

RETAIL-MEDIATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION IN FAST MOVING CONSUMER GOODS OF SELECTED CHI LIMITED PRODUCTS IN ILISAN-REMO, NIGERIA

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Abstract

In fast-moving consumer goods, marketing communication planning is often done by the brand manager, but experienced by consumers in retail conditions, at price cues, on product availability, packaging visibility, and when using the product. This study critically investigates the communication and re-interpretation of selected Chi Limited products in General Trade, Modern Trade and On-premise retail environment in Ilishan-Remo, Ogun State, Nigeria. The study is anchored on Integrated Marketing Communication, Consumer Control Theory, and Consumer Information Processing/Cue Utilization; and views marketing communication as a channel-mediated cue system, instead of advertising activity alone. The paper uses a critical analytical case study design, which includes a semi-structured key-informant interview with a salesperson who is conversant with Chi Limited channel execution, short open-ended confirmations from ten consumers (parents) and an on-premise confirmation with a bar attendant. Findings indicate that controllable factors—such as packaging, visibility, pricing, promotion, and distribution—are affected by uncontrollable or less controllable factors (such as exchange-rate pressure, retailer substitution, availability gaps, shelf-life time loss, consumption-stage practices such as decanting). The paper proposes that coherence in Fast Moving Consumer Goods marketing communication does not only occur during the planning stage, but is verified, undermined and/or re-authored during retail and consumption contexts. The study makes an important contribution to the marketing communication literature through the demonstration of the role of retail mediation in retailing brand meaning in everyday contexts in Nigeria for FMCGs.

Keywords: consumer cue utilization; FMCG; integrated marketing communication; packaging; trade marketing; retail-mediated communication; Nigeria

Introduction

Marketing communication is viewed as a strategic process that firms use to manage and design market-oriented signals to influence consumer meaning, preference, and behaviour (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) was born from this tradition as a response to fragmented brand messaging, coordinating communication tools and touchpoints to provide consumers with coherent brand meaning in place of disjointed signals (Schultz et al., 1993). Prior marketing communication research, however, reveals that the notion of coherence is not only about the planning of consistent messages. It is also influenced by the actual context in which customers interact with brands in the retail, distribution, and consumption environments (Tafesse & Kitchen, 2017).

It is particularly applicable in the context of Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG), when the consumer does not encounter an advertisement for the product but instead relies on regular cues. In such a scenario, all factors ranging from product availability, product positioning, pricing, transparency of packaging, retail recommendation, and the store's setup may impact communications. For example, a consumer may forget the slogan used in the advertising campaign but remember the name of the product, its positioning, its price compared to others, its transparency, or the ease with which they use the product after purchase.

Therefore, retailing environments are not neutral places. Retailing environments may either enhance the meaning associated with brands or disrupt and undermine them. Retailers may use organized placement and shelf displays to facilitate visibility and value perception in the context of Modern Trade retailing channels. In the case of General Trade retailing channels, issues of price,

availability of goods, influence of the seller, and product exposure conditions will affect consumer interpretation. Premise environments, such as bars, restaurants, hotels, and lounges, are another set of environments since consumers may consume the product in the service environment without the package being seen.

This paper employs a critical case study method of selected Chi Limited products in Ilisan-Remo, Nigeria, to explore this interaction. Product flows at Chi Limited are useful to consider because the products are available in various retail and consumption environments, such as general trade, modern trade, and on-premise. In such situations, brand meaning can be enhanced by brand visibility, packaging, pricing, promotion, and distribution. Still, it can also be weakened by currency exchange should the price change, retailer intervention, out-of-stock conditions, shelf-life pressures, and conditions at the point of consumption—e.g., decanting.

Previous literature presents the relationship between Integrated Marketing Communication, which implies coordination of communication through brand touchpoints, marketing control being conditional on the environment, and the consumer decision-making process as influenced by the availability of product and market information cues (Jaworski, 1988; Olson & Jacoby, 1972; Porcu & Del Barrio-García, 2022). Despite the presence of all these theories mentioned above, they are considered independently of each other without adequate regard to how controllable aspects of marketing communication can be kept, converted, or weakened through different sales channels for FMCG products - General Trade, Modern Trade, and On-Premise. This is especially true in the Nigerian environment, with its volatile exchange rate, uncertain product availability, independent retailers, inadequate storage, product substitution, and serving practices in the outlet. The study

will investigate the interaction between the controllable elements of Chivita's marketing communication and different sales channel constraints in Ilisan-Remo.

The main thesis of this paper is that the marketing communication for FMCG continues beyond the campaign planning stage. Instead, consumers continuously negotiate it along the retail chain and reinterpret it on the retail shelf and in use. The paper sheds new light on the role of brand communication in real-life Nigerian FMCG markets by studying the interplay between controlled and uncontrolled market forces, which brings the analysis of brand communication to a more grounded level.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this paper is to critically appraise how selected Chi Limited products are communicated and interpreted across general trade, modern trade, and on-premise contexts in Ilisan-Remo, Nigeria.

The specific objectives are to:

1. identify the key controllable marketing communication elements used across the three channel contexts;
2. analyse the major uncontrollable or weakly controllable forces that moderate these elements in-market;
3. examine how the interaction between controllables and uncontrollables shapes consumer interpretation across purchase and consumption contexts.

Literature Review

This section discusses the literature related to Integrated Marketing Communication, retail-mediated communication, packaging, and store-based cues, as well as the controllables and uncontrollables in marketing. The review provides the conceptual and theoretical framework for

analysing how Chi Limited's marketing communication is determined in General Trade, Modern Trade, and On-premise markets.

Integrated Marketing Communication and the Problem of Coherence

The concept of integrated marketing communication is still relevant because it shows how companies try to coordinate the marketing signals they send in the market at various touchpoints. Even today, this research by Tafesse and Kitchen (2017) remains relevant because it offers an integrated view of key IMC models and treats IMC as a multidimensional phenomenon involving communication strategy, scope of integration, organizational involvement, and outcomes. In FMCG markets, IMC is relevant because advertising, packaging, pricing, distribution, and shelf presence all contribute to the brand experience.

The Modern IMC scholarship argues for assessing integration from the consumer's perspective, not simply from the firm's planning documents. Observing the connection of touchpoints in reality, consumers notice and evaluate three characteristics of omnichannel IMC: consistency, interactivity, and connectivity (Butkouskaya et al., 2023). This study reinforces the trend that Chi Limited brand communication should be measured in the context of consumers' experiences of the products in the general trade, the modern trade, and the on-premise.

This is further supported by Kliatchko and Uttamchandani (2024), who suggest a modern integrated marketing communication (IMC) planning model that applies to both academia and industry. Their framework is useful in this context as it moves away from rote memorisation of the message to the management of interdependent contact points. Moreover, Rehman et al. (2022) note that IMC has evolved alongside changing modes of communication as brands adopt various channels to preserve their brand identity and performance in the market.

Integrated marketing communication is the beginning, but not the end, of the discussion in this study. The brand can plan its communication in a coordinated manner, but the store environment can interfere with this communication, including price changes and poor display management. Therefore, this paper extends IMC theory to a retail communication theory where the brand message is designed by the firm but tested and possibly re-authored in the market.

Trade Marketing and Retail-Mediated Communication

Trade marketing is at the heart of FMCG communication, as numerous consumer decisions are made at the point of purchase. Distribution is not just a logistics problem—it is a problem of determining whether consumers will be able to see the brand. Ailawadi and Farris (2017) state that metrics that link distribution decisions to marketing goals indicate availability and channel performance are components of marketing effectiveness; hence, multi- and omnichannel distribution requires metrics that link distribution with marketing goals.

In other words, retail execution influences how the available product is encountered. The results indicate that the three different types of in-store displays affect consumer purchase behaviour, particularly because the location and format of the displays influence shoppers' responses (Han et al., 2022). This lends weight to the idea that visibility is an effective communication cue in fast-moving consumer goods retail contexts. Regularly seen and easily found products can convey reliability. On the other hand, poor visibility of a product can affect consumer attention, assessment, and choice.

Retailers are also getting more involved in communicating about brands. Grewal et al. (2017) name visual display, merchandise offers, consumption and engagement, data use and retail technologies as major aspects that influence the future of retailing. Bartholomew and Williamson (2022) build

on this argument in their work on retail media networks by illustrating how retailers are utilising customer information and targeted advertising in systems they control.

According to Thomas et al. (2025), retail media networks are a new type of platform owned by retailers that sell products to consumers based on first-party data and closed-loop reporting metrics. While the present study does place greater emphasis on physical retail than on digital retail media, the logic is still important because retailers and outlet systems are increasingly coming into play at the retail point of purchase to affect what consumers see, compare, and remember.

Packaging, Shelf Visibility, and Consumer Cue Interpretation

Packaging is a very effective form of communication in FMCG industry as packaging operates in between attention, recognition and buying decisions. Packaging has always been known not to be simply a container but rather a visual form of communication through which customers can communicate and interpret the brand, quality, convenience and appropriateness, etc. According to Underwood & Klein (2002), beliefs, package evaluations and brand perception can be influenced by pack images and attributes. In an FMCG setting, consumers often make buying decisions when they are pressed for time and cues from packs are evident signs that influence their decision-making process.

Consumer attitudes and behavioural responses are also influenced by packaging, as revealed in recent packaging studies. Drechsel et al. (2025) show that preferences and emotions also influence consumers' behaviour and intentions regarding environmentally friendly food packaging. Likewise, Quoc et al. (2025) correlate green packaging, green branding, and eco-labelling with food choices among young consumers. Anjali and Menon (2025), on the other hand, suggest that information about product packaging and brand image is relevant to FMCG consumer buying

behaviour. While these studies examine varying packaging situations, they all reinforce the general idea that packaging serves as a "visible cue" by which consumers read the value, quality, and appropriateness of the product.

Shelf visibility determines whether packaging communication is actually noticed. Han et al. (2022) demonstrate that the type and location of in-store displays influence purchasing decisions, suggesting that in-store visibility and shelf placement may influence consumers' reactions at the point of sale. Nordfält and Ahlbom (2024) also highlight the need for in-store attention research in the real world, as in-store conditions influence consumer attention. This is relevant to the present study as the meaning of retail is not just what is written on the pack, but also its visibility, accessibility, display and ease of comparison within the outlet.

Marketing Communication Control and Environmental Constraint

The relationship between the firm-focused strategies and the general market environment is relevant to the FMCG communication process. The brand can prepare itself in terms of packaging, pricing, promotion, distribution, retail presence, and trade activation. However, everything will have a different meaning once the brand enters the actual retail market setting. Economic conditions, channel dynamics, product availability, household pressure to purchase, and routine retail store practices may influence consumer reactions. Consequently, FMCG communication is situational because of how the brand's planned messages are interpreted within the market environment.

Marketing Control Theory remains fundamental because it explains why the manager's intention may not always lead to a consistent market result. Marketing control theory by Jaworski (1988) remains relevant because it views managerial control as dependent on the environment. Recent

research builds on this idea by demonstrating how uncertainty and turbulence influence marketing capabilities, marketing activities, and marketing outcomes. (Chatterjee et al., 2023). Market instability becomes an issue, especially for consumer goods companies operating in environments where costs, logistics, and consumer buying power are unstable. The study by Okanlawon et al. (2025) indicates that changes in the exchange rate affect the performance of publicly held consumer goods companies in Nigeria.

Product availability and consumer behaviour are key to understanding how marketing actions affect the market. According to Khan and DePaoli (2025), consumer behaviour during stockouts can make all the difference between consumer retention and consumer switching to other brands. In addition, according to the findings of Mennekes and Schramm-Klein (2025), financial constraints and limited product availability can impact consumer stress, buying behaviour, and dependency on other products. This illustrates that FMCG communication outcomes are influenced not only by the planned brand message but also by the market context in which consumers experience it; for instance, if their buying power is limited or the regular product competes with other household expenses, consumers can perceive prices differently.

Theoretical Framework

The current study will be anchored in a framework that integrates Integrated Marketing Communication, Marketing Control Theory, and Consumer Information Processing/Cue Utilization. The IMC model describes the planned coordination of controllable cues, including packaging, pricing, visibility, promotion, and distribution of the product. Marketing control theory shows why the planned cues might yield inconsistent results when moving through an unstable

market environment. Consumer information processing and cue utilization explain how consumers process information about the product, including its price and packaging.

The framework is constructed from both the foundational and recent literature. The foundational theories that underpin IMC, marketing control, and information and cue utilisation come from foundational theories. In contrast, their application in the current retail and FMCG environment can be seen in recent research. On the IMC side of the framework, supporting literature includes Tafesse and Kitchen (2017), Butkouskaya et al. (2023), and Kliatchko and Uttamchandani (2024). On the other hand, according to the marketing control theory of Jaworski (1988), environmental uncertainty determines managerial control, while Chatterjee et al. (2023), Yang et al. (2022), and Ciszewska-Mlinarič et al. (2026) illustrate the influence of uncertainties and turbulence on marketing activity in the current environment. Recent research on packaging and retail attention provides examples of consumer perception of visible cues in the market, including packaging, shelf visibility, and price.

The integrated theoretical framework supports the core argument of this study: FMCG marketing communication is a channel-mediated cue system. Integrated marketing communication defines the ideal integration of controllables, whereas marketing control theory outlines how uncontrollables constrain controllables. Consumer information processing /cue utilization is about how consumers process cues.

Methodology

The research used a critical case study research approach to investigate how selected products of Chi Limited were communicated, experienced, and understood within retail and consumption situations in Ilisan-Remo, Ogun State, Nigeria. This research design was suitable because the

research focused on examining a marketing communication process that depended on context and was influenced by managerial intent, retail implementation, channel conditions, and consumer experience. Geographical boundaries were defined as Ilisan-Remo, and analytical boundaries included General Trade, Modern Trade, and on-premise situations.

General Trade referred to the distribution network comprising the open market, kiosks, shops, and other outlets that had traits such as price sensitivity, stock turnover, and selling influence. Modern Trade included supermarkets with formal product displays and price tags. The on-premise environment included bars, lounges, hotels, and restaurants where both the buying and consumption occurred at one place.

The data were collected using four complementary methods. These included administering a semi-structured key-informant interview to a salesperson acquainted with Chi Limited's channel activities to collect data on distribution, price signalling, retail execution, product visibility, and the DVQ-3P decision-making heuristic (Distribution, Visibility, Quality, Promotion, Persuasion, and Price). Additionally, short open-ended confirmations were collected from ten purposefully sampled parents who have recently bought children-specific products from Chi Limited or its equivalents in Ilisan-Remo. Further evidence was provided by the bar attendant regarding serving the product within the establishment and how the juice is decanted, thus reducing the visibility of packaging at the point of consumption. Field observations involved examining shelf-life displays, presentation, and differences between general trade and modern trade settings. The combination of management, consumer, outlets, and observational evidence allowed for comparisons at different stages of the retail and consumption chain.

This research used an explanation-building approach grounded in theoretical perspectives. Data collection was organized around the three channel configurations and classified according to controlled communication cues, uncontrolled or weakly controlled market factors, retail cues interpretation, and consumption phase interpretation of cues. Source triangulation, differentiation between types of evidence, and proper documentation of observations gathered in the field helped in establishing credibility. And participants were handled anonymously; interview data were cited as personal communication. Managerial explanations were not offered as consumer consensus and consumer perspectives were not considered company policy.

Findings

The results were grouped under three thematic categories: controllable marketing communication cues in general trade, modern trade, and on-premise settings. Uncontrollable or poorly controllable market forces influence the marketing communication cues. Consumer and retailer interpretation occurs at the point of purchase and consumption.

Controllable Communication Cues Across Channel Contexts

The evidence demonstrated that selected Chi Limited products were communicated in-market (availability, packaging, visibility, price, promotion, etc.) rather than directly recalled from the campaign. These cues functioned differently across the general trade, the modern trade, and the on-premise.

Modern trade outlets revealed that the most visible, controllable cues were shelf placement, shelf arrangement, product grouping, and package recognition. According to the key informant, modern trade emphasised visibility and quality because organised displays could reinforce brand visibility

and trustworthiness (Chi Limited Salesperson, personal communication, December 20, 2025). In this respect, packaging acted as a cue for recognition and quality. Organised product arrangement lowered search efforts and ensured that the brand had adequate display.

The key informants provided insight into how they gave priority to the controllable factors through the channels based on the DVQ–3P framework, which included Distribution, Visibility, Quality, Promotion, Persuasion, and Price. In general trade, the top priority controllable factors were price, availability, and distribution range. The modern trade displays were formal, whereas the general trade was informal and was influenced by the salesperson's influence and how the price was determined by the households. The general trade channel's success hinged on its distribution range, price, and turnover. The parents highlighted that any slight difference in price would make a difference in the purchase of the products for their homes. (Chi Limited salesperson, personal communication, December 20, 2025; P1, P3, P7, 10, in Ilisan-Remo, personal communication, January 8, 2026). In this context, price signalled affordability, value, and ease of purchase.

The primary elements the company could control in an on-premise environment included activation, ambiance, service presentation, and interpersonal selling. One of the key informants revealed that on-premise communication relied more on promotion and persuasion, which was associated with customer engagement in the outlet and the provision of experiential presentations (Chi Limited salesperson, personal communication, December 20, 2025). Nevertheless, this was a vulnerable method since the product could become invisible once bar attendants decanted the drink into jars for consumption.

The results showed that different channels use controllable communication elements in different ways. For example, modern trade highlights brands through shelf visibility, general trade focuses

on price sensitivity, and on-premise settings use service presentation. This means that controllable elements are specific to each channel and gain meaning from the environment where consumers experience them.

Uncontrollable and Weakly Controllable Forces Reshaping Retail Communication

The results showed that different channels use controllable communication elements in different ways. For example, modern trade highlights brands through shelf visibility, general trade focuses on price sensitivity, and on-premise settings use service presentation. This means that controllable elements are specific to each channel and gain meaning from the environment where consumers experience them.

However, the salesperson identified exchange rate volatility as one of the major challenges facing the company. One of the factors behind frequent price changes was exposure to costs due to imported concentrates and packing materials. While the price could be planned and relayed via the distribution channels, the pressure itself was not entirely under the firm's control. The key informant revealed that the distributors as well as key buyers were always informed ahead of price increases. At the same time, a communication could be sent out when management decided to maintain prices unchanged despite foreign exchange movements (Chi Limited salesperson, personal communication, December 20, 2025). This shows that the company tried to handle macroeconomic pressures by communicating with its distribution channels, even though consumers mostly saw the impact as changes in shelf prices.

The availability of the product was yet another factor. The parents affirmed that there were times when the children's pack could not be found in stock. In such situations, the retailers offered some alternatives. This depended on either the stock available, price, or priority in selling. This happened

mainly in general trade outlets because the interactions between seller and buyer were relatively informal (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, in Ilisan-Remo personal communication, January 8, 2026). Here, the problem had more to do with communication than the supply of the product, which led to comparison, uncertainty, and switching between products.

Again, the distribution of shelf life appeared to be an important constraint. Field observation revealed that there were differences in the shelf-life window of selected products, some family or medium juice packs had shorter shelf-life window compared to some products targeted at children, which had longer shelf lives window (Researcher's field observation, December 23, 2025). The key informant confirmed that shelf life was not only determinant of shelf life but also product content, category, packaging integrity and seal quality pack size, but also by product content, product category, packaging integrity and seal quality. Dairy-related products like Hollandia Yoghurt were described as more sensitive towards microbial interaction and dynamics of dairy products related to the spoilage, whereas some juice products were described as having higher stability due to the content and packaging structure. Warehousing and distribution delays could shorten the effective shelf life remaining shelf life by the time products arrive at retail outlets (Chi Limited salesperson, personal communication, December 20, 2025). This shelf-life issue had a communication implication. A product with shorter shelf life might speed up the chain. "one way of coping with this pressure," the key informant said, was to distribute products to many buyers instead of concentrating stock in a few bulk accounts. This enhanced market penetration and visibility but exposed how operational constraints could affect distribution strategy and retail communication (Chi Limited salesperson, personal communication, December 20, 2025).

Consumers also encountered storage and display problems in parental affirmations. To some parents, the open-market display of products in the sun raised concerns that could indicate a potential risk to the product, even without any technical proof of spoilage. This is significant since consumers tend to use visual handling procedures as determinants of safety or quality. Parents opted for modern trading points despite higher costs due to safety, cleanliness, or reliability considerations (P2, P5, P6, P9, in Ilisan-Remo, personal communication, January 8, 2026).

Consumer and Outlet Interpretation at Purchase and Consumption Stages

It was found that brand meanings emerge not only during purchase but also during consumption. Consumer perceptions of brands depend on factors such as the ease of use of the packaging, the way the product is delivered to the consumer, and its cleanliness.

Some consumers noted issues with some Chi Limited products aimed at children, such as Hollandia yoghurt packs, after purchase. Some of the packaging had opening difficulties or lacked straws, making them difficult to use in schools or away from home. Consumers viewed these issues as hygiene and usability issues, rather than packaging issues (P2, P5, P6, P9, in Ilisan-Remo, personal communication, Jan 8, 2026). This made some consumers reluctant to purchase that particular product even though they might be using other products from the same company.

Another issue that came up during on-premise observation was decanting. The bar attendant said that juice could be poured into a stylish jar to give customers a more premium experience and to help manage different juice products, such as clearing stock before it expires (Bar attendant, personal communication, January 7, 2026). While this serving style looked better, it meant that customers no longer saw the branded packaging while drinking.

Discussion of Findings

This section explains the findings in terms of Integrated Marketing Communication, retail-mediated communication, packaging and interpretation of cues, and market uncertainty. It indicates that selected Chi Limited products are communicated not only through planned brand activity, but also through retail and market conditions that shape consumer interpretation.

Retail-Mediated Coherence and the Limits of Planned IMC

Marketing Communication between the brand and the consumer is effective when the store environment provides an opportunity for consumers to perceive and recognize the product. At Modern Trade, well-organized shelf placement, product grouping, packaging, and product displays allowed the brand to appear professional and trustworthy. Based on the IMC perspective outlined by Tafesse and Kitchen (2017), the findings suggest that organizational integration should be visible at the point of sale.

This research addressed objective 3: how controllable communication elements interact with channel constraints and how they affect consumer perception. The brand identity control by Chi Limited was limited to packaging, branded merchandising, and product grouping. However, product location, stock availability, handling and serving depended on the channel members. Modern trade generally ensured the transmission of brand identity elements through clear display and prominent packaging. This may not be the case in a disorganized environment, where the product could lose its visibility. The on-premise channel involved pouring the juice into unbranded juice jars; hence, the packaging that would otherwise communicate brand identity was absent.

Butkouskaya et al. (2023) note that perceived consistency is one of the key elements of the omnichannel IMC. Here, consistency was determined by the extent to which retail conditions made the brand consistent, visible, and recognizable. Coherence was based on corporate coordination,

but retail behaviour determined whether it was perceived. Therefore, FMCG communication can be referred to as retail-verified since the intended messages have to remain recognizable in retail and usage environments. Thus, in accordance with the assumption of Kliatchko & Uttamchandani (2024) regarding the interrelation between IMC planning and implementation, the findings suggest that measuring communication coherence includes not only corporate alignment but also retail effectiveness.

Trade Marketing, Retailer Mediation, and Channel Co-Authorship

Not only did various channels sell Chi Limited products, but they also helped shape the brand's image and perception. General Trade was concerned with availability, speed of sales, selling ability, and rapid value delivery for the buyer. Modern Trade created brand visibility through well-organized shelf presentation. The product experience in the on-Premise channel depended on the environment, service presentation, and the product service itself. These differences in the distribution chain suggest that Chi Limited channel actors were engaged in conveying brand meaning, rather than acting as intermediaries between Chi Limited and consumers.

In the case at hand, Ailawadi and Farris (2017) note that channel performance and product availability were important considerations because it was not possible to market a product that could not be made available. In this scenario, availability was an indicator of the product's reliability. In cases where some of the kids' packs, such as Hollandia Yogurt, could not be found, the retailer could recommend competing products, thus offering switching opportunities (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P8, P9, P10). As such, recommendations from retailers played a key role in determining consumer choices and communication objectives of Chi Limited. Equally, the in-store

displays through the Modern Trade were able to raise customer awareness of the products through making them more visible for comparison.

Retail execution could also be viewed as governance of the brand's communication process. Chi Limited had the opportunity to develop its packaging, distribution strategy, promotional activities, and brand visibility level. Nevertheless, retailers were responsible for product placement, availability, recommendation, presentation, and service delivery. According to Thomas et al. (2025), retailers are becoming increasingly involved in governing critical aspects of brands' communication with customers. In physical retail stores, pre-designed brand meaning is more stable when products are available and visible, but becomes unstable when they are substituted, relocated, or branded. Therefore, retailers, along with other actors in the store, are perceived as co-writers of brand experience. By highlighting the areas of communication that become variable due to retailer activity within the three retail environments – General Trade, Modern Trade, and on-premise channels, and demonstrating how retailer-driven practices affect them, this paper fulfils the research objectives concerning controllable elements and communication influencing factors by channel.

Price, Foreign-Exchange Pressure, and Market Uncertainty as Communication Forces

Price worked as a planned communication cue as well as a market constraint. Price could work as an indication of quality in Modern Trade because of the neatness in displays, packaging, and handling. On the other hand, price would create affordability issues in General Trade since there is price comparison based on differences in prices. Thus, depending on the channel through which it operates, price can signal one about quality and another about value.

The foreign exchange rate influenced how the organization would communicate about the pricing changes. According to the key informant, the pricing changes occurred due to the cost of concentrates and packing materials purchased, where sometimes the distributor and other clients were informed about the change in pricing even before it started (Chi Limited salesperson, personal communication, December 20, 2025). The attempt to inform customers in advance to manage how distribution chain actors communicate price changes led to increased shelf pricing. This finding is consistent with Jaworski's assertion concerning the influence of the environment on marketing control. It is also consistent with findings made by Yang et al. (2022).

Market uncertainty was a natural component of the day-to-day retail experience rather than an abstract economic concept. Movements in foreign exchange rates affected prices, while shortages, stock issues, and retailers' decisions determined whether the perceived value provided to the consumer still applied. The definition of price depended on the particular shop, the buyer's context, and other factors surrounding the item. By demonstrating the impact of exchange rate fluctuations and other market conditions on an otherwise controllable communication element, and on perceptions of quality and value, the following analysis addresses research objectives 2 and 3.

Packaging, Shelf Visibility, and Consumption-Stage Cue Conflict

The findings mostly address the first and third objectives by proving the existence of two controllable variables - packaging and shelf placement. Moreover, the findings provide an understanding of how consumers perceived such cues during the purchasing and consumption process. It is also worth mentioning that the discussion relates to the second aim in terms of packaging effects being affected by aspects of retailer-store behaviour that are not under company control. In MT, proper placement and easy-to-see packages helped detect the products and assess

their quality. This supports Underwood & Klein's (2002) claim that packaging is a communication tool rather than mere covering of the product. Besides, parents mentioned that the packaging was still communicating its message after the purchase. For instance, inconvenient packaging and the absence of straws in children's products helped evaluate the convenience, hygiene, and appropriateness of the product for children. In some cases, it was a reason for product or brand switching.

This research illustrates that the interpretation of packaging can vary from the moment of purchase to the moment of consumption. The visibility of packaging increases consumers' awareness of the product in the store, but inconvenient packaging use negatively affects their attitude while using the product. These findings align with the assumption by Drechsel et al. (2025) regarding the influence of emotions and preferences on reactions to food packaging. Moreover, Nordfält and Ahlbom (2024) emphasize the importance of investigating attention and responses in real-life conditions. A similar problem was identified in the on-premise environment, where pouring juice into vivid, unlabelled cups was evaluated positively. Still, the absence of branded packaging led consumers to associate the experience with the establishment's ambiance rather than Chi Limited. Therefore, packaging and shelf presence influenced consumer perception of the brand only when packaging was constant.

DVQ–3P as an Applied Channel Communication Framework

The results achieve all three objectives by applying the DVQ–3P approach. The DVQ–3P consists of six components: Distribution, Visibility, Quality, Promotion, Persuasion, and Price. This technique helped identify the controllable communication elements, the influence of different channels on them, and the role of these components in brand perception. The importance of each

component differed depending on the specific retail environment. For General Trade, the components of Distribution and Price were the most significant since reach, price, turnover, and the influence of a seller had a significant impact on purchase decision-making. For Modern Trade, the components of Visibility and Quality were crucial since organized layout and product positioning contribute to brand recognition and a high-quality image of the products. For on-premise environments, the components of Promotion and Persuasion played an essential role as the atmosphere and customer engagement are the key aspects influencing the experience (Chi Limited salesperson, personal communication, December 20, 2025). In general, DVQ-3P is a flexible approach to communication.

The theoretical framework helps to link the central themes of the study. IMC examines the effectiveness of planned communication initiatives. According to Marketing Control Theory, however, such planned communication efforts may be influenced by economic conditions and uncertainties in the channels.. The Consumer Information Processing and Cue Utilization are concerned with the interpretation of stable and changing cues. Thus, the results reveal that communication in FMCG serves as a cue system influenced by channel characteristics. At the same time, the meaning of the brand relies on coordination between management planning, retailing, and consumption. Hence, evaluating communication effectiveness requires not only analysis of consistency (for example, in advertising or campaigns) but also distribution reliability, shelf visibility, proper pricing, ease of use, store presence, and consumers' ability to recognize the brand during product use. The DVQ-3P concept explains this idea, according to which the meaning of the brand is maximized when cues work collectively and is destabilized due to channel-related problems.

Conclusion

The findings revealed that the marketing communication for select products of Chi Limited was more of a cue-based process of communicating to consumers through various channels rather than organized promotions. Aspects such as distribution, visibility, quality, promotion, persuasion, and price played various roles in creating marketing communication across General Trade, Modern Trade, and on-premise channels. In Modern Trade, organized product displays created brand visibility, and in General Trade, price, accessibility, and seller influence played the main role. In on-premise channels, service improved the consumption experience. Serving product in other containers, however, weakened brand identification. Other factors that influenced consumer perception of the products included foreign exchange problems, stock-out problems, retailer behaviour, and product handling across the channels.

This study is novel in its application of IMC, marketing control, and consumer behaviour theories. The research examines how organizational planning, market uncertainty, channel operation, and consumer message interpretation are linked in the FMCG advertising process. Specifically, the study proposes the notion of retail-verified coherence: the efficiency of marketing communication increases when the retail environment promotes product availability and maintains their visibility, recognition, and branding. If the retail environment interferes with the cues intended for the consumers, marketing messages become less efficient.

The research results in Ilisan-Remo provide case-specific guidelines for FMCG advertising within a Nigerian retail environment. The study implies that future studies on marketing communication will gain a better understanding of IMC in the light of retailing and purchase experience. In particular, companies like Chi Limited, other FMCG enterprises, and channel intermediaries will

benefit from learning the importance of factors such as product availability, shelf visibility, price clarity, user-friendly packaging, retailer support, and brand recognition in communicating with customers. In conclusion, this study finds that the effectiveness of FMCG communication depends not only on organizational planning and message formulation, but also on the information that retail channels retain, modify, or drop when consumers use and encounter the product.

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