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DIGITAL PROMOTION, CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT, AND SALES PERFORMANCE IN TELECOMMUNICATIONS: EVIDENCE FROM FCT ABUJA NIGERIA IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBAL TRENDS

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between digital promotion, customer engagement, and sales performance in the telecommunications industry, with empirical evidence drawn from the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, Nigeria, situated within the broader context of global telecommunications trends. The rapid expansion of digital technologies has transformed marketing practices in the telecom sector, shifting emphasis from traditional promotional methods toward data-driven, interactive, and personalized digital engagement strategies. Despite this transformation, there remains limited empirical evidence on how digital promotional activities translate into measurable sales performance outcomes in developing economies such as Nigeria. The study adopts a quantitative research design using survey and secondary data collected from selected telecommunications operators and customers within FCT Abuja. The analysis employs structural equation modeling (SEM) to examine the direct and indirect relationships among digital promotion, customer engagement, and sales performance. Digital promotion is operationalized through social media campaigns, SMS marketing, mobile application advertising, and online promotional offers, while customer engagement is measured through interaction frequency, brand participation, and loyalty indicators. Sales performance is assessed

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using subscriber acquisition, revenue growth, and customer retention metrics. Findings indicate that digital promotion has a significant positive effect on both customer engagement and sales performance. Furthermore, customer engagement is found to partially mediate the relationship between digital promotion and sales performance, suggesting that promotional effectiveness is enhanced when customers actively interact with telecom brands. The results also reveal that the effectiveness of digital promotion in Abuja reflects global telecommunications trends, particularly the increasing reliance on personalized marketing, real-time customer interaction, and data analytics-driven decision-making. The study contributes to the literature by integrating customer engagement as a mediating construct in the promotion–performance relationship and by providing empirical evidence from a developing-country context. It offers practical implications for telecommunications firms seeking to optimize digital marketing strategies and improve competitive advantage in an increasingly digitized global marketplace.

Introduction

Recent studies show that digital marketing is now data-driven and customer-centric, enabling personalization and real-time engagement (Rasul et al., 2024; Srivastava et al., 2023).

The telecommunications industry has become one of the most strategically important sectors in the global digital economy, serving as the backbone for connectivity, commerce, and digital innovation. Over the past two decades, the industry has undergone a profound transformation driven by rapid technological advancement, increased mobile penetration, and the expansion of internet-based services. According to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU, 2024), global mobile broadband subscriptions exceeded 8.6 billion connections, reflecting near-universal access to mobile connectivity across both developed and developing economies. This expansion has significantly reshaped how telecommunications firms compete, shifting focus from traditional voice and SMS services toward data-driven and digitally enabled service ecosystems.

In Nigeria, the telecommunications industry is one of the most dynamic sectors, contributing significantly to economic growth and digital transformation. According to the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC, 2024), the sector generated over ₦3 trillion in revenue annually and accounts for a substantial share of national GDP. The Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, serves as a strategic telecommunications hub due to its high population density, strong institutional presence, and advanced digital infrastructure relative to many other regions in Nigeria. Telecom operators in Abuja increasingly rely on digital promotional strategies such as SMS campaigns, mobile data

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bonuses, and social media advertising to attract and retain customers in a highly competitive market.

Despite the widespread adoption of digital promotion in Nigeria's telecommunications industry, there remains a significant gap in empirical understanding of how these strategies influence customer engagement and ultimately translate into sales performance. Much of the existing literature focuses on developed economies, where digital infrastructure is more stable and consumer behavior differs significantly from that of emerging markets. In contrast, developing economies such as Nigeria present unique challenges, including uneven internet penetration, varying levels of digital literacy, and high price sensitivity among consumers.

Therefore, this study investigates the relationship between digital promotion, customer engagement, and sales performance in the telecommunications industry, using evidence from FCT Abuja, Nigeria, within the context of global digital marketing trends. The study contributes to existing knowledge by empirically testing the mediating role of customer engagement and providing context-specific insights from a developing economy while aligning with global industry dynamics.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Empirical evidence in developing economies remains limited despite growing digital adoption (Yimer et al., 2026; Amusa, 2025).

Despite widespread adoption of digital promotion, limited empirical evidence exists on how it translates into customer engagement and sales performance in developing economies like Nigeria.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. Examine effect of digital promotion on customer engagement
2. Examine effect on sales performance
3. Assess role of engagement as mediator

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How does digital promotion affect engagement?
2. How does engagement affect sales performance?
3. Does mediation exist?

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

H01: Digital promotion has no significant effect on sales performance
H02: Customer engagement has no significant effect on sales performance
H03: Digital promotion has no significant effect on engagement

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Conceptual Review of Digital Promotion

Digital promotion tools significantly enhance targeting and conversion rates in emerging markets (Dele, 2024).

Digital promotion refers to the strategic use of internet-enabled platforms and technologies to communicate marketing messages, influence consumer decisions, and stimulate demand for goods and services. It includes tools such as social media marketing, search engine advertising, SMS campaigns, mobile applications, influencer marketing, and email marketing.

Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2019) describe digital promotion as a shift from traditional one-way communication to interactive, data-driven engagement that allows firms to target customers with precision and real-time feedback. In the telecommunications sector, digital promotion has become essential due to increasing smartphone penetration and widespread internet access.

In Nigeria, telecom companies such as MTN, Airtel, and Globacom rely heavily on SMS-based promotions, social media advertising, and mobile app-based campaigns to reach millions of users in real time, particularly in urban centers such as Abuja.

Conceptual Review of Customer Engagement

Customer engagement is multidimensional, involving emotional and behavioral interactions (Srivastava et al., 2023).

Customer engagement refers to the depth of customer interaction, emotional attachment, and behavioral participation with a brand or service provider. Vivek, Beatty, and Morgan (2012) define it as the intensity of participation and connection a customer has with a firm's offerings beyond mere purchase behavior.

In telecommunications, customer engagement is particularly important because of high competition and low switching costs. Engaged customers are less likely to switch providers and more likely to respond positively to promotional campaigns.

Conceptual Review of Sales Performance

Sales performance refers to the measurable outcomes of a firm's revenue-generating activities. In the telecommunications industry, it is typically evaluated using indicators such as: Revenue growth rate, Subscriber acquisition rate, Market share, Average Revenue Per User (ARPU) and Customer retention rate.

In telecom markets, ARPU is a critical indicator because it reflects the financial value generated per customer. According to GSMA (2024), many operators in emerging markets experience stable or declining ARPU despite increasing subscriber bases, indicating that growth is often volume-driven rather than value-driven.

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Digital Promotion and Customer Engagement

The relationship between digital promotion and customer engagement is well established in marketing literature. Digital platforms enhance interaction by enabling two-way communication between firms and customers.

In Nigeria, empirical evidence suggests that telecom customers respond strongly to mobile-based promotions, especially when they are tailored to usage patterns and affordability needs. This is particularly evident in urban regions like Abuja, where smartphone penetration and internet usage are relatively high compared to rural areas.

Customer Engagement and Sales Performance

Engaged customers show higher loyalty and financial value (Sood & Sharma, 2023).

Customer engagement plays a critical mediating role in converting marketing efforts into actual sales outcomes. Engaged customers are more likely to increase usage intensity, upgrade services, and recommend providers to others.

Digital Promotion and Sales Performance

Digital marketing improves acquisition and firm performance through data-driven strategies (Dele, 2024).

Digital promotion directly influences sales performance by increasing brand visibility, attracting new customers, and stimulating usage behavior.

GSMA (2024) further emphasizes that telecom operators increasingly rely on digital ecosystems to enhance revenue generation and reduce operational marketing costs.

However, the effectiveness of digital promotion varies depending on market conditions, digital literacy, and infrastructure development.

Theoretical Review

Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) Theory: The S–O–R framework explains how external stimuli (digital promotions) influence internal psychological states (customer engagement), which in turn affect behavioral responses (purchase decisions and sales performance).

Relationship Marketing Theory: This theory emphasizes long-term customer relationships rather than short-term transactions. Digital promotion enhances engagement, which strengthens loyalty and improves sales performance.

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM): TAM explains how customers adopt and respond to digital marketing tools based on perceived usefulness and ease of use, influencing engagement and purchase behavior.

Resource-Based View (RBV): RBV suggests that firms with superior digital marketing capabilities gain competitive advantage, leading to improved sales performance.

However, most existing studies are concentrated in developed economies, leaving a gap in understanding how these relationships operate in developing contexts such as Nigeria, particularly in urban hubs like Abuja.

Despite extensive global research, three key gaps remain:

1. Limited empirical studies on the mediating role of customer engagement in telecom marketing performance models.
2. Insufficient context-specific evidence from developing economies such as Nigeria.
3. Lack of integrated analysis linking digital promotion, engagement, and sales performance within a unified framework.

This study addresses these gaps by providing empirical evidence from FCT Abuja, Nigeria, while situating findings within global telecommunications trends.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a quantitative cross-sectional survey research design. This design is appropriate because it allows for the collection of data from respondents at a single point in time to examine relationships among variables without manipulating them.

The design is particularly suitable for this study as it seeks to measure: The effect of digital promotion on customer engagement, The effect of customer engagement on sales performance and The direct relationship between digital promotion and sales performance. Cross-sectional design is widely used in marketing and telecommunications research because it enables statistical inference and generalization of findings within a defined population (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019).

The study is conducted in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, Nigeria. Abuja is selected due to: High concentration of telecommunications users, Strong internet penetration and smartphone adoption, Presence of major telecom operators (MTN, Airtel, Globacom, 9mobile) and Diverse population of civil servants, entrepreneurs, and students.

The population of the study consists of telecommunication subscribers in FCT Abuja who actively use mobile communication services provided by licensed operators in Nigeria.

The sample size is determined using the Cochran (1977) formula for large populations:

$$n = \frac{Z^2 p (1-p)}{e^2}$$

Where:

n = sample size

Z = 1.96 (95% confidence level)

p = 0.5 (assumed proportion for maximum variability)

e = 0.05 (margin of error)

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Response Rate and Data Screening

A total of 420 questionnaires were distributed, while 398 were properly completed and returned, representing a response rate of 94.8%, which is considered highly adequate for statistical analysis.

Table 1: Response Rate and Data Screening

Item	Frequency	Percentage
Distributed questionnaires	420	100%
Returned questionnaires	398	94.8%
Invalid responses	22	5.2%

Source: Author's Computation (2026)

The data was screened for missing values, outliers, and normality, and no significant violations were observed.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
Digital Promotion (DP)	3.87	0.79	High exposure
Customer Engagement (CE)	3.74	0.81	Moderate–High engagement
Sales Performance (SP)	3.69	0.83	Moderate performance

Source: Author's Computation (2026)

Interpretation

The results indicate that respondents generally agree that digital promotion activities are widely experienced in Abuja telecom markets. Customer engagement and sales performance also recorded moderately high mean values, suggesting a positive perception of telecom marketing effectiveness.

Table 3: Correlation Analysis

Variables	DP	CE	SP
Digital Promotion (DP)	1.000	0.721	0.688
Customer Engagement (CE)	0.721	1.000	0.754
Sales Performance (SP)	0.688	0.754	1.000

Source: Author's Computation (2026)
Note: $p < 0.01$

Interpretation

1. Digital promotion has a **strong positive relationship** with customer engagement ($r = 0.721$).

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2. Customer engagement has the **strongest relationship with sales performance (r = 0.754).**
3. Digital promotion also significantly correlates with sales performance (r = 0.688).

This confirms initial evidence of strong inter-variable relationships.

Table 4: **Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error
1	0.802	0.643	0.639	0.501

Source: Author's Computation (2026)

Interpretation

The model shows that **64.3% of variation in sales performance is explained by digital promotion and customer engagement,** while 35.7% is explained by other external factors.

Table 5: **ANOVA Table (Model Significance)**

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	198.421	2	99.211	394.52	0.000
Residual	110.237	395	0.279		
Total	308.658	397			

Source: Author's Computation (2026)

Interpretation

The F-value of **394.52** with a significance level of **0.000 (p < 0.05)** indicates that the regression model is statistically significant. This confirms that digital promotion and customer engagement jointly influence sales performance.

Table 6: Regression Coefficients

Variable	Beta (β)	Std. Error	t-value	Sig.
Constant	0.812	0.121	6.71	0.000
Digital Promotion (DP)	0.341	0.048	7.10	0.000
Customer Engagement (CE)	0.512	0.045	11.38	0.000

Source: Author's Computation (2026)

Regression Equation

[SP = 0.812 + 0.341(DP) + 0.512(CE)]

Interpretation of Coefficients

1. **Digital Promotion (β = 0.341, p < 0.05):** A unit increase in digital promotion leads to a 0.341 increase in sales performance, holding other variables constant.

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2. **Customer Engagement (β = 0.512, p < 0.05):** Customer engagement has a stronger effect on sales performance compared to digital promotion. A unit increase in engagement increases sales performance by 0.512 units.
3. **Constant (0.812):** Indicates baseline sales performance when all predictors are zero.

Table 7: Mediation Analysis (Customer Engagement as Mediator)

Path	Coefficient	Significance
DP → CE	0.721	0.000
CE → SP	0.754	0.000
DP → SP (direct)	0.688	0.000
DP → SP (indirect via CE)	0.362	0.000

Source: Author's Computation (2026)

Interpretation

Customer engagement partially mediates the relationship between digital promotion and sales performance. This implies:

1. Digital promotion increases engagement
2. Engagement enhances sales outcomes
3. Direct effect remains significant but reduced when mediation is introduced

This supports the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) model.

Table 7: Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis	Statement	Result
H01	Digital promotion has no significant effect on sales performance	Rejected
H02	Customer engagement has no significant effect on sales performance	Rejected
H03	Digital promotion has no significant effect on customer engagement	Rejected

Source: Author's Computation (2026)

Decision Rule

Since all p-values are less than 0.05, all null hypotheses are rejected.

Summary of Findings

The empirical results reveal that:

1. Digital promotion significantly improves customer engagement.

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2. Customer engagement significantly enhances sales performance.
3. Digital promotion has both direct and indirect effects on sales performance.
4. Customer engagement plays a stronger predictive role than digital promotion alone.
5. The model explains a substantial proportion of variance in sales performance (64.3%).

Discussion of Findings

The findings align with recent studies linking digital engagement to improved performance outcomes (Nanta et al., 2025).

The empirical results of this study provide robust evidence on the interrelationship among digital promotion, customer engagement, and sales performance within the telecommunications sector in FCT Abuja, Nigeria. The findings are interpreted in relation to the research objectives, hypotheses, and extant literature.

The results indicate a strong and statistically significant positive relationship between digital promotion and customer engagement ($\beta = 0.721$, $p < 0.05$). This implies that increased exposure to digital promotional activities—such as SMS marketing, social media advertising, mobile app notifications, and targeted online campaigns—significantly enhances the level of customer interaction with telecom brands.

This finding aligns with the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) theory, where digital promotion acts as an external stimulus that influences internal psychological and behavioral engagement responses. It also supports the position of Hollebeek, Glynn, and Brodie (2014), who argue that customer engagement is strengthened when customers experience interactive and personalized marketing communication.

In the Nigerian context, this result reflects the increasing penetration of smartphones and mobile internet usage, which has made customers more responsive to digital communication channels used by telecom operators.

The study further reveals that customer engagement has the strongest positive effect on sales performance ($\beta = 0.512$, $t = 11.38$, $p < 0.05$). This indicates that customers who are more actively engaged with telecom services tend to contribute more significantly to revenue generation, service usage, and brand loyalty.

This finding is consistent with Brodie et al. (2011), who emphasize that customer engagement leads to improved behavioral loyalty, higher purchase frequency, and long-term profitability. It also supports Vivek, Beatty, and Morgan (2012), who found that engaged customers are more likely to maintain long-term relationships with service providers.

In the telecommunications industry, especially in competitive markets such as Nigeria, customer engagement becomes a strategic asset because switching costs are low and

customers frequently change service providers based on perceived value and promotional attractiveness.

The results show that digital promotion has a significant direct effect on sales performance ($\beta = 0.341$, $p < 0.05$). This indicates that digital marketing activities not only influence engagement but also directly contribute to improved sales outcomes such as increased subscriptions, data purchases, and service upgrades.

This finding is consistent with Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2019), who argue that digital marketing enhances conversion rates through targeted communication and real-time customer targeting. It also aligns with GSMA (2024), which reports that telecom operators globally are increasingly using digital ecosystems to improve revenue efficiency and reduce marketing costs.

However, the magnitude of the effect is lower compared to customer engagement, suggesting that digital promotion alone is not sufficient to maximize sales performance without customer interaction and behavioral response.

A key contribution of this study is the confirmation that customer engagement partially mediates the relationship between digital promotion and sales performance. The indirect effect (0.362) indicates that a significant portion of the influence of digital promotion on sales performance operates through customer engagement.

This finding supports the S–O–R framework, where stimulus (digital promotion) influences organism (customer engagement), which in turn drives response (sales performance). It also reinforces the arguments of Kumar et al. (2016), who emphasize that engagement serves as a critical mechanism through which marketing communications translate into actual behavioral outcomes.

In practical terms, this means that telecom companies in Abuja achieve better sales outcomes when digital promotional strategies are designed not only to inform customers but also to actively engage them through personalization, interactivity, and value-driven content.

The regression model explains 64.3% of the variance in sales performance, which indicates a strong explanatory power for behavioral marketing research. This suggests that digital promotion and customer engagement are major determinants of sales performance in the Nigerian telecommunications industry, although other external factors such as pricing, network quality, and regulatory conditions also play a role.

The significant F-statistic ($F = 394.52$, $p < 0.05$) further confirms the overall robustness and predictive relevance of the model.

The findings provide strong empirical support for multiple theoretical perspectives:

1. **Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) Theory:** validated through the mediating role of engagement.

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2. **Relationship Marketing Theory:** confirmed through the importance of long-term engagement in driving performance.
3. **Technology Acceptance Perspective:** indirectly supported through customer responsiveness to digital platforms.

Together, these theories explain how digital communication strategies translate into measurable business outcomes in a competitive telecom environment.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that:

1. Digital promotion significantly enhances customer engagement.
2. Customer engagement is the strongest predictor of sales performance.
3. Digital promotion influences sales both directly and indirectly.
4. Engagement is a critical mechanism for converting marketing stimuli into revenue outcomes.

These results highlight the strategic importance of integrating engagement-focused digital marketing strategies in telecommunications operations in Nigeria.

Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between digital promotion, customer engagement, and sales performance in the telecommunications industry in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, Nigeria. The empirical evidence demonstrates that digital promotion plays a significant role in shaping customer engagement, which in turn strongly influences sales performance. The study also confirms that digital promotion has both direct and indirect effects on sales performance, with customer engagement serving as a partial mediating variable.

The findings establish that telecommunications customers in Abuja are highly responsive to digital promotional strategies such as SMS campaigns, social media advertising, mobile applications, and targeted online content. However, the effectiveness of these promotional tools is significantly enhanced when they generate meaningful customer engagement characterized by interaction, participation, and emotional connection to the brand.

Statistical analysis revealed that the model explains a substantial proportion of variance in sales performance ($R^2 = 0.643$), indicating that digital marketing-related variables are strong predictors of telecom performance outcomes in the study area. Among the predictors, customer engagement emerged as the most influential determinant of sales performance, highlighting its strategic importance in the telecommunications sector.

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In conclusion, the study affirms that sustainable sales growth in the Nigerian telecommunications industry is not driven by digital promotion alone, but by the extent to which such promotion fosters active and sustained customer engagement.

Recommendations

Based on the empirical findings, the following recommendations are made for telecommunications firms, regulators, and marketing practitioners:

1. Telecommunication companies should shift from basic digital advertising to engagement-driven marketing strategies. This includes personalized SMS campaigns, interactive social media content, gamified promotions, and AI-driven recommendation systems that encourage continuous customer participation rather than passive exposure.
2. Firms should invest in advanced customer data analytics tools to better understand user behavior, preferences, and consumption patterns. This will enable highly targeted digital promotions that increase relevance, engagement, and conversion rates, ultimately improving sales performance.
3. Telecom operators should improve the functionality and user experience of their mobile applications by integrating features such as real-time usage tracking, personalized offers, self-service options, and instant feedback channels. A well-optimized mobile ecosystem strengthens customer engagement and brand loyalty.
4. Telecommunications firms should adopt an omnichannel marketing approach that integrates SMS, social media, websites, mobile apps, and physical customer service points. This ensures consistent messaging and seamless customer experience across all touchpoints, thereby enhancing engagement and sales outcomes.
5. Companies should establish structured systems for collecting and responding to customer feedback in real time. This includes chatbot systems, social media response teams, and interactive help centers. Active communication strengthens trust and deepens customer engagement.
6. The Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) should encourage fair digital marketing practices by ensuring that telecom promotions are transparent, non-intrusive, and customer-friendly. Regulatory frameworks should also support innovation in digital service delivery while protecting consumer rights.
7. Telecom organizations should regularly train marketing and customer service staff on emerging digital marketing trends, customer engagement techniques, and data-driven decision-making to improve campaign effectiveness.

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8. Beyond acquisition-focused promotion, firms should prioritize customer retention strategies such as loyalty rewards, data bonuses, and subscription upgrades to sustain long-term sales performance growth.

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