



PROMOTIONAL STRATEGIES AND MARKET ACCEPTABILITY OF CHAMP MALT BEVERAGES IN OWERRI MUNICIPALITY.

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Cite this article:

Dike, N. O., Okafor, U., Nwodo, S. I. (2025), Promotional Strategies and Market Acceptability of Champ Malt Beverages in Owerri Municipality. British Journal of Management and Marketing Studies 8(1), 20-38. DOI: 10.52589/BJMMS-2GIGPI71

Manuscript History

Received: 23 Nov 2024

Accepted: 6 Jan 2025

Published: 14 Jan 2025

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ABSTRACT: Market acceptability refers to the degree of consumers' willingness to adopt, purchase, use, and continue using a product or service in a given market over time. The study adopted a survey method to determine the influence of promotional strategies on market acceptability of champ malt beverages in Owerri municipality. The young adults and middle-aged persons between 18 and 50 years constituted the study population of 301,000, according to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). The convenience sampling technique was deployed and a sample size of 400 was determined using the Taro Yamane formula. The research instrument (questionnaire), designed in a four-point Likert Scale format was used to elicit responses from the respondents in Owerri municipality. Two hypotheses and two research questions guided the study. The primary and secondary data sources were accessed. The questionnaire was subjected to face-to-face validity by presenting it to the marketing experts to ensure its alignment with the study objectives. In-depth interviews, including focus group discussions were conducted and the reliability coefficient of the instrument, 0.92 was determined using Cronbach's Alpha technique. With the Pearson Correlation and multiple linear regression analytical techniques, hypotheses one and two were tested respectively at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that promotional strategies had strong positive relationships with market acceptability of champ malt beverages in Owerri municipality, and exerted significant positive influence on consumer purchase decisions. The study provided insights into the impressive sales turnover of champ malt in the rural areas instead of Owerri municipality.

KEYWORDS: Promotional strategies, Malt beverage, Market acceptability, Municipality, Competition.



BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Marketing competition has intensified as firms strive to outpace one another through the provision of high-quality products and services. In today's business environment, unpredictability has become the norm, and businesses must develop sound marketing strategies to navigate these uncertainties successfully. The success of any firm hinges on its ability to achieve customer satisfaction, coupled with the communication of core benefits of its products or services to them. As suggested by Okolo et al. (2024), companies need to create a blueprint for long-term success through the implementation of diverse promotional strategies. The strategies include product samples (champ malt), packaging, brand visibility, premium offers, online advertising (google adv), price reduction, and in-store promotion, among others. Manufacturing and retail firms adopt various promotional strategies to attract customers. Price reductions and promotional offers have proven to be especially effective in stimulating consumer interest. Abugu, et al., (2019) posited that students who consume beer are particularly attracted by discounted prices, a finding that is particularly relevant to the competitive landscape of malt beverages in Owerri municipality. In times of economic recession, many studies have shown that consumer goods experience lower demand due to reduced purchasing power, which increases the importance of promotional strategies in sustaining product consumption. In Nigeria, particularly Owerri Urban, consumers of malt beverages tend to respond positively to price discounts and other promotional offers during economic downturns (Olorunleke, 2017).

A variety of promotion techniques such as brand reputation, social media, specialty advertising, word of mouth, billboard, crown cork scratch & win, television/radio commercials, and loyalty/event sponsorship are deployed by companies to influence consumer purchase behaviours. The promotion strategies exert the capacity to stimulate immediate consumer purchase decisions and enhance business profitability, as argued by Obeta, et, al. (2024). This assertion was corroborated by Mishra, et al, (2024), who described promotion techniques as drivers of marketing campaigns that supplement personal selling by focusing on boosting organizational effectiveness. The techniques when carefully applied, provoke brand switching, and persuade customers to adopt the promotional offerings of the competing brands.

While monetary sales promotions, such as price discounts, have long been the focus of marketing campaigns, non-monetary promotions are gaining ground in the beverages industry. The non-monetary promotions may be appealing to consumers who value quality and additional incentives over mere price reductions. Consumer behaviour is a crucial factor to consider in the application of promotional strategies. With numerous malt brands available in the marketplace, making purchase decisions has become a more complex process for consumers. The purchase decisions of consumers involve evaluating various alternatives before settling for a final choice. Research by Njoroge (2017) also indicated that the ultimate decision to purchase is influenced by factors such as price, product quality, and promotional incentives. As such, promotional strategies that align with these consumer preferences are more likely to succeed in driving market acceptability of champ malt. Agbi, et al. (2019) also emphasized that sales promotion techniques such as coupons, free samples, and buy-one-get-one-free offers have a significant effect on consumer purchase decisions. The price-based promotions attract certain consumer segments, while non-monetary promotional strategies such as specialty advertising, and crown cork scratch-and-win campaigns may appeal to others. Tandoh and Sarpong (2015) posited that buy-one-get-one-free promotions have been relatively



well studied, unlike specialty advertising, crown cork scratch-and-win promotions. Despite the limited research on specialty advertising and crown cork scratch-and-win promotions, these promotional strategies provide a unique opportunity for companies to differentiate their products and influence consumer buying decisions. The appraisal of the impact of promotional strategies on consumer purchase decisions and preferences, especially for champ malt beverages in Owerri municipality provoked this study, among others.

Statement of the problem

In spite of the extensive research on the effects of promotion on consumer awareness and product patronage, there remains a gap in understanding the effects of specific promotional strategies, such as specialty advertising, social media, premium offer, and brand reputation, etc, on consumer buying decision process, particularly within the Nigerian beverages industry. While contests, sweepstakes, and buy-one-get-one-free promotions have received the attention of marketing scholars and practitioners, the relationship between some other promotional strategies and consumer behaviour is yet to be comprehensively examined in Nigeria. The previous studies focused more on monetary sales promotions, such as price discounts and coupons, while neglecting the potential influence of non-monetary strategies on consumer purchase decisions.

In the Nigerian context, especially in the Southeastern States, malt brands frequently employ promotional strategies to entice consumers and boost market shares. The Champion Breweries Limited, producers of champ malt has applied diverse promotional strategies in the Owerri municipal council area to create awareness for its products, stimulate consumer acceptability of champ malt and outpace competing brands. However, the experience has been that high sales turnover of champ malt was rather achieved in the rural areas than in Owerri urban with strong exposure to the intensity of multiple promotional strategies. The experience of low sales turnover of Champ malt brand in Owerri municipality and high sales volume in the rural areas of Imo State, with virtually little exposure to the promotional activities, presents a gap in the understanding of the effects of promotional strategies on consumer purchase decisions.

However, there is limited empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of these strategies on consumer purchase decisions for malt beverages, particularly champ malt. For instance, while consumers may be attracted to price-based promotions during periods of economic recession, the effect of non-monetary strategies such as free gifts, in-store promotions, packaging, word of mouth or brand reputation, remains unexamined. According to Abugu, et al.,(2019), it is unclear whether these promotional strategies can effectively drive consumer loyalty or merely generate short-term sales volumes. An understanding of the effectiveness of the promotional strategies on the purchase decisions of consumers by marketers is imperative to enrich their knowledge and build capabilities to drive an increase in market shares of champ malt beverage, foster brand loyalty, and stimulate market acceptability of the brand in the highly competitive market environment of Owerri municipality.

It becomes necessary to evaluate the effects of the strategies in the urban area that is bombarded with commercial messages yet with poor sales records. Though recent researches suggest that sales promotion strategies are very important for product awareness (Kotler & Keller, 2022; Shultz & Peltier, 2023), there is a notable gap in understanding how these strategies specifically affect the market acceptability of champ malt in Owerri municipality. This study therefore aims to determine the relationship between promotional strategies and market acceptability of champ



malt and evaluate their contributions to the enhancement of the consumer buying decision-making process, among others.

Objective of the study

The broad objective of the study is to evaluate the influence of promotional strategies on the market acceptability of champ malt beverages in Owerri municipality. The specific objectives are to determine the:

1. relationship between promotional strategies and market acceptability of champ malt in Owerri municipality.
2. influence of promotional strategies on market acceptability of champ malt in Owerri municipality.

Research questions

1. Is there any relationship between promotional strategies and market acceptability of champ malt in Owerri municipality?
2. To what extent do promotional strategies influence the market acceptability of champ malt in Owerri municipality?

Hypotheses Formulation

The hypotheses of the study are formulated in the null form for testing,

Ho.1 There is no significant relationship between promotional strategies and market acceptability of champ malt in Owerri municipality.

Ho.2 Promotional strategies have no significant influence on the market acceptability of champ malt in Owerri municipality.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

The literature of the study was reviewed from the perspectives of conceptual, theoretical, and empirical frameworks.

Conceptual Framework

Promotional Strategies

Promotional strategies are designed to attract additional customer patronage and influence sales and customer preferences for the company's goods and services over competitors' products. The strategies include sales promotion, advertising, publicity, personal selling, direct marketing, event sponsorship, packaging, and branding, with inherent characteristics that influence their roles and functions. The promotional strategies aim to boost sales, facilitate new product acceptance, build brand equity, position the brand, respond to competition, or establish



a brand image. The promotional strategies include free samples, contests, premiums, coupons, and price incentives, aimed at achieving immediate sales.

Promotional strategies incorporate social media marketing (SMM) that leverages social media technologies, channels, and software to create, communicate, deliver, and exchange offerings that have value for an organization's stakeholders (Solomon, 2018). SMM integrates social media networks and physical phenomena into useful strategic ways of attaining targeted marketing productivity (Li, *et al.*, 2021). Several activities such as entertainment, customization, trendiness, interactivity, and word-of-mouth have been identified as predictors of SMM's impact on brand loyalty, equity, and willingness to pay premium prices (Kim, *et al.*, 2021). According to Putri Dwicahyani, and Henny Welsa, (2022), SMM enables consumers to interact and engage positively with a company and its brand, promoting and engaging content marketing to increase reach and interest. The five dimensions of SMM include entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customization, and word of mouth (WOM). Social media plays a crucial role in enabling enterprises to establish direct communication and strong customer relationships. SMM significantly influences customer relationship quality, leading to positive behavioural outcomes. To attain marketing goals and generate sustainable performance, social media marketing content should follow these dimensions (Wibowo *et al.*, 2021).

Specialty advertising aims to foster strong brand associations between consumers and specific products or services. The promotional products used in specialty advertising include imprinted goods such as caps, T-shirts, pens, key holders, golf balls, coffee mugs, shopping bags, calendars, torches, mouse pads, stickers, etc. These items feature the company's logo, name, or promotional message and are distributed as gifts to entice consumers into making purchases (Kotler *et al.*, 2018). The gifts are distributed during various events such as in-store promotions, sponsored events, and special occasions.

Crown cork scratch and win serves as a strategic tool for encouraging trials and fostering repeat purchase behaviour of consumers. Many beer-producing and distribution companies in Nigeria frequently engage in crown cork scratch and win promotions, as they appeal to current and potential beer drinkers who enjoy the excitement of potentially winning extra products. The promotional format entails a customer purchasing a bottle of beer, and scratching off a hidden prize beneath the crown cork. The prize often consists of an extra bottle of beer, and imprinted gifts, in the form of specialty advertising for the company.

Market acceptability

Market acceptability encapsulates how well a product or service is adopted by consumers in a particular market. It highlights the level of consumer willingness to purchase, use, and continue using a product over time. Chandon, Wansink, and Laurent (2020), posited that well-executed promotional strategies such as discounts, coupons, and loyalty programs significantly enhance market acceptability through product trials and short-term sales boosts. The scholars opined that promotions create initial awareness and direct incentives for customers to engage with a product which is important in its market introduction. The promotions are capable of building familiarity, needed to shape consumer perception positively (Keller, 2020). The more consumers are exposed to a brand or product through targeted marketing, the more likely they are to find the product acceptable. The acceptability concept shapes the perceived worth of the product which balances the price consumers pay and the quality or benefits they receive in return.



Promotion and market acceptability

Promotion plays an important role in enhancing market acceptability and influencing consumers' perceptions and purchase decisions. Understanding the factors that affect both promotion and market acceptability is vital for businesses aiming to succeed in competitive environments. This review explores the key factors that influence promotional activities and their impact on market acceptability.

1. **Consumer behaviour:** Consumer behaviour is fundamental to understanding how promotions are received. Factors such as preferences, attitudes, and socio-demographic characteristics significantly influence how consumers respond to promotional activities. Marketers must conduct thorough market research to identify target audiences' preferences and tailor promotions accordingly.

2. **Product characteristics:** The nature of the product being promoted also affects market acceptability. Products with unique features or innovations may benefit from promotional strategies that emphasize their distinct attributes. Suffice it to say that products perceived as high quality or innovative often enjoy better market acceptance when promoted effectively. Marketers should highlight unique selling points (USPs) to attract consumers.

3. **Cultural influences:** Cultural factors play a significant role in shaping consumer attitudes toward promotions. Different cultures have varying values, beliefs, and consumption habits, which can influence how promotional messages are received. An understanding of the cultural dimensions is essential for marketers to develop culturally sensitive promotional strategies that resonate with diverse consumer groups. Promotions that align with cultural norms are more likely to be accepted in the market.

4. **Economic factors:** Economic conditions significantly impact market acceptability. In times of economic uncertainty, consumers tend to prioritize essential goods over luxury items, influencing their response to promotions. There is a need for marketers to adjust their promotional strategies based on the economic environment, emphasizing value and affordability during downturns to maintain market acceptability.

5. **Competition:** The level of competition in a market can influence the effectiveness of promotional activities. In highly competitive markets, businesses may need to adopt aggressive promotional strategies to stand out. According to Kotler and Armstrong (2018), understanding competitors' promotional tactics is essential for developing strategies that enhance market acceptability. Marketers should analyze competitors' strengths and weaknesses to craft compelling promotional messages.

6. **Technology:** Advancements in technology and the rise of digital marketing have transformed how promotions are delivered and perceived. Social media, email marketing, and online advertisements enable businesses to reach broader audiences effectively. According to Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2019), leveraging technology in promotional strategies can enhance consumer engagement and improve market acceptability. Marketers should utilize digital platforms to create targeted and personalized promotions.

7. **Regulatory and ethical considerations:** Regulatory frameworks and ethical considerations significantly impact promotional activities. Marketers must adhere to advertising standards and regulations to avoid legal repercussions and maintain consumer trust. According to Babb and



Murdock, (2018), transparent and ethical promotional practices enhance brand reputation and contribute to market acceptability. Brands that prioritize ethical marketing are more likely to be favoured by consumers.

8, Feedback and adaptation: Continuous feedback and adaptation are essential for successful promotional strategies. Brands that actively seek consumer feedback and adjust their promotions based on responses are more likely to achieve market acceptability.

Owerri market

Owerri, the capital city of Imo State in Southeastern Nigeria, is known as the economic and cultural hub of the state. Often referred to as the "Heartland" of Nigeria, Owerri is recognized for its rich history, vibrant cultural heritage, and growing urbanization. This highlights the city's economic, social, and cultural significance, which directly influences consumer behaviours and preferences. Owerri's growing middle class, increasing urbanization, and vibrant social life provide a conducive environment for the malt beverages industry. Owerri is characterized by its rich Igbo cultural heritage, which often reflects in consumer choices, especially in relation to beverages traditionally consumed during festivals and social gatherings. The city's nightlife, driven by a robust hospitality sector with numerous hotels, bars, and entertainment spots, contributes to a strong demand for beverages, including malt drinks. These non-alcoholic malt beverages are widely favoured for their perceived health benefits, making them popular among both the younger and older population, particularly for those who abstain from alcohol for cultural or religious reasons. The increasing awareness of health consciousness, combined with the city's social dynamics, shapes the market acceptability of malt beverages. Brands must align their products with the local tastes, price sensitivities, and social trends that prevail in Owerri municipal council areas. Moreover, competitive pricing, product quality, and strong brand presence are essential factors that companies must consider to successfully penetrate and thrive in Owerri's beverages market.

Malt beverages

Malt beverages are drinks made from malted barley or other grains, undergoing a process that converts the grain's starches into fermentable sugars. These beverages can be alcoholic, such as beer, or non-alcoholic, such as malt drinks. Non-alcoholic malt beverages, particularly popular in regions like Africa, the Caribbean, and the Middle East, are known for their sweet, rich flavour and nutritional benefits. They are often marketed as energy drinks or health supplements due to their high vitamin B content, proteins, and carbohydrates.

In countries like Nigeria, non-alcoholic malt drinks serve as a staple at social gatherings and are positioned as healthy alternatives to sugary sodas, appealing to both health-conscious consumers and families. The market for malt beverages has been growing, especially with the rise of flavoured and fortified variants that cater to changing consumer tastes. Brands leverage these products' health benefits and cultural acceptance, utilizing digital marketing and influencer campaigns to maintain a strong market presence, particularly among younger demographics. The versatility of malt beverages, in both alcoholic and non-alcoholic forms, makes them an important product in global beverage markets, where they meet diverse consumer needs across various cultural contexts (Obinna, 2022).



Theoretical Framework

The hierarchy of effects theory

The hierarchy of effects theory, propounded by Lavidge, and Steiner (1961), suggests that consumers pass through sequential stages; cognitive, affective, and conative; before making a purchase decision. This process involves consumers becoming aware of a product, gaining knowledge, developing emotional responses, forming preferences, becoming convinced, and ultimately purchasing. The theory emphasizes that promotional and advertising strategies should be structured to guide consumers through these stages, gradually influencing their attitudes and behaviour.

The work of Shimp and Andrews (2013), highlighted the importance of integrated marketing communications in moving consumers from awareness to action. They emphasize that each phase of the consumer's journey should be addressed; beginning with creating awareness and fostering emotional connection before leading the consumer to a decision, reinforcing the step-by-step process of the Hierarchy of Effects. They highlighted that marketing communications must be designed to influence cognition, affect, and behaviour, which aligns with the stages of the Hierarchy of Effects. According to them, guiding consumers through these phases ensures a smooth transition from awareness to the final purchase. Similarly, Belch and Belch (2018) focus on integrated marketing strategies that move consumers through the cognitive and affective stages, ultimately leading to conative action. The emphasis on using a mix of promotional tactics to influence decision-making mirrors the structure of the Hierarchy of Effects, acknowledging that consumers rarely make immediate decisions but must be led through each stage.

Fill and Turnbull (2016) discussed the role of modern digital marketing strategies, emphasizing the need to engage consumers at each stage of the decision-making process. The views align with Lavidge and Steiner's theory, particularly in how digital environments require structured campaigns that nurture consumer awareness, shape preferences, and drive action. These contemporary perspectives illustrate that the step-by-step approach of the Hierarchy of Effects remains relevant in understanding how consumers move from awareness to purchase, even in modern marketing contexts. Integrating these authors' insights, the theory's applicability is reinforced, showing how marketers must design campaigns that gradually influence consumers' thinking, emotions, and behaviour for successful outcomes.

The theory is essential in understanding the impact of promotional strategies on the market acceptability of champ malt beverages in Owerri. It outlines how promotions move consumers through stages like awareness, knowledge, and preference before leading to a purchase. Applying this theory helps the study assess how different promotional tactics influence consumer behaviour at each stage, identifying which strategies are most effective in increasing acceptance and driving the purchase of champ malt in the region.



Planned behaviour Theory

The Theory of Planned behaviour (TPB) was propounded in (1985) by Icek Ajzen which suggests that an individual's intention to perform a certain behaviour is the most significant predictor of whether or not they will perform that behaviour. The theory is a widely used framework in marketing to predict and understand consumer behaviour, particularly in areas like sales promotion and purchase decision-making. The theory asserts that an individual's intention to engage in a specific behaviour is influenced by three primary factors namely, attitude toward the behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. These factors, in turn, determine the likelihood of the actual behaviour occurring. In the context of marketing and sales promotion, attitude refers to the consumer's positive or negative evaluation of a product or promotion. If a promotion, such as a discount or a celebrity endorsement, leads a consumer to perceive the product as beneficial or desirable, they are more likely to develop a favourable attitude toward purchasing it. Cheah, et al. (2019) explored how social media promotions and celebrity endorsements significantly shape consumer attitudes, influencing their intentions to purchase a product. In their study, it was found that such promotions enhance consumers' perceptions of the brand, leading to a stronger intention to buy, as the positive associations with celebrities enhance the brand's appeal.

Subjective norms play a crucial role in influencing how individuals perceive the expectations of others regarding their purchase decisions. In sales promotion, peer influence, reviews, and social media campaigns are often used to create a perception that others approve of a product. This is especially true in digital marketing, where user-generated content and social influence are powerful motivators. Nadeem, et al. (2020) examined how social media and website promotions engage consumers, demonstrating that these channels foster perceptions of peer endorsement, thus shaping subjective norms and driving purchase behaviour, especially among younger consumers who are heavily influenced by online communities.

Perceived behavioural control refers to the consumer's perception of their ability to perform the purchasing behaviour. This is influenced by factors such as ease of access to the product, financial resources, or familiarity with the purchasing process. Through promotional strategies, marketers aim to enhance perceived control by simplifying purchase processes, offering instalment payment options, or providing easily accessible online shopping platforms. Kim and Qu (2022) illustrated how persuasive communication by employees impacts customers' perceived behavioural control, showing that when consumers feel they have the necessary information and means to make a purchase, they are more likely to act on their intentions. This aligns with the TPB, where greater perceived control strengthens the likelihood of the intended behaviour being carried out. Finally, in the evolving landscape of mobile and digital platforms, promotional activities like those explored by Ruiz-Equihua, et. al.,(2020) show how online brand communities enhance perceived behavioural control and attitudes, which can increase brand loyalty. The study indicated that by engaging consumers in mobile app promotions, companies can create environments where customers feel empowered to make purchase decisions, thereby solidifying their intention to buy. This theory is significant to this study because it provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the psychological factors that influence consumer behaviour in response to marketing efforts. It helps explain how consumer attitudes, social influence, and perceived control shape purchasing intentions. Promotional efforts that build positive perceptions of the product, emphasize social acceptance and make purchasing easier can drive higher consumer acceptance. By applying TPB, the study



can effectively analyze how these psychological factors interact with marketing strategies to influence the acceptance and purchase of champ malt in the region.

Consumer buying decision-making process

The purchase stage is a pivotal point in the consumer buying decision-making process. At this stage, consumers are highly committed to their choices, often exercising caution in their spending habits. Sales promotions are integral to shaping consumer purchase decisions, fostering retention, and enhancing loyalty across various product brands. For example, within India's apparel industry, research indicates that sales promotions positively influence customer purchase decisions (Mishra, et al., 2024). This highlights a universal consumer tendency to seek goods and services at more affordable rates. When consumers become aware of sales promotions, they often seize opportunities to purchase products in bulk, preparing for future needs. Ironically, consumers may engage in sales promotions even when no promotional events are being held. This behaviour underscores the unpredictable nature of consumer behaviour, which can vary significantly based on external circumstances.

However, it is essential to recognize that a variety of factors—social, economic, demographic, and cultural—can also influence purchasing decisions (Olorunleke, 2017). These factors shape consumer responses to promotional messages, determining the effectiveness of marketing strategies. The black box model of consumer behaviour (Okolo, 2017) demonstrates how integrated marketing communications can effectively influence purchasing actions. Furthermore, sales promotions can stimulate impulse buying, encouraging consumers who may not have initially planned to purchase a product to do so as a result of external stimuli. Activities such as demonstrations and point-of-purchase displays can trigger immediate trial behaviours for specific products. Many consumers, who might not have intended to participate in a promotion, often find themselves compelled to make purchases due to external influences.

The purchase stage represents the culmination of the buyer decision-making process in the consumer behaviour model. At this stage, consumers pay for products after carefully analyzing all relevant factors impacting their purchasing decisions. Businesses closely monitor this stage, as they aim to deploy all available marketing and communication strategies to ensure that customers do not fall prey to competing offers. In a study by Agbi, et al., (2019), it was found that four key sales promotion constructs—price discount, coupon discount, buy-one-get-one-free offers, and free samples—significantly influenced consumer purchasing decisions. Darpito (2022) revealed that flash sales, which induce discounts, have a positive effect on consumers' decisions to purchase products. Similarly, Arsta and RsiRespati (2021) reaffirmed that the relationship between sales promotions and purchase decisions is significantly mediated by brand image, indicating that effective promotional strategies not only drive immediate sales but also enhance the overall perception of the brand, ultimately encouraging consumer purchase decisions.



Empirical Framework

In Nigeria, sales promotions are an integral part of the marketing strategies used by companies in the beverage industry. However, despite the extensive use of promotions, research has shown that not all strategies are effective. Ade-Johnson (2014) found that 56% of respondents did not participate in sales promotions for Maltina and Malta Guinness, indicating that some promotional tactics fail to resonate with consumers. Chang (2017) argued that the effectiveness of a sales promotion depends on various factors, including the type of promotion and the target audience.

Umesha, and MariGowda,(2019) examined the influence of promotional strategies on customer satisfaction levels in a shopping mall. They discovered that promotional tactics, particularly discounts, loyalty programs, and event-based marketing, are essential in shaping positive consumer perceptions and fostering long-term engagement with the malls. Discounts and premium offers directly enhance the shopping experience of consumers, making them feel rewarded and more likely to return. Loyalty programs strengthen customer relationships by making consumers feel appreciated, resulting in repeat purchases and brand loyalty.

Advertising and event sponsorship emerged as significant drivers of consumer engagement.

Effective promotional campaigns raised awareness of the mall's offerings and created an enjoyable, lively shopping atmosphere. The research also suggests that younger demographics, particularly those engaged with social media and digital platforms, are more responsive to modern promotional methods, indicating a shift in how marketing strategies need to evolve to capture the attention of this target market for champ malt beverages. In the study of the impact of sales promotion on product awareness in Ilala Municipality, Clemence,(2017) noted that sales promotion strategies significantly influenced product awareness in the decorative paints market. When the research was extended to the retailers' shops, they noted that promotional campaigns directly affected their sales volumes. Retailers observed that when sales promotions were in place, there were a noticeable increase in consumer interest and inquiries about decorative paints, which resulted in higher turnover.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a survey method to determine the influence of promotional strategies on the market acceptability of champ malt beverages in Owerri municipality. The convenience sampling technique was adopted to gather a broad range of responses from young and middle aged adults in Owerri municipality, aged 18 to 50 years who interact with a variety of malt beverages brands (Okon & Okere, 2023). The population of the study was 301,000, according to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). The sample size for the study, 400 was determined using Taro Yamane formula. Two hypotheses and two research questions guided the study. The primary and secondary data sources were accessed. To obtain relatively bias-free data with minimal error context, the questions in the questionnaire were designed in simple language and structured in a Four-Point Likert Scale format, viz; Strongly Agree(4points), Agree(3), Strongly disagree(2), and Disagree (1). The research instrument (questionnaire) was subjected to face-to-face validity by presenting it to the marketing experts to ensure they are in line with the study objectives. The reliability of the instrument was determined by using Cronbach's



Alpha technique. The data obtained from the pilot study were processed to obtain a reliability coefficient of 0.92, indicating high degree of internal consistency of the research instrument. In-depth interviews, including focus group discussions, were conducted to obtain free expressions of respondents' opinions. With the Pearson Correlation Analysis technique, hypothesis one was tested. Using the technique of multiple linear regression, hypothesis two was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSES OF DATA

Data presentation.

Table 4.1: Gender distribution of respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	225	56.3
Female	175	43.7
Total	400	100

Source: Field survey, 2024

Table 4.1 shows that 56.3% and 43.7% of respondents were males and females respectively.

Table 4.2: Age distribution of respondents

Age range	frequency	percentage
18-25	145	36.3
26-35	170	42.5
36-45	55	13.7
45& above	30	7.5
Total	400	100

Source: Field survey, 2024

Majority of the respondents were within the age bracket of 26-35 (42.5%), followed by 18-25 (36.3%). Young adults and middle-aged persons constituted the target audience.

Table 4.3: Marital status of respondents

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage
Single	250	62.5
Married	110	27.5
Divorced	40	10.0
Total	400	100

Source: Field survey, 2024

Table 4.3 shows that majority of respondents were single (62.5%), while the married, and divorced were 27.5% , and 10.0% respectively.

**Table 4.4: Literacy level of respondents**

Qualifications	Frequency	Percentage
WAEC/ GCE	90	22.5
OND/NCE	100	25.0
HND,/B.Sc.	190	47.5
PGD,MSc/Ph.D	20	5.0
Total	400	100

Source: *Field survey, 2024*

Table 4.4 shows that 47.5 % of the respondents possessed HND/BSc, 25% OND/NCE, 22.5% WAEC/GCE and 5.0% higher degrees respectively.

Test of hypotheses.

Ho.1. There is no significant relationship between promotional strategies and market acceptability of champ malt in Owerri municipality.

Correlation Analysis: Relationship between promotional strategies and market acceptability of champ malt.

Promotional strategies	Coefficient (r)	Prob.
Combined promotion strategies	0.921	0.000
Product sample(champ malt)	0.853	0.000
Packaging	0.789	0.000
Brand visibility	0.731	0.000
Premium offer	0.694	0.000
Online advertising(google adv)	0.581	0.000
Price reduction	0.546	0.000
In-store promotion	0.463	0.000

Source: *Field survey, 2024*

The analysis showed a correlation coefficient, $r=0.921$; at $p<0.05$, indicating a strong positive relationship between promotional strategies and market acceptability of champ malt in Owerri municipality. The correlation coefficients of the individual promotional strategies showed that product sample, $r=0.853$; $p<0.05$, and packaging, $r=0.789$; $p<0.05$; have strong positive relationship while brand visibility, $r=0.731$; $p<0.05$; premium offer, $r=0.694$; $p<0.05$; and on-line advertising(google ad), $r=0.581$; $p<0.05$, have moderate positive relationship with market acceptability of champ malt. The correlation coefficient of price reduction, $r=0.546$; , $p<0.05$; and in-store promotion, $r=0.463$; $p<0.05$; indicate a weak positive relationship with market acceptability of champ malt in Owerri municipality.

Ho.2 Promotional strategies have no significant influence on market acceptability of champ malt in Owerri municipality.

**Table 4.6: Multiple linear regression analysis on the influence of promotional strategies on market acceptability of champ malt in Owerri municipality**

Promotional strategies	Coefficients,r	Std. error	t-value	Prob.
Brand reputation	0.281	0.051	5.510	0.000
Social media	0.251	0.045	5.593	0.000
Specialty advertising	0.306	0.053	5.783	0.000
Word of mouth	0.189	0.038	4.974	0.000
Billboard	0.231	0.042	5.500	0.000
Crown cork scratch & win	0.163	0.034	4.791	0.000
Television/radio commercials	0.201	0.041	4.902	0.000
Loyalty/event sponsorship	0.421	0.065	6.481	0.000
Constant	103.15	30.19	3.419	0.001
R-squared (R^2)	0.923			
Adjusted R^2	0.913			
F-statistic:	84.219			
P-value	<0.001			

Source: Field survey data: 2024

The result of the multiple regression analysis showed that promotional strategies have significant influence on market acceptability of champ malt beverages in Owerri municipality. The details of the analysis showed that loyalty/event sponsorship has significant positive influence on market acceptability($R^2=(0.421)^2=17.7\%$), followed by special advertising, ($R^2=(0.306)^2=9.4\%$); brand reputation, ($R^2=(0.281)^2=7.9\%$); social media ($R^2=(0.251)^2=6.3\%$); billboard ($R^2=(0.231)^2=5.3\%$); television/radio commercials ($R^2=(0.201)^2=4.0\%$); word of mouth ($R^2=(0.189)^2=3.6\%$); & crown cork scratch & win ($R^2=(0.163)^2=2.7\%$). The regression model (coefficient of determination, adjusted $R^2=0.913$) elucidates about 91.3% of the variation in market acceptability.

Decision:

From 4.6, the computed F-value (84.219) is greater than the tabulated F-value (3.37) at 391 degrees of freedom and 0.05 level of significance. In applying the decision rule, the null hypotheses ($H_0.2$) was rejected. The p-value gave additional insight into the strength of the decision. Assuming the null hypothesis was true, the p-value would have reported the probability of getting a value of the test statistics, at least as extreme as the value actually obtained. The procedure involved a comparison of the p-value with significance level. The p-value (0.001) was less than the significant level of 0.05 (i.e. $p < 0.05$). This confirmed that the



null hypotheses (Ho.2) was not true and therefore rejected. The coefficient of determination, R^2 adj, is 91.3%. The alternate hypothesis was upheld with the conclusion that promotional strategies have significant influence on the market acceptability of champ malt beverages in Owerri municipality.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The results of the study showed a strong positive relationship between promotional strategies and market acceptability of champ malt in Owerri municipality. The findings showed that product sample, and packaging have strong positive relationships with consumer purchase behaviour, while brand visibility, premium offer and on-line advertising(google ad) have moderate positive relationships. The strategies of price reduction, and in-store promotion indicated weak positive relationships with market acceptability of champ malt in Owerri municipality. The implication is that the reduction in the price of champ malt and in-store promotion has insignificant effect on customer purchase decisions.

The study revealed that that loyalty/event sponsorship, specialty advertising, billboards, and television/radio commercials were the influential promotional strategies adopted by champ malt manufacturers in Owerri municipality. The promotional strategies of brand reputation, brand visibility, and social media exerted moderate influence on the consumer purchase behaviour. The word –of- mouth and crown cork scratch & win strategies had weak influence on consumer buying decisions. The implication of these findings is that champ malt manufacturers should embark on the use of effective promotional strategies in Owerri and outside the municipal council area to influence customer purchase behaviours and increase champ malt acceptability.

Effective promotional strategies are capable of increasing consumer awareness and acceptability of champ malt beverages in Owerri. This implies that well-executed promotional strategies would significantly impact how consumers perceive and accept different brands in the market. It shows that promotional activities not only enhance brand visibility but also shape consumer attitudes toward champ malt. The finding corroborates the study by Belch & Belch, (2021).which posited that well-structured promotional campaigns contribute to improved brand perception and loyalty. Notwithstanding the degree of relationship between promotional strategies and market acceptability, promotional strategies alone cannot guarantee long-term market success. Companies must ensure that their products meet consumer expectations and provide core benefits beyond the ambit of promotions.

The interactions with the respondents during group focus interviews revealed that the rural areas constitute the hub of social gatherings in recent times. The urban dwellers always travel to their villages for funeral ceremonies, chieftaincy titles/Ezeship coronations, thanksgiving ceremonies, traditional dances, especially during yuletides, launching of projects, and political gatherings, etc. Having received strong exposures to the promotional campaigns of champ malt brand in Owerri municipality and its environs, the purchase decisions of these organizers and attendees are influenced in favour of champ malt. The rural communities' preference for the rich taste of champ malt has positioned it as common drink for social gatherings and celebrations. The lower disposable incomes in the rural communities promote regular consumption of champ malt beverages during social gatherings due to high cost of the



alternative brands. The champ malt beverages are relatively affordable, making the drink more accessible to the rural population. The availability of malt beverages in local stores brings it closer to the reach of the local consumers. The investigation showed that the rural communities joined the bandwagon of the visiting champ malt consumers, resulting in the high sales turnover experienced in the rural areas.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of the findings

The findings of the study are summarized below:

1. Majority of the respondents were within the age bracket of 18-45 years, indicating the dominance of the young adults and middle aged persons in the champ malt beverages market.
3. Of the 400 consumers involved in the study, 190 possessed first degree and its equivalents, and 100 were holders of National Diploma/National Certificate in Education, indicating high literacy level of the respondents.
4. The marital status of the consumers revealed that more than half of the respondents were bachelors and spinsters.
5. All the promotional strategies deployed by champ malt manufacturers in Owerri municipality have positive relationships with market acceptability of champ malt. Each promotional strategy of the malt brand has definite relationship with the consumer purchase decision.
6. Brand visibility, online advertising, and premium offer strategies relate moderately with market acceptability of champ malt in Owerri municipal council areas. The relationship between price reduction, in-store promotion and consumer purchase behaviour was rather weak.
7. All the promotional strategies significantly influence the market acceptability of champ malt. Loyalty/event sponsorship strategies had strong influence on the buying behaviour of champ malt consumers, and followed by specialty advertising.
8. The promotional strategies involving brand reputation, social media, billboard, and television/radio commercials influenced the purchase decisions of consumers moderately. The word of mouth and crown cork scratch & win strategies exert low influence on champ malt consumer purchase behaviour.
9. The impressive sales turnover of champ malt beverages in the rural communities was significantly orchestrated by the purchase decisions of urban dwellers that travelled to their villages to organize and attend ceremonies.
10. The producers of champ malt should extend the promotional campaign strategies to the rural communities using local dialects to boost market shares.



CONCLUSION

In today's competitive marketplace, effective promotional strategies are essential for brands seeking to capture consumer attention and drive purchasing decisions. This study investigated the influence of promotional strategies on champ malt consumer purchasing decisions in sync with market acceptability of the product in Owerri municipality. The findings indicate that champ malt beverage's promotional activities rely on traditional media, such as television and radio, without full utilization of social media. The study revealed that all the promotional strategies maintain positive relationship with market acceptability of champ malt beverages in Owerri municipality. The loyalty and event sponsorship strategies had the strongest impact on the buying behaviours of champ malt consumers. The word of mouth, crown cork scratch & win exerted weak influence on the purchase behaviours of consumers. Though well-executed promotional activities significantly enhance brand visibility and foster consumer preference, they are not the sole determinants of consumer buying behaviour, and business success.

The influx of urban dwellers into the rural areas to partake in the beehive of social gatherings and cultural festivals significantly influenced the sales turnover of champ malt in the rural communities, alluding to the effectiveness of the promotional strategies of the brand.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made;

1. The champ malt brand should explore innovative promotional strategies such as influencer partnerships, user-generated content, and experiential marketing to create a stronger emotional connection with consumers and enhance market acceptability.
2. Champ malt beverages should increase investment in social media marketing, Google ads and leverage on platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter to create interactive promotional contents that resonates with young adults and middle- aged persons.
3. Manufacturers of champ malt should utilize market research and consumer data analytics to foster better understanding of their target audience's preferences/tastes to further enhance market acceptability.
4. Champ malt brand should evaluate the effectiveness of their promotional campaign strategies on regular basis through consumer feedback and sales data and refine their approaches for wide acceptability.
5. Champ malt brand should engage in educational campaigns such as sporting activities , school debates , quiz competitions, etc. and utilize the opportunity to inform consumers about the unique qualities and core benefits of the products.
6. Manufacturers of champ malt should extend the promotional campaign strategies to the rural areas and interpret the messages in local dialects to create consumer engagement and foster community identity.



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