Marketing Strategies and Enrolment Rate of Social Health Insurance Programme: A Microdata Study in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT
This study examined the effect of marketing strategies on the enrolment rate of the Akwa Ibom State Social Health Insurance Programme, focusing on advertising, market segmentation, marketing budget allocation, and customer relationship management (CRM) strategies. The study adopted a survey research design, with primary data collected through structured questionnaires administered to employees of Akwa Ibom State Social Health Insurance Agency, and the managers of the Akwa Ibom State Social Health Insurance programme. A multiple linear regression model was used for data analysis in the study. The results revealed a significant positive relationship between advertising, market segmentation, marketing budget allocation as well as customer relationship management and enrolment rate. It was concluded that the effective implementation of these marketing strategies significantly improved the enrolment rate of the Akwa State social health insurance programme. Therefore, to sustain customer acquisition and retention, continuous evaluation and improvement of advertising strategies, periodic refinement of market segments, strategic allocation of marketing budget and adoption of robust and advanced customer relationship systems to improve customer satisfaction and loyalty were recommended.

Keywords: Social health insurance; advertising; market segmentation; marketing budget allocation; customer relationship management

I. Introduction

Marketing is critical to the impressive performance of a business or an organisation (Gillespie & Swan, 2021). This is so as marketing strategies support the identification and utilisation of opportunities to boost performance (Morgan*, et al* 2019). Marketing is even more crucial for the success of the insurance sector as a significant contributor to the service economy (Kajwang, 2020). Fundamentally, marketing strategies are a set of controllable and adaptable characteristics within the purview of commercial or social insurance service providers with the potential to influence customers' patronage decisions (Singh, *et al* 2022). Practically, marketing strategies shape the direction of an insurance service provider's marketing efforts with the aim of boosting performance (Kajwang, 2020). These strategies are guided by various elements of the marketing mix, which are product, place, price, process, positioning, promotion, people and performance (Guan, et al 2020). Ideally, a key measure of performance for social insurance providers is the rate of enrolment. However, the leading social insurance service in Nigeria, the state social health insurance schemes, that are established and managed by different state government agencies to facilitate the achievement of universal health coverage, is experiencing low enrolment rates despite its huge financial protection benefits. Thus, an understanding of the influence of marketing strategies on the rate of enrolment is necessary to inform us of practice.

Extant literature indicates that marketing strategies such as product differentiation, pricing strategies, distribution channels and promotional activities play a crucial role in shaping the performance of insurance companies (Eling, 2012). Moreover, the effectiveness of these strategies varies depending on the regional market dynamics, including socio-economic factors, cultural preferences, and regulatory frameworks (Zaki & Shared, 2023). Also, despite the potential benefits of insurance in terms of provision of financial security and functioning as an effective tool for risk management through the sales of commercial and social insurance coverages, individuals and businesses have little or no knowledge about the benefits of insurance and this prompts a negative impact on the efficacy of designed and implemented marketing strategies (Bhattacharyya et al, 2024).

These concerns thus suggest the suboptimal performance of social health insurance schemes in Nigeria in the form of lean enrolment rate indicating challenges in effectively reaching and engaging the public crystallising in a small proportion of the population with social health insurance coverage (Eze et al, 2024). However, in today's rapidly evolving business environment, characterised by changing consumer preferences and technological advancements, social health insurers must innovate and adapt their marketing strategies to increase their enrolment rate and overall performance while remaining efficient.

Therefore, insurance providers, social health insurance inclusive, design and implement different marketing strategies that are perceived to resonate with the unique needs, preferences, and knowledge levels of different target populations to boost performance (Anyadighibe et al, 2021). However, understanding the effectiveness of these strategies is a gap in the literature that needs to be filled. This study thus seeks to fill this gap by examining the relationship between marketing strategies and the performance of social health insurance programmes measured with enrolment rate drawing evidence from Akwa Ibom state social health insurance programme with the following specific objectives:

i. to investigate the association between advertising and enrolment rate
ii. to assess the relationship between market segmentation and enrolment rate

iii. to examine the effect of the marketing budget on enrolment rate
iv. to explore the link between customer relationship management and enrolment rate.

The findings of this study will influence marketing practices and operations that will support the increase in the enrolment rate on the social health insurance programmes operated in Nigeria specifically and other emerging economies.

II. Literature Review

Advertising

Advertising is the strategic process of crafting and disseminating messages to promote products or services to a target audience (Andrews & Shimp, 2018). Advertising informs, persuades and reminds consumers about a brand and its offerings, ultimately driving consumer behaviour and achieving business objectives (Harhut, 2022). According to Keller (2016), advertising is any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods, or services by an identified sponsor. The primary purpose of advertising is to influence consumer behaviour by conveying persuasive messages that lead to increased awareness, interest, and, ultimately, purchases of the advertised products or services.
Advertising is a crucial tool designed to reach a broad audience and shape perceptions and actions regarding a product or brand. Belch and Belch (2018) define advertising as a critical component of the promotional mix that involves communicating with potential customers through various media channels to achieve specific marketing goals. Advertising helps create brand equity, enhances customer loyalty and provides a competitive edge in the marketplace. Advertising can be broadly categorized into traditional and digital advertising, each with distinct channels and methods (Phiri, 2020). These methods collectively enable businesses to reach their target audiences through various touch points, maximizing their market presence and effectiveness. By delivering consistent and compelling messages, advertising can significantly impact a company's market share and profitability.

Market Segmentation

Market segmentation is one of the fundamental principles of modern marketing, rooted in microeconomic theory, and pays particular attention to the needs of customers (Misra *et al*, 2022). In segmenting the market, the potential customers are divided into several sections with similar wants and needs (Camilleri & Camilleri, 2018). Therefore, market segmentation is the practice of grouping customers or a process of dividing the total larger market, often heterogeneous, into meaningful submarkets of homogeneous characteristics based on product needs, behaviour or preferences (Venter *et al,* 2018). Thus, market segmentation is the process of dividing a market into smaller groups of buyers with distinct needs, characteristics, or behaviours in response to product offerings or marketing mixes. In a similar submission, Liu et al, (2019) regard market segmentation as the process of dividing a market into distinct subsets of consumers with common needs or characteristics and selecting one or more segments to target with a distinct marketing mix.
Notably, Marketers do not create a segment because segments are naturally phenomenal (Deepak & Jeyakumar, 2019). However, through segmentation, a marketer identifies the segments and selects one or more segments to target and satisfy. The underlying aim of market segmentation is to group customers with similar needs and buying behaviour into segments, thereby facilitating each segment being targeted by a distinct product and marketing offerings to be developed to suit the requirements of

different customer segments (Alzoubi *et al*., 2022). The segmentation of the market based on demographics, geography and behaviour facilitates a better understanding of the targeted customers, leading to the development of a more effective marketing strategy.

Budget Allocation

Budget allocation in marketing strategy is a fundamental process that involves the judicious distribution of financial resources to various marketing activities and channels (Zia & Rao, 2019). It is a critical component of strategic planning, aimed at optimizing the utilization of funds to achieve specific business objectives (Chiu, 2018). Effective budget allocation ensures that resources are allocated in a manner that maximizes return on investment (ROI) and contributes to overall organizational success (Silva *et al,* 2020). A marketing budget documents how much the business plans to spend on marketing over a particular period, similar to a year, quarter, or month.

In creating a marketing budget for marketing, all costs associated with marketing must be considered ab initio. The marketing budget is key to the successful implementation of a developed or adopted marketing strategy as it enhances brand awareness, increases customer acquisition and retention and equally increases sales and revenue.

Customer Relationship Management

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) refers to the practice of focusing on turning each potential customer into a customer and keeping customers through personalized communication with them. The idea of CRM has made organizations enhance communication with clients ever since implementation and reach their objectives (Mau *et al,* 2018). According to Osmana & Ghiran, (2019), Customer relationship management is the alignment of business strategy, organizational structure and culture as well as customer information in a manner that customer interactions are conducted for the customer's long-term satisfaction to increase organisation’s performance and for the organization's overall benefit.

Performance in the social health insurance sector.

Generally, performance in the insurance sector serves not only as a measure of financial success but also of an organisation’s ability to resonate with customers, stay competitive and fortify its brand in the marketplace. The fundamental measures of performance unveil a nuanced understanding of the drivers of success in the insurance sector. A robust financial performance with premium revenue growth, return on investment (ROI) and market share as its measures is central to a successful social health insurance venture. In addition, the cost-effectiveness of marketing strategies serves as a vital indicator of the financial health of a social health insurance business organisation. A study by Smith (2018) revealed a positive correlation between strategic marketing initiatives and the financial performance of insurance businesses, a finding that was linked to adept management of financial resources judicious allocation of capital economies of scale leveraging and optimisation of pricing strategies to bolster the organisation’s bottom line.

Another measure of performance that provides insights into the effectiveness of marketing strategies of social health insurance organisations is the rate of customer acquisition and retention. While customer acquisition is captured by lead generations conversion rates and customer acquisition cost, customer retention is measured through customer churn rate, renewal rates and customer lifetime value (Wang *et al*, 2022). Also, the level of satisfaction of customers with insurance products and services demonstrates the prioritization of service quality, responsiveness and personalised experience enjoyed by a customer which is critical to the overall performance of the insurance business. Performance equally finds meaning in brand equity which emerges as the strong brand differentiator encompassing dimensions such as brand awareness, brand perception, and brand loyalty (Qalati *et al,* 2019). Market performance, another indicator of performance in the social health insurance sector, involves the organisation's performance relative to competitors, mainly private health insurance providers, in the insurance market, around dimensions such as market penetration, market growth, market share and competitive positioning. It is worth noting that where the private health insurers concentrate on increasing their market share, the social health insurers strategize to increase the enrolment rate, and this rationalises the adoption of the enrolment rate as the measure of performance in this study.

Theoretical Framework

Market Orientation Theory

Market orientation theory, developed by Narver and Slater (1990), emphasises the importance of customer orientation, competitor orientation, and inter-functional coordination in driving business performance. In the insurance industry, this theory suggests that market-oriented firms are better equipped to understand and respond to customer needs, anticipate competitive threats, and capitalise on market opportunities.

According to market orientation theory, customer orientation involves systematically gathering and analysing customer information to identify and address their evolving needs and preferences. Social health insurance organisations that prioritise customer satisfaction, invest in market research, and tailor their products and services to meet customer needs are more likely to foster strong relationships, enhance long-term loyalty, and achieve outstanding customer acquisition rates. Competitor orientation entails monitoring and analysing competitors' strategies, strengths, and weaknesses to identify potential threats and opportunities in the marketplace. By staying abreast of competitors' actions and industry trends, social health insurance establishments can adjust their strategies to maintain a competitive advantage and protect their market position.

Inter-functional coordination refers to the alignment and collaboration of different departments within the organization to deliver superior value to customers and achieve organizational objectives. Effective coordination between marketing, sales, underwriting, and claims processing functions in the social health insurance sector can streamline operations, enhance service quality, and improve overall organisational performance. Market Orientation Theory suggests that firms should adopt a customer-centric approach to decision-making as all activities are guided by a deep understanding of customer needs and market dynamics and pay less attention to the macroeconomic dynamics in a market and this is the major criticism of this theory. This theory is adopted in this study as the continuous monitoring of the market environment, responding promptly to changing customer demands and fostering a culture of innovation and adaptability can support the organisation's decisions on advertisement, market segmentation, marketing budget allocation and customer relationship management to sustain competitive advantage and drive superior performance in terms of enrolment rate in the long run.

Empirical Review

Aduloju *et al*, (2009) conducted an empirical investigation of the influence of advertising on sales of insurance products among 71 insurance companies in Nigeria using questionnaires, interviews, and field observation as major research instruments to collect data from a sample of 100 employees. The study used descriptive statistics to explore the relationship as well as the strength of the relationships. The findings of the study showed that advertising had a positive effect on sales volume and improved public image. However, the choice of advertising medium, the message, and the format were found to be critical ingredients of a successful advertising program in the insurance industry of Nigeria. The findings of the study made a strong case for proper control of the advertising budget to align with the expected sales volume to reduce financial waste.

Lee and Kim (2017) investigated the relationship between branding strategies and financial performance in the insurance sector. The study examined the responses of 1,000 insurance customers and analysed financial data from 20 insurance companies in South Korea. By combining financial data analysis with brand perception surveys among consumers, the study found that insurance companies with strong, well-defined brands consistently outperform their competitors in market share, customer loyalty, and profitability. Effective branding strategies, including consistent messaging, brand differentiation, and emotional engagement, were found to positively influence consumer perceptions and ultimately drive financial performance.

Smith (2018) conducted a study to investigate the relationship between marketing strategy and the performance of insurance businesses. The study utilised a quantitative research approach, collecting data through surveys distributed to a sample of 50 insurance companies in the United States. Pearson moment Correlation was adopted as the method of data analysis. The findings revealed a positive correlation between the effectiveness of marketing strategy implementation and the financial performance of insurance businesses. Specifically, insurance companies that implemented strategic marketing initiatives showed higher profitability and market share compared to those with less focused marketing efforts.

Wang and Zhang (2021) examined the impact of customer-centric marketing approaches on the performance of insurance businesses. The study population consisted of 50 insurance companies operating in China. The study employed a longitudinal analysis of customer satisfaction metrics and financial performance indicators across multiple insurance firms. The study revealed a strong positive correlation between customer-centric marketing practices, such as personalized service delivery and proactive customer engagement, and business performance metrics such as revenue growth, customer retention, and profitability. Insurance companies that prioritised customer needs and preferences in their marketing strategies consistently outperformed competitors in terms of financial outcomes.

Miller and Davis (2022) explored the influence of social media marketing on the performance of insurance firms in Canada. The study included 25 insurance companies and analysed their social media engagement metrics and financial performance data. Using a mixed-methods approach, the researchers found that insurance companies with a strong social media presence experienced higher levels of customer interaction and engagement, which translated into improved brand awareness, customer loyalty, and financial performance. Effective use of social media platforms for customer service and promotional activities was identified as a key factor in driving business success.

Makena *et al*, (2024) investigated the influence of digital marketing tools on the performance of insurance firms in Nairobi Kenya using quantitative primary data obtained from marketing staff from 62 insurance companies through the instrumentality of a structured questionnaire. Pearson moment correlation was adopted for data analysis in the study. Findings indicated that the digital marketing dimensions that were considered in the study website marketing social media marketing search engine optimisation and content marketing all demonstrated a positive significant correlation with the performance of the firms. It was recommended among others that insurance firms supervise their digital channels and acquire competent digital managers with coordination of communication patterns and vetting of content before release as their job description to maintain quality and ensure timeliness of the release of relevant information.

III. Methodology

The study was conducted in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, where the Akwa Ibom State Social Health Insurance Programme, managed by the Akwa Ibom State Social Health Insurance Agency, is actively operational. A survey research design was adopted for this study as structured questionnaires, designed to gather primary data on the aspects of marketing strategies of interest in the study and performance indicators, were administered on a face-to-face basis to randomly sample 140 employees of Akwa Ibom state social health insurance agency which was determined using the Taro Yamen formula from a population of 230 employees. Face validity method was adopted to validate the instrument of data collection and the calculated Cronbach alpha of 0.81 obtained indicated that the instrument was reliable. A multivariate regression model was used for data analysis in the study. The model is specified thus:

$SHIPER=\beta_0 \; +\beta_1 \; AC+\beta_2 MS+\beta_3 \; MBA+\beta_4 \; CRM+\epsilon$

Where:

SHIPER =	Social Health Insurance Enrolment Rate		Dependent Variable
AC =	Advertising	-	Independent Variable
MS =	Market Segmentation		Independent Variable
MBA =	Marketing Budget Allocation		Independent Variable
CRM =	Customer Relationship Management		Independent Variable

$\beta 0$ = Intercept term

$\beta 1, \beta 2, \beta 3, \beta 4$ = Coefficients of the respective marketing strategies

ϵ = Error term

IV. Result and Discussion

Descriptive Statistics

All 140 copies of the questionnaires that were distributed were completed and returned and used in the study. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the respondents. A description of the respondents indicated an equal distribution along gender lines 50% (70) males and 50% (70) females. In terms of marital status 53% (75) respondents were married and 47% (65) respondents were not married. The age distribution showed 35% (50) of respondents were below 30 years old 45% (64) respondents were 30-50 years old, and 20% (26) respondents were 50 years old and more. With regards to academic qualification 15% (21) respondents had secondary education certificates as their highest academic qualification and 85% (119) respondents had tertiary education certificates and higher academic qualifications. In terms of work experience 58% (82) respondents had less than 5 years of work experience and 42% (58) respondents had 5 years and more of work experience.

Table 1 - Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	70	50
Female	70	50
Marital Status		
Married	75	53
Not Married	65	47
Age (years)		
Below 30	50	35
30-50	64	45
50 and above	26	20
Academic Qualification		
Secondary Education Certificate	21	15
Tertiary Education Certificate	119	85
Work Experience		
Less than 5 years	82	42
5 years and more	58	42

Source: Researchers' computation from the study data using Stata 13

Result of data analysis and discussion of findings

Table 2 presents the results of the multivariate linear regression indicating that data from all 140 respondents sampled were used in the analysis. The R Square value of 0.621 suggests that the independent variables accounted for 62% of the variability in performance. The model's goodness of fit is further supported by prob.>F of 0.000 demonstrating that the overall model is statistically significant.

From Table 2, the coefficient for advertising is 0.012, indicating a positive association between advertising channels and performance. This positive relationship is statistically significant, as evidenced by a p-value of 0.000. This result shows that increased use of advertising channels increased the enrolment rate. This result demonstrates that advertising had a positive significant influence on enrolment rate underscores the importance of integrating diverse advertising strategies to enhance the performance of social health insurance schemes, aligning with the views of Aduloju *et al*, (2009), which emphasised the role of advertising in improving brand visibility and customer acquisition. This study confirms that, when utilised effectively, advertising is crucial for improving performance outcomes of social health insurance schemes in terms of enrolment rate (Olowokudejo, 2021).

Also, table 2 indicates that the coefficients show that market segmentation had a positive impact on the rate of enrolment, with a coefficient of 0.019 and this effect is statistically significant as indicated by a p-value of 0.001. This finding indicates that increased market segmentation is associated with an improved rate of enrolment as a measure of performance which aligns with the finding of Wang and Zhang (2021) who concluded that prioritising the need of specific segments of the market supports customer acquisition and retention. This result highlights the significance of targeting specific customer needs and preferences through market segmentation which aligns with Narver and Slater's (1990) conceptualisation of market orientation as a method to improve marketing effectiveness and Kotler and Keller's (2012) assertion that effective segmentation can increase market share and profitability. The study reinforces that a well-executed segmentation strategy can substantially boost performance with an increased enrolment rate as in the case of social health insurance.

In addition, table 2 shows that the coefficient for marketing budget allocation is 0.022 and the p-value is 0.001 indicating a significant positive relationship between marketing budget allocation and enrolment rate. This finding suggests that an increase in marketing budget allocation increased the enrolment rate significantly. This result corroborates the finding of Smith (2018) on the importance of strategic budget allocation for improved performance outcomes. Furthermore, the result supports Narver and Slater's (1990) theory that proper budget allocation driven by inter-functional coordination is crucial for effective marketing and enhanced business performance. The finding indicates that investing in marketing efforts can lead to significant returns, emphasising the need for strategic budget management to achieve better performance (Prijono *et al*, 2021).

The coefficient for Customer Relationship Management strategies is 0.039 with a p-value of 0.000, highlighting a significant positive effect of Customer relationship management on the rate of enrolment. The significant positive influence suggests that effective Customer relationship management practices lead to improved customer satisfaction and better business outcomes in the form of increased rate of enrolment. This finding aligns with Matiş & Ilieş (2014), who emphasised customer relationship management's role in building long-term customer relationships and driving performance for insurance firms. Also, Nwankwo & Ajemunigbohun, (2013) who reported the supportive role of customer relationship management on customer loyalty and retention corroborate the findings of this study. In addition, the finding reinforces the perspective that customer relationship management is essential for achieving superior performance in the social health insurance sector which corroborates the submission of Issau *et al.,* (2023).

Table 2 - Results of Multivariate Linear Regression

Variables	Coefficient	Std. Error	P-value
Advertising	0.012	0.006	0.000
Market segmentation	0.019	0.094	0.001
Marketing budget allocation	0.022	0.065	0.001
Customer relationship management	0.039	0.095	0.000
Constant	0.202	0.621	0.000
SHIPER=0.202+0.012 AC+0.019MS+0.022 MBA+0.039CRM+ϵ			

N = 140; Prob>F = 0.000; R-squared = 0.621.
Source: Researchers' computation from the study data using Stata 13

Table 3 indicates the test results for normality and heteroscedasticity. The Shapiro-Wilk test results indicate that all the variables have p-values greater than 0.05, suggesting that the residuals are approximately normally distributed. This satisfies the normality assumption required for conducting a linear regression. The W statistics, all close to 1, further support that the data does not significantly deviate from normality. The Breusch-Pagan test results show that all p-values are above 0.05, which means the absence of heteroscedasticity. This implies that the residuals' variance is constant across different levels of the independent variables, satisfying the assumption of homoscedasticity. This is important as it indicates that the regression model provided unbiased and efficient estimates, with no issues related to unequal variance.

Table 3 – Test results of Normality and Heteroscedasticity

Variable	Shapiro-Wilk test		Breusch-Pagan- Test	
	W-Statistics	P-value	T-statistics	P-value
Advertising	0.96	0.20	3.80	0.29
Market Segmentation	0.95	0.18	4.10	0.30
Marketing Budget Allocation	0.97	0.25	3.95	0.28
Customer Relationship Management	0.94	0.16	4.05	0.31

Source: Researchers' computation from the study data using Stata 13

V. Conclusion

This study examined the effect of marketing strategies with advertising market segmentation marketing budget allocation and customer relationship management as proxies on the enrolment rate of social health insurance programme in Akwa Ibom state, Nigeria. This study emphasises the need to fine-tune strategies to increase enrolment rates on social health insurance by the public to benefit from the financial protection it offers and for the attainment of universal health coverage. Estimates from the multiple linear regression model used for analysing primary data obtained from employees of Akwa Ibom State Social Health Insurance Agency for the study indicated a positive significant relationship between advertising, market segmentation, marketing budget allocation as well as customer relationship management and enrolment rate. It was concluded that marketing strategies have the potential to increase the enrolment rate in social health insurance programmes.

VI. Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made.

i. Social health insurance managers should continuously assess the effectiveness of their advertising strategies while remaining adaptable and open to exploring alternative advertising channels to improve enrolment rates.

ii. Social health insurance managers should constantly refine their approach to target different market segments to boost enrolment rates.

iii. Social health insurance agencies should strategically allocate their marketing budgets to adequately fund marketing strategies for increased enrolment rates.

iv. Social health insurance agencies should invest in robust and advanced customer relationship systems to improve customer relationship satisfaction and loyalty which will lead to an increase in the rate of enrollees' acquisitions and retention.

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