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SALES PROMOTION AND CONSUMER BRAND PREFERENCE FOR MOBILE PHONE SERVICES IN KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Kenya's mobile telephony industry has been characterized by cut-throat competition among the industry players in the last one decade with the resultant closure or complete sell off of the businesses of some of the mobile phone service providers to competitors. It is against this background that measuring a consumer's brand preference is an important step towards understanding the choice behaviour of a consumer. The study's objective was to establish the influence of sales promotion on consumer brand preference for mobile phone services in Kenya. A descriptive survey design was used, with data collected using a structured and semi-structured questionnaire. A multi-stage stratified random sampling was used to collect data from mobile phone service subscribers domiciled in Nairobi County. Of the 500 questionnaires administered, 387 subscribers responded, giving a response rate of 77.4%. Correlation analysis was used to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between the variables. Regression analysis was used to test the study's hypotheses using F and T-tests. The study revealed that there is a significant and positive relationship between sales promotion and consumer brand preference for mobile phone services in Kenya. The study concluded that sales promotion is a significant factor in influencing consumer brand preference for a mobile phone service. Marketers in the mobile telecommunication services industry need to effectively utilize sales promotion with the aim of creating awareness, influencing consumers to form positive attitudes towards their brands and generating immediate sales of their brands.

Key Words: *Voice Traffic, Sales Promotion, Brand Preference, Mobile Phone Service*

INTRODUCTION

Kenya's voice traffic market, one of the mobile phone services, has an array of tariff offerings. These brands are offered in Kenya by Safaricom Ltd, Telekom Kenya, Airtel Kenya, and Finserve Africa Ltd. A consumer's frequent use of any of these brands thus reflects the consumer's brand preference. Kenya's mobile telecommunication industry has been characterized by stiff competition among the mobile phone service providers. This has seen the exit or selling out of some of the network providers to competition from within and from outside the country. It is against this background that measuring a consumer's brand preference becomes very critical as it enables one to understand consumer choice behavior, as pointed out by Ebrahim (2013). Lin (as cited in Alamro & Rowley, 2011) concurs and states that a single brand preference can be regarded as a measure of brand loyalty. Yet despite its importance, brand preference has received scant attention, as shown by Alamro & Rowley (2011).

Consumer sales promotions are a crucial part of the marketing mix for many consumer products and services (Vaishnani, 2011). Jean & Yazdanifard (2015) concur and assert that promotion is a vital tool that helps the marketer to achieve their sales target and increase the company's profit. They posit that marketing managers use price-oriented and non-price promotions to add excitement and value to brands and to encourage brand loyalty. Afande & Maina (2015) state that sales promotion has received little academic attention despite the evidence on the growth of its importance compared to other forms of marketing techniques, such as advertising. Vaishnani (2011) in supporting this argument notes that many studies have focused on the effects of sales promotion on brand switching, purchase quantity, and stockpiling. These studies, he notes, have shown that sales promotion makes consumers switch brands and purchase earlier or more. In the Kenyan context, network providers have continued to use sales promotion in their mobile phone services with an aim of increasing their market share, sales, brand switching, among other objectives. With no prior studies on the effect of sales promotion on consumer brand preference for the mobile phone services in Kenya, it remains unclear how sales promotion affects brand preference for these mobile phone services. Given that the effect of sales promotion remains largely unexamined in academic literature in Kenya, a need, therefore, exists which necessitates a practical study on the relationship it has with consumer brand preference for mobile phone services. On the same note, even though voice traffic has been the largest contributor to mobile phone operators' revenues in Kenya, consumer research has devoted little attention to the motives underlying consumer brand preference for a service provided by a network provider. It is for this reason that the study examined how consumer preference for these services are influenced by sales promotion.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The study's objective was to establish the relationship between sales promotion and consumer brand preference for the mobile phone services in Kenya

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sales Promotion

Belch and Belch (2003, pp. 512) define sales promotion as "a direct inducement that offers an extra value or incentive for the product to the sales force, distributors, or the ultimate consumer with the primary objective of creating an immediate sale". Kotler and Armstrong (2013) concur and explain that sales promotion consists of short-term incentives aimed at encouraging the purchase or sale of a service or product. Percy (2008), on the other hand defines sales promotion as any direct purchasing incentive, reward, or promise offered to the target audience with a view to making a specific purchase or taking a specific action that will be beneficial to those responding to the promotion. As pointed out by Fill and Jamieson (2011), sales promotion consists of various marketing techniques that are often used tactically to provide added value to an offering with a view to accelerating sales and gathering marketing information. It has been acknowledged that consumer and trade promotions can be a very effective tool for generating short-term increases in sales, and many brand managers would rather use a promotion to produce immediate sales than invest in advertising to build the brand's image over time (Belch and Belch, 2003). They, however, caution that overuse of sales promotion can be detrimental to a brand in several ways. The first is that a brand that is constantly promoted may lose perceived value. This is in line with Teunter (2002) and Jha-Dang's (2004) assertion that the presence of a promotion will lead consumers to attribute lower quality to the brand owing to the fact that it is on promotion. A study by Priya, Raghubir et al (1999), which examined whether price promotions affect pre-trial evaluations of a brand, showed that offering a price promotion is more likely to lower a brand's evaluation when the brand has not been promoted previously compared to when it has been frequently promoted, and that promotions are more likely to result in negative evaluations when they are uncommon in the industry. The second reason why sales promotions should not be overused is because consumers often end up purchasing a brand either because it is on sale, they get a premium, or they have a coupon, rather than basing their decision on a favourable attitude they have developed towards the brand. When the extra promotional incentive is not available, they switch to another brand.

Sawyer and Dickson (2015) have used the concept of attribution theory to examine how sales promotion may affect consumer attitude formation. They explain that according to this theory, people acquire attitudes by observing their own behaviour and considering why they acted in a certain manner. They further contend that consumers who consistently purchase a brand because of a coupon or price-off deal may attribute their behaviour to the external promotional incentive rather than to a favourable attitude towards the brand. By contrast, when no external incentive is available, consumers are more likely to attribute their purchase behaviour to favourable underlying feelings about the brand. Sawyer and Dickson (2015) further contend that another potential problem with consumer-oriented promotions is that a sales promotion trap or spiral can result when several competitors use promotions extensively. They explain that often a firm begins using sales promotions to differentiate its product or service from the competition. If the promotion is successful and leads to a differential advantage, competitors may quickly copy it. When all the competitors are using sales promotions, this not only lowers profit margins for each firm but also makes it difficult for any one firm to hop off the promotional bandwagon. Percy (2008) on the other hand contend that there are costs associated with promotion, and when a promotion is too successful, the unexpected increased costs can have a significantly negative effect on the marketing budget.

Manusov and Spitzberg (2008) note that despite the expansive and diverse domains and questions to which attribution theory has been applied, it still has its own problems. They explain that in terms of explanatory power, which refers to how well does a theory explains, or makes sense of, phenomena, attribution theories have the advantage of making good intuitive sense. However, in terms of scope and generality, which refer to the breadth of phenomena and contexts in which a theory applies, they posit that Attribution theory which only applies to a particular time, place, or behavior is narrow in scope and not very generalizable. Malle (2011) concurs and notes that traditional formulations of attribution theory either focused too narrowly on inferences of stable traits or oversimplified the complex nature of behaviour explanations. Manusov and Spitzberg (2008) further point out that even though there is lack of support or partial support reported in prior studies, it is rare to find any scholar claiming that attribution theory is fundamentally flawed and that some of its premises need to be replaced. Teunter (2002) and Jha-Dang (2004), however, argue that although early researchers had suggested that the mere presence of a promotion would lead to perceptions of lower quality, results of later studies have shown that a promotion's information value is context specific. Jha-Dang (2004) further pointed out that in today's purchase environment where most brands promote, it is unlikely that consumers will make negative attributions about a brand just because it is on promotion. Various researchers have tried to test the assimilation theory empirically, with the studies' findings showing some evidence to support the assimilation theory approach (Isac and Rusu, 2014). They, however, note that attempt at reconciling the assimilation-contrast theories has been methodologically flawed. They explain that attempts by various researchers to test this theory empirically have brought out mixed results. This, they explain, is unlike adaptation-level theory which has been shown to be gaining acceptance, as it is able to explain some counter-intuitive predictions made by assimilation-contrast theories. Past studies on self-perception theory have shown that consumers have a low level of involvement in everyday shopping situations (Jha-Dang, 2004), given that in such low involvement situations, consumers are not motivated enough to make the kind of attributions suggested by self-perception theory.

Empirical evidence shows that sales promotions have mixed results on consumer behaviour. Jean and Yazdanifard (2015), whose article sought to review how sales promotion change the consumer's perception and their purchasing behaviour of a product, cite past research which shows that consumers perceive promotional products as low-equity brands. Furthermore, they note, consumers might associate a lower price during sales promotion to low quality of products. They add that prior studies have suggested that some consumers might feel embarrassed when purchasing a product under sales promotion. This implies that inappropriate sales promotions may lead to the opposite desired outcome, such as a decrease in the purchase of these products by the consumers. Afande and Maina (2015) concur and assert that in countries like Japan, purchasing products or services offered in a sales promotion is seen as a sign of poverty or losing face. Omotayo (2011), whose study aimed at determining the effect of sales promotion on customer loyalty in the telecommunication industry in Nigeria, however, argue that the impact of sales promotion on consumer behaviour reveals mixed results, with past studies showing that sales promotion is an important factor to differentiate hard-core loyal consumers from brand switchers and that sales promotion was the most important factor to attract brand switchers. This position rhymes with Jean and Yazdanifard's (2015) contention that past research has indicated that the brand with sales promotion is more likely to increase the consumers' preferences and purchasing behaviour than the brand without sales promotion. Abdul (2007), in his literature review, however, cites studies which showed that sales promotions do not affect post promotion brand preferences in general. He explains that depending on features of sales promotion and the promoted product or service, sales promotion can either increase or decrease preference for a brand. He adds that the results of a prior study had shown that a very successful promotion did not have any positive or negative longer-term effect on the brand, however it did expand the total category for the retailer, though temporarily. He further cites studies relating to the impact of promotion on brand switching which showed that sales promotion has a strong effect on brand switching.

In concurring with the preceding discussions, Lindholm (2008), whose study sought to show how sales promotion influence consumer behaviour in the marketing of financial services, demonstrated that sales promotion has an effect on consumer behaviour, noting though that the behaviour of the consumer could not be fully explained by the effect of sales promotion, thus acknowledging that other promotion mix strategies could have an effect in consumer behaviour. Furthermore, Dangaiso (2014), in his study which sought to determine the effectiveness of sales promotion strategies on company performance with special reference to TelOne Zimbabwe, showed that sales promotion has an important role and influences in marketing management of the telecommunication sector in Zimbabwe. This, he notes, is evinced by a significant sales volume increase as a result of price-off promotion. In the Kenyan context, Afande and Maina (2015), whose study sought to evaluate the influence of promotional mix elements on sales volume of financial institutions in Kenya, demonstrated that sales promotion has the highest influence on sales volume of financial institutions in Kenya as compared to the other promotion mix elements like advertising, personal selling and direct marketing. From literature reviewed, it is evident that there are mixed results on the effect of sales promotion on consumer behaviour. It these inconsistencies in the effect of sales promotion on consumer behaviour, from past studies, that the current study sought to cure by including sales promotion as a predictor variable.

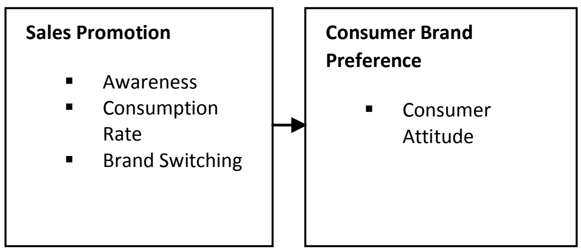
Consumer Brand Preference

Assessments of brand preference endeavor to measure marketing activities' influence in the potential and current customers' hearts and minds. As pointed out by Ebrahim (2013), measuring a consumer's brand preference is a significant step towards comprehending consumer choice behaviour. He further notes that brand preferences reveal the kind of traits possessed by a brand, and how these attributes bolster the brand's position and boost its market share. As indicated by Lin (as cited in Alamro and Lowrey, 2011), a single brand preference can be regarded as a measure of loyalty. Higher brand preference would thus normally result in more revenues and profitability. Alamro and Rowley (2011) assert that there is no consensus on the definition of brand preference. They state that different authorities conceptualise brand preference in different ways and suggest different relationships between brand preference and other branding variables. For example, Keller (as cited in Alamro and Rowley, 2011), discusses brand preference as an antecedent of brand loyalty and brand equity, whereas Chang and Ya Ming (as cited in Alamro and Rowley, 2011) discuss brand preference as a consequence of brand loyalty and brand equity. Brand preference, according to Dadzie and Boachie-Mensah (2011), is the measure of brand loyalty in which a consumer will select a specific brand in the existence of competing brands, but will accept alternatives if that brand is unavailable. They contend that it could also be considered as the inclination to choose a particular brand of product in preference to any other having a comparable make-up and cost or preference features. Rahman and Azhar (2011), on the other hand, define brand preference by looking at the concept as having two components, namely stated preference, which is based on the importance of various characteristics associated with it; and revealed preference which is explained as actual choice by the consumer.

Other authors use brand preference and brand loyalty interchangeably (Rundle-Thiele and Mackay, as cited in Alamro and Lowrey, 2011). Hellier et al. (as cited in Alamro and Lowrey, 2011), on the other hand, define brand preference as the extent to which a customer favours the chosen service provided by his or her present company, in comparison to the other services provided by other companies in his or her consideration set. Ebrahim (2013) however, indicates that there is a difference between brand preference and brand loyalty. He explains that brand preference represents the attitudinal brand loyalty leaving out the action of repeat purchasing. This position is supported by Bass and Talarzyk (1972) who posit that brand preference does not convert directly into purchasing behaviour, though noting that the two concepts are related. The study adopted this definition of brand preference by Ebrahim (2013) by seeking to investigate it from an attitudinal point of view. He further notes that knowing the pattern of consumer preferences across the population is a critical input for designing and developing innovative marketing strategies, though noting that forecasting consumer's preferences between brands, however, is not an easy task. Bass and Talarzyk (1972) concurred and stated that prediction of individual preference is a difficult and elusive task. They however, argue that it is a vital task given that it represents a major step in understanding consumer choice. Ebrahim, (2013) indicates that he had employed the use of attitude models in his study to measure brand preference. Use of attitude models in measuring brand preference could also be seen in an earlier study by Bass and Talarzyk (1972) in which they indicated that they applied a model of consumer attitudes. They further note that their study compared the predictive results of the attitude model with two multiple discriminant analysis models, and the results indicated that for all product categories analysed, the attitude model was significantly better than the other models in predicting the most preferred brand.

Empirical data show that the theory of reasoned action has been put to test in a number of consumer circumstances with a view to predicting behaviour of customers (Shrum, Liu et al, 2012). For example, they indicated that the Fishbein model has been shown to be predictive of the acquisition of a certain brand of grape drink, generic prescription drugs, football tickets, among other brands. Empirical evidence thus suggests that decisions a consumer makes on a brand therefore stems from brand attitude, a concept which captures the meaning a consumer attaches to the brand, and which in turn is influenced by satisfaction, brand evidence, and brand hearsay (Grace and O'Cass, 2005). Alamro and Rowley (2011) explain that brand evidence consists of brand name, price/value for money, servicescape, core service, employee, and self-image congruence; while brand hearsay encompasses controlled communication (advertising and promotional activities), and uncontrolled communication (word-of-mouth, and publicity). The study was therefore built from prior studies, including that of Alamro and Rowley (2011), Shrum, Liu et al (2012), Grace and O'Cass (2005), among others. The point of departure from these earlier studies, however, lay in the use of brand attitude to the services to operationalize the measurement of consumer brand preference. This is consistent with an earlier study by Ebrahim (2013) which showed that brand preference exemplifies the attitudinal brand loyalty which excludes the repeat purchase action. This position is supported by Bass & Talarzyk (1972) whose study showed that brand preference does not necessarily convert immediately into a purchasing behaviour by a consumer.

Conceptual Framework:



Independent variable **Dependent variable**

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

Cross sectional survey research design was used in this study with data collected using structured and semi-structured questionnaire from mobile phone service subscribers domiciled in Nairobi County. Data was obtained using multi-stage stratified random sampling method from a sample size of 500 respondents (Garson, 2012), The instrument reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha coefficients which was set at the recommended 0.7 (Smith & Albaum, 2010). Pearson product-moment correlation (r) was used to measure the strength of linear relationship between sales promotion and consumer brand preference. As pointed out by Pallant (2005), correlation coefficient provides a numerical summary of the direction and the strength of the linear relationship between two variables. Simple linear regression analysis was used in the study to determine the relationship between sales promotion and consumer brand preference for mobile phone services. The study's hypothesis was tested using a simple linear regression model. The coefficient of determination (R2) was used to show the change in consumer brand preference as explained by sales promotion. P value and t statistic were used to establish the significance of the coefficients (Field, 2009), while the F statistic was used to determine significance of the model. To answer the study's objective simple linear regression model, as shown below, was used.

$Y = \beta 0 + \beta i\ xi + \varepsilon$

Where:

Y is the consumer brand preference response variable which in this case was the attitude of consumers towards the mobile phone service, as measured by the beliefs consumers have about the specific attributes of the attitude object.

$\beta 0$ is the least squares estimates of the intercept

βi is the coefficient of xi,

xi is the influence of sales promotion on consumer brand preference

ε is the error term

THE STUDY HYPOTHESIS

The study's objective was to establish the relationship between sales promotion and consumer brand preference for the mobile phone services in Kenya. The relationship between the two variables was hypothesized as follows:

Ho1: Sales promotion is not positively related to consumer brand preference for the mobile phone services in Kenya.

THE STUDY FINDINGS

The study's findings revealed that there was a positive and moderate correlation between sales promotion and consumer brand preference (r= .398, p value <.01). This demonstrated that an increase in positive perception towards sales promotion of a mobile phone service resulted in an increase of consumer brand preference for the promoted service. As pointed out by Field (2009), the correlation coefficient provides a good estimate of the overall fit of the regression model. To test the hypothesis that sales promotion is positively related to consumer brand preference for the mobile phone services, a simple linear regression analysis was performed. The results of linear regression analysis, shown in Table 1, indicated a positive linear relationship of R = .398 (n =356, p <.01), an R2 of .158 with an F (1,354) of 66.614 and an adjusted R2 of .156. This implied that 15.8% of the variability in consumer brand preference for the mobile phone services could be explained by sales promotion. The remaining 84.2 per cent were explained by other factors not considered in the model. To determine how well the model generalizes to the population, the value of adjusted R2 was examined and it showed that there was a small difference between R2 and adjusted R2 (.158 -.156 = .002, about 0.2%). Table 1 (b) showed an F (1, 354) of 66.614, which was statistically significant at p< .01. The null hypothesis β1=0 was thus rejected and the alternative hypothesis β1≠0 held. This confirmed that there was a positive linear relationship between sales promotion and consumer brand preference for mobile phone services in Kenya.

Table 1: Model Summary of Consumer Brand Preference and Sales Promotion

(a). Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.398[a]	.158	.156	.42697	.158	66.614	1	354	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Sales Promotion

(b). ANOVA

Model		**Sum of Squares**	**Df**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**Sig.**
1	Regression	12.144	1	12.144	66.614	.000[b]
	Residual	64.537	354	.182		
	Total	76.681	355			

a. Dependent Variable: Consumer Brand Preference

b. Predictors: (Constant), Sales Promotion

(c). Coefficients

Model		**Coefficients**			
		B	**Std. Error**	**T**	**Sig.**
1	(Constant)	2.527	.143	17.680	.000
	Sales promotion	.328	.040	8.162	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Consumer Brand Preference

To determine the unique contribution of constant and sales promotion to the model, a test of the beta coefficients, as shown in Table 1 (c) indicated that the constant, α = 2.527, was statistically different from 0, with a p value = 000 which is less than p = .05. The coefficient β = .328 was also shown to be significantly different from 0 with a p value = 0.00 which was less than p = .05. This demonstrated that both the constant and sales promotion made a significant contribution to the model. The contribution of sales promotion to the model was further tested using t-statistic. Sales promotion was shown to make a statistically significant contribution with a t (354) value of 8.162 at $p < .01$. The study model was thus represented by the following equation: $Y = 2.527 + .328X1$

Where Y is consumer brand preference while X1 sales promotion.

The beta coefficient of sales promotion was significant (β1 = .328, t = 8.162, p = .00). This implies that a unit increase in sales promotion led to an increase of .328 of consumer brand preference for mobile phone services.

Discussion on Results for Sales Promotion and Consumer Brand Preference for Mobile Phone Services

The study's findings, as shown in Table 1, indicated a moderate, positive correlation between sales promotion and consumer brand preference ($r = .398$, $n = 356$, $p < .01$), implying that a moderate score for sales promotion was associated with a moderate level of consumer brand preference for the mobile phone services. Linear regression analysis, as shown on table 1 (a), indicated a positive linear relationship of $R = .398$. As pointed out by Field (2009) the correlation coefficient provides a good estimate of the overall fit of the regression model. Linear regression analysis also showed R2 of .158 with an $F (1,354)$ of 66.614 and an adjusted R2 of .156. This implied that 15.8% of the variability in consumer brand preference for the mobile phone services could be explained by sales promotion. The model therefore explains 15.8% of the variance. The remaining 84.2 per cent were explained by other factors not considered in the model. The value of coefficient of determination (R2) thus showed the goodness of fit of the model. As pointed out by Ngugi (2012) R2 is a coefficient of determination in a linear relationship which explains how well the regression line fits the data set. He further noted that R2 is an important indicator of the predictive power of the equation. This is in agreement with Field (2009) who noted that R2 gives a good gauge of the substantive size of the relationship between the predictor and outcome variable. To determine how well the model generalizes to the population, the value of adjusted R2 was examined and it was shown that there was a small difference between R2 and adjusted R2 (.158 -.156 = .002, about 0.2%). What this decrease implies is that if the model was derived from the population rather than from a sample it would account for roughly 0.2% less variance in consumer brand preference for the mobile services.

Table 1(b) showed an $F (1,354)$ of 66.614, which was statistically significant at $p< .01$. This implied that there is less than a 0.1% chance that an F-ratio this large would happen by chance if the null hypothesis were true (Field, 2009). In agreeing with the preceding arguments Pallant (2005) note that F-ratio is a measure of how much the model has improved the prediction of the outcome compared to the level of inaccuracy of the model. She further notes that a good model should have a large F-ratio. The null hypothesis $\beta 1=0$ was thus rejected and the alternative hypothesis $\beta 1\neq 0$ held. It was therefore concluded that the regression model results in significantly better prediction of consumer brand preference than the use of mean value of consumer brand preference. This confirms that there is a positive linear relationship between sales promotion and consumer brand preference for mobile phone services.

To determine the unique contribution of each of the predictors to the model, a test of the beta coefficients, as shown in Table 1(c), indicated that the constant, $\alpha = 2.527$, was statistically different from 0, with a p value = 000 which is less than $p = .05$. The coefficient $\beta = .328$ was also shown to be significantly different from 0 with a p value = 0.00 which was less than $p = .05$. This demonstrated that both the constant and sales promotion made a contribution to the model; hence both were retained in the model. Sales promotion, as shown on the coefficients Table 1(c), made a statistically significant contribution ($p < 0.01$) to the model, with a β of .328. As pointed out by Pallant (2005) the beta value represents the unique contribution of each variable, when the overlapping effects of all the other variables are held constant. The contribution of sales promotion to the model was further tested using t-statistic. Sales promotion was shown to make a statistically significant contribution with a $t (354)$ value of 8.162 at $p < .01$. This position is supported by Field (2009) who posited that the t-statistic tests the null hypothesis that the value of b is 0. Therefore, if the t-statistic is significant, we get confidence in the hypothesis that the b-value is significantly different from 0 and that the predictor variable contributes significantly to the model's ability to estimate values of the outcome. Since sales promotion b value was different from 0, it was concluded that sales promotion made a significant contribution ($p < .01$) to predicting consumer brand preference for the mobile phone services.

These findings concurred with results from earlier studies which showed that sales promotion has a significant influence on consumer brand preference. Jean & Yazdanifard's (2015), for instance, contend that past research has indicated that the brand with sales promotion is more likely to increase the consumers' preferences and purchasing behaviour than the brand without sales promotion. This position rhymes with Dangaiso's (2014) findings which showed that sales promotion has an important role and effects in marketing management of the telecommunication sector in Zimbabwe as its use was evinced by a significant sales volume increase as a result of price-off promotion. In agreeing with these findings, Afande & Maina (2015) demonstrated that sales promotion has the highest influence on sales volume of financial institutions in Kenya as compared to the other promotion mix elements like advertising, personal selling and direct marketing. These findings are also in agreement with Belch & Belch's (2003) assertion that it has been acknowledged that consumer and trade promotion is a very effective tool for generating short-term increases in sales. As such, they note that many brand managers would rather use a sales promotion campaign to produce immediate sales rather than invest in advertising to build the brand's image over time. This position rhymes with Vaishnani's (2011) argument that consumer sales promotions, throughout the world, are an essential part of the marketing mix for many consumer products and services. Jean & Yazdanifard (2015) concur and assert that promotion is a vital tool that helps the marketer to achieve their sales target and increase the company's profit. They posit that marketing managers use price-oriented promotions as well as non-price promotions to add excitement and value to brands and to encourage brand loyalty. In addition, consumers like promotions (Jean & Yazdanifard, 2015; Vaishnani, 2011). This, they explain, is because promotions provide utilitarian benefits such as monetary savings, added value, increased quality, and convenience, as well as hedonic benefits such as entertainment, exploration, and self-expression. Vaishnani (2011) further points out that many studies which focused on the effects of sales promotion on brand switching, purchase quantity, and stockpiling have shown that sales promotion makes consumers switch brands and purchase earlier or more.

Conclusion and Suggestions for Future Research

The study sought to determine the influence of sales promotion on consumer brand preference for mobile phone services in Kenya. It was observed that sales promotion was a significant factor in influencing consumer brand preference for mobile phone services. The study established that there was a moderate and positive correlation between sales promotion and consumer brand preference for mobile phone services. The findings confirmed that there was a significant and positive relationship between sales promotion and consumer brand preference for mobile phone services. The results were supported by empirical evidence which showed that sales promotion has an influence on consumer brand preference. Past studies, for instance, have shown that sales promotion is an important factor in differentiating hard-core loyal consumers from brand switchers and that sales promotion is the most important factor to attract brand switchers. It has also been shown in past studies that the brand with sales promotion is more likely to increase the consumers' preferences and purchasing behaviour than the brand without sales promotion. Thus apart from serving as a short-term profit marketing strategy, sales promotion has the potential in helping the marketers to achieve long-term profits by influencing the consumer's self-perception and self-satisfaction as well as in the development of loyal customers. The current study was carried out in the context of the voice traffic market which, as has been shown, generates the largest revenues for the cellular phone industry. This study recommends that future studies could be done on any of the other cellular phone services like mobile money transfer, SMS or data services to corroborate, or otherwise, the findings.

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