



## MARKETING COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES AND CONSUMER BRAND LOYALTY FOR AUTOMOBILES IN CALABAR, NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

The focus of this study was on marketing communication strategies and consumer brand loyalty towards automobiles in Calabar, Nigeria. Its specific purpose was to ascertain the influences of advertising, social media marketing and sales promotion on consumer brand loyalty towards automobiles. The research utilized a cross-sectional survey approach, employing a structured questionnaire to gather primary data from 357 automobile owners chosen through judgmental sampling. Descriptive statistics were employed to analyze and interpret the data, and the study's hypotheses were assessed using multiple linear regression method. The results of the research disclosed that social media marketing, sales promotion and advertising had significant positive influences on consumer brand loyalty towards automobiles. This entails that among the marketing communication strategies tested, social media marketing emerged the most crucial in positively influencing consumer brand loyalty towards automobiles. Therefore, we presented the following recommendations: automobile marketers should intensify the use of advertising media such as print, television and outdoor to promote key features and performance of their brands to customers in order to influence customers' preference and patronage; the enormous connectivity and reach of social media should be harnessed by automobiles marketers to execute strategies such as influencer marketing, virtual customer engagement and targeted promotional campaigns to attract customer patronage; and special price deals, discounts and premiums should be offered to customers in a sales promotional campaign to entice and induce patronage and repeat patronage of automobile brands.

**Keywords:** Marketing communications, Consumer brand loyalty, Advertising, Social media marketing, Sales promotion.

### INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary competitive business landscape, the loyalty of consumers to specific brands significantly influences the success of business enterprises (Coelho et al., 2018). Brand loyalty denotes a customer's steadfast preference and dedication to a particular brand, resulting in recurrent purchases and favorable recommendations (Yeh et al., 2016). It represents the extent to which a consumer consistently selects a specific product or service from a particular brand over available alternatives. According to Leckie et al. (2018), maintaining consumer brand loyalty is pivotal for marketing effectiveness because loyal consumers tend to repeatedly patronize the brand, leading to increased sales and revenue.



Similarly, when a brand has a loyal customer base, they do not need to spend as much money on marketing and advertising to attract new customers. They can focus on nurturing and retaining their existing customers instead. In recognition of the imperative roles of consumer brand loyalty in enhancing marketing performance, business organizations, in several sectors, including automobiles, are applying a variety of marketing strategies to improve consumer loyalty. Extant research shows that marketing communication strategies are popularly applied by automobile brands around the world in response to competitive pressure (Al-Tawil & Al-Tawil, 2020; Bhattacharya & Chatterjee, 2019; Nyaga et al., 2021; Hussain et al., 2018).

According to Appiah-Kubi et al. (2022), marketing communication is the process through which business organizations communicate persuasively with customers to inform, enlighten, and convince them to patronize their services. There are several marketing communication strategies applied by automobile marketers, but this study is concerned with advertising, social media marketing and sales promotion. Advertising involves the impersonal promotion and presentation of automotive brands across various media channels, facilitated by a recognized sponsor with the aim of boosting sales and fostering customer patronage (Al-Sabbah & Al-Nimer, 2019).

Social media marketing is the utilization of social media platforms and networks to promote the sales of automobile brands to customers (Sharma & Singh, 2021). On the other hand, sales promotion is a collection of short-term incentives used by automobile marketers to entice customers and stimulate customer patronage (Al-Tawil & Al-Tawil, 2020). Due to intense competitive pressure in the automobiles sector, marketers are applying these marketing communication strategies in their effort to gain market share and guard against customer takeovers.

Similarly, Adebajo and Mann (2020) observed that the need for product differentiation is a key factor driving automobile marketers in Nigeria to apply communication strategies. The market for automobiles in Nigeria is highly competitive, with many automobile brands competing for the same customers. As a result, automobile marketers face the challenge of differentiating their products from those of their competitors (Ekanem & Ogunrinola, 2021; Olufemi, 2019).

To this end, automobile marketers have resorted to marketing communication strategies to promote their brands to customers. However, the problem of this study is that although marketers of automobiles have resorted to marketing communications strategies to weather competition, there is insufficient empirical evidence of its effectiveness in improving brand loyalty. An initial scoping review of pertinent research articles revealed that despite numerous studies conducted in Nigeria concerning marketing communication and brand loyalty, there has been a notable neglect in addressing the context of automobiles.

It was observed in the literature that the overwhelming majority of Nigerian studies on the subject were restricted to fast-moving consumer goods (Oladebo & Abimbola, 2015), banks (Zephaniah et al., 2020; Anyadighibe et al., 2021), telecommunication companies (Oluwafemi & Adebisi, 2018; Egwuonwu et al., 2017), and hospitality firms (Ogah et al., 2018; Etim et al., 2021). This suggests that there is a lack of substantial empirical data concerning the relationship between promotional mix strategies and customer loyalty to automotive brands within the Nigerian market. Therefore, this study sought to determine the effect of marketing communication strategies on consumer brand loyalty towards automobiles in Nigeria. The study's specific aims were thus to:

- i. investigate the effect of advertising on consumer brand loyalty towards automobiles;

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- ii. assess the effect of social media marketing on consumer brand loyalty towards automobiles;
- iii. ascertain the effect of sales promotion on consumer brand loyalty towards automobiles.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Marketing Communications

Marketing communication encompasses a wide array of strategies aimed at conveying a message from a company to its intended audience. This includes various channels through which businesses engage with their customers in a compelling manner, such as sales promotions, advertising, personal selling, public relations, and direct marketing (Appiah-Kubi et al., 2022). According to Bhattacharya and Chatterjee (2019), marketing communication plays a vital role in building and maintaining relationships between businesses and their customers. Similarly, Coelho et al. (2018) maintained that the application of marketing communication by business organizations involves the use of an integrated approach. This approach ensures that a business utilizes the best mix of tools and techniques to deliver its message effectively. It also ensures that marketing communication is delivered through multiple channels to reach a wider audience (Egwuonwu et al., 2017).

Furthermore, Ekanem and Ogunrinola (2021) observed that one of the key components of marketing communication is advertising, which involves creating and disseminating a message that promotes a product or service. Advertising can take many forms, from print advertisements in newspapers and magazines to commercials on television and radio, to digital advertisements on social media and search engines. Another important component of marketing communication is public relations, which involves creating and maintaining a positive image for a business in the eyes of its stakeholders (Etim et al., 2021). This involves communicating with the media, bloggers, influencers, and other stakeholders to promote the business, its products, and its services. Sales promotions are also an essential element of marketing communication, which include any type of promotion that encourages customers to purchase a product or service (Hussain et al., 2018). This can take many forms, such as discounts, coupons, free trials, and loyalty programs. Direct marketing, and personal selling are also key marketing communication tools in marketing (Leckie et al., 2018). In a competitive business environment, marketing communication is critical to the success of a business. It helps businesses to differentiate themselves from their competition, build brand awareness, and create a loyal customer base (Nyaga et al., 2021).

### Consumer Brand Loyalty

Consumer brand loyalty can be defined as the consistent purchasing habit of consumers towards a specific brand or product (Oluwafemi & Adebisi, 2018). It is the degree to which a particular product or service is preferred by a customer over other similar products or services. Consumer brand loyalty is a significant factor that impacts marketing strategies, business development and



growth, and financial success (Oluwaseun & Adeola, 2022). According to Sharma and Singh (2021), there are various interpretations of consumer brand loyalty in different contexts. First, behavioral loyalty refers to the repurchasing habit of consumers based on previous experience. In other words, a consumer who has previously purchased a product or service would consistently buy it again in the future. Second, attitudinal loyalty demonstrates consumers' sentimental attachment to a particular brand or product based on certain features such as quality, design, image, and ethical standards (Zephaniah et al., 2020). Third, composite loyalty reflects consumers' commitment to a brand or product based on both behavioral and attitudinal components (Huang & Su, 2021). In the view of Kimani et al. (2018), consumer brand loyalty is essential for businesses operating in a highly competitive marketplace. It offers numerous benefits, such as creating a more stable customer base and generating customer retention.

Brands that have a high level of consumer brand loyalty are more likely to experience repeat business and customer referrals (Nyambura & Kamau, 2021). It also enhances customer trust and reduces customers' risk aversion since loyal customers prefer a specific product or service over competitors and do not look for alternative options. Moreover, loyal customers are more likely to pay a premium price for a product or service, contributing to financial success. Also, consumers who are brand loyal are less susceptible to competitors' marketing campaigns. They may remain loyal even with minor fluctuations in product quality, price, or features compared to similar products or services in the market. Furthermore, Silva and Costa (2020) maintained that consumer brand loyalty helps businesses to identify product or service gaps and make improvements by gathering feedback from loyal customers. Companies can evaluate brand preferences and determine which features are most appealing to their customers by conducting market research surveys or analyzing social media feedback. By maintaining strong consumer brand loyalty, a crucial relationship develops between the business and its customer base (Mendes & Machado, 2019).

### **Advertising and Consumer Brand Loyalty**

Advertising involves the strategic promotion of products, services, or concepts across diverse mass communication platforms, aimed at enhancing consumer awareness and ultimately stimulating sales (Benali & El Kabbaj, 2022). The advertising industry has significantly evolved over the years with the introduction of digital tools and platforms for advertising. Chen and Lin (2018) submitted that advertising is an important aspect of marketing and plays a critical role in creating brand awareness, driving sales, and influencing consumer behavior. According to Wu and Huang (2021), advertising can be defined as the process of creating or presenting persuasive messages or information through the mass media that inform prospective customers of the features, benefits, and advantages of a product or service, with a view of prompting them to make a purchase or take a specific action. It can be done through various mass media channels such as television, radio, billboards, print ads, social media, and influencer marketing, among others (Al-Saud & Al-Rashed, 2019). The ultimate goal of advertising is to create an emotional connection with the target audience and foster brand loyalty. In the view of Al-Harbi and Al-Mutairi (2020), advertising is a vital constituent of marketing as it helps organizations to reach out to their target audience more effectively. Through advertising, companies can build brand equity, establish brand recognition, and increase sales revenue.

In addition, Haile and Negash (2022) asserted that advertising helps companies to differentiate their



products or services from competitors and convince the target audience to choose their brand over others. Similarly, Alemu and Mohammed (2017) maintained that advertising plays a substantial part in improving brand loyalty. When consumers encounter advertising messages that resonate with them in terms of appeal, relevance, and informativeness, they tend to foster a favorable perception of the brand and its offerings. This positive attitude towards the brand correlates with an increased likelihood of consumers making purchases of the advertised products or services (Anyadighibe et al., 2021). Such observations underscore the effectiveness of advertising as a marketing communication tool capable of positively shaping consumer loyalty towards brands. This assertion finds support in various studies. For instance, Anyadighibe et al. (2021) demonstrated the significant positive impact of advertising on the marketing of insurance services. Similarly, Bhattacharya and Chatterjee (2019) highlighted the significant positive influence of advertising on consumer brand loyalty within the automotive sector in India. Likewise, Al-Sabbah and Al-Nimer (2019) unveiled the positive effect of advertising on consumer brand loyalty towards automobile brands, a sentiment echoed by Al-Tawil and Al-Tawil (2020) within the Jordanian automotive industry. These findings are consistent with Appiah-Kubi et al. (2022), who found a significant positive relationship between advertising and consumer brand loyalty towards automobiles in Ghana. Furthermore, Egwuonwu et al. (2017) demonstrated how advertising significantly impacts customer loyalty towards telecommunication companies in Nigeria, while Etim et al. (2021) concluded that advertising positively influences the performance of hotels in Nigeria. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

*H<sub>1</sub>: Advertising has a significant effect on consumer brand loyalty towards automobiles in Nigeria*

### **Social Media Marketing and Consumer Brand Loyalty**

In recent years, the popularity of social media marketing has surged alongside the emergence of platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and LinkedIn (Oluwaseun & Adeola, 2022). It has evolved into an essential component of digital marketing, leveraging social media platforms for product and service promotion (Yeh et al., 2016). This marketing approach entails crafting and distributing content across various social media channels to engage a specific target demographic (Zephaniah et al., 2020). According to Huang and Su (2021), social media marketing serves to cultivate and uphold a company's image, enhance brand recognition, draw in new clientele, and foster customer loyalty. The main objective of social media marketing is to engage with the audience and build a relationship with them (Kimani et al., 2018). By doing so, social media marketing enables businesses to interact with their customers, gather feedback, and provide customer support.

Similarly, Nyambura and Kamau (2021) observed that social media marketing can be used to promote content like infographics, blogs, videos, and articles. Such content can be used to educate the audience about the business or industry, answer frequently asked questions, or promote products and services. Furthermore, Silva and Costa (2020) opined that social media enables companies build relationships with customers. By engaging with customers, answering their questions, and addressing their concerns, businesses can build a loyal customer base. Similarly, Mendes and Machado (2019) added that social media marketing can increase brand awareness, which is essential for building brand loyalty. By regularly promoting their products or services using social media, the visibility and findability of companies can be significantly enhanced. In addition, social media marketing can be used to create shareable content that customers can share with their friends and





family, which may enhance brand awareness and new customer acquisition (Ahmed & Ali, 2017; Eze et al., 2018). The foregoing viewpoint suggests that social media marketing is an effective marketing communication strategy capable of positively influencing consumer brand loyalty. This perspective is supported by Al-Sabbah and Al-Nimer's (2019) research, demonstrating that social media marketing positively impacted consumer brand loyalty towards automobile brands. Similarly, Appiah-Kubi et al. (2022) found a significant positive correlation between social media marketing and consumer brand loyalty towards automobiles in Ghana. Hussain et al. (2018) also discovered a significant positive effect of social media marketing on consumer brand loyalty towards automotive brands in Pakistan. This aligns with Nyaga et al.'s (2021) findings, illustrating a positive relationship between social media marketing and consumer loyalty towards automotive brands in Kenya. Furthermore, Sharma and Singh (2021) concluded that social media marketing had a significant positive influence on consumer loyalty towards automotive brands in India. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

*H<sub>2</sub>: Social media marketing has a significant effect on consumer brand loyalty towards automobiles in Nigeria*

### **Sales Promotion and Consumer Brand Loyalty**

Sales promotion is one of the integral components of the marketing mix. It involves activities that are designed to stimulate demand for a product or service while also increasing sales (Adebanjo & Mann, 2020). Sales promotion is vital in ensuring that companies achieve their sales targets and business objectives. With increased competition in the global marketplace, companies are adopting different sales promotion techniques to succeed (Coelho et al., 2018). As stated by Ekanem and Ogunrinola (2021), sales promotion encompasses a range of marketing initiatives aimed at temporarily increasing the sales of a product. This approach serves as a brief-term tactic adopted by businesses to incentivize customers to make purchases of their offerings. It includes activities such as coupons, discounts, premiums, sweepstakes, and contests. In the view of Leckie et al. (2018), sales promotion is used by companies to create excitement and urgency around their products, thereby encouraging customers to act quickly to take advantage of the promotion. It is an integral part of the marketing strategy that is used to achieve the company's sales objectives.

Furthermore, Ogah et al. (2018) observed that sales promotion is essential in marketing because it helps companies to attract new customers who may not have considered buying their products or services. Similarly, Oladepo and Abimbola (2015) asserted that sales promotion activities such as discounts, coupons, and free samples can help customers recognize and remember a brand. When a customer associates a brand with a positive experience, they are likely to remain loyal to the brand. In addition, sales promotion can increase the perceived value of a product. Promotions such as discounts, offers, and free samples make customers feel like they are getting a good deal, which can lead to increased brand loyalty (Olufemi, 2019; Isichei et al., 2023). The preceding perspective proposes that utilizing sales promotion as a marketing communication tactic can effectively enhance consumer loyalty towards a brand. This perspective finds support in various studies. For instance, Al-Tawil and Al-Tawil's (2020) research demonstrated a substantial positive correlation between sales promotion and consumer brand loyalty within the Jordanian automotive sector. Similarly, Appiah-Kubi et al. (2022) uncovered a significant positive association between sales promotion and consumer brand loyalty in the automobile industry of Ghana. Similarly, Bhattacharya and Chatterjee (2019) discovered a notable positive impact of sales promotion on consumer brand loyalty in the

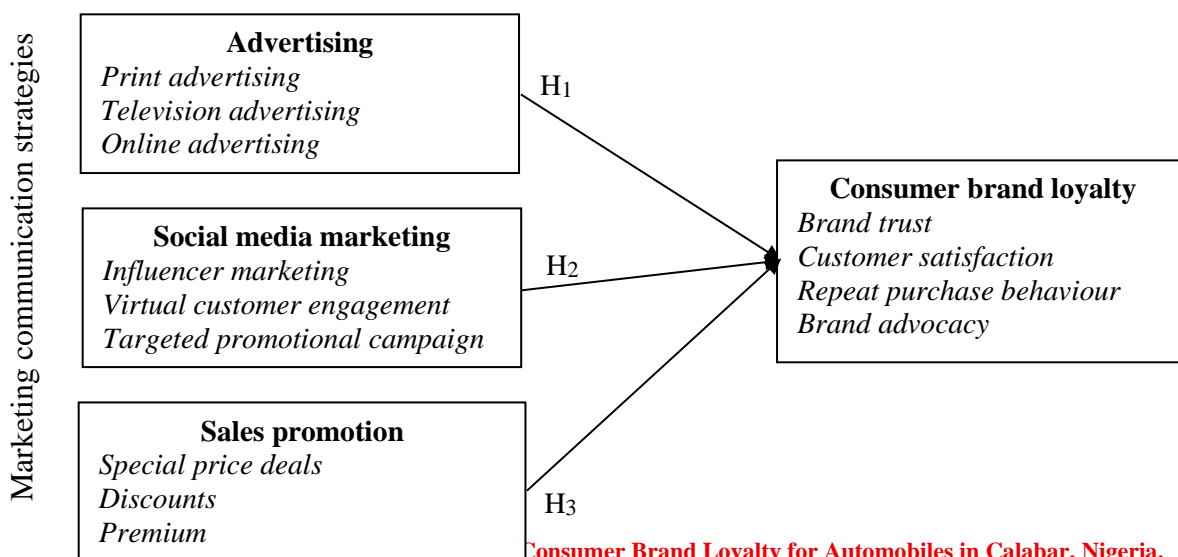


Indian automotive market. This conclusion resonates with the findings of Hussain et al. (2018), who identified a significant positive influence of sales promotion on consumer brand loyalty within the Pakistani automotive industry. Moreover, Oluwafemi et al. (2018) revealed a significant effect of sales promotion on customer loyalty among telecommunication subscribers in Lagos Metropolis. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

*H<sub>3</sub>: Sales promotion has a significant effect on consumer brand loyalty towards automobiles in Nigeria*

### Research Model Conceptualization

The study examined marketing communication strategies and consumer brand loyalty for automobiles. The study aimed to investigate how marketing communication strategies, as the independent variable, influence consumer brand loyalty, the dependent variable, within the Nigerian automotive industry. Given that in the social sciences, concepts are not studied directly (Zeller & Carmines, 1980; Stockemer et al., 2019), there was need to identify relevant parameters to represent both the independent and dependent variables. This prompted an exploratory review of extant relevant studies in available literature to identify measurement parameters for the variables of the study. This ensures a solid foundation for measurement and analysis in the absence of direct examination of the concepts themselves. As such, from the account of existing empirical review, the study adopts advertising, sales promotion, and social media marketing as indicators of marketing communications. On the other hand, the dependent variable (consumer brand loyalty) was assessed through parameters including brand trust, customer satisfaction, repeat purchase behavior, and brand advocacy. In this study, advertising was defined as the use of mass media by identified sponsors to present and promote automobile brands in a non-personal manner, aiming to drive sales and attract customers. Social media marketing referred to the utilization of social media platforms and networks to promote automobile brands and reach out to customers. Sales promotion, on the other hand, was seen as a collection of short-term incentives employed by automobile marketers to entice customers and stimulate patronage. Drawing upon prior empirical research, this investigation posits the assumption that there is a correlation between marketing communication strategies and consumer loyalty to automotive brands in Nigeria. To illustrate this conjecture visually, the study employs a conceptual framework (see FIG. 1) derived from prior literature, adapted to suit the particular context of this current inquiry.



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**FIG. 1:** Adapted conceptual model of the study

**Source:** Parameters of independent variables adapted from Etim et al. (2021); Hussain et al. (2018); Nyaga et al. (2021); Oluwafemi et al. (2018). Parameters of dependent variable adapted from: Bhattacharya and Chatterjee (2019); Sharma and Singh (2021)

### **Theoretical Framework**

This research is grounded in Logan and Edwards' (2004) rapid response model (RRM), which highlights the efficacy of marketing communication in generating prompt and favorable reactions from intended recipients. Logan and Edwards (2004) initially proposed the RRM, advocating for timely and efficient tactics to evoke swift and positive feedback from target audiences. The major premise of the theory is that by triggering cognitive reactions through integrated marketing communication, firms can engage and influence consumers, aiming for immediate and positive reactions (Logan & Edwards, 2004). This model recognizes the challenge of capturing and retaining consumers' attention in today's fast-paced world, stressing the importance of impactful and timely communication that resonates with the audience. According to Schoemaker and Stam (2006), the rapid response model in marketing is based on three key elements: agility, relevance, and interactivity. Agility refers to marketers' ability to quickly adapt to changing market dynamics and consumer preferences. By staying updated on trends and consumer insights, marketers can customize their communication strategies to meet the evolving needs of their target audience. Relevance is crucial, as it emphasizes delivering messages that are highly pertinent and meaningful to the target audience (Kim & Stout, 2008).

By understanding their interests and motivations, marketers can establish a strong connection with consumers, leading to rapid and positive responses. Interactivity plays a significant role in the rapid response model by recognizing the growing demand for two-way communication between brands and consumers (Yang & Kang, 2010). Interactive platforms such as social media, live chats, and user-generated content allow marketers to engage in active dialogue with their audience, promptly addressing inquiries and concerns. This approach not only builds trust and loyalty but also enhances brand-consumer relationships. The relevance of the rapid response model of communication to this study is that it suggests that marketers of automobiles in Calabar can effectively elicit cognitive, affective and conative responses from customers by integrating marketing communication strategies into their marketing campaigns. The model suggests that for such an effort to be successful in eliciting positive responses from customers, three (3) core elements are critical, namely, agility, relevance and interactivity. Moreover, the rapid response model encourages the use of compelling storytelling techniques by automobiles marketers. By crafting narratives that resonate with the target audience's emotions and aspirations, it suggests that automobiles marketers can create a powerful connection that motivates immediate action. The theory also suggested that incorporating interactive communication platforms such as social media marketing, along with other communication channels like advertising and sales promotion can have a profound impact on the responses of consumers.





## METHODOLOGY

This research employed a cross-sectional survey approach, utilizing a structured questionnaire to gather information from automobile brand owners residing in Calabar. The implementation of this survey design involved a singular data collection process conducted within a specific timeframe. This approach aimed to minimize the resources and time required for data collection, as opposed to conducting the procedure repeatedly over an extended period. This enabled the study to capture a snapshot of current state of the relationship between the study variables at a particular moment. By adopting this approach, the study aimed to optimize efficiency and minimize the need for continuous data collection as would have been the case in a longitudinal study.

### *Population and Sample Size*

The target population of this study comprised all owners of automobile brands in Calabar, Cross River State. However, due to the inaccessibility of information regarding all car owners in Calabar as of the time of the research, the population was numerically unknown. Therefore, for the sake of sample size determination, the study followed the Topman sample size determination procedure thus:

$$n = \frac{Z^2Pq}{e^2}$$

Where	n:	Sample size required
	Z:	Tabular statistical unit (1.96)
	P:	Probability of positive response (0.44)
	q:	Probability of negative response (0.56)
	e:	Margin of error (5 percent)

To obtain the probabilities of positive and negative responses (P and q respectively), the researcher conducted a pilot survey in July, 2023 by interviewing a random selection of 50 respondents found along Bedwell Road, Calabar, a popular location for auto dealers. These respondents were asked to identify whether or not they owned a personal car. Out of the 50 respondents interviewed, 22 respondents or 44 percent said that they owned a personal car, while 28 respondents or 56 percent said that they did not own a personal car. From the result of the pilot survey above, the Probability of Positive Responses (P) is 0.44, while the Probability of Negative Responses is 0.56. By simple substitution, the Topman formula was applied thus:

$$\begin{aligned} n &= \frac{1.96^2 (0.44 \times 0.56)}{0.05^2} \\ &= \frac{3.8416 (0.2464)}{0.0025} \end{aligned}$$

$$= \frac{0.9466}{0.0025}$$

$$= 378.64$$

$$n = 379 \text{ owners of automobiles approximately}$$

Having determined a definitive sample size for the study, we adopted judgmental sampling technique to recruit respondents into the survey. Along with a 3-member team of assistants, we



visited popular locations in Calabar where auto dealers and owners converged on a daily basis. Respondents found at the locations were then confirmed through enquiry to be actual car owners, before being included in the survey. The rationale for adopting judgmental sampling was that it would be more efficient to survey car owners at the locations where automobile accessories were being sold. Hence, this sampling technique ensured that only respondents who were actual car owners were ultimately included in the survey.

*Source and Methods of Data Collection*

This research utilized primary data collected from car owners in Calabar through a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire comprised two sections: Section A aimed at gathering demographic information such as age, gender, marital status, and educational background, while Section B included statements derived from previous studies to evaluate study variables. The marketing communication strategies parameters (advertising, social media marketing, and sales promotion) were adapted from various sources (Etim et al., 2021; Hussain et al., 2018; Nyaga et al., 2021; Oluwafemi et al., 2018), while the consumer brand loyalty parameters (brand trust, customer satisfaction, repeat purchase behavior, and brand advocacy) were adapted from other studies (Bhattacharya and Chatterjee, 2019; Sharma and Singh, 2021). Statements 1-3 assessed advertising, 4-6 evaluated social media marketing, 7-9 measured sales promotion, and 10-13 examined consumer brand loyalty. Respondents' opinions were assessed using a 5-point Likert scale.

*Questionnaire Reliability and Data Analytical Method*

The questionnaire used in this study underwent assessments for reliability using the Cronbach alpha procedure. The researchers personally conducted a preliminary survey, distributing questionnaires to 30 randomly selected car owners in Calabar. These participants were briefed on responding accurately to minimize errors. Subsequently, collected data were coded and analyzed using SPSS 23. Results (refer to Table 1) indicated Cronbach's alpha coefficients above 0.7 for all questionnaire scales, affirming the instrument's reliability for field data collection in the study.

**Table 1: Summary of reliability results**

SN	Variables	No. of items	Alpha coefficients
1	Advertising	3	.818
2	Social media marketing	3	.742
3	Sales promotion	3	.709
4	Consumer brand loyalty	4	.862
		<b>13</b>	

Source: Authors' Analysis Via SPSS 2024

Having confirmed the questionnaire to be reliable statistically, it was adopted for field administration, leading to the collection of primary data for the research. The collected data underwent analysis and interpretation utilizing descriptive statistical methods, while the study's hypotheses underwent testing through multiple linear regression employing the following model:

$$CBLOY = a + \beta_1ADS + \beta_2SMMARK + \beta_3SALESPROM + e$$



Where:

CBLOY =	Consumer brand loyalty
a =	The intercept (or constant)
$\beta_1$ ADS =	Coefficient of advertising
$\beta_2$ SMMARK =	Coefficient of social media marketing
$\beta_3$ SALESPROM =	Coefficient of sales promotion
e =	Error margin (5 percent)

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### *Data Analysis and Interpretation*

In the course of the questionnaire survey, we distributed 379 questionnaire copies to automobile owners. Of these, 357 copies, accounting for 94.2 percent, were successfully collected, while the remaining 22 copies, constituting 5.8 percent, were not returned. Consequently, our overall response rate stood at 94.2 percent.

### *Hypothesis one*

Ho: Advertising has no significant effect on consumer brand loyalty towards automobiles in Nigeria.

### *Hypothesis two*

Ho: Social media marketing has no significant effect on consumer brand loyalty towards automobiles in Nigeria.

### *Hypothesis three*

Ho: Sales promotion has no significant effect on consumer brand loyalty towards automobiles in Nigeria.

*Predictor variables:* Advertising, social media marketing and sales promotion

*Dependent variable:* Consumer brand loyalty

*Decision criteria:* Accept the alternative hypothesis if ( $P < .05$ ) and reject the null hypothesis, if otherwise.

**Table 2: Model summary of the effect of marketing communication strategies on consumer brand loyalty towards automobiles in Nigeria**



Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.622 <sup>a</sup>	.386	.378	.45801

a. Predictors: (Constant), Advertising, social media marketing and sales promotion

Source: Authors' Analysis Via SPSS 2024

**Table 3: ANOVA<sup>a</sup> of the effect of marketing communication strategies on consumer brand loyalty towards automobiles in Nigeria**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	46.341	3	15.447	73.557	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	73.632	351	.210		
	Total	119.973	356			

a. Dependent Variable: Consumer brand loyalty

b. Predictors: (Constant), Advertising, social media marketing and sales promotion

Source: Authors' Analysis Via SPSS 2024

**Table 4: Coefficients<sup>a</sup> of the effect of marketing communication strategies on consumer brand loyalty towards automobiles in Nigeria**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.485	.110		13.480	.000
	Advertising	.188	.039	.266	4.807	.000
	Social media marketing	.199	.037	.328	5.342	.000
	Sales promotion	.163	.032	.309	5.021	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Consumer brand loyalty

Source: Authors' Analysis Via SPSS 2024

The outcomes illustrated in Tables 2, 3, and 4 elucidate the effect of marketing communication strategies on consumer loyalty to automobile brands in Nigeria. Table 2 reports a correlation coefficient ( $R = 0.622$ ), which denotes a strong association of 62.2 percent between marketing communication strategies and consumer loyalty to automobile brands in Nigeria. This highlights a robust relationship within the study's scope. Moreover, the coefficient of determination ( $R^2 = 0.386$ ) suggests that marketing communication strategies can explain up to 38.6 percent of the variability in consumer loyalty to automobile brands in Nigeria, assuming other factors remain constant. The statistical significance of the effect of marketing communication strategies on consumer loyalty to automobile brands in Calabar is evident from Table 3, where  $F = 73.557$  and  $p = 0.000$ .

Additionally, the standardized coefficients in Table 4 unveil that social media marketing holds the highest contribution to the regression model, with a beta coefficient of 0.328 (32.8 percent), followed by sales promotion at 0.309 (30.9 percent). Conversely, advertising, with a beta coefficient of 0.266 (26.6 percent), emerges as the least influential variable. Thus, in terms of importance, social media marketing ranked highest among the marketing communication strategies pertinent to automobile marketing, followed by sales promotion and advertising.



Furthermore, Table 4 demonstrates that all dimensions tested yielded p-values below the 0.05 error margin, accompanied by positive t-test values [(advertising: p-value = 0.000, t = 4.807); (social media marketing: p-value = 0.000, t = 5.342); and (sales promotion: p-value = 0.000, t = 5.021)]. This signifies the significant positive effects of advertising, social media marketing, and sales promotion on consumer loyalty to automobile brands in Nigeria.

### *Discussion of Findings*

The examination of hypothesis one indicated that advertising significantly enhances consumer loyalty to automobile brands in Nigeria. This assertion is consistent with the research conducted by Anyadighibe et al. (2021), which demonstrated a notable positive impact of advertising on the promotion of insurance services. Similarly, Bhattacharya and Chatterjee (2019) found a significant positive correlation between advertising and consumer loyalty to automotive brands in India. Consequently, within the scope of this study, the implication is that advertising stands as a potent marketing communication tool, exerting considerable influence on consumer loyalty towards automobiles in Nigeria.

Also, the analysis of hypothesis two unveiled that social media marketing has a substantial positive effect on consumer loyalty towards automobiles in Nigeria. This conclusion aligns with the findings of Al-Sabbah and Al-Nimer (2019), who observed a significant positive impact of social media marketing on consumer loyalty to automobile brands. Additionally, Appiah-Kubi et al. (2022) provided evidence of a significant positive relationship between social media marketing and consumer loyalty towards automobiles in Ghana. Thus, within the context of this study, it is evident that social media marketing serves as a potent marketing strategy, capable of significantly shaping consumer loyalty towards automobiles in Nigeria.

Lastly, hypothesis three demonstrated that sales promotion significantly enhances consumer loyalty to automobiles in Nigeria. This outcome is supported by the research of Al-Tawil and Al-Tawil (2020), which highlighted the positive effect of sales promotion on consumer loyalty in the Jordanian automotive industry. Moreover, Appiah-Kubi et al. (2022) found a significant positive relationship between sales promotion and consumer loyalty towards automobiles in Ghana. Therefore, within the framework of this study, it can be concluded that sales promotion emerges as a robust marketing communication strategy, effectively influencing consumer loyalty towards automobiles in Nigeria.

## **CONCLUSION AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS**

In contemporary times, marketing communication has been applied in several business organizations across countries to facilitate marketing operations amidst intense competition. In the Nigerian automobiles sector, marketing companies have resorted to several marketing communication strategies in their marketing campaigns. This study was designed to examine the effects of advertising, social media marketing and sales promotion on consumer brand loyalty towards automobiles. In this effort, primary data were obtained from owners of automobile brands in Calabar Metropolis through a structured questionnaire survey. The data obtained were statistically analyzed and interpreted using descriptive statistics. To generate findings, the hypotheses developed for the study were tested using multiple linear regression.





The findings made indicated that in order of relative importance, social media marketing, sales promotion and advertising had significant positive influences on consumer brand loyalty towards automobiles in Nigeria. This implies that the application of marketing communication strategies such as social media, sales promotion and advertising could substantially improve consumers' brand loyalty towards automobiles in Nigeria. This study concludes that marketing communication strategies have a significant positive effect on consumer brand loyalty towards automobiles in Nigeria.

On the basis of the findings made, the following suggestions are recommended for potential implementation:

- i. Automobile marketers should intensify the use of advertising media, such as print, television and outdoor to promote key features and performance of their brands to customers in order to influence customers' preference and patronage. Advertising can enhance consumer brand loyalty towards automobiles by creating strong emotional connections, showcasing product benefits, and maintaining consistent brand presence, fostering trust and affinity.
- ii. The enormous connectivity and reach of social media should be harnessed by automobiles marketers to execute strategies such as influencer marketing, virtual customer engagement and targeted promotional campaigns to attract customer patronage. This will enhance consumer brand loyalty towards automobiles by fostering engaging and personalized interactions, showcasing product benefits and features, providing timely customer support, and building a community around the brand's values.
- iii. Special price deals, discounts and premiums should be offered to customers in a sales promotional campaign to entice and induce patronage and repeat patronage of automobile brands. This can improve consumer brand loyalty towards automobiles by providing incentives, discounts, or exclusive offers that create positive purchasing experiences, fostering a sense of value and attachment to the brand.

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