

# Marketing Strategies and Sales Performance of Non-Durable Product During and After Covid 19 Pandemic in Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

The study examined marketing strategies for improving sales performance during and after Covid 19 Pandemic of Honey Well Flour Mills Plc as area of study. The objectives of this study are to determine the relationship between intensive distribution strategy and sales performance and also to examine the relationship between convenience distribution and sales performance. Descriptive research method was adopted and was collected through structured questionnaire. The population of the study was one thousand and three hundred and ninety-two (1,392) staffs from Honeywell flours mills plc and 10% of the population was used as the sample size which was one hundred and thirty-nine (139). Simple random and stratified sampling techniques were used to select respondents. Correlation analysis was used to analyse the data collected. Findings revealed that there is positive relationship between intensive distribution strategy and sales performance during and after COVID 19 of Honeywell Flours Mill Plc in Nigeria. Furthermore, the sales performance variables show significant positive relationship with intensive distribution strategy at correlation value of .389. And also the finding revealed that there is significant positive correlation between the convenience distribution strategy and sales performance. The sales performance variables show significant positive relationship with convenience distribution strategy at correlation value of .499. The study recommended that organisation should focus on intensive distribution strategy and convenience distribution strategy because it will help them to increasing their sales performance as they want it to be. Large scale distribution resorts to more sales which in turn boosts revenue.

**Keywords:** Marketing Strategies, Intensive Distribution, Convenience Distribution, Sales Performance

## INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 context has resulted in people having to make new decisions, and even familiar decisions have been subject to increased scarcity and urgency. The current globalization market has made companies to see the internationalization of their activities as a way to remain difficult for firms to recognize and adapt to change when it is drastic, sudden, and externally forced (Carroll, 1984; Hannan & Freeman, 1984; Tripsas&Gavetti, 2000). Some are forced to close down and others to drop their production capacity because of insufficient consumer demand for their products. At the same time, however, certain firms do sustain competitive advantage even during such major environmental changes (Abernathy & Clark, 1985; March, 1981; Tushman & Anderson, 1986). Although there is a large literature concerning general company measures taken in an economic crisis, there are very limited works dealing with the effect of changes in marketing strategies, during economic crisis, on firm sales performance

Marketing strategy has become important tool globally for any organization to remain in competitive market environment and wax stronger. Aremu and Lawal (2012) some decision-making has speed up as people seek

to secure access to things they want to now, or they fear may not be available next week making good decisions is a crucial skill at every level, Peter Drucker.

Others have become harder and slower as people grapple with new ways of buying things or assessing whether now is the right time. In a world where people have to cope with unprecedented uncertainty, a brand that can assist consumers at the exploration stage of their purchasing journey and help them evaluate their options is providing something truly valuable to their customers. For purchasing decisions to be made easy and improvement in sales of non-durable products, there is a need for a marketing strategy.

The marketing of goods and services goes all over the world round the clock. Millions of marketing activities take place every day involving individuals, groups, businesses, and governments. It is difficult for firms to recognize and adapt to change when it is drastic, sudden, and externally forced (Carroll, 1984; Hannan & Freeman, 1984; Tripsas & Gavetti, 2000). Some are forced to close down and others to drop their production capacity because of insufficient consumer demand for their products. At the same time, however, certain firms do sustain competitive advantage even during such major environmental changes (Abernathy & Clark, 1985; March, 1981; Tushman & Anderson, 1986). Although there is a large literature concerning general company measures taken in an economic crisis, there are very limited works dealing with the effect of changes in marketing strategies during economic crisis on sales performance. These activities are parts of the marketing processes, this study will consider honey well flour production company.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

So many organisations have adopted various marketing strategies to improve their sales performance or sales level which in turn leads to profitability, improve customer patronage, retention and satisfaction (Muola, 2017; Jean, 2019; Cross, 2018). Most strategies have been in play before the COVID-19 pandemic e.g. pricing strategy, product modification strategy, promotion strategy and the physical distribution strategy. In as much that we know that goods produced must leave its abode to its appropriate customers, the problem is that, conveyance of goods and services to their appropriate place at the appropriate time and appropriate amount has been limited by the pandemic, the flow of the goods to its proper destination or depot in terms of reduction of force to essence the distribution of the goods, due to the fact that employees are limited in reporting to the factory. Organisations must adopt the best marketing strategy, with the said stated problem, it has become imperative to examine marketing strategies using intensive distribution and convenience distribution for improving sales performance of honey well flour mills plc during and after the COVID-19 to ascertain whether the marketing strategy adopted before the COVID 19 will still provide the same sales performance or otherwise. However so many papers has been written toward marketing strategy using physical distribution strategy but no or little has made use of the intensive and convenience distribution strategy as a proxy to improve sales performance of non-durable products, in presence of this, the paper intend to bridge that gap by investigating the intensive distribution and convenience distribution strategy to improve sales performance during and after Covid-19 since much has not be done especially during this covid 19 pandemic.

## **OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

The broad objective of this study is to examine the marketing strategies for improving sales performance during and after COVID 19 of non-durable product in Nigeria. While other specific objective are to:

1. determine the relationship between intensive distribution strategy and sales performance during and after COVID 19 of non-durable product in Nigeria.

2. examine the relationship between convenience distribution and sales performance during and after COVID 19 of non-durable product in Nigeria.

### Research Hypotheses

**H<sub>01</sub>:** there is no significant relationship between intensive distribution strategy and sales performance during and after COVID 19 of non-durable product in Nigeria.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** there is no significant relationship between convenience distribution and sales performance during and after COVID 19 of non-durable product in Nigeria.

## CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

### Marketing Strategy

Marketing strategy is the fundamental goal of increasing sales and achieving a sustainable competitive advantage (Silva, 2016). Marketing strategy includes all basic, short-term, and long-term activities in the field of marketing that deal with the analysis of the strategic initial situation of a company and the formulation, evaluation and selection of market-oriented strategies and therefore contributing to the goals of the company and its marketing objectives (Gituma, 2017). Marketing strategy allows firms to develop a plan that enables them to offer the right product to the right market with the intention of gaining competitive advantage. A marketing strategy provides an overall vision of how to correctly position products in the market place while accounting for both internal and external constraints (Heiner & Muhlbacher, 2010).

According to Muthengi (2017), marketing strategy is a method of focusing an organization's energies and resources on a course of action which can lead to increased sales and dominance of a targeted market niche. A marketing strategy combines product development, promotion, distribution, pricing, relationship management and other elements; identifies the firm's marketing goals, and explains how they will be achieved, ideally within a stated timeframe. Furthermore, Kasiso (2017) argues that marketing strategy determines the choice of target market segments, positioning, marketing mix, and allocation of resources. It is most effective when it is an integral component of overall firm strategy, defining how the organization will successfully engage customers, prospects, and competitors in the market arena of corporate strategies, corporate missions, and corporate goals. As the customer constitutes the source of a company's revenue, marketing strategy is closely linked with sales. A key component of marketing strategy is often to keep marketing in line with a company's overarching mission statement (Pembi., 2017).

### Convenience Distribution

According to Nagle (1995), distribution strategy is concerned with the channel a firm employs to make its goods and services available to customers. Stern (1997), notes that marketing is defined as an exchange process. In relation to distribution, exchange poses two problems. Firstly, goods must be moved to a central location from the warehouse of producers who make heterogeneous goods and who are geographically widespread. Secondly, the goods that are accumulated from diversified source should represent a desired assortment from the viewing of customers. He stressed further that these two problems can be solved by the process of sorting which combine concentration (that is, bringing the goods from different source to a central location), and dispersion (that is, Picking and assortment of goods from different point of concentration) for an efficient channel network, the manufacturer should clearly define the target customer it intends to reach. Implicit in the definition of target customer is a decision about the scope of distribution the manufacturer wants to pursue.

Stern (1997), pointed further to explain the alternative distribution strategies, they are:

- a) Exclusive Distribution
- b) Intensive Distribution
- c) Selective Distribution

### **Intensive Distribution**

Nagle (1992) notes that the inverse exclusive distribution occurs in this place. The study pointed out that intensive distribution makes product available at all possible retail outlets. This may mean that the products are all possibly carried at a wide variety of different and competing retail institutions in a given area. The study further stated that the advantages gained from this strategy are increased sales, wider customer recognition, and impulse buying. All these qualities are desirable for convenience goods. Stern (1997), pointed to two main disadvantages associated with intensive distribution. Firstly, intensively distributed goods are characteristically low priced and low margin products that require a fast turnover. Secondly, it is difficult to provide any degree of control over a large number of retailers.

Kotler (1995) notes that selective strategy is a strategy in which several but not all retail outlets in a given area distribute products. According to him shopping goods are goods that consumers seek on the basis of the most attractive price or quality characteristics that are frequently in distribution through selective distribution. Because of this, competition among retailers is far greater for shopping goods than for convenience goods.

### **Sales Performance**

As businesses grow more optimistic about opportunities for growth, the pressure is on for sales organizations to meet ever-higher revenue targets. For these reasons, optimizing sales performance in economy calls for a more rigorous and data-driven approach to foundational sales processes, including strategic planning, territory allocation, resource planning and compensation programming. Performance can be defined as the extent of actual work performed by an individual or to what extent the actual work is shown by an individual (Richard, 2009). In an era of intensifying competition and fierce negotiations with buyers, tactical selling approaches simply don't work. The key to sales success is creating value the buyer is not currently considering in their decision making.

Sales performance has been conceptualized to include both the outcome and behavioral dimensions. Sales outcomes have always been seen by performance oriented sales people as evidence to their behavioral performance and consequently a positive relationship has been found to exist between job involvement component of commitment and sales performance. In other words, committed sales people are expected to extend greater efforts on the job there by having a direct effect on job performance (Silva, 2016). Richard (2009) defined performance measures as the vital signs of the organization, which "quantify how well the activities within a process or the outputs of a process achieve a specified goal".

Performance measures help us understand, manage and improve what our organizations do. Effective performance measures can let us know, how well we are doing, if we are meeting our goals, if our customers are satisfied, if our processes are in statistical control, and if and where improvements are necessary Sales volume is the number of units sold within a reporting period (Ajagbe M., Olujobi, Worlu, & Uduimoh, 2015). This figure is monitored by investors to see if a business is expanding or contracting. Within a commercial bank, sales volume may be monitored at the level of the product, product line, customer, subsidiary, or sales region. This information may be used to alter the investments targeted at any of these areas. According to Adekoya (2011), a business may also monitor its break even sales volume,

which is the number of units it must sell in order to earn a profit of zero. The concept is useful when sales are contracting, so that management can determine when it should implement cost reductions. This can be a difficult concept to employ when there are many different products, and especially when each product has a different contribution margin (Iqbal, 2013).

According to Guesh (2010), the sales volume concept can be applied to services. For example, the sales volume of a consulting firm may be considered the total number of hours billed in a month. On the other hand, Soltani and Davanloo (2016) uphold that sales volume equals the quantity of items a business sells during a given period, such as a year or fiscal quarter. Abah and Olohiliye (2015) stress that sales volume indicate the quantity of different stock keeping units sold or the number of customers who have sought for the services offered by a firm in a given time period such a year or a fiscal quarter. Sales volume measurement is a vital part of the performance evaluation of the sales force that is responsible for selling the products of the firm (Abah & Olohiliye, 2015). Generally, sales representatives are incentivized on the basis of their ability to meet their target. Since, a major part of the variable pay component depends on achieving the target, sales volume is an important metric in sales and marketing among commercial banks (Abah & Olohiliye, 2015).

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Consumer Behaviour Theory**

This theory was propounded by Martin Fishbein and Icek Ajzen in 1940-1950s. Consumer theory explains the various reasons a consumer or customer behave in a certain way. Consumers can never be perfectly understood but can only be predicted to some extent, consumers reacts in a certain way according to the level of satisfaction he or she derive from consuming a particular product or services.

### **Hawkins Stern Impulse Buying Theory**

While many of the theories of consumer behavior focus on rational action, Hawkins Stern (1962) believed heavily in the idea of impulse behavior. Stern argued that sudden buying impulses fit alongside rational purchasing decisions to paint a complete picture of the average consumer. Impulse purchases are driven largely by external stimuli and have almost no relationship to traditional decision-making. Impulse buying theories present an ocean of opportunities for marketers. Every aspect of a product, from the way the packaging catches the eye to the way the product is displayed in the store, has an impact on a consumer's impulse control. Marketers who can capture the impulsive thought and close the sale will have the most success.

This paper adopts this theory because its helps organisation to predict and plan towards a way consumer is likely to react or behave. Consumers behave according to the situation of their environment. There are consumers who will only buy online. Others who prefer physical stores and yet others who have ongoing subscriptions for regular purchase. Buying habits can also be impacted by where you live, your age, gender, price, promotion and buying situation. The study therefore support the ideas and concept of consumer behaviour because the theory reflects that consumer will respond to purchasing and a pattern product or services that give maximum satisfaction.

## **Empirical Review**

Mohammad, Kalsom Abd Zainon and Fayeq (2014) examined the influence of green marketing strategy on sales growth of green cars in Jordan. The study analyses the data of 332 car dealers during 2010-2014. The results reveal both positive (green product, green promotion and green process) and negative (green price, green physical evidence, green people, green distribution on sales growth) influence of green marketing

strategy on sales growth. The study further finds that adoption of green marketing strategy may significantly increase the sales volume of green cars. However, the adoption of marketing strategies may decline the sales volume of non-green cars comparing with the green cars.

Jean, Claude & Ngendahayo (2019) examined the effect of Marketing Strategies on Sales Performance of Manufacturing Firms in Uganda with specific focus on Tembo steels Uganda Limited as area of study. The study objectives were to establish the relationship between product development strategy and sales performance, evaluate the relationship between price strategy and sales performance, to determine the relationship between place strategy and sales performance and examine the relationship between promotion strategy and sales performance of Tembo Steels Uganda Limited. A case study design was used for this study. A total of 68 respondents participated. Simple Random, Stratified and Purposive sampling techniques were used to select respondents. Questionnaire and interview guide were used to collect data. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze data and findings presented in tables and figures. Results showed a strong positive impact of sales promotion on sales performance through improving brand awareness, consumer-perceived product quality, enhancing product use, company's brand image, and loyalty. The use of pricing strategy increased sales volume, use of penetration pricing influences customer purchase and value-based pricing has a positive impact on profitability.

Janny and Peter (2020) examined the effect on consumer behaviour in the era of COVID-19 and elaborate on the consequences of this disruption for marketing strategies and marketing policies. The crisis shows similarities with changes in consumer behaviour and the way marketing is carried out during economic downturns. However, it also displays characteristics which differ from down cycles, such as shifts in consumption between categories and the accelerated shift from offline to online behaviour. This is forced by the re-evaluation of life priorities by final consumer.

Michael, Mwenda & sGituma (2017) examined effects of marketing mix on sales performance. The paper evaluates the relationship between price and sales performance. It was also established that majority of the respondents agreed that use of pricing strategy has increased sales volume, price promotion has a significant impact on perceived product quality, use of penetration pricing influences customer purchase and value based pricing has a positive impact on profitability. However respondents disagreed that that price promotion strategies does not affect sales performance and use of price discount influences to a significant reduction in sales performance. As well evaluated relationship between promotion and sales performance. Findings revealed that majority of the respondents agreed that advertising is used to present product and ideas, sales promotions influences sales volume, e-marking has a positive influence on performance, direct marketing increase profit. Findings also revealed that respondents disagreed that Unga Ltd does not use personal selling and publicity to promote products and does not offer price discounts and coupons.

Many authors have used various marketing strategies to examine various strategies that can improve sales performance. Michael (2017); Jean, Claude & Ngendahayo (2019), Those researchers carried out the research before covid 19 pandemic so this paper will examine the marketing strategic that can improve sales performance during and after the pandemic.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The descriptive research design was adopted in this study to establish the existing association between variables under consideration. The design was chosen because it is more effective in examining relationship between the marketing strategies and sales performance

### **Target Population**

The population of this study covers the entire employees working in honey well flour mills plc. The total

numbers of employees in Honeywell flour mills plc is 1,392. (Source: www.honeywellflour.com).

### Sample and Sampling Techniques

Sampling is the process by which inference is made to the whole by examining a part. For the purpose of this study, stratified sampling technique was adopted to draw the sample from the population. From the population, 10% was drawn out as sample size for this study which is one hundred and thirty-nine (139) employees that are capable of given the relevant information as regards marketing strategies and sale performance in the organisation.

These are managing director, purchase department, marketing department, research and development department, production department and account and finance department.

**Table 1 Proportion of the sample selected from each Department.**

Managing Director,	1
Purchase Department,	11
Marketing Department	62
Research and Development Department	12
Production Department	44
Account and Finance Department.	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>139</b>

Source; Author’s compilation, (2021).

### Research Instruments

A well-structured questionnaire was drawn and used to gather information from the Honeywell Flour Mills Plc. However, 5-points rating scale popularly called Likert scale was used with calibration of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (UD), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). Values of 5,4,3,2 and 1 respectively were assigned in a descending order to each calibration in measuring the responses. 144 copies of questionnaire were administered with extra 5 copies and 139 copies were correctly filled, returned and selected for the analysis.

### Research Technique

Descriptive and correlation matrix was used in analyzing the data collected with the aid of a statistical package.

## RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

**Table 1: Descriptive Analyses of the Respondents**

	Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>1</b>	<b>Gender</b>	Male	63	45.3
		Female	76	54.7
		<b>Total</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Age</b>	Below 25 years	10	7.2
		26 – 30 years	24	17.3

	31 – 35 years	33	23.7
	36 years above	72	51.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>3 Educational Qualifications</b>	Certificate	3	2.2
	Diploma	27	19.4
	Degree	66	47.5
	Masters	39	28.1
	Others	4	2.9
	<b>Total</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>4 Length of Service</b>	Less than a year	15	10.8
	2-5 years	31	22.3
	6-10 years	78	56.1
	11 years above	15	10.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>5 Department</b>	Managing Director	5	3.6
	Purchasing	41	29.5
	Marketing	32	23.0
	Research and Development	19	13.7
	Production	17	12.2
	Account and Finance	18	12.9
	Transportation	7	5.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey, (2021)**

Item 1 on the table indicates the gender of the respondents. It shows that 63 (45.3%) respondents were male, while 76 (54.7%) respondents were female. Meaning that the female respondents are more committed to their portion of work in the organisation. Item 2 on the table indicate the age distribution of respondents, it shows that 10 (7.2%) respondents were between below 25 years, 24 (17.3%) respondents were between 26-30 years, 33 (23.7%) respondents were between 31-35 years, and 72 (51.8%) respondents were between 36 above years. The dominance of the respondents within the age group of 36 years above implies that they are matured enough to stay and work for the company and reduce work turnover which would imply seeking for better means of improving sales performance. Item 3 on the table involves the educational status of the respondents, it clearly shows that 3 (2.2%) of the total respondents have certificate, 27 (19.4%) of the total respondents have diploma, 66 (47.5%) respondents have Degree, 39 (28.1%) of the total respondents have Masters while 4 (2.9%) respondents have Ph.d. The interpretation of this is that majority of the respondents acquired degree that the honey well flour mills plc prefer to employ educated employees who understand the importance of marketing strategy in scaling up sales performance. Item 4 on the table involves the length of service of the respondents, it shows that 15 (10.8%) of the total respondents have used less than a year in the organisation, 31 (22.3%) respondents of the total respondents are 2-5 years, 78 (56.1%) of the respondents are 6-10 years while 15 (10.8%) of the total respondents are 11 years above. The interpretation of this is that majority of the respondents have used 6-10 years in the organisation. Item 5 on the table shows the department of the respondents, it indicates that 5 (3.6%) respondents of the total respondents are managing director in the organisation, 41 (29.5%) respondents are in Purchasing, 32 (23.0%) are in Marketing, 19 (13.7%) respondents are in Research and Development, 17 (12.2%) are in Production, 18 (12.9%) respondents are in Accounting and Finance, and 7 (5.0%) respondents are in Transportation. The



interpretation of this is that the distribution was fair and balance.

**Test of Hypotheses**

**Hypothesis One:** there is no significant relationship between intensive distribution strategy and sales performance during and after COVID 19 of non-durable product in Nigeria

**Table 2:** Correlations analysis measuring the relationship between sales performance and intensive distribution strategy.

<b>Correlations</b>			
		Intensive Distribution Strategy	Sales Performance
Intensive Distribution Strategy	Pearson Correlation	1	.399**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	139	139
Sales Performance	Pearson Correlation	.399**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	139	139

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Sources: Field Survey, (2021)*

As reveals in Table 2, the sales performance variables shows significant positive relationship with intensive distribution strategy at correlation value of .389. The variables were statistically significant at 99% confident limits. This implies that there is significant positive correlation between the intensive distribution strategy and sales performance of Honeywell Flour Mills Plc. Null hypothesis is rejected; therefore, this implied that there was statistical evidence to explain that an increase in the adoption of intensive distribution would increases sales performance.

**Hypothesis Two:** there is no significant relationship between convenience distribution strategy and sales performance during and after COVID 19 of non-durable product in Nigeria

**Table 3:** Correlations analysis measuring the relationship between sales performance and convenience distribution strategy.

<b>Correlations</b>			
		Sales Performance	Convenience Distribution Strategy
Sales Performance	Pearson Correlation	1	.499**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	139	139
Convenience Distribution Strategy	Pearson Correlation	.499**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	139	139

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

### **Sources: Field Survey, (2021)**

As reveals in Table 3, the sales performance variables shows significant positive relationship with convenience distribution strategy at correlation value of .499. The variables were statistically significant at 99% confident limits. This implies that there is significant positive correlation between the convenience distribution strategy and sales performance of Honeywell Flour Mills Plc. Null hypothesis is rejected; therefore, this implied that there was statistical evidence to explain that an increase in the adoption of convenience distribution would increase sales performance.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that intensive distribution strategy does have a significant positive impact on sales performance. Therefore, the use of intensive distribution strategy does improve sales performance of the organisation. This method of distribution uses all the possible sources by utilizing different distribution channels so that the customer gets the product at every possible location.

It was concluded that convenience distribution strategy plays a major contribution to sales performance. It is observed that convenience distribution strategy is mainly decided by keeping the top management in loop because it affects overall operation. There is a lot of importance given to making proper distribution strategies for a company. Convenience distribution is when a product reaches the end customer through numerous channels in between easily and this can improve the sales performance of an organisation.

Based on the conclusion and findings, the following recommendations are proclaimed for necessary action: the company should focus on intensive distribution strategy because it will help them to increase their sales performance as they want it to be. Large scale distribution resorts to more sales which in turn boosts revenue. However, intensive distribution may not be perfect strategy for every business but it will be suitable for the company like Honeywell flour mills.

The Honeywell should as a matter of urgency embark on more convenience distribution strategies so as to drive its product and services to the target market and to further improve the organisation sales performance. Implementing convenience distribution is key to obtaining revenue and retaining customer loyalty.

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