

ADVERTISING STRATEGIES AND CONSUMER BRAND LOYALTY: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF MTN AND GLO IN BENUE STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigated the extent to which advertising strategies were utilised by MTN and GLO to enhance consumer brand loyalty in Benue State, Nigeria. A quantitative survey design was adopted, and data were collected from 544 respondents using a structured questionnaire. Descriptive statistical tools were employed to analyse the data. The findings indicated that advertising strategies such as celebrity endorsements, emotional storytelling, rational appeals, and promotional campaigns significantly influenced consumer loyalty and brand attachment. However, the effectiveness of these strategies was constrained by poor network quality, inconsistent service delivery, and limited local adaptation of advertising messages. The study further revealed that while persuasive advertising attracted customers, long-term loyalty depended on the alignment between advertising promises and actual service experiences. It was therefore concluded that sustained brand loyalty required an integration of persuasive communication, reliable service performance, and cultural relevance. The study recommended that MTN and GLO adopt integrated marketing communication approaches, enhance customer engagement, and promote culturally inclusive advertising content to strengthen consumer trust and long-term loyalty.

Keywords: Advertising strategies, Brand loyalty, MTN, GLO, Consumer behaviour, Nigeria.

Introduction

Advertising has long been recognised as a cornerstone of marketing communication and a primary driver of consumer engagement, brand differentiation, and corporate competitiveness (Tellis, 2017). Historically, advertising evolved from a simple medium for product awareness to a sophisticated communication process that integrates emotional, psychological, and cultural dimensions to influence consumer perception and decision-making (Leiss et al., 2017). Globally, effective advertising blends rational appeals such as product quality and performance with emotional and symbolic associations that create deeper brand attachment. In the digital age, this dynamic has intensified as brands leverage integrated

marketing communication, digital storytelling, and influencer collaborations to shape consumer loyalty (Wu, 2025).

Within Nigeria's fast-evolving telecommunications sector, advertising plays a pivotal role in market competition, corporate reputation, and customer retention. The liberalisation of the industry in 2001 ushered in major players such as MTN, Globacom (GLO), Airtel, and 9mobile, transforming the communication landscape through increased accessibility, technological innovation, and aggressive marketing (Idamoyibo, 2021). These firms rely heavily on advertising as a means of differentiation in a market characterised by service parity and customer mobility. For instance, MTN's "*Everywhere You Go*" and

“*Life is Beautiful*” campaigns have become synonymous with emotional connectivity and aspiration, while GLO’s “*Rule Your World*” campaign emphasises empowerment, innovation, and national pride (Abubakar, 2021). Such campaigns have embedded telecommunications advertising into Nigeria’s cultural and social identity, making it not only an economic activity but also a reflection of shared national values.

Despite its strategic importance, existing research shows that advertising outcomes in Nigeria’s telecom sector are often undermined by inconsistent service quality and weak alignment between brand promises and consumer experience. Ode (2021) found that while persuasive advertising boosts customer acquisition, loyalty remains contingent upon network reliability and service satisfaction. Similarly, Erungworo, Bassey, Ekunke, & Ugo, (2023). demonstrated that corporate communication strategies and public relations efforts significantly shape public trust and brand credibility for MTN and GLO. However, gaps persist in maintaining message authenticity and operational transparency, leading to what Abubakar (2021) described as “spurious loyalty,” where consumers remain tied to a provider out of convenience rather than genuine satisfaction. These findings underscore the need for further empirical inquiry into how advertising effectiveness interacts with service quality to sustain long-term brand loyalty.

Recent scholarship has also highlighted the shift toward digital and social media advertising, which has redefined consumer engagement and brand communication in Nigeria. Studies by Uwua, Rabiu, and Joshua (2025) revealed that telecom firms increasingly adopt social media to enhance corporate communication and two-way customer interaction, though many still treat digital platforms primarily as broadcast

media rather than engagement tools. Similarly, Wu (2025) and Liu (2025) argued that digital engagement through live-streaming, influencer marketing, and interactive campaigns fosters stronger emotional bonds and trust between brands and consumers. Nevertheless, these benefits are often undercut by misleading promotions, limited local adaptation, and insufficient responsiveness challenges that weaken the long-term effectiveness of advertising efforts.

Given these observations, this study is necessary to address the enduring gap between persuasive advertising and sustainable consumer loyalty in Nigeria’s telecommunications industry. Although MTN and GLO have excelled in developing emotionally resonant campaigns, the degree to which these strategies translate into brand loyalty particularly in culturally diverse regions such as Benue State remains insufficiently explored. This study, therefore, seeks to examine how advertising strategies influence brand loyalty among telecom subscribers in Benue State, focusing on the interplay between emotional appeal, message credibility, and service quality. By integrating insights from the Persuasion Theory (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) and Total Quality Management Theory (Deming, 1982), the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how advertising communication and service reliability jointly determine brand loyalty in Nigeria’s dynamic telecommunications environment.

Statement of the Problem

Advertising has long been recognised as a strategic tool for shaping consumer perception and influencing purchase decisions, yet its capacity to cultivate enduring brand loyalty remains contested (Kumar & Gupta, 2021). Within Nigeria’s highly competitive telecommunications industry, firms such as MTN and GLO invest

heavily in celebrity-driven campaigns, emotional storytelling, and nationalistic messaging designed to attract and retain customers. However, a persistent disconnect exists between the persuasive promises conveyed through advertising and the lived realities of consumers' service experiences. Studies reveal that while advertising expenditure drives short-term gains in sales and visibility, it does not consistently translate into long-term loyalty unless supported by dependable service delivery and customer satisfaction (Idamoyibo, 2021; Ode, 2021). The inconsistency between advertising narratives and operational performance has been shown to undermine brand credibility, leading to consumer scepticism, weakened trust, and brand switching tendencies.

Furthermore, emerging research underscores that the expansion of digital media has redefined advertising engagement, yet many Nigerian telecom firms have not optimally leveraged these platforms for authentic two-way communication (Uwua, Rabiu, & Joshua, 2025). Studies by Erungworo et al. (2023) and Abubakar (2021) reveal that misalignment between brand image and identity often results in what is termed "spurious loyalty," where customers remain out of necessity rather than emotional commitment. Likewise, Joseph (2024) found that while MTN and GLO campaigns are creatively appealing, they lack perceived authenticity among younger audiences due to recurring service inconsistencies. Consequently, a critical gap persists regarding the extent to which advertising particularly emotional and digital strategies can foster genuine, sustainable brand loyalty within Nigeria's telecommunications context. This study therefore seeks to examine how advertising strategies influence consumer brand loyalty in Benue State, focusing on the interplay between persuasive communication, service quality, and cultural

relevance in sustaining long-term consumer trust and attachment.

Research Questions

1. What advertising strategies are employed by MTN and GLO to build brand loyalty in Benue State?
2. How have these advertising strategies influenced consumers' patronage and brand attachment?
3. What role do advertising strategies play in the marketing communication of MTN and GLO services?

Literature Review

Advertising and Brand Loyalty

Advertising and brand loyalty have remained central to marketing research, especially in dynamic industries like telecommunications where competition is intense. Globally, advertising is recognised as a multidimensional communication tool that influences not only purchase decisions but also consumer attitudes and long-term brand relationships (Tellis, 2017; Leiss et al., 2017). Recent studies highlight the growing importance of emotional branding, experiential marketing, and digital engagement as means of creating deep, psychological connections with consumers. Within Nigeria's telecommunications sector, where product offerings are largely homogeneous, advertising serves as a critical differentiator that shapes brand perception and enhances credibility (Belch & Belch, 2021).

Empirical research demonstrates that advertising effectiveness depends on emotional resonance and message authenticity. Nguyen and Simkin (2017) identified emotional appeals and celebrity endorsements as key to building consumer attachment, while Adeola and Ojo (2019) confirmed that these strategies increase trust

among Nigerian telecom consumers. However, Omari and Mohamed (2017) warned that price promotions, although effective in driving sales, rarely foster genuine loyalty. Leong and Li (2019) concluded that lasting brand attachment relies on message consistency and alignment between advertising promises and consumer experience. Despite numerous studies on national advertising trends, regional variations remain underexplored, particularly in Benue State, where cultural and infrastructural differences may shape how consumers interpret advertising messages.

Advertising Strategies Used by MTN and GLO to Build Brand Loyalty

In Nigeria's telecommunications industry, advertising serves both competitive and cultural functions. Idamoyibo (2021) noted that MTN and GLO invest heavily in advertising because it directly influences market retention and profitability. Campaigns such as MTN's "Everywhere You Go" and GLO's "Rule Your World" exemplify how emotional and patriotic narratives strengthen consumer identification with brands (Abubakar, 2021). Rooted in *Persuasion Theory* (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), these campaigns rely on emotional cues and celebrity influence to shape consumer attitudes in a highly competitive market.

Nonetheless, the success of such campaigns depends on perceived credibility and authenticity. Joseph (2024) found that although MTN's creative storytelling resonates with Nigerian youths, inconsistent service undermines trust. Similarly, Ode (2021) demonstrated that poor network performance diminishes advertising effectiveness, a view supported globally by Leong and Li (2019), who stressed that emotional appeals must align with service experience to sustain loyalty. The *Total Quality Management (TQM) Theory*

(Deming, 1982) reinforces this, asserting that quality consistency sustains consumer trust beyond persuasion. Thus, while MTN and GLO employ emotionally powerful advertising, enduring loyalty depends on their ability to match promotional narratives with reliable service delivery.

Influence of Advertising Strategies on Consumer Patronage and Brand Attachment

Advertising shapes both cognitive evaluation and emotional attachment, influencing consumer patronage and loyalty. Idamoyibo (2021) established a positive relationship between advertising expenditure and sales growth, while Ode (2021) revealed that service quality mediates the link between advertising exposure and customer satisfaction. Emotional branding enhances identification and belonging (Leong & Li, 2019), suggesting that consumers are often drawn to brands that reflect their aspirations rather than functional attributes alone. In competitive markets, emotional engagement thus becomes a stronger determinant of patronage than price or performance.

However, advertising's influence can be superficial when operational realities fail to meet expectations. Abubakar (2021) described this as "spurious loyalty," where customers remain with a network provider out of necessity rather than satisfaction. Erungworo et al. (2023) observed that when advertising messages overpromise, consumer trust declines, leading to brand switching. In Benue State, these dynamics remain underexplored, as local consumers experience national campaigns differently due to network instability and service disparities. This study therefore addresses the gap by examining how MTN and GLO's advertising efforts influence genuine brand attachment rather than transactional patronage.

The Role of Advertising Strategies in the Marketing Communication of MTN and GLO Services

Advertising remains the cornerstone of integrated marketing communication in Nigeria's telecom industry, linking brand identity, consumer engagement, and corporate reputation. Belch and Belch (2021) describe it as the unifying force coordinating promotional, digital, and public relations activities. For MTN and GLO, advertising not only informs but also communicates reliability and national pride. Uwua, Rabi, and Joshua (2025) found that while telecom firms increasingly use digital platforms for visibility, most still rely on one-way communication models, limiting interactive engagement and relationship building.

Globally, interactive advertising fosters consumer trust through dialogue and participation. Wu (2025) and Liu (2025) reported that two-way digital engagement enhances emotional connection and loyalty, while Sutisna et al. (2025) emphasised the value of personalised content and influencer marketing. In Nigeria, Erungworo et al. (2023) confirmed that advertising is most effective when supported by transparent corporate behaviour. Despite these insights, few studies have explored how advertising functions as a relational communication tool at the subnational level. This study fills that gap by analysing advertising's communicative role in shaping consumer-brand relationships in Benue State, where cultural identity and service reliability jointly define advertising credibility.

Conceptual Review

Advertising strategies represent the systematic application of persuasive communication techniques designed to

influence consumer decision-making, shape attitudes, and reinforce brand preference. According to Belch and Belch (2021), these strategies often combine emotional, rational, and social appeals to stimulate both cognitive and affective responses.

Advertising Strategies

Advertising strategies refer to the deliberate use of creative and persuasive techniques designed to influence consumer attitudes and behaviours toward a brand (Belch & Belch, 2021). They encompass emotional appeals, rational persuasion, celebrity endorsements, digital engagement, and cultural symbolism. According to Petty and Cacioppo's (1986) *Persuasion Theory*, advertising works through both central (rational) and peripheral (emotional) routes, shaping consumer attitudes toward products or services. In Nigeria's telecommunications sector, advertising campaigns by MTN and GLO illustrate these dimensions vividly using celebrity figures, slogans, and culturally resonant imagery to foster consumer identification and recall (Abubakar, 2021; Nguyen & Simkin, 2017).

Effective advertising strategies do more than capture attention they build trust through message credibility and consistency. Keller (2020) and Tellis (2017) argue that strategic advertising enhances brand equity by reinforcing the emotional and cognitive associations consumers form with a company. However, the effectiveness of advertising depends on its ability to align with cultural expectations and real consumer experiences. When service delivery falls short of promotional claims, advertising loses persuasive power (Ode, 2021). Therefore, the success of advertising strategies lies in maintaining harmony between the promise and the performance a balance reinforced by the principles of *Total Quality Management* (Deming, 1982), which emphasise quality consistency as a foundation for loyalty.

Consumer Brand Loyalty

Consumer brand loyalty is defined as a customer's consistent preference and commitment to a brand over time, demonstrated through repeat purchases and advocacy (Aaker, 2020). Loyalty emerges when consumers trust a brand to meet their functional and emotional needs reliably (Keller, 2020). It involves both *attitudinal loyalty* emotional attachment and psychological commitment and *behavioural loyalty* actual repeat purchase behaviour (Leong & Li, 2019). In the context of telecommunications, where switching costs are low and competition intense, loyalty becomes a strategic asset that determines long-term profitability.

Scholars such as Abubakar (2021) and Erungworo et al. (2023) have established that loyalty is not sustained by advertising alone but by the perceived congruence between advertising messages and consumer experience. Emotional branding strengthens attachment by evoking trust and belonging, but inconsistent service erodes this relationship. Similarly, Leiss et al. (2017) contend that loyalty is both psychological and experiential it depends on how consistently a brand delivers on its promise. In the Nigerian telecom industry, consumers' loyalty to MTN and GLO fluctuates with service reliability, customer care responsiveness, and cultural authenticity of their advertisements (Joseph, 2024).

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded on two theoretical perspectives: The Persuasion Theory and the Total Quality Management Theory, these frameworks provide a dual analytical lens through which the relationship between advertising strategies, consumer perception, and brand loyalty can be examined within the Nigerian telecommunications industry.

Persuasion Theory

The Persuasion Theory, also known as the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), was propounded by Richard E. Petty and John T. Cacioppo in 1986. The central assumption of this theory is that individuals process persuasive messages through two distinct cognitive routes the central route and the peripheral route. The *central route* involves high involvement and deep cognitive processing, where consumers critically evaluate the quality, credibility, and logical coherence of advertising messages before forming or changing an attitude. In contrast, the *peripheral route* operates when individuals have low motivation or limited ability to process information, relying instead on superficial cues such as attractiveness, celebrity endorsement, emotional appeal, or repetition (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

The core tenets of the theory posit that attitude change and ultimately behaviour change depends on both the consumer's motivation to process information and their ability to do so. Consequently, persuasive communication in advertising must strategically combine emotional, logical, and contextual appeals to influence consumer perception effectively.

In the context of this study, the Persuasion Theory is highly relevant because advertising in the telecommunications sector relies heavily on both emotional and rational appeals to influence consumer decisions. For instance, MTN's campaign slogans such as "*Everywhere You Go*" and GLO's "*Rule Your World*" utilise emotional narratives that appeal to belonging, empowerment, and national identity reflecting persuasion through the peripheral route. Meanwhile, rational appeals such as data affordability and network speed are examples of central route processing, influencing more deliberate consumer evaluation. Therefore, this theory provides a useful lens to understand how

Nigerian consumers internalise advertising messages and translate them into brand preference and loyalty.

However, one major limitation of the Persuasion Theory is that it assumes a relatively linear and rational decision-making process. It underestimates the role of cultural, environmental, and service quality factors, which may override persuasive advertising in shaping consumer loyalty. For instance, even when advertising effectively persuades consumers, poor service quality, unreliable network coverage, or negative customer experiences can quickly reverse positive attitudes. Thus, while persuasion explains *how* advertising attracts consumers, it does not fully explain *how* loyalty is maintained in contexts where post-purchase experiences are inconsistent a gap that is bridged by the Total Quality Management Theory.

Total Quality Management Theory

The Total Quality Management (TQM) Theory, developed by W. Edwards Deming in 1982, emerged as part of his broader philosophy on organisational excellence, continuous improvement, and systemic quality control. Deming proposed that customer satisfaction and loyalty are not accidental outcomes but the direct result of sustained quality improvement across every aspect of an organisation's operations. He argued that quality must extend beyond the production line to encompass all organisational processes, including internal communication, customer service, and even marketing and advertising functions. In essence, TQM posits that true organisational success is rooted in a culture of continuous improvement, proactive error prevention, and unwavering attention to customer needs (Deming, 1982).

At its core, the TQM framework is guided by four foundational principles: customer orientation, continuous improvement,

systemic thinking, and employee involvement. Customer orientation underscores the necessity of understanding and prioritising consumer expectations, ensuring that every product or service meets or exceeds these needs. Continuous improvement, in turn, views quality not as a static goal but as a dynamic, evolving process that requires constant evaluation and refinement. Systemic thinking highlights the interdependence of organisational units, recognising that quality outcomes depend on the seamless integration of all departments and processes. Finally, employee involvement emphasises that achieving quality excellence demands collective participation every staff member, from top management to frontline personnel, must contribute to quality enhancement and customer satisfaction. Together, these tenets form a holistic model in which quality becomes both a philosophy and a practice embedded in organisational culture.

The relevance of the TQM theory to this study lies in its direct link between advertising promises and actual service delivery. Within Nigeria's telecommunications industry, firms such as MTN and GLO rely heavily on persuasive advertising to attract and retain customers in a highly competitive market. While such advertising often highlights superior service quality through messages like "*Everywhere You Go*" or "*Rule Your World*", consumer loyalty ultimately depends on whether the actual experience reflects these claims. When customers encounter frequent network disruptions, billing issues, or unresponsive customer service, the perceived inconsistency between advertised promises and real experiences can undermine trust and loyalty. Thus, TQM provides a complementary lens to the Persuasion Theory, illustrating that loyalty cannot be sustained through persuasive appeal alone but must be reinforced through reliable, high-

quality service performance. It emphasises that brand credibility grows when operational excellence supports communication credibility, making quality assurance a key driver of lasting consumer trust.

Nevertheless, despite its practical strengths, the TQM framework exhibits certain limitations when applied to consumer behaviour and marketing contexts. Its focus is largely internal and managerial, prioritising organisational systems over consumer psychology. As such, it offers limited insight into the emotional and cognitive dimensions of consumer decision-making factors that the Persuasion Theory more directly addresses. Furthermore, TQM assumes a linear relationship between improved quality and increased loyalty, overlooking the complexity of consumer behaviour in markets characterised by intense competition and low switching costs. In Nigeria's telecommunications sector, for instance, even firms with superior service quality face customer churn driven by price competition, peer influence, and promotional incentives. Therefore, while TQM provides a valuable foundation for understanding the operational determinants of loyalty, it must be integrated with behavioural and psychological perspectives to fully explain how advertising strategies translate into sustained consumer commitment.

Research Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative survey research design, which was deemed appropriate for collecting measurable data from a large population to determine the relationship between advertising strategies and brand loyalty among telecom consumers. The population of the study comprised subscribers of MTN and GLO within Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State, representing a diverse consumer base reflective of varying demographic characteristics. A sample of 544 respondents

was selected using a stratified random sampling technique combined with purposive selection, ensuring that only active telecom users across demographic groups such as age, occupation, and network affiliation were represented. This approach allowed for proportional representation of MTN and GLO subscribers within the study area. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire divided into sections corresponding to the study's objectives and research questions. The instrument consisted mainly of close-ended items measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from *Strongly Agree (5)* to *Strongly Disagree (1)*, enabling quantitative assessment of attitudes and perceptions. To ensure validity, the questionnaire underwent expert review by scholars in mass communication and marketing, while reliability was established through a pilot test, yielding a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.82, indicating high internal consistency.

Data were analysed using descriptive statistical methods, including frequency counts and percentage distributions, to summarise respondents' views on advertising effectiveness and brand loyalty patterns. The percentage for each response option was computed using the formula:

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100$$

where:

P = Percentage of respondents for each response category,
F = Frequency of responses for each item, and
N = Total number of respondents.

This formula provided a clear quantitative representation of the distribution of responses across all variables. The results were presented in tables corresponding to the study's three research questions, with interpretations linked to the objectives, theoretical frameworks, and related

literature. The use of descriptive statistics was justified because it allowed for the accurate presentation and interpretation of trends, patterns, and relationships in the dataset, thereby providing empirical insight into how advertising strategies by MTN and GLO influence consumer loyalty in Benue State.

Results and Analysis

This section presents and interprets findings derived from 544 valid questionnaire responses collected from MTN and GLO subscribers across Makurdi Local Government Area, Benue State. The data were analysed descriptively, using frequency counts and percentages, and are presented in three tables each corresponding to one of the study’s research questions. Interpretations are linked to the study’s objectives, reviewed literature, and theoretical frameworks.

What advertising strategies are employed by MTN and GLO to build brand loyalty in Benue State?

Table 1: Advertising Strategies Used by MTN and GLO to Influence Brand Loyalty

Response Option	Frequency Percentage (%)	
Celebrity Endorsements and Emotional Appeals	218	40.1
Price Promotions and Data Bonuses	134	24.6
Social Media and Digital Engagement Campaigns	116	21.3
Sponsorships and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Initiatives	76	14.0
Total	544	100

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 1 shows that celebrity endorsements and emotional appeals (40.1%) were the dominant advertising strategies used by MTN and GLO, followed by price promotions (24.6%), digital campaigns (21.3%), and CSR initiatives (14%). This underscores the dominance of emotional persuasion in telecom advertising, consistent with Nguyen

and Simkin (2017) and Joseph (2024), who linked affective storytelling to stronger brand attachment. However, as Ode (2021) and Deming’s (1982) TQM Theory caution, sustained loyalty depends not merely on persuasive appeal but on aligning advertising promises with consistent service quality.

How have these advertising strategies influenced consumers’ patronage and brand attachment?

Table 2: Impact of Advertising Strategies on Consumers’ Patronage and Brand Loyalty

Response Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Increased Subscription and Data Usage	203	37.3
Strengthened Emotional Connection with Brand	168	30.9
No Significant Change in Patronage	102	18.8
Brand Switching Despite Advertising	71	13.0
Total	544	100

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 2 indicates that most respondents (68.2%) experienced increased patronage or emotional attachment to MTN and GLO due to advertising, though 31.8% showed little behavioural change or continued switching. This suggests that advertising drives short-term engagement but not enduring loyalty, echoing Abubakar (2021) and Idamoyibo (2021), who linked inconsistent service to weak retention. The finding aligns with Persuasion Theory and TQM, implying that while emotional appeals attract consumers, sustained loyalty in Benue State depends on consistent service quality that fulfils advertising promises.

What role do advertising strategies play in the marketing communication of MTN and GLO services?

Table 3: Role of Advertising Strategies in Marketing Communication

Response Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Enhances Brand Visibility and Recall	231	42.5
Promotes Trust and Customer Retention	153	28.1
Facilitates Product Information Dissemination	99	18.2
Minimal or No Role in Service Perception	61	11.2
Total	544	100

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 3 shows that most respondents (70.6%) viewed advertising as central to MTN and GLO’s marketing communication enhancing

brand visibility (42.5%), trust (28.1%), and information dissemination (18.2%). However, 11.2% perceived minimal impact,

indicating a gap between message reception and experience. This supports Uwua, Rabi, and Joshua (2025) and Erungworo et al. (2023), who linked credible communication to interactive and transparent advertising. Consistent with Belch and Belch (2021) and the TQM perspective, effective advertising must reflect operational quality to sustain brand trust and loyalty.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study reveal that advertising strategies play a significant yet complex role in shaping consumer brand loyalty among MTN and GLO subscribers in Benue State. Advertising was found to be both a persuasive and relational mechanism that influences how consumers perceive, engage with, and remain attached to telecommunications brands. The data indicate that emotional storytelling, celebrity endorsements, digital engagement, and promotional campaigns were the most prominent strategies adopted by both firms. These approaches reflect a reliance on emotional and cultural cues to foster attachment and trust. This aligns with *Persuasion Theory* (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), which posits that emotional and peripheral appeals influence consumer attitudes, particularly in high-competition markets such as telecommunications. Consistent with the findings of Nguyen and Simkin (2017) and Adeola and Ojo (2019), MTN and GLO's use of affective and celebrity-based advertising enhanced brand recognition and trust, particularly among younger consumers who respond strongly to aspirational messaging.

However, the study also reveals that the persuasive power of advertising is significantly moderated by message authenticity and service reliability. Respondents reported admiration for the creativity of MTN's and GLO's campaigns but expressed scepticism when advertised

claims did not align with real-life experiences of service quality. This finding supports Joseph (2024), who observed that Nigerian youths often perceive a gap between advertising narratives and network performance, leading to reduced trust. Similarly, Ode (2021) established that while advertising exposure drives purchase intention, loyalty deteriorates when customer experience fails to meet expectations. When examined through the lens of *Total Quality Management (TQM) Theory* (Deming, 1982), this relationship underscores that persuasive appeal must be reinforced by consistent service delivery. Advertising can stimulate consumer engagement, but sustained loyalty depends on operational credibility. Thus, persuasion and quality management are not competing forces but complementary processes in building enduring brand relationships.

The analysis further demonstrates that advertising influences both the cognitive and emotional dimensions of consumer behaviour. Approximately two-thirds of respondents reported increased patronage and a deeper emotional connection with their preferred telecom brand as a result of advertising exposure. These outcomes are consistent with the findings of Schivinski and Dąbrowski (2016), who emphasised that interactive advertising enhances both cognitive and affective loyalty, and Leong and Li (2019), who showed that emotional branding creates a psychological bond between consumer and brand. Nevertheless, the study found that service quality gaps, network unreliability, and unresponsive customer care weakened advertising's long-term impact, leading to what Abubakar (2021) described as "spurious loyalty" a form of temporary attachment driven by convenience rather than genuine satisfaction. This pattern reveals that loyalty in the Nigerian telecommunications market is fragile, sustained only when advertising

promises are consistently validated through quality experiences.

In addition, the study highlights advertising's role as a strategic communication tool within integrated marketing systems. Over 70% of respondents acknowledged that advertising enhanced brand visibility, recall, and trust, confirming its centrality in telecom marketing communication. This finding supports Belch and Belch (2021), who described advertising as the unifying force linking a company's promotional and communicative functions. Digital engagement, in particular, emerged as a crucial factor in contemporary consumer interaction. Studies by Wu (2025) and Liu (2025) reinforce this observation, demonstrating that social media and influencer-based advertising foster interactive relationships that strengthen trust and advocacy. However, consistent with Uwua, Rabi, and Joshua (2025), the present study found that Nigerian telecoms underutilise two-way communication channels, limiting the relational potential of their advertising efforts. This suggests that while MTN and GLO have mastered brand visibility, they must deepen engagement by fostering participatory dialogue and feedback-driven customer relationships.

Analytically, the convergence of *Persuasion Theory* and *TQM Theory* offers a comprehensive framework for interpreting the study's findings. Persuasion Theory explains how consumers form favourable attitudes toward brands through emotional and cognitive processing, whereas TQM Theory provides the operational basis for maintaining these attitudes through reliable quality performance. Together, they underscore that effective advertising is not an isolated activity but part of an integrated system linking communication, service quality, and consumer experience. The results reveal a persistent credibility gap in

Nigeria's telecom industry: while advertising stimulates consumer interest and attachment, deficiencies in service quality undermine long-term loyalty. Consequently, advertising effectiveness in this context must be understood as a function of both persuasive storytelling and operational trustworthiness. Sustained brand loyalty emerges when emotional appeal, message credibility, and service delivery converge to produce consistent consumer satisfaction.

Conclusion

The study concludes that advertising strategies play a significant role in shaping consumer brand loyalty among MTN and GLO subscribers in Benue State. Advertising, when strategically executed, serves not merely as an informational tool but as an emotional bridge that connects brands with consumers through persuasive storytelling, cultural symbolism, and relatable messages. The findings demonstrate that while emotional and digital advertising enhance consumer attachment, true loyalty emerges only when these promotional promises are supported by consistent service quality, transparency, and responsiveness. In other words, persuasive communication attracts consumer attention and fosters initial trust, but sustained loyalty depends on operational credibility and customer satisfaction. The study therefore affirms that effective advertising in the telecommunications industry must go beyond persuasion to reflect authentic service delivery, thereby transforming short-term attraction into enduring consumer commitment.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings and guided by the three research questions, several actionable recommendations are proposed to strengthen the relationship between advertising strategies and brand loyalty

among MTN and GLO subscribers in Benue State.

1. MTN and GLO should adopt an Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) approach that ensures message consistency across traditional, digital, and experiential platforms. The findings revealed that emotional storytelling and digital engagement positively influence consumer loyalty when communication is coherent and aligned across media. Therefore, unifying brand narratives whether through television adverts, social media, or sponsorships will enhance message credibility, improve recall, and sustain consumer trust.
2. The companies must prioritise service quality enhancement to ensure that advertising claims reflect actual consumer experiences. The study established that while persuasive advertising attracts attention and increases short-term patronage, long-term loyalty is only achieved when customers perceive

service delivery as reliable and responsive. Thus, network providers should strengthen customer service channels, minimise network disruptions, and promote transparency in billing to reinforce the integrity of their advertising promises. Aligning operational performance with promotional communication will bridge the credibility gap identified in the findings and foster genuine brand commitment.

3. MTN and GLO should promote cultural relevance in their advertising campaigns by integrating local languages, values, and cultural symbols that resonate with their Benue State audience. The findings highlighted that consumers respond more positively to messages that reflect their social identity and lived realities. By tailoring advertisements to the local cultural context, telecom brands can evoke deeper emotional connection, strengthen community affiliation, and enhance long-term loyalty.

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