International Journal of Advances in Engineering and Management (IJAEM)
Volume 6, Issue 12 Dec. 2024, pp: 145-152 www.ijaem.net ISSN: 2395-5252

Analysis of Transport Marketing Strategies Adoption: A Case of Commercial Transport Company in Nigeria

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Date of Submission: 05-12-2024 Date of Acceptance: 15-12-2024

ABSTRACT

The study examines the transport marketing strategies adopted by commercial transport company in Nigeria and the challenges encountered in their implementation. A descriptive cross-sectional survey was conducted on 181employeesof the selected transport company. Simple random sampling was used to select participants from the company terminals across Lagos State. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data which was analysed using descriptive statistics. Results show that the selected transport company uses different strategies, including digital marketing and partnerships, but it faces problems like high competition, financial limitations, and seasonal demand fluctuations. These findings suggest the need for better financial planning, more adaptive marketing, and more effective service delivery. Policy implications include encouraging technology-driven marketing and financial support to transport companies. The profitability of marketing strategies and customer-centric perspectives should be further researched. This study contributes to understanding the dynamics of transport marketing and operational challenges in the Nigerian transport sector.

Keywords: Transport marketing, commercial transport, challenges, digital marketing, operations

I. INTRODUCTION

Transportation is the movement of people, goods and services from one location to another; and is central to socio-economic development. Transportation helps to bring regions and sectors together to promote national unity. Anwar and Gulzar (2021) pointed out that unfavourable transport systems prolong underdevelopment due to the inability to foster societal change and connectivity. Transportation systems have a profound impact on the social processes and determine peoples' behaviour, the layout of cities, and the accessibility of products and services (Ascarza et al., 2017). In the recent past, urbanization and economic development in the Global South have expanded far ahead of the ability of the public transport system to meet the demand (Brata et al., 2017; Bruner, 2014). It serves as a reminder that transportation both drives economic growth and hinders growth in resource-constrained settings. On the other hand, in densely populated urban areas public transport systems, including the bus, rail, and water transport, are of particular importance as a way to council and are active sustainable and efficient ways of moving! (Cervero, 2018). Taking into account the potential in developing countries, however, public transportation continues to have its challenges.

However, marketing strategies are crucial for addressing these challenges and optimizing transport systems. They offer a framework for achieving long-term market goals and involve activities such as branding, pricing, advertising, and customer engagement (Chen, 2017). According to Kotler (1984), organizations must not only meet but exceed customer expectations to remain competitive. Understanding customer preferences and tailoring strategies to meet diverse needs is essential, as noted by Coggin and Marius (2015). Effective segmentation allows transport operators to align their services with customer demographics and travel patterns, improving the relevance and impact of marketing efforts.

Furthermore, transport marketing strategies are integral to promoting services,

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increasing customer satisfaction, and improving profitability. Public transport systems often face challenges such as competition from private vehicles, changing travel preferences, and perceptions of inefficiency (Culwick, 2015). Effective marketing strategies can address these challenges by emphasizing public transport's benefits, such as affordability, reduced congestion, and environmental sustainability (Czeglédy, 2014). Marketing can reshape public perceptions and boost patronage.Despite the critical role of transportation in economic development, Nigeria's public transport system is hampered by weak marketing strategies. For example, Demirci (2017) highlighted that marketing strategies, which involve unique and comprehensive approaches to achieving organizational goals, are often underutilized. Studies like those by Dinçer (2017) and Dimitrov (2019) have shown that effective marketing strategies enhance organizational performance and customer satisfaction. However, these insights are not consistently applied in Nigeria's transport sector.

Most of the public transport operator struggles with passenger retention, operational efficiency, and competitive positioning. Despite the prominence and years of operations of most commercial transport company in Nigeria, their marketing strategies have not been rigorously evaluated. This study seeks to fill this gap by analysis the adoption of marketing strategies by commercial transport company in Nigeria. Therefore, the study will answer these research questions:

1. What are the types of transport marketing strategies adopted by commercial transport company in Nigeria?
2. What are the challenges faced by transport company in implementing transport marketing strategies?

1.1 Scope of the Study

Association Bus Company (ABC), which is a private transport company located in Lagos State, Nigeria is the focus of this research and not the whole commercial transport companies in South West Nigeria. This study selected ABC Transport Company because of its location in the transport industry and its application of various marketing techniques to capture and maintain customers (Romanus, Orji and Chris, 2024). The study was conducted in Lagos State because it is the commercial capital of Nigeria with high population density, diverse transit requirements, and a complex environment in which to evaluate the efficiency of transport marketing initiatives (Nwoko & Osiki, 2016).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Concept of Marketing Strategy

The phrase "marketing strategy" (MS) was first defined using various terminology by various writers. Some early studies, such as Borden(1986) and Yasmin(2017), referred to it as the "marketing mix." Smith (1956) described it as the expression of various marketing tactics, "market segmentation" and "product differentiation." Dean (1951) used the concepts of "skimming" and "penetration" to suggest different pricing, etc. Wind and Lilien (1993) introduced the "6C model," which includes the broad six-factor MS of "customers," "channels of distribution," "competitors," "Company," "Culture," and "candidates for cooperation." The earlier 2C models (Company-Customers) and 3C models were replaced with this six-factor model (Company-Customers-Competitors). Later research by Shaoming, Zou and Cavusgil (2019) identified several vital standardizations of global marketing strategy, including those related to the product, promotion, channel structure, price, the concentration of marketing activities, coordination of marketing activities, participation in international markets, and integration of competitive moves.

2.2 Principles of Public Transport Marketing

Implementing marketing strategies in public transportation systems is fraught with complexities, owing to the sector's unique characteristics. For instance, resource limitations make it highly problematic to broadly increase the customer base, as any sharp influx of ridership could overwhelm system capabilities, especially during peak hours. This could result in negative user perceptions, thereby undermining the very objective of the marketing strategy (Kuntner and Teichert, 2016). Consequently, a less aggressive, short-term strategy aimed at maintaining current riders while incrementally improving service quality may be more prudent. In contrast, any ambitious strategies aimed at enticing car users to switch to public transport should only be executed if they are accompanied by major enhancements in service quality or infrastructural developments (Lin, 2016).

Public transportation organizations often operate under financial constraints, while simultaneously shouldering significant social responsibilities. These limitations often prevent

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them from introducing new products or modifying existing services. Moreover, the diverse composition of potential customers adds another layer of complexity. This audience includes people from various age groups, with differing lifestyles and travel requirements—whether it be for work, leisure, or shopping. Each subset also utilizes different information channels. Therefore, a one-size-fits-all approach to marketing is likely to be ineffective, necessitating instead a multifaceted strategy that caters to this varied clientele (Matiş and Ilieş, 2014). In summary, marketing strategies in public transportation need to be crafted with a nuanced understanding of both system capabilities and user diversity.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

This research adopted the theory of Institutional theory. This theory states that the actions and outcomes of firms are not only the result of strategic choices but are profoundly influenced by three layers of contextual elements: the general environment, the industry environment, and the internal environment. Firstly, the general environment includes both institutional guidelines that govern organizational behavior and macro-societal influences like prevailing cultural norms. These elements act as overarching frameworks within which firms operate (Turner et al, 2018). Secondly, the industry environment consists of various stakeholders such as suppliers, customers, and competitors, whose interrelationships determine the range of strategic actions a firm may employ to gain competitive advantage (Rekettye and Liu, 2018). Finally, the internal environment is shaped by the firm's unique resources and capabilities, as well as collective organizational beliefs about the market, competition, and industry (Teece, 2012). These three layers collectively constitute the complex ecology in which firms operate, dictating both their actions and outcomes.

Corporate strategy, business strategy, and functional strategies like marketing strategy interlock to formulate a firm's competitive advantage within its portfolio of businesses (Porter, 1980). The symbiosis of these strategic layers dictates the extent to which a business unit can generate and maintain competitive leverage. This competitive advantage is a crucial determinant of both market-based and financial performance metrics (Toptal and Cetinkaya, 2014). The literature offers diverse viewpoints on performance determinants, rooted in multiple disciplines such as industrial organization economics (Bain, 2015) and marketing (Kotler and Armstrong, 2012). These frameworks collectively enrich our understanding of how firms can effectively navigate complex market dynamics to optimize performance outcomes at various organizational levels.

Therefore, tailored marketing strategies that segment customer groups and offer differentiated promotional incentives may yield higher effectiveness, as diverse user segments respond differently to changes in the service offering.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study was a cross-sectional descriptive survey of the Associate Bus Company (ABC) in Lagos State, Nigeria. The transport company, ABC is known and has branches in all the states in the country but its headquarters is in Lagos state in the South west of Nigeria. This allows for a representative sample across the Island and Mainland sub regions of Lagos, where ABC offers their services (Olajide & Lawanson, 2022). Island services comprise coach and shuttle services, and mainland services include haulage and cargo services (Filani, 2012).

The population of this study is 322 employees of the selected company. The study was carried out in company terminals, Jibowu Terminal, Amuwo Odofin, Ikeja Cargo Outlet, Lekki Ticketing Terminal, Ajah Terminal, Bolade Terminal and Ikorodu Terminal which are the major operational areas of the company in the state.

A sample size of 181 was extracted from 322 population using the Cohran formula. The sample size consists of 181 staff (managers, IT staff and operators) who were randomly selected by simple random sampling. A questionnaire was used for data collection. Descriptive statistics i.e. frequency distribution tables were used to analyse the objectives of the study.

IV. RESULTS

4.1 Types of Transport Marketing Strategies

The responses to various marketing strategies used by the selected company are presented in Table 1. The responses are categorized into five levels of agreement: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (UD), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD), with their respective frequencies and percentages.

1. **Use of Advertising Channels**: A large number of respondents (89, 41.4%) strongly agreed and 71 (33.0%) agreed that ABC uses advertising channels like print media, television, radio, billboards and online

platforms to reach a large audience. Twelve (5.6%) were undecided, 19 (8.8%) disagreed, and 24 (11.2%) strongly disagreed. This means that ABC is a large user of traditional and online advertising.

2. **Digital Marketing Strategies**: Of the 81 (37.8%) who strongly agreed, and 66 (30.7%) who agreed, ABC utilizes digital platforms for marketing. Eight percent (18) were undecided, 11.2 percent (24) disagreed and 12.1 percent (26) strongly disagreed. This means that digital marketing is a necessary but not universally accepted method.
3. **Content Marketing**: Of the 72 respondents (33.5%) who strongly agreed, 78 (36.3%) agreed for content marketing such as creating and distributing blog articles, videos and infographics. Meanwhile, 13 (6.0%) were undecided, 37 (17.2%) disagreed, and 15 (7.0%) strongly disagreed. This implies that those content marketing is very acceptable as a strategy, but most of them lean in favour of agreement.
4. **Social Media Engagement:** On the use of social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn to engage customers and promote services, 72 respondents (33.5%) strongly agreed and 55 (25.6%) agreed. But 19 (8.8%) were undecided, 34 (15.8%) disagreed and 32 (15.8%) strongly disagreed. There is a lot of agreement, but respondents have some contention with the strategy.
5. **Influencer Collaboration:** 81 respondents (37.7%) strongly agreed and 62 (28.8%) agreed with collaboration with influencers or bloggers in the travel or transportation industry. Twelve (5.6%) were undecided, 31 (14.4%) disagreed and 29 (13.5%) strongly disagreed. This shows that influencer collaborations are generally seen as valuable, but there is some dissent.
6. **Partnerships with Other Businesses:** 85 respondents (39.5%) strongly agreed and 78 (36.3%) agreed that they would form partnerships with businesses like hotels, tourism agencies or event organizers for joint promotions. 9 (4.2%) were undecided, 28 (13.0%) disagreed, and 15 (7.0%) strongly disagreed. It shows a great level of agreement that partnerships are an effective way to market.

Table 1: Types of Transport Marketing Strategies Employed by the Company

S/N	Marketing Strategies	SA (%)	A (%)	UD (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
i.	Use of advertising channels such as print media, television, radio, billboards, and online platforms.	89 (41.4)	71 (33.0)	12 (5.6)	19 (8.8)	24 (11.2)
ii.	Utilization of digital marketing strategies through online platforms.	81 (37.8)	66 (30.7)	18 (8.4)	24 (11.2)	26 (12.1)
iii.	Creation and distribution of valuable content, such as blog articles, videos, and infographics.	72 (33.5)	78 (36.3)	13 (6.0)	37 (17.2)	15 (7.0)
iv.	Leveraging social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn for engagement and promotions.	72 (33.5)	55 (25.6)	19 (8.8)	34 (15.8)	32 (15.8)
v.	Collaboration with influencers or bloggers in the travel or transportation industry.	81 (37.7)	62 (28.8)	12 (5.6)	31 (14.4)	29 (13.5)
vi.	Forming partnerships with businesses like hotels, tourism agencies, or event organizers for joint promotions.	85 (39.5)	78 (36.3)	9 (4.2)	28 (13.0)	15 (7.0)

Source: Data Analysis using SPSS version 22, 2023.

4.2 Challenges Faced in Implementing Transport Marketing Strategies

Table 2 describes the challenges that the company faces when trying to implement transport marketing strategies. These are discussed as follows:

1. **High Competition in the Transport Industry**Competition was recognized by a significant proportion of respondents as a major challenge, 83 (38.6) strongly agreeing and 66 (31.0) agreeing. But 3 (1.4%) were undecided, 29 (13.5%) disagreed, and 34

(15.8%) strongly disagreed. The results here suggest that ABC is in a real competitive situation with other transport companies.

2. **Changing Consumer Preferences and Expectations**: 85 (39.5%) strongly agreed and 72 (33.5%) agreed that rapid changes in consumer preferences and expectations were a challenge. A further 12 (5.6%) were undecided, 25 (11.6%) disagreed and 21 (9.8%) strongly disagreed. This highlights the importance for ABC to be agile and responsive to changing customer needs.
3. **Financial Resource Allocation**: Another challenge was allocating enough financial resources for marketing activities, 55 (25.6%) strongly agreed and 98 (45.6%) agreed. Meanwhile, 8 (3.7%) were undecided, 23 (10.7%) disagreed, and 31 (14.4%) strongly disagreed. This implies that financial constraints, especially for smaller companies, are a big impediment to effective marketing.
4. **Reliance on Service Delivery**: ABC's ability to deliver the promised services is crucial for marketing strategies. 65 (44.2%) strongly agreed, 90 (25.4%) agreed and 55 (37.2%) neither agreed nor disagreed. But 11 (5.3%) were undecided, 20 (15.2%) disagreed, and 39 (9.9%) strongly disagreed. The responses show that effective marketing requires that service reliability and quality be ensured.
5. **Seasonal Variation in Transport Demand:** A significant challenge was identified in variability in transport demand based on seasons, holidays and other factors, with 59 (40.4%) strongly agreeing and 79 (25.9%) agreeing. 7.6% were undecided, 43 (10.9%) disagreed, 20 (15.2%) strongly disagreed. This indicates that ABC should adapt its strategies to fluctuating demand patterns.

Table 2: Challenges Faced by ABC in Implementing Transport Marketing Strategies

S/N	Challenges	SA (%)	A (%)	UD (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
i.	The transport industry is highly competitive, with multiple companies vying for the same customer base.	83 (38.6)	66 (31.0)	3 (1.4)	29 (13.5)	34 (15.8)
ii.	Consumer preferences and expectations in the transport industry change rapidly.	85 (39.5)	72 (33.5)	12 (5.6)	25 (11.6)	21 (9.8)
iii.	Allocating sufficient financial resources to marketing activities is challenging, especially for smaller companies.	55 (25.6)	98 (45.6)	8 (3.7)	23 (10.7)	31 (14.4)
iv.	Marketing strategies depend on the company's ability to deliver the promised services.	65 (44.2)	90 (25.4)	11 (5.3)	20 (15.2)	39 (9.9)
v.	Transport demand varies significantly based on seasons, holidays, and other factors.	59 (40.4)	79 (25.9)	14 (7.6)	43 (10.9)	20 (15.2)

Source: Data Analysis using SPSS version 22, 2023.

4.3 Discussion of Findings

The findings show that the selected company uses a variety of marketing methods, including traditional advertising, digital marketing, content creation, social media engagement, influencer collaborations, and business partnerships. This is in accordance with Chen (2017) and Çolpan (2018) who argue that marketing frameworks that are effective in engaging customers and growing organizations. But agreement variations imply different perceptions of the effectiveness of these strategies, especially in digital marketing and social media engagement, which require more focused approaches to increase impact (Catherine, 2015).

On the other hand, the challenges that were identified - high competition, rapid changing consumer preferences, financial constraints, dependence on service reliability, and seasonal demand fluctuations-are major impediments. These results are in agreement with Brata et al. (2017), who claim that competition and the changing needs of consumers necessitate dynamic strategies for survival. Additionally, the financial constraints are consistent with Dimitrov (2019) statement that the limited resources hinder the effectiveness of marketing in transport businesses. Culwick (2015) notes that seasonal demand challenges require adaptive and flexible strategies to continue operations. To improve the company's operational efficiency and customer retention, these issues need to be addressed.

Additionally, the findings are consistent with the Institutional Theory that states that the behavior of an organization is dictated by the pressure and expectation of the external environment (Risi, et al., 2023). The company has been using different marketing strategies to conform to industry norms and societal expectations and to be competitive and relevant. Nevertheless, financial constraints and the changing consumer preferences present the institutional pressures that can impede operational effectiveness. These findings are consistent with the belief of this theory that these external factors can have a very deterministic role in shaping the organizational strategy leading to sustained success.

V. CONCLUSION

This study proposes that the selected company execute various marketing strategies regarding transport marketing, including traditional marketing, digital marketing, content development, social media engagement, working with influencers, and other businesses. The company has been able to maintain relevance and attract customers with these strategies, however, there is no full optimization of their effectiveness as stakeholders have varying perceptions. The company, however, is faced with stiff competition, changing consumer preferences rapidly, financial constraints, dependence on reliable service delivery, and seasonal variations in transport demand. Such challenges prevent the company from exploiting the full potential of its marketing strategies. To improve operational efficiency, improve customer satisfaction and ensure long term success, these issues must be addressed.

5.1 Recommendations

1. **Enhance Digital Marketing**: Therefore, transport companies should concentrate on fortifying its digital marketing ability and building customized campaigns based on data analytic studies and customer feedback to communicate effectively to different audience segments.
2. **Adapt to Consumer Preferences**: Regular market research should be done to get to know what consumers are demanding.
3. **Improve Financial Planning**: If the transport companies cannot afford many marketing activities to be carried out, they should share part of them with other partners or sponsorships.
4. **Ensure Service Reliability**: If marketing promises are made, then investments in service quality, such as timely operations and customer support, should be made to build trust and loyalty.
5. **Develop Seasonal Strategies**: Effective demand fluctuation will be addressed through tailored marketing and operational adjustments during peak and off peak seasons.

5.3 Policy Implication

The study finds that policies supporting innovation and technology in transport marketing are needed. Tax breaks should be given to transport companies to adopt digital marketing and strategic partnerships as incentives for policymakers. Operators are faced with financial constraints and therefore policies that allow access to grants or low-interest loans for marketing and operational improvements. In addition, regulatory frameworks that encourage demand forecasting and adaptive service delivery models are needed to address seasonal demand fluctuations. Government agencies and transport companies can work together to have a resilient and sustainable transport sector, and improve competition and customer satisfaction.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Studies

Future studies should investigate the direct impact of marketing strategies on the profitability of transport companies. A comparison between regional and national operators in Nigeria could shed light on the different levels of effectiveness of these strategies. Research on customer perceptions and satisfaction of marketing efforts will also help in identifying areas for improvement. Another area that may provide valuable findings is the role of technology-driven marketing such as data analytics and digital platforms in improving operational efficiency and customer engagement.

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