerian telecoms market. As a result, the study proposed that brand image does not have significant effect on customers purchase intention in Nigeria telecommunications sector.

2. Literature Review

A brand is a term, name, design, symbol or other distinctive feature that sets one company's product apart from other companies (Waluya, Iqbal & Indradewa, 2019; Almousa & Kurt, 2020). Customers' perceptions of a particular brand are referred to as brand image. After acquiring information, it is a way by which consumers choose between a certain brand and readily available alternatives (Chen et al., 2018). The effective transmission of a company's name, logo, symbol, or other aspects, as well as customer perception and experience with the brand, as well as a wide range of societal factors, all contribute to the formation of the brand image (Rakib et al., 2022). Brand image, as defined by Ateke, Onwujiariri, and Nnennanya (2015), is the way consumers view a brand and is based on the brand associations they can remember. Ateke et al. (2015) go further to assert that functional and symbolic brand beliefs constitute a brand image. It is a potent, positive, and distinctive brand connection that results in a favourable outlook, perceived quality, and overall outcome. Brand image is a set of belief held by a consumer about a particular brand and what distinguishes it apart from its competitors. Brand image is what external people think about the product or services of a firm (Fakayode, 2021). The sales of a product are ultimately influenced by this image of a brand. It serves as a mirror in which the core values of the company are reflected. A strong brand image influences consumer purchasing behaviour directly and can facilitate decision-making, which encourages both primary and repeat purchases (Onigbinde & Odunlami, 2015). A strong brand image helps clients identify the needs that the brand satisfies and distinguishes it from its rivals, increasing the likelihood that they will buy the brand (Abdulazeez, 2022). Brand image is noted to be (a) priceless (b) as the fundamental marketing tool that businesses cannot ignore; (c) for fostering recognition, since individuals prefer to do business with or patronise companies they are acquainted with; (d) to help a firm stand out from the competition; (e) to image tells people about the DNA of a business, as the full brand experience; (f) to provide motivation and direction for the staff; and (g) to produce referrals. Cho, Fiore, and Russell (2015) further noted that the idea of brand image may be viewed in a variety of ways, including through the lens of a brand's benefits, tangible and intangible attributes, and overall impressions that customers have of the company.

The likelihood of a client to make a purchase, or buy intention, may be used to quantify actual purchase behaviour (Liu and Li, 2019; Trivedi and Raval, 2016). Consumer propensity to purchase a product may be described by the amount of purchasing intention. Purchase intention refers to consumers' expectations on upcoming product purchases (Mustapha, Ojeleye, & Umar, 2022). It describes an individual's preferred method of product acquisition and their classification of the available choices. Purchase intention serves as a proxy for consumer purchasing intent; hence, if purchase intention is high, it is likely that consumer willingness

to purchase will be as well (Rakib et al., 2022). At first, consumers will recognize the product before purchasing it, and then they will seek information about it, evaluate it, purchase it, and then provide feedback on their experience (Kotler et al., 2010). Customers' pre-purchase considerations reveal their intentions. Before making a purchase, customers' buying behaviour may be influenced by a number of variables, such as brand recognition, price, innovation awareness, quality, and the capacity to replicate (Rahim et al., 2016; Rakib, 2019). Additionally, purchase intentions were plans to make a future purchase of anything for use, but they come before a cognitive process that takes into account a number of variables, including consumers' perception about the brand or the individual initiator (Onu et al., 2019). Purchase intention refers to the customer's intention and plan to purchase a good or service (Padhy & Sawlikar, 2018; Noorlitaria et al., 2020). Purchase intention also refers to a customer's expectation of making further purchases in the future. Business organizations foresee their clients' purchasing behaviours based on this prediction (Civelek & Ertemelb, 2019). The two basic points of view on purchases are those of new and existing consumers. The purchase intention of new customers shows their interest, preferences, and general purchasing behaviour, whereas the purchase intention of existing customers predict their confidence, satisfaction and likelihood of repetitive purchase in the future (Santoso & Cahyadi, 2014; Ruangkanjanases et al., 2020). Marketers are constantly curious about the factors that affect consumer purchases. The goal of all marketers is to steer customers to a particular brand, and by being aware of these variables, they can accomplish this (Tariq et al., 2017).

Empirical Review

Purchase intention is positively impacted by brand image (Tariq et al., 2013). By increasing brand loyalty and customer trust in the product, a strong brand image can increase consumer buy intent (Yaseen & Mazahir, 2019). The brand image and purchase intention were found to have a substantial positive correlation in prior research (Fakharmanesh & Miyandehi, 2013). During the decision-making process for purchases, the brand image is important. Additionally, there is a larger chance that a customer will decide to buy well-known companies with a positive reputation since a strong brand image will increase the consumer's perception of the brand's worth (Wang & Tsai, 2014).

The effect of brand image (brand identity, awareness, and reputation) on consumers' patronage of certain gasoline filling stations in Calabar Metropolis was assessed by Anyadighibe et al. in 2023. The study performed multiple regression analysis using cross-sectional data. The results demonstrated that brand identity, awareness, and reputation have a favourable impact on consumers' consumption of gas stations in Calabar Metropolis. Similarly, the impact of service quality as a moderator on brand image and customer satisfaction as drivers of purchase intention was examined by Ojeleye et al. in 2023. The study utilised a sample size of 422, and partial least square structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) was used to analyse the data. The results show that brand image, customer happiness, and service quality substantially and positively influenced purchase intentions. Rakib et al. (2022) investigated the effects of product features, brand perception, price, and

social factors on young consumers' willingness to acquire smartphones during the Covid-19 epidemic. The study's findings show a considerable correlation between a Smartphone's features, brand image, price, and intention to purchase of 305. In the same vein, Savitri et al. (2022) investigated the connection between social media marketing and brand image, social media marketing and purchase intention, the interactions between brand image and purchase intention, and the relationship between social media marketing and purchase intention via brand image in Banten, Indonesia, where the respondents were Millennial Smartphone Consumers. The results of hypothesis testing revealed a positive and substantial link between brand image and purchase intention.

Mao et al. (2020) focused on analysing consumer purchasing behaviour utilising identity and brand-related variables. The study contributed to a conceptual framework that takes into account flow theory, brand image, brand communication, brand identity, and brand personality when examining purchase intention. Purchase intention is directly or indirectly explained by the flow experience, brand image, brand communication, brand personality, and brand identity. Additionally, Ahmad et al. (2019) looked at how young celebrity endorsements in social media marketing and brand image affected young customers' purchasing intentions. Four research studies provide the theoretical foundation for Shimp's TEARS Model of celebrity endorsement. In the TEARS Model, brand image was found to be one of the important predictors of purchase intention. Towing the same line of thought, in Karachi's telecommunications business, Yaseen and Mazahir (2019) examine the effects of corporate credibility, brand image, brand awareness, and brand loyalty on customers' purchase intentions. Brand image, followed by brand awareness, corporate credibility, and brand loyalty, was proven to be the best predictor of purchase intention.

Theory of Planned Behaviour

This study uses the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) as its guiding theory due of its relevance to this study. The TPB offers a comprehensive framework for conceptualising, testing, and experimentally detecting the elements that influence customers' purchase intentions, according to earlier studies (Ashraf et al., 2017; Lama, 2017). The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), which Martin Fishbein and Icek Ajzen jointly created in 1967 (and later modified till 1975), is an extension of the TPB, which Icek Ajzen developed in 1985 (Fatoki, 2020). The TPB's primary goal is to provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the many aspects that influence people's intentions (Rizwan et al., 2021). Since the beginning of the 21st century, a number of businesses, including retail, sports, health care, finance, and online shopping, have used the TPB to forecast customer behaviour (Arif, 2016; Ruangkanjanases et al., 2020). The TPB factors have a considerable influence on consumers' purchasing intentions, according to other studies (Tuan & Vinh, 2016; Lama, 2017; Fatoki, 2020). The TPB serves as evidence for the proposition that human intentions are significantly influenced by three factors: attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control.

3. Methodology

The study looked at how brand image affects customer purchase intentions using a quantitative research technique. For specific ideas to be well described in quantitative research, numbers must be used (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2014). As a result, the research strategy for the study was cross-sectional and survey. To answer a specific study topic, cross-section research, sometimes referred to as one-shot research, collects data just once, maybe over the course of days, weeks, or months (Ojeleye, Kareem, Chimezie, & Abdullahi, 2022; Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). In order to support contemporary statistical analysis, investigate the relationship between constructs, and enable appropriate and logical generalisations, the study also used a survey research design, which entails steps for gathering enormous amounts of data via questionnaires or interviews (Ojeleye, Ojeleye, Kareem, & Abdullahi, 2023). The study's sample size is infinite. In order to do this, the study used the purposive sampling method, which involved giving out 1,000 questionnaires to MTN, Glo, Airtel, and 9mobile users in Katsina State. In particular, two hundred and fifty (250) questionnaires were distributed to customers of each telecommunications outfit. Out of which 736 were returned correctly filled and used for the analysis. Specifically, 211, 179, 183 and 163 returned and correctly filled by MTN, Glo, Airtel and 9mobile customers.

Validated instruments from earlier investigations were adopted for this study. The four-item brand image measurement tool was developed by Lien, Wen, Huang, and Wu in 2015. The Cronbach alpha of the instrument is 0.739, demonstrating the consistency of the scale and its suitability for this study. The reasonable answer range for this item is 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The Cronbach alpha for this study is 0.866. Sample of question is "This company has a good reputation". Yoo, Donthu, and Lee's 3-item purchase intention scale was used to gauge consumer purchase intention. The Cronbach's alpha ranges from 0.89 to 0.94, indicating the consistency of the scale and its suitability for this study. A sample item is "I am willing to recommend that others buy this brand or product," with a possible response of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The study's Cronbach's alpha is 0.805.

The information gathered from respondents is examined in this section. The data was deemed clean after preliminary examination, which looked at the response rate, missing values, outliers, and normalcy. A structural equation model was also employed to test the proposed relationship. Using this description of the measurement and structural model, the investigation established the link that was hypothesised to exist.

4. Result

The structural equation modelling measurement model was used to assess internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. First, the item loading was assessed. Items with a loading of 0.5 or above should be maintained, whereas those with a loading of less than that should be eliminated, according to Hulland (1999). Each and every item that loaded more than 0.5 was preserved. The composite reliability was also used to assess the research constructs' consistency. All of the data in Table 1 below that are more than the cutoff value of 0.7,

according to Sekaran and Bougie (2016), demonstrate that the instrument is reliable and appropriate for the investigation. All average variance extracted (AVE) statistics used to show convergent validity, according to Fornell and Larcker (1981), are greater than the 0.5 threshold. so demonstrating the convergent validity of the study tool. Convergent validity, as defined by Hair, Hult, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2017), is the extent to which two assessments that are used to evaluate the same constructs disclose their connection.

Table 1: Study (n=736): Loadings, Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	Indicators	Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Brand Image	BI1	0.901	0.866	0.882	0.713
	BI2	0.821			
	BI3	0.833			
	BI4	0.711			
Purchase Intention	PI1	0.782	0.805	0.823	0.691
	PI2	0.765			
	PI3	0.854			

Source: Authors' Computation

Furthermore, Correlations between heterotraits and homotraits (HTMT) were used to evaluate the discriminant validity. Although the Fornell-Larcker criterion and cross-loadings are the most frequently used techniques for evaluating discriminant validity, Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2015) claimed that they do not consistently demonstrate no evidence of discriminant validity in real-world research scenarios, specifically whenever connection are between 0.65 and 0.85. HTMT was consequently applied. The relationships between the components of the HTMT statistics' reflective constructs are clearly necessary, as seen in Table 2. The Table displays that the HTMT values for each of the reflective latent constructs employed in this investigation fell within the range of 0.85 to 0.900 established by Henseler et al. (2015) as the cutoff for conceptually separate variables, indicating discriminant validity.

Table 2: Measurement Model: Discriminant Validity (Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT))

Constructs	BI	PI
BI		
PI	0.543	

Source: Authors' Computation

The study utilised structural equation model to ascertain the type of connection between BI and PI. 5000 bootstrap samples were utilised for 736 occurrences to examine the significance of the path coefficients of the direct linkages.

Table 5: Hypothesis Testing for the Direct Relationship

Hypotheses	Relationship	Beta	Standard Error	T-Values	P- Values	Decision
H ₀	BI->PI	0.326	0.074	4.405	0.000	Rejected
	<i>R² = 0.337</i>					

Note: p<0.05

Source: Authors' Computation

The hypothesis holds that, brand image (BI) and consumer purchase intentions (PI) are related in some way. The positive sign (0.326) in front of the beta coefficient in this case indicates that the variables directly correlate. Simply said, a stronger brand image will result in a 32.6% rise in customer purchase intentions. Therefore, the projected strength of the relationship between customer purchase intentions and brand image is shown by the beta coefficient (0.326). In this case, the beta coefficient is 0.326. The t-value (4.405) is calculated by dividing the beta coefficient by its standard error. It demonstrates the anticipated link between BI and PI's statistical significance. The p-value (0.000) associated with the t-value indicates the statistical significance of the association. The p-value in this instance is 0.000, indicating that brand image had a substantial impact on consumer purchase intentions among subscribers in Katsina State. (e.g., $p < 0.05$). H_0 is hence rejected in this context.

Brand image can indeed have a positive and significant effect on consumer purchase intentions among telecommunication subscribers in Katsina State. The finding is consistent with previous studies e.g., Ojeleye et al., 2023; Yaseen & Mazahir, 2019; Anyadighibe et al., 2023; Rakib et al., 2022; Savitri et al., 2022; Mao et al., 2020. This study reveals a compelling and robust connection. A positive brand image fosters consumer trust, loyalty, and satisfaction, which, in turn, lead to increased purchase intentions (Ojeleye et al., 2023). Customers are more likely to choose products and services from companies with favorable brand perceptions, as these perceptions create a sense of reliability, quality, and differentiation in a highly competitive market (Mao et al., 2020). Consequently, strategic brand management and marketing efforts that enhance brand image can effectively stimulate consumer purchasing behaviour, contributing to the overall success and profitability of telecommunication companies (Yaseen & Mazahir, 2019).

The practical implication of the finding that brand image has a positive and significant effect on consumer purchase intentions among subscribers of telecommunication companies is crucial for marketers and business leaders in the industry. Recognizing the importance of cultivating a strong and favorable brand image becomes paramount in order to attract and retain customers in a highly competitive market. Investing in strategic brand management, consistent messaging, and customer-focused marketing campaigns can help telecommunication companies create a positive brand perception, foster trust, and enhance consumer loyalty, leading to increased purchase intentions and revenue growth. Moreover, understanding the specific elements of brand image that resonate most with consumers allow companies to tailor their branding strategies effectively, ensuring their offerings align with customer expectations and preferences, thereby maximizing their market share and overall success in the industry.

The observation that brand image has a favourable and considerable impact on customer purchase intentions among subscribers of telecommunications providers is remarkable, as are the theoretical implications utilising the theory of planned behaviour (TPB). According to TPB, attitudes towards a conduct, subjective norms (social influence), and perceived behavioural control all have an impact on people's

intentions to engage in that action. In this context, a positive brand image can shape consumers' attitudes toward purchasing from a particular telecommunications company, as it signifies favorable perceptions of the brand's attributes and benefits. Additionally, positive brand associations can influence subjective norms, with consumers feeling more encouraged to make purchases due to the influence of their peers or societal norms. Furthermore, a strong brand image can enhance consumers' perceived behavioural control, as it may give them a sense of confidence in the company's products or services, making them more likely to follow through with their purchase intentions. Overall, the finding aligns with and enriches the theoretical framework of TPB, showcasing how brand image plays a pivotal role in shaping consumers' purchase intentions within the telecommunication sector.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

The study on the beneficial and substantial impact of brand image on consumer purchase intentions among telecom customers in Katsina State concludes by highlighting the critical role that branding plays in influencing consumer behaviour in this highly competitive industry. The findings underscore the importance of fostering a strong and favorable brand image to build trust, loyalty, and satisfaction among customers, ultimately driving their intentions to make purchases. Marketers and business leaders in the telecommunication sector should recognize the power of strategic brand management, consistent messaging, and customer-focused marketing efforts in shaping positive brand perceptions. Moreover, the theoretical implications derived from the theory of Planned Behaviour reinforce the relevance of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control in understanding and predicting consumer purchasing decisions in relation to brand image. By leveraging these insights, telecommunication companies can tailor their branding strategies effectively, enhancing their market positioning, and sustaining long-term success in the dynamic and evolving marketplace.

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