

Promotion Strategies and Performance of Taxi-Hailing Services in Calabar Metropolis

Bernard, Samuel Eventus

Department of Business Management, University of Calabar, Nigeria.

Corresponding author: samuelbernard674@gmail.com

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Abstract

This study examined promotion strategies and performance of taxi-hailing services in Calabar Metropolis. It specifically aimed to determine the effects of sales promotion, direct marketing, advertising, and influencer marketing on the performance of taxi-hailing services. The study adopted cross-sectional survey research design. A structured questionnaire was used to obtain primary data from 232 passengers of Bolt taxi services in Calabar. Descriptive statistics were applied for data analysis and interpretation, while the hypotheses developed for the study were tested using multiple linear regression in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 23). The findings of the study revealed that the promotional strategies applied by taxi-hailing services (sales promotion, direct marketing, advertising and influencer marketing) have been effective in substantially improving their marketing performance in Calabar. Hence, it was recommended that operators of taxi-hailing services in Nigeria can enhance their marketing performance through sales promotion by implementing targeted promotional discounts during off-peak hours, introducing loyalty rewards for frequent users, and partnering with local businesses to offer bundled service packages, thereby attracting new customers and increasing customer retention. The study also recommended that operators of taxi-hailing services should integrate direct marketing strategies such as leveraging targeted social media campaigns to engage local communities, implementing personalized email promotions based on user preferences, utilizing strategic telemarketing to re-engage inactive users, offering exclusive in-app discounts and promotions, and creating compelling content marketing that highlights service benefits, thereby increasing customer acquisition, retention, and long-term engagement significantly. Other recommendations were made to provide a practical framework for operators of taxi-hailing services to improve marketing performance through effective promotional strategies.

Keywords: Promotional Mix, Taxi-Hailing, Marketing Performance, Service Marketing.

Introduction

The Nigerian taxi-hailing industry is experiencing rapid growth, with projections suggesting significant market expansion. In 2023, the market size was valued at approximately \$1 billion and is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 14 percent through 2030 (Olayode et al., 2023). Uber and Bolt continue to lead, but local startups are seeing increasing traction, particularly in regional markets where they can offer lower pricing and tailored services (Etuk et al., 2022). Bolt's share of the market is on the rise,

particularly due to its focus on affordability, while Uber maintains a strong presence in major cities like Lagos (Olawale et al., 2023). The growing demand for urban transportation, alongside an increasing number of mobile internet users in Nigeria, is expected to further fuel the industry's growth, creating opportunities for both international and local competitors (Etuk et al., 2022). In this light, major taxi-hailing brands are investing in several marketing strategies to enhance performance and increase their share of the market. The performance of taxi-hailing services entails the degree of effectiveness and efficiency of the marketing campaigns of taxi-hailing firms in achieving marketing objectives such as market awareness, passenger patronage and sales revenue. It is imperative for taxi-hailing to consistently maintain high levels of business performance in today's dynamic business environment because of the far-reaching adverse impacts of poor performance on corporate sustainability (Haba & Dastane, 2018). This is because the taxi-hailing sector operates within a fiercely competitive environment characterized by technological advancements, changing consumer preferences, and regulatory uncertainties. In such an environment, any lapse in business performance can swiftly lead to adverse consequences that may jeopardize the viability and longevity of taxi-hailing companies (Methu, 2018). To that end, taxi-hailing services in Nigeria have resorted to the execution of promotional strategies in an effort to guard against disruptions to business performance (Etuk et al., 2022; Ogbo & Nwaobasi, 2021).

In the views of Abimbola et al. (2020), promotional strategies are a collection of persuasive tools designed and implemented by business organizations to inform, educate, convince and attract customer patronage. These promotional strategies have become popular among taxi-hailing companies in contemporary times due to a confluence of factors within the competitive landscape and the evolving nature of consumer behaviour (Etuk et al., 2022). To begin with, intense competition characterizes the taxi-hailing industry, with numerous players vying for market share in densely populated urban areas (Guo et al., 2019). By offering discounts, incentives, or exclusive deals, taxi-hailing companies aim to entice passengers away from competitors and establish brand loyalty. Also, in the taxi-hailing sector, consumer preferences and expectations continually evolve, driven by technological advancements and changing socioeconomic dynamics (Siddiq & Taylor, 2022). Promotional campaigns serve as a strategic tool to adapt to these changes, allowing companies to tailor their offerings to meet evolving expectations (Etuk et al., 2022). Whether it is discounted fares during off-peak hours, referral bonuses for new users, or bundled services that cater to specific demographics, promotional campaigns enable taxi-hailing companies to remain agile in a dynamic market environment (Yunus et al., 2019).

Considering these and other imperatives of promotional mix, taxi-hailing companies in Nigeria often rely on several promotional campaigns such as sales promotion, direct marketing, advertising and influencer marketing in a bid to enhance their competitiveness. New and regular passengers of brands like Bolt are periodically given incentives such as discounts, bonus rides, price-off deals and encouraged to participate in referral programmes as part of a sales promotional programme. Advertising media such as

television, radio, internet, outdoor and print outlets are used as vehicles to present and promote the brands of taxi-hailing services in several Nigerian cities. Also, famous Nigerian influencers and celebrities in several key niches have been recruited by taxi-hailing brands to endorse and promote their brands in a bid to gain market traction. The focus of this research, therefore, was to analyze data from regular passengers of taxi-hailing services in Calabar Metropolis to determine the effect of promotional strategies (sales promotion, direct marketing, advertising and influencer marketing) on the performance of these companies.

Problem Statement

Promotional mix strategies are not new to taxi-hailing companies in Nigeria. In a bid to keep up with competition and attract patronage from passengers, these companies have applied several promotional mix strategies in the Nigerian market. However, the effectiveness of the promotional mix strategies of taxi-hailing companies in Nigeria is often impeded by several environmental challenges, thereby undermining their overall business performance (Bassey et al., 2024). One significant challenge is the lack of widespread internet access and smartphone penetration in Nigeria (Etuk et al., 2022). While urban areas might boast relatively higher smartphone adoption rates, vast rural regions still lack access to stable internet connections and smartphones. Since taxi-hailing services predominantly operate through mobile applications, this digital divide limits the reach of promotional campaigns, as a sizable portion of the population remains inaccessible through online channels. Consequently, taxi-hailing companies may find it difficult to effectively target and engage with potential customers in these underserved areas, hampering the overall impact of their promotional endeavors.

Similarly, Nigeria's socio-economic disparities pose a considerable obstacle to the success of the promotional campaigns for taxi-hailing companies. The country exhibits stark income inequalities, with a significant portion of the population residing below the poverty line (Nwosa & Ehinomen, 2020). As such, affordability becomes a critical issue, as the cost of using taxi-hailing services may be out of reach for many Nigerians, particularly those with lower incomes. In light of this scenario, despite promotional offers and discounts, a sizable segment of the population may perceive these services as luxuries rather than necessities, thus limiting their willingness to participate in promotional campaigns or become regular users. Moreover, trust and safety concerns represent significant barriers to the widespread adoption of taxi-hailing services in Nigeria (Ojekere et al., 2022). This is because reports of security incidents involving both drivers and passengers have raised apprehensions among potential users, dissuading them from embracing these platforms. Against this backdrop, this study aimed to provide empirical evidence that demonstrated the effect of promotional strategies on the performance of taxi-hailing services in Calabar Metropolis. Specifically, the study sought to realize the following specific objectives:

- i. To examine the effect of sales promotion on the performance of taxi-hailing services in Calabar Metropolis;

- ii. To determine the effect of direct marketing on the performance of taxi-hailing services in Calabar Metropolis;
- iii. To ascertain the effect of advertising on the performance of taxi-hailing services in Calabar Metropolis;
- iv. To examine the effect of influencer marketing on the performance of taxi-hailing services in Calabar Metropolis.

Literature Review

Promotion in Marketing

Promotion in marketing encompasses a diverse array of activities aimed at raising awareness, generating interest, and persuading potential customers to take action regarding a good or service (Abdulrasool et al., 2020). It involves various communication tools such as advertising, public relations, sales promotions, direct marketing, and personal selling (Mishra & Varshney, 2024). At its core, promotion seeks to communicate the value proposition of a tangible product or service to the target audience, differentiate it from competitors, and ultimately drive consumer behavior towards the desired outcome, whether it is making a purchase, subscribing to a service, or engaging with the brand in some meaningful way (Sohn & Kim, 2022). In competitive industries, promotion is indispensable for marketing organizations striving to carve out a distinctive position and gain a competitive edge (Nguyen & Yang, 2021; Mishra & Varshney, 2024). With numerous players vying for the attention and patronage of consumers, effective promotion becomes a strategic imperative. It allows companies to break through the clutter of competing messages, establish brand recall, and stay top-of-mind amidst a sea of choices. Moreover, promotion enables firms to highlight the unique selling propositions of their offerings, whether it is superior quality, innovative features, or unbeatable value (Mawejje & Taremwa, 2019). By effectively communicating these advantages, companies can sway consumer preferences in their favor and capture market share. Furthermore, promotion plays a pivotal role in driving sales and revenue growth, because by deploying targeted campaigns, marketing organizations can stimulate demand, spur purchase behaviour, and drive traffic to retail outlets or online platforms (Kamau & Mburugu, 2017). Whether it is offering discounts, launching limited-time promotions, or implementing loyalty programs, promotional initiatives can create a sense of urgency and incentivize consumers to act swiftly. In essence, promotion serves as a catalyst for converting interest into action, thereby fueling the revenue engine of businesses operating in fiercely competitive markets. Additionally, promotion fosters engagement and interaction with consumers, nurturing long-term relationships and fostering brand loyalty (Dompheh & Nyarko, 2018).

Performance of Taxi-Hailing Services

Taxi-hailing companies are entities that utilize technology platforms to connect passengers with drivers of private vehicles for hire (Sudjana, 2022). These companies have revolutionized the transportation industry by providing convenient and efficient

alternatives to traditional taxi services. Through mobile applications, users can request rides, track their vehicle's location in real-time, and make cashless transactions, thereby enhancing the overall customer experience (Lee & Tan, 2019). Examples of prominent taxi-hailing companies include Uber, Lyft, and Didi Chuxing, among others. From a marketing perspective, the performance of taxi-hailing companies refers to their ability to effectively attract, engage, and retain customers while maximizing profitability and brand value (Abdullah & Mohd-Any, 2018). Marketing performance encompasses various key indicators, including customer acquisition rates, user engagement metrics, brand awareness, customer satisfaction levels, and revenue generation. A high marketing performance for taxi-hailing companies signifies their success in establishing a strong market presence, capturing market share, and fostering positive relationships with both passengers and drivers (Kim & Lee, 2017).

Maintaining a high marketing performance is crucial for taxi-hailing companies because in a highly competitive market environment, where multiple players vie for the attention and loyalty of consumers, superior marketing performance enables companies to differentiate themselves and stand out amidst the competition (Huong et al., 2018). In this way, effective marketing strategies help to communicate the unique value propositions of the company, such as reliability, safety, affordability, and convenience, thus influencing consumer perceptions and preferences. Also, a high marketing performance directly correlates with business growth and revenue generation for taxi-hailing companies (Namulindwa et al., 2021). This is because by consistently attracting new customers, retaining existing ones, and increasing user engagement, companies can expand their customer base and increase the frequency of ride bookings. This, in turn, translates into higher revenues and profitability, as well as enhanced shareholder value.

Sales Promotion and Performance of Taxi-Hailing Services

Sales promotion can be defined as a strategic marketing tool aimed at stimulating consumer demand or improving product visibility in the market (Muthoka & Kyalo, 2017). It encompasses a variety of mostly short-term tactics designed to incentivize purchases, drive sales, and ultimately increase revenue for a business. One definition of sales promotion involves temporary incentives or offers that encourage consumers to make immediate purchases (Bikkhu & Rashid, 2017). These incentives can take various forms, such as discounts, coupons, rebates, contests, or free samples. By providing consumers with a tangible benefit or added value, sales promotion creates a sense of urgency and motivates them to take action. Another perspective on sales promotion emphasizes its role in influencing consumer behaviour and purchase decisions. From this standpoint, sales promotion can be seen as a strategic communication tool used to inform, persuade, and remind consumers about the benefits of a product or service (Mawuena, 2018; Mishra & Varshney, 2024). Through targeted promotional campaigns, businesses can effectively communicate their value proposition and differentiate themselves from competitors. Whether through advertising, public relations, or direct marketing channels, sales

promotion aims to create a positive perception of the brand and foster customer loyalty (Díaz & Carro, 2018).

In a competitive industry, sales promotion plays a crucial role in enhancing the marketing performance of business organizations as it helps businesses stand out in a crowded marketplace by attracting attention and generating interest in their products (Medeiros & Sousa, 2018). By offering discounts or promotions, businesses can entice customers to choose their brand over competitors, thereby increasing market share and driving sales volume. Also, sales promotion can be used strategically to influence consumer behaviour and purchasing decisions (Kang & Kim, 2019). The foregoing viewpoint suggests that sales promotion, as a promotional strategy, has the capacity to enhance the marketing performance of business organizations in competitive industries. This viewpoint is backed by the study of Dompheh and Nyarko (2018), which revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between sales promotion and the marketing performance of taxi-hailing services in Ghana. The viewpoint is also backed by the study of Kamau and Mburugu (2017), which revealed that sales promotion had a significant positive influence on the marketing performance of taxi-hailing services in Kenya. The viewpoint also finds support in the study of Mawejje and Taremwa (2019), which revealed that sales promotion contributed significantly and positively to the marketing performance of Uber in Uganda. Also, it was found in the study of Sohn and Kim (2022) that sales promotion had a significant positive effect on the marketing performance of taxi-hailing services in South Korea. In addition, the viewpoint aligns with the study of Abdurassool et al. (2020), which revealed that sales promotion had a significant positive relationship with the marketing performance of taxi-hailing services in Malaysia. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H₁: Sales promotion has a significant effect on the performance of taxi-hailing services in Calabar Metropolis.

Direct Marketing and Performance of Taxi-Hailing Services

Direct marketing is a strategic marketing approach that involves communicating directly with targeted individuals or groups of potential customers. This form of marketing bypasses intermediaries, such as retailers or wholesalers, and instead reaches out to consumers through various channels, including email, direct mail, telemarketing, social media, and SMS marketing (Doan & Nguyen, 2020). The essence of direct marketing lies in its personalized and targeted nature, aiming to establish a direct connection with consumers to promote products, solicit feedback, and build long-term relationships (Balu, 2020). One aspect of direct marketing is its ability to precisely target specific demographics or segments of the market (Kebeney et al., 2020). By leveraging data analytics and consumer insights, businesses can tailor their marketing messages and offers to suit the preferences, needs, and behaviours of individual customers. This targeted approach enhances the relevance and effectiveness of marketing campaigns, increasing the likelihood of engagement and conversion. Also, direct marketing facilitates measurable and trackable

results, allowing businesses to assess the performance of their marketing efforts with greater accuracy (Abdel-Malek, 2020). Through metrics such as response rates, conversion rates, and customer lifetime value, companies can evaluate the return on investment of their direct marketing campaigns and make data-driven decisions to optimize future strategies.

Particularly in a competitive industry, direct marketing can serve as a powerful tool for business organizations to gain a competitive edge and enhance their marketing performance (Kang, 2021). This is because by leveraging data-driven insights to target specific market segments, businesses can effectively reach potential customers with personalized messages and offers tailored to their needs and preferences. The foregoing viewpoint suggests that direct marketing, as a promotional strategy, has the capacity to enhance the marketing performance of business organizations in competitive industries. This viewpoint is backed by the study of Dompheh and Nyarko (2018), which revealed a significant positive relationship between direct marketing and the marketing performance of taxi-hailing services in Ghana. The viewpoint also aligns with the study of Kamau and Mburugu (2017), which revealed that direct marketing had a significant positive influence on the marketing performance of taxi-hailing services in Kenya. The viewpoint also finds support in the study of Mawejje and Taremwa (2019), which revealed that direct marketing contributed significantly and positively to the marketing performance of Uber in Uganda. The foregoing viewpoint has been reinforced by the study of Nguyen and Yang (2021), which revealed that direct marketing had a significant positive impact on the marketing performance of taxi-hailing services in Vietnam. In another study by Abdulrasool et al. (2020), it was found that direct marketing had a significant positive relationship with the marketing performance of taxi-hailing services in Malaysia. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H₂: Direct marketing has a significant effect on the performance of taxi-hailing services in Calabar Metropolis

Advertising and Performance of Taxi-Hailing Services

Advertising is a strategic communication tool utilized by businesses to promote their products, services, or brand to target audiences through the mass media (Zainuddin et al., 2021). It encompasses a wide array of promotional activities designed to capture the attention of consumers and persuade them to take desired actions, such as making a purchase or engaging with the brand. One definition of advertising is that it is a form of paid communication, where businesses pay for space or time in various media channels, including television, radio, print, digital platforms, and outdoor displays, to deliver their messages to a large audience (Suci & Rahadi, 2021). This definition emphasizes the financial investment involved in advertising and the deliberate effort to reach a wide audience through paid channels. Another perspective defines advertising as a creative process that involves crafting compelling messages and visuals to communicate the unique selling

propositions of products or services (Saeed et al., 2021). In this view, advertising is not merely about disseminating information but also about engaging consumers emotionally and intellectually to create a memorable brand experience. It involves strategic planning to understand the target audience's needs, preferences, and behaviours, and then tailoring the advertising message to resonate with them effectively. This definition underscores the importance of creativity, storytelling, and visual aesthetics in capturing audience attention and fostering brand affinity.

Furthermore, advertising plays a crucial role in enhancing the marketing performance of business organizations operating in competitive industries as it helps increase brand visibility and awareness by exposing the brand to a wider audience (Hamadi & Slim, 2022). Through targeted advertising campaigns, businesses can reach potential customers who may not have been aware of their products or services otherwise. This heightened visibility can translate into increased brand recognition and recall, which are essential factors in influencing consumer purchasing decisions. The foregoing viewpoint suggests that advertising, as a promotional strategy, has the capacity to enhance the marketing performance of business organizations in competitive industries. This viewpoint is backed by the study of Dompheh and Nyarko (2018), which revealed a significant positive relationship between advertising and the marketing performance of taxi-hailing services in Ghana. The viewpoint is also backed by the study of Kamau and Mburugu (2017), which revealed that advertising had a significant positive influence on the marketing performance of taxi-hailing services in Kenya. In another study by Nguyen and Yang (2021), it was found that advertising had a significant positive impact on the marketing performance of taxi-hailing services in Vietnam. Similarly, the viewpoint is reinforced by the study of Sohn and Kim (2022), which revealed that advertising had a significant positive effect on the marketing performance of taxi-hailing services in South Korea. In addition, the study by Abdulrasool et al. (2020) aligns with this viewpoint by revealing that advertising had a significant positive relationship with the marketing performance of taxi-hailing services in Malaysia. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H₃: Advertising has a significant effect on the performance of taxi-hailing services in Calabar Metropolis

Influencer Marketing and Performance of Taxi-Hailing Services

Influencer marketing is a strategic approach wherein businesses collaborate with individuals who possess a significant following and influence on social media platforms to promote their products (Muthoka & Kyalo, 2017). This form of marketing capitalizes on the trust and credibility that influencers have built with their audience, leveraging their authenticity and rapport to endorse brands. Essentially, it involves the alignment of a brand's message or product with an influencer's personal brand, resulting in a more authentic and relatable advertising experience for the audience (Mishra & Varshney, 2024). From a broader perspective, influencer marketing is about leveraging the power of social

proof and word-of-mouth marketing in the digital age (Bikkhu & Rashid, 2017). It taps into the psychological phenomenon wherein people are more likely to trust recommendations from individuals they perceive as credible and trustworthy, such as influencers, rather than traditional advertisements. By partnering with influencers whose values and niche align with their target audience, businesses can effectively reach and engage with potential customers in a more organic and authentic manner (Mawuena, 2018).

In the context of competitive industries, influencer marketing can serve as a potent tool for businesses to gain a competitive edge and enhance their marketing performance (Díaz & Carro, 2018). One key advantage lies in its ability to cut through the noise of traditional advertising and capture the attention of consumers who are increasingly immune to conventional marketing tactics. In crowded marketplaces where multiple companies are vying for the same audience's attention, influencer marketing offers a way to stand out by leveraging the trust and authority that influencers have already established within their niche. Through collaborations with influencers, brands can tap into new audiences, increase brand awareness, and ultimately drive more traffic and sales. The foregoing viewpoint suggests that influencer marketing, as a promotional strategy, has the capacity to enhance the marketing performance of business organizations in competitive industries. This viewpoint is backed by the study of Dompreeh and Nyarko (2018), which revealed a significant positive relationship between influencer marketing and the marketing performance of taxi-hailing services in Ghana. The viewpoint is also supported by the study of Mawejje and Taremwa (2019), which revealed that influencer marketing contributed significantly and positively to the marketing performance of Uber in Uganda. The viewpoint is also backed by the study of Nguyen and Yang (2021), which revealed that influencer marketing had a significant positive impact on the marketing performance of taxi-hailing services in Vietnam. This viewpoint is also reinforced by the study of Sohn and Kim (2022), which revealed that influencer marketing had a significant positive effect on the marketing performance of taxi-hailing services in South Korea. In addition, this viewpoint aligns with the study of Abdulrasool et al. (2020), which revealed that influencer marketing had a significant positive relationship with the marketing performance of taxi-hailing services in Malaysia. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H₄: Influencer marketing has a significant effect on the performance of taxi-hailing services in Calabar Metropolis.

Review of Empirical Studies and Conceptual Model

In a study by Dompreeh and Nyarko (2018), the focus was on investigating the relationship between promotional strategies and marketing performance of taxi-hailing services in Ghana. The study centered on exploring the relationship between sales promotion, direct marketing, advertising, influencer marketing and the marketing performance of taxi-hailing services in Ghana. Primary data were obtained from 282 passengers of taxi-hailing services in Accra Metropolis using a structured questionnaire. The data obtained were

analyzed using descriptive statistics while the hypotheses of the study were tested using Pearson's product moment correlation method. The findings of the study revealed a significant positive relationship between sales promotion, direct marketing, advertising, influencer marketing and the marketing performance of taxi-hailing services in Ghana. However, the limitation of the study is that it was restricted to the performance of taxi-hailing services in Ghana, with no emphasis on those operating in Nigeria.

Kamau and Mburugu (2017) examined promotional strategies and marketing performance of taxi-hailing services in Nairobi, Kenya. The study specifically sought to determine the influences of advertising, sales promotion, direct marketing and public relations on the marketing performance of taxi-hailing services in Kenya. To that end, the study sought and obtained primary data from 178 operators of taxi-hailing companies in Nairobi. The data were analyzed and interpreted using descriptive statistics, while the hypotheses of the study were tested using simple regression analysis. The findings of the study revealed that advertising, sales promotion, direct marketing and public relations had significant positive influences on the marketing performance of taxi-hailing services in Kenya. However, the limitation of the study is that it was restricted to the performance of taxi-hailing services in Kenya, with no emphasis on the performance of those operating in Nigeria as a consequence of promotional strategies.

Mawejje and Taremwa (2019) carried out their own study on the roles of promotional strategies in improving the marketing performance of Uber in Uganda. The specific aim of the study was to determine the contributions of influencer marketing, sales promotion, direct marketing and event sponsorship to the marketing performance of Uber in Uganda. To that end, the study used a structured questionnaire survey to obtain primary data from 281 passengers of Uber in Kampala. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while the hypotheses of the study were tested using analysis of variance (ANOVA) method. The findings emerging from that analysis revealed that influencer marketing, sales promotion, direct marketing and event sponsorship contributed significantly and positively to the marketing performance of Uber in Uganda. However, the limitation of the study is that it was restricted to the performance of taxi-hailing services in Uganda, with no emphasis on the performance of those operating in Nigeria as a consequence of promotional strategies.

In Vietnam, Nguyen and Yang (2021) investigated promotional strategies and marketing performance of taxi-hailing services. The study specifically sought to establish the impacts of advertising, influencer marketing, direct marketing and public relations on the marketing performance of taxi-hailing services in Vietnam. To accomplish this aim, primary data were obtained from 302 passengers of taxi-hailing services in Hanoi using a structured questionnaire. The data were descriptively analyzed and interpreted, while structural equation modeling method facilitated hypotheses testing. Consequently, the findings of the study revealed that advertising, influencer marketing, direct marketing and public relations had significant positive impacts on the marketing performance of taxi-hailing services in Vietnam. The limitation of this study, however, is its narrow focus on the

performance of taxi-hailing services in Vietnam, with no empirical evidence to explain the causality between promotional strategies and performance of taxi-hailing companies in Nigeria.

In South Korea, Sohn and Kim (2022) examined the effect of promotional strategies on the marketing performance of taxi-hailing services. The specific purpose of the study was to examine the effects of sales promotion, advertising, influencer marketing and event sponsorship on the marketing performance of taxi-hailing services in South Korea. To that end, the study obtained primary data from 186 customers of taxi-hailing services in Seoul using an online questionnaire survey. The data obtained were analyzed and interpreted with the aid of descriptive statistics, while multiple linear regression was adopted for hypotheses testing. The findings emerging from this test revealed that sales promotion, advertising, influencer marketing and event sponsorship had significant positive effects on the marketing performance of taxi-hailing services in South Korea. However, the limitation of this study is that it narrowly focused on the performance of taxi-hailing services in South Korea, with no empirical evidence to explain the causality between promotional strategies and performance of taxi-hailing companies in Nigeria.

Also, Abdulrasool et al. (2020) investigated promotional strategies and marketing performance of taxi-hailing services in Malaysia. The aim of this study was to determine the relationship of direct marketing, sales promotion, advertising and influencer marketing with the marketing performance of taxi-hailing services in Malaysia. The study used a structured questionnaire survey to obtain primary data from 428 passengers of taxi-hailing brands in Kuala Lumpur. Descriptive statistics sufficed for data analysis and interpretation, while hypotheses testing was actualized using Pearson's product moment correlation method. The findings of the study revealed that direct marketing, sales promotion, advertising and influencer marketing had significant positive relationships with the marketing performance of taxi-hailing services in Malaysia. However, the limitation of this study is that it narrowly focused on the performance of taxi-hailing services in Malaysia, with no empirical evidence to explain the causality between promotional strategies and performance of taxi-hailing companies in Nigeria.

Another study by Etuk et al. (2022) investigated marketing strategies and passengers' adoption of taxi-hailing services in Calabar and Uyo, Nigeria. The study centered on determining the effects of e-marketing, relationship marketing, marketing communication and service quality on passengers' adoption of taxi-hailing services. To that end, the study obtained primary data from 277 passengers of Bolt in Uyo and Calabar through a structured questionnaire. The data obtained were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while the hypotheses of the study were tested using multiple regression. Consequently, it was found that relationship marketing strategy had the highest significant positive effect on passengers' adoption of taxi-hailing services, followed chronologically by E-marketing, service quality, and marketing communications. The limitation of this study is that although it examined the role of marketing communication in the taxi-hailing context in Nigeria, it was restricted to predicting its effect on passengers' propensity to adopt these services,

with no emphasis on the marketing performance these services as a consequence of promotional strategies.

From the foregoing review, it has been observed that several promotional strategies have been applied with the intent of enhancing the performance of taxi-hailing services around the world. Based on the scholarly accounts of Dompheh and Nyarko (2018); Kamau and Mburugu (2017); Nguyen and Yang (2021), this study adopted sales promotion, direct marketing, advertising and influencer marketing as key dimensions of promotional strategies in the Nigerian taxi-hailing sector. From these scholarly studies, the parameters measuring these promotional dimensions were adapted, whereas the parameters of the dependent variable (performance of taxi-hailing services) were adapted from Odunmbaku et al. (2021). Informed by the findings of extant relevant studies like Dompheh and Nyarko (2018); Kamau and Mburugu (2017); Nguyen and Yang (2021), this study hypothesized that the selected promotional strategies have some sort of relationship with the performance of taxi-hailing services in Calabar. This hypothesized relationship between the independent and dependent variables of the study is depicted on the conceptual model in FIG. 1.

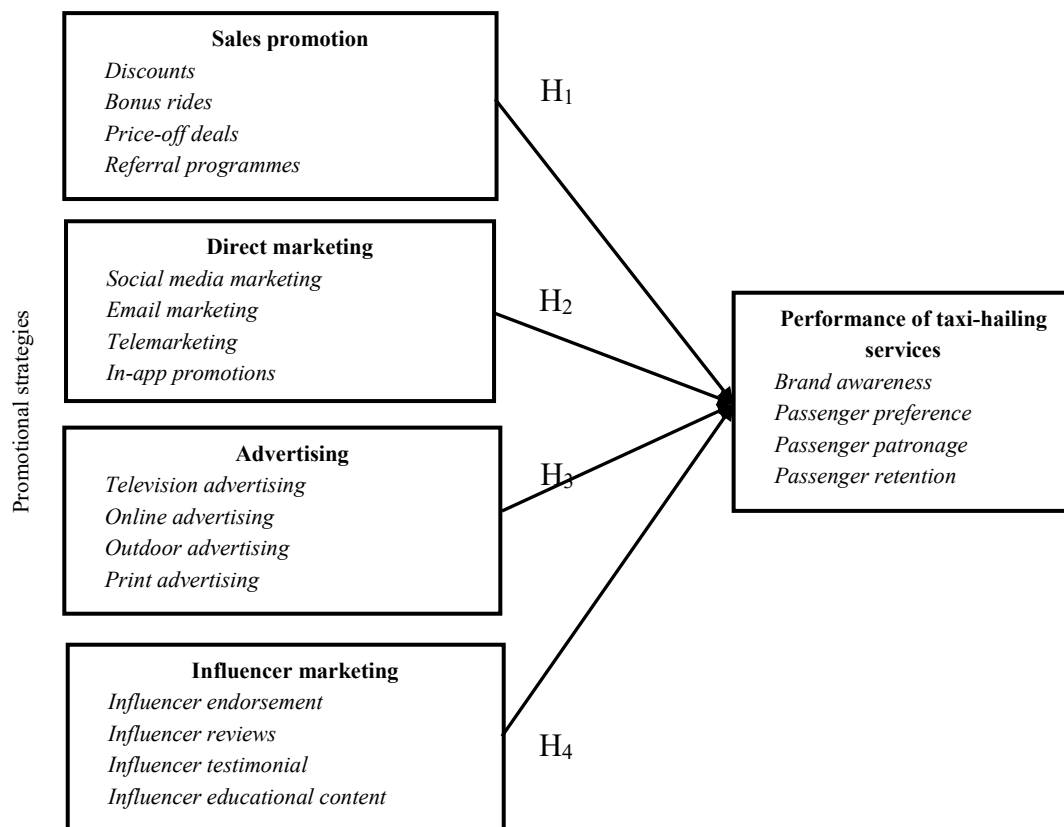


FIG. 1: Adapted conceptual model of the study

Source: Parameters of independent variable adapted from Dompheh and Nyarko (2018); Kamau and Mburugu (2017); Nguyen and Yang (2021). Dependent variable parameters adapted from Odunmbaku et al. (2021)

Theoretical Framework

This study was based on the AIDA model, propounded by Lewis (1961) to explain the key stages that target audiences go through when exposed to an advertisement. Subsequently, the AIDA model has been applied more broadly to explain the functionality of marketing promotion in eliciting positive responses from customers in the marketplace (Prathapan et al., 2018). The AIDA model suggests that advertising drives consumers to take action through four stages: attention, interest, desire, and action (Lewis, 1961). Initially, the marketer aims to capture the consumer's attention amidst various stimuli using compelling visuals, headlines, or content (Ullal & Hawaldar, 2018). Once attention is secured, the focus shifts to nurturing interest by presenting the product's features and benefits clearly and persuasively (Fortenberry & McGoldrick, 2020). The desire stage seeks to create a strong craving for the product through emotional appeals, urgency, and positioning the offering as the best choice, often using testimonials and social proof. Finally, the action stage encourages the consumer to take the desired step, such as making a purchase or signing up for a newsletter, with calls-to-action providing clear instructions and removing barriers (Lewis, 1961).

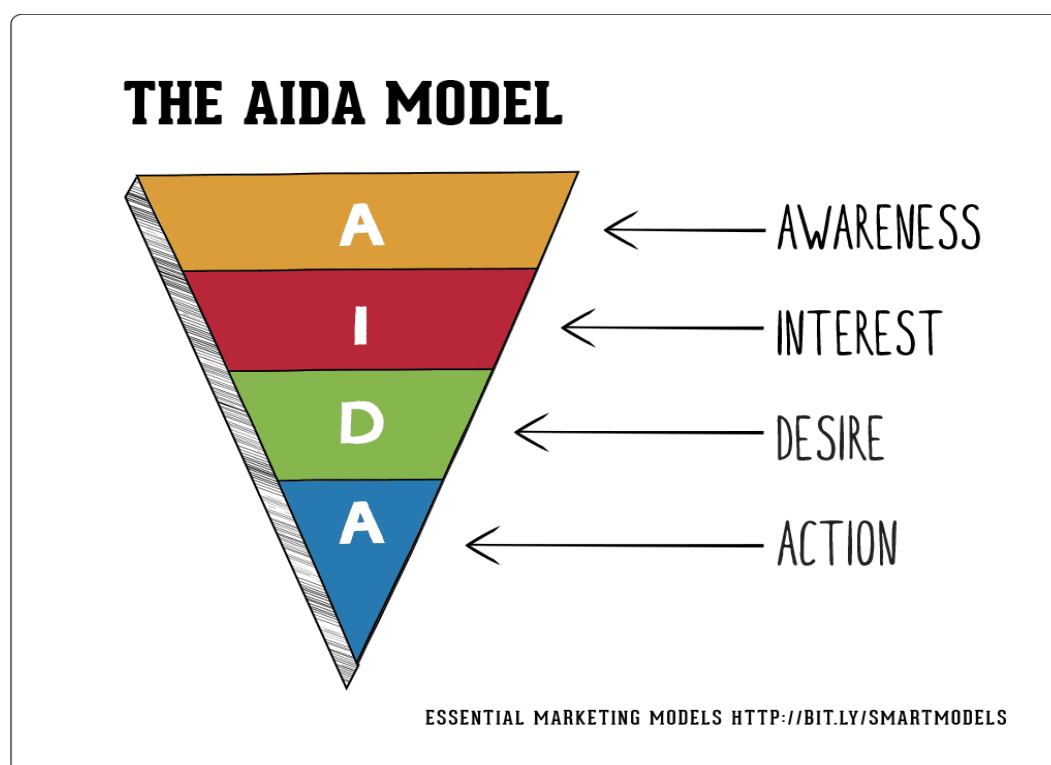


FIG. 2: AIDA model

Source: Lewis (1898)

In the context of this study, the relevance of the AIDA model is that it encapsulates a strategic progression that acknowledges the complexity of consumer decision-making towards taxi-hailing services. It acknowledges that converting a potential passenger into an active user of taxi-hailing services is a multi-faceted process, and each stage demands careful consideration and execution. By meticulously addressing the cognitive and conative aspects of consumer behaviour, the AIDA model provides a comprehensive framework that taxi-hailing companies can leverage to create effective promotional campaigns capable of attracting passengers' patronage. Furthermore, it can be deduced from the theory that the promotional strategies of taxi-hailing services play out in the consumers' minds by first obtaining their attention, and progresses through interest, desire and culminates in patronage action, which can enhance their performance in the long run.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted cross-sectional survey research design, which guided the collection of primary data from passengers of Bolt Company in Calabar on a one-time basis. The advantage of this research design was cost minimization. Instead of conducting a lengthy longitudinal study where data would have been collected in months or years, cross-sectional research design enabled the study to obtain data from a representative sample of the population on a one-time basis. This substantially contributed to minimizing the cost and difficulties that were encountered in primary data collection.

Population and Sample Size

The target population of the study comprised all passengers of Bolt Company in Calabar, Cross River State. The study chose to target passengers of the taxi-hailing service because they are on the receiving end of the promotional campaigns of these services. Hence, they are best positioned to provide information on the effects of these campaigns on the marketing performance of the companies in terms of brand awareness, passenger preference, passenger patronage and passenger retention. However, the population of the study was numerically unknown because there are no valid records of all passengers of Bolt service in Calabar as of the time of carrying out this research. Hence, the population of the study was numerically unknown. Since the population of the study was numerically unknown or infinite, the researcher relied on the Topman sample size determination procedure to statistically determine the sample size of the study. This procedure is based on the Topman formula which states thus:

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

Where	n:	Sample size required
	Z:	Tabular statistical unit (1.96)
	P:	Probability of positive response (0.8)
	q:	Probability of negative response (0.2)

e: Margin of error (5%)

To obtain the probabilities of positive and negative responses (P and q respectively), the researcher conducted a pilot survey in May, 2024 before the actual field survey by interviewing a random selection of 30 respondents on campus of the University of Calabar, who were presumed to be passengers of Bolt services. During the pilot survey, respondents were asked to identify whether or not they were actual users of Bolt services for transportation within Calabar. Out of the 30 respondents interviewed, 24 respondents representing 80 percent said they were actual users of Bolt services, while 6 respondents representing 20 percent said they did not patronize Bolt services in Calabar. From the result of the pilot survey above, the Probability of Positive Responses (P) is 0.8, while the Probability of Negative Responses is 0.2. By simple substitution, the Topman formula was applied thus:

$$\begin{aligned} n &= \frac{1.96^2 (0.8 \times 0.2)}{0.05^2} \\ &= \frac{3.8416 (0.16)}{0.0025} \\ &= \frac{0.6147}{0.0025} \\ &= 245.88 \approx 246 \text{ Bolt passengers approximately} \end{aligned}$$

Afterwards, the study adopted convenience sampling technique to locate and include passengers of Bolt in Calabar into the questionnaire survey. This was because Bolt services are open to the general public and anyone could be a passenger just by ordering a ride on the Bolt application software. However, this sampling technique could introduce bias by over-representing frequent Bolt users who are more easily accessible and may not reflect the broader passenger population, potentially skewing the results towards a specific demographic or usage pattern. To address this bias, the researcher ensured that any passenger using the Bolt service in Calabar, regardless of demographics, could participate, thereby allowing for a broad representation of the general public. This was done by implementing a random selection approach, where passengers were invited to participate in the survey across various times and locations, ensuring representation from different demographic groups. The researcher ensured an open invitation through multiple channels, and at various pickup points in Calabar, allowing all passengers, regardless of their usage frequency or demographic background, the opportunity to participate. In applying the convenience sampling technique then, the researcher randomly approached potential respondents along Etta-Agbor, Goldie, IBB and Marian Roads, four of the major roads used by hundreds of people in Calabar on a daily basis. The researcher asked all potential respondents if they were Bolt users, as a qualifying criterion, before including them in the questionnaire survey. Potential respondents who agreed to being Bolt users were asked to consent and participate in the questionnaire survey, while those who identified as non-users of Bolt were excluded from the study. In doing so, convenience sampling ensured that

respondents finally selected to participate in the study were actual passengers of Bolt services in Calabar.

Source and Methods of Data Collection

The study used a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire to obtain primary data from respondents during the survey exercise. The instrument comprised two sections; namely: Section A, which collected data on respondents' demographic characteristics such as age, gender, marital status, and educational qualifications, and Section B, which contained statements from the variables of the study (sales promotion, direct marketing, advertising, influencer marketing and performance of taxi-hailing services). The instrument's measurement scale was a 5-point Likert Scale containing the following metrics: Strong Agreed (SA = 5), Agreed (A = 4), Undecided (U = 3), Disagreed (D = 2) and Strongly Disagreed (SD = 1). The parameters measuring these variables are presented in Table 1 along with their empirical sources.

Table 1: Variables, parameters and empirical sources

SN	Variables	Parameters	Empirical sources
1	Sales promotion	Discounts, bonus rides, price-off deals, and referral programmes	Dompreh and Nyarko (2018); Kamau and Mburugu (2017)
2	Direct marketing	Social media marketing, email marketing, telemarketing, in-app promotions and content marketing	Dompreh and Nyarko (2018); Kamau and Mburugu (2017)
3	Advertising	Television advertising, online advertising, outdoor advertising, and print advertising	Dompreh and Nyarko (2018); Kamau and Mburugu (2017)
4	Influencer marketing	Influencer endorsement, influencer reviews, influencer testimonial, and influencer educational content	Nguyen and Yang (2021)
5	Performance of taxi-hailing services	Brand awareness, passenger preference, passenger patronage, and passenger retention	Odunmbaku et al. (2021)

Source: Researchers' construction via literature review

Questionnaire Reliability and Data Analytical Method

The reliability status of the research questionnaire was confirmed through the Cronbach alpha reliability method. As part of a pilot survey, copies of the questionnaire were

administered to a random selection of 30 Bolt drivers in Calabar, who were ultimately excluded from the actual survey to prevent respondent biases. The data obtained were coded and entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 26) for the conduct of reliability testing. The instrument was subsequently deemed reliable and adopted for primary data collection because all its measurement scales produced Cronbach alpha coefficients not less than the benchmark of 0.7 (see Table 2). This pilot survey informed the design of the questionnaire by allowing the researcher to assess the internal consistency and reliability of the instrument, ensuring that all measurement scales achieved Cronbach alpha coefficients of 0.7 or higher, thus confirming the questionnaire's suitability for collecting reliable primary data in the main survey.

Table 2: Questionnaire reliability statistics

SN	Variables	No. of items	Alpha coefficients
1	Sales promotion	4	.810
2	Direct marketing	5	.851
3	Advertising	4	.738
4	Influencer marketing	4	.771
5	Performance of taxi-hailing services	4	.804
		21	

Source: Researchers' analysis via SPSS-26 (2024)

After statistically validating the reliability of the questionnaire, it was utilized for field administration, resulting in the collection of primary data for the research. This data was then analyzed using descriptive statistics. Additionally, the study's hypotheses were tested through a multiple linear regression model, as outlined thus:

$$PERF = a + \beta_1 SALES PRO + \beta_2 DIR MKT + \beta_3 ADS + \beta_4 INFLUMKT + e$$

Where:

PERF = Performance of taxi-hailing services

a = The intercept (or constant)

β_1 SALES PRO = Coefficient of sales promotion

β_2 DIR MKT = Coefficient of direct marketing

β_3 ADS = Coefficient of advertising

β_4 INFLUMKT = Coefficient of influencer marketing

e = Error margin (5 percent)

Analysis and Discussion

Data Analysis and Interpretation

During the questionnaire survey, a total of 246 copies of the questionnaire were administered to passengers of Bolt in Calabar, Cross River State. Out of the 246 questionnaire copies administered, 232 or 94.3 percent of the copies were successfully

retrieved, while 14 or 5.7 percent of the copies were not returned. With this data, the null hypotheses developed for the study were tested thus:

Hypothesis one

Ho: Sales promotion has no significant effect on the performance of taxi-hailing services in Calabar Metropolis.

Hypothesis two

Ho: Direct marketing has no significant effect on the performance of taxi-hailing services in Calabar Metropolis.

Hypothesis three

Ho: Advertising has no significant effect on the performance of taxi-hailing services in Calabar Metropolis.

Hypothesis four

Ho: Influencer marketing has no significant effect on the performance of taxi-hailing services in Calabar Metropolis.

Decision criteria: If the probability (P) is less than 0.05, we accept the alternative hypothesis; otherwise, we reject the null hypothesis.

Table 3: Model summary of the effect of promotional strategies on the performance of taxi hailing services in Calabar Metropolis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.795 ^a	.633	.626	1.673

a. Predictors: (Constant), Sales promotion, direct marketing, advertising and influencer marketing

Source: Researchers' Computation using SPSS-26 (2024)

Table 4: ANOVA^a of the effect of promotional strategies on the performance of taxi hailing services in Calabar Metropolis

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1093.773	4	273.443	97.734	.000 ^b
	Residual	635.106	227	2.798		
	Total	1728.879	231			

a. Dependent Variable: Performance of taxi-hailing services

b. Predictors: (Constant), Sales promotion, direct marketing, advertising and influencer marketing

Source: Researcher's Computation using SPSS-26 (2024)

Table 5: Coefficients^a of the effect of promotional strategies on the performance of taxi hailing services in Calabar Metropolis

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.156	.857		15.349	.000
	Sales promotion	1.425	.093	.600	5.323	.000
	Direct marketing	.195	.049	.483	13.949	.000
	Advertising	.176	.045	.315	12.377	.000
	Influencer marketing	.119	.050	.564	3.878	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Performance of taxi-hailing services

Source: Researcher's Computation using SPSS-26 (2024)

Tables 3, 4, and 5 present the multiple linear regression results of the effect of promotional strategies on the performance of taxi hailing services in Calabar Metropolis. Table 3 shows a strong correlation ($R = 0.795$ or 79.5 percent) between promotional strategies and the performance of taxi-hailing services, with an R^2 value of 0.633, indicating that 63.3 percent of the variation in performance of taxi-hailing services can be explained by promotional strategies. This entails that a unit change in promotional strategies will affect the performance of taxi-hailing services in Calabar by up to 63.3 percent, holding other factors constant. Also, the F-test result (97.734, $P < 0.05$) in Table 4 confirms that promotional strategies significantly affect the performance of taxi-hailing services in Calabar Metropolis. Furthermore, Table 5 details the predictive power of the promotional strategies tested (sales promotion, direct marketing, advertising and influencer marketing) to exert changes on the dependent variable. The results in Table 5 revealed that all the promotional strategies tested significantly and positively predict the performance of taxi-hailing services, with p-values below 0.05. In this regard, sales promotion has the highest predictive power (beta = 0.600), followed by influencer marketing (beta = 0.564), direct marketing (beta = 0.483), and advertising (beta = 0.315). With this revelation, all null hypotheses were rejected, and alternative hypotheses accepted, confirming that sales promotion, direct marketing, advertising and influencer marketing significantly and positively influence the performance of taxi-hailing services in Calabar, Cross River State.

Discussion of Findings

Sales promotion and performance of taxi-hailing services

From the test of hypothesis one, it was revealed that sales promotion has a significant positive effect on the performance of taxi-hailing services in Calabar Metropolis. This finding is backed by the study of Dompheh and Nyarko (2018), which revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between sales promotion and the marketing performance of taxi-hailing services in Ghana. The finding is also backed by the study of Kamau and

Mburugu (2017), which revealed that sales promotion had a significant positive influence on the marketing performance of taxi-hailing services in Kenya. In the context of this study, this research finding underscores the crucial role that sales promotion plays in enhancing the performance of taxi-hailing services in Calabar Metropolis. By demonstrating a significant positive effect, it highlights that strategic sales promotional activities can effectively boost customer engagement and usage rates. Operators of these services can thus prioritize sales promotion as a key component of their marketing strategy. This entails that investing in well-planned and executed sales promotional campaigns can be a decisive factor in driving business success in the competitive landscape of taxi-hailing services.

Direct marketing and performance of taxi-hailing services

From the test of hypothesis two, it was found that direct marketing has a significant positive effect on the performance of taxi-hailing services in Calabar Metropolis. This finding is backed by the study of Dompheh and Nyarko (2018), which revealed a significant positive relationship between direct marketing and the marketing performance of taxi-hailing services in Ghana. The finding also aligns with the study of Kamau and Mburugu (2017), which revealed that direct marketing had a significant positive influence on the marketing performance of taxi-hailing services in Kenya. The finding also finds support in the study of Mawejje and Taremwa (2019), which revealed that direct marketing contributed significantly and positively to the marketing performance of Uber in Uganda. In the context of this study, this finding highlights that direct marketing can provide a competitive edge in the crowded taxi-hailing market by fostering a stronger connection with the customer base, understanding their needs better, and delivering tailored offers and promotions that resonate more effectively. Consequently, taxi-hailing service operators can prioritize and optimize their direct marketing efforts as a core component of their overall business strategy to achieve sustained growth and enhanced market performance.

Advertising and performance of taxi-hailing services

In testing hypothesis three, the findings revealed that advertising has a significant positive effect on the performance of taxi-hailing services in Calabar Metropolis. This finding is supported by the study of Dompheh and Nyarko (2018), which revealed a significant positive relationship between advertising and the marketing performance of taxi-hailing services in Ghana. The finding is also backed by the study of Kamau and Mburugu (2017), which revealed that advertising had a significant positive influence on the marketing performance of taxi-hailing services in Kenya. In another study by Nguyen and Yang (2021), it was found that advertising had a significant positive impact on the marketing performance of taxi-hailing services in Vietnam. In the context of this study, this finding highlights the necessity of investing in robust advertising campaigns to enhance brand visibility, attract more users, and increase market share of taxi hailing services. It underscores that effective advertising can help differentiate their services in a competitive market, communicate unique value propositions, and build customer loyalty. Overall, this insight is crucial for operators aiming

to improve service uptake, customer retention, and overall business performance in the taxi-hailing industry.

Influencer marketing and performance of taxi-hailing services

The test of hypothesis four revealed that influencer marketing has a significant positive effect on the performance of taxi-hailing services in Calabar Metropolis. This finding is backed by the study of Dompreeh and Nyarko (2018), which revealed a significant positive relationship between influencer marketing and the marketing performance of taxi-hailing services in Ghana. The finding is also supported by the study of Mawejje and Taremwa (2019), which revealed that influencer marketing contributed significantly and positively to the marketing performance of Uber in Uganda. The finding is also backed by the study of Nguyen and Yang (2021), which revealed that influencer marketing had a significant positive impact on the marketing performance of taxi-hailing services in Vietnam. In the context of this study, this finding underscores the critical impact of influencer marketing on the performance of taxi-hailing services in Calabar Metropolis. It suggests that leveraging influencers can substantially enhance various aspects of service performance, such as customer acquisition, brand visibility, and user engagement. For operators of taxi-hailing services, this implies that integrating influencer marketing strategies into their promotional efforts can lead to increased bookings, improved customer trust, and a competitive edge in the market. Thus, operators can consider investing in influencer collaborations as a strategic tool to optimize their service performance and achieve sustainable growth in the competitive taxi-hailing industry.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The taxi-hailing industry is an emerging one in most parts of the Nigerian market, especially in rural villages and towns, where traditional taxi services are dominant. The competition is therefore fierce for taxi-hailing services as they strive to gain new-customer acquisitions in an increasingly dynamic sector. To cope with the competition and gain traction in this emerging market, taxi-hailing companies like Bolt, Uber, In-Drive and others in Nigerian major cities are resorting to the implementation of promotional strategies. This study was conducted to determine whether or not the application of promotional strategies has been effective at improving the performance of taxi-hailing services in Calabar, Nigeria. Primary data were analyzed statistically after being obtained from passengers of Bolt taxi service in Calabar Metropolis through a structured questionnaire survey. This analysis revealed that the promotional strategies applied by these companies (sales promotion, direct marketing, advertising and influencer marketing) have been effective in substantially improving their marketing performance in Calabar. These findings align with the AIDA model by showing how promotional strategies like advertising, influencer marketing, sales promotion, and direct marketing guide consumers through each stage. Advertising and influencer marketing capture customers' attention, while direct marketing and sales promotions generate interest with personalized offers. Emotional appeal and exclusivity foster desire;

hence these strategies drive action by prompting purchases or engagement with taxi hailing services. This alignment explains the significant improvement in marketing performance of taxi hailing companies in Calabar. In this light, the study arrived at the conclusion that promotional strategies are undeniably indispensable to the profitability, growth and sustainability of the taxi-hailing business model in Nigeria. To that end, the following recommendations are suggested for implementation by taxi-hailing companies:

- i. Operators of taxi-hailing services in Nigeria can enhance their marketing performance through sales promotion by implementing targeted promotional discounts during off-peak hours, introducing loyalty rewards for frequent users, and partnering with local businesses to offer bundled service packages, thereby attracting new customers and increasing customer retention.
- ii. Operators of taxi-hailing services should integrate direct marketing strategies such as leveraging targeted social media campaigns to engage local communities, implementing personalized email promotions based on user preferences, utilizing strategic telemarketing to re-engage inactive users, offering exclusive in-app discounts and promotions, and creating compelling content marketing that highlights service benefits, thereby increasing customer acquisition, retention, and long-term engagement significantly.
- iii. Operators of taxi-hailing services should engage in television advertising for broad reach, online advertising for targeted digital campaigns, outdoor advertising at high-traffic locations, and print advertising in local publications to enhance visibility and customer acquisition, thereby optimizing marketing performance through diversified and targeted advertising channels. By advertising through all of these specialized channels, taxi-hailing services can better improve their brand image, positioning and customer patronage.
- iv. Operators of taxi-hailing services in Nigeria can enhance their marketing performance by collaborating with influencers for endorsements, reviews, testimonials, and educational content, strategically using influencers to reach diverse audience segments and foster trust, thereby increasing brand visibility, customer engagement, and service adoption. By leveraging the influence of popular and credible influencers, these companies can amass market traction rapidly and expand their market share.

Suggestion for Future Research

Considering the increasing roles of digital technologies in marketing campaigns, this study suggests that future research explore the role of digital transformation in enhancing the effectiveness of promotional strategies within the taxi-hailing industry in Nigeria. Specifically, investigating how digital tools such as targeted advertising, customer data analytics, and mobile app features influence consumer engagement and loyalty could provide valuable insights into optimizing marketing efforts in this rapidly evolving sector.

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