# Sales Management Strategies and Business Performance of Telecomunication Firms, a Study of MTN in Southern Senatorial District of Taraba State, Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

This study examined sales management strategies and business performance of telecommunication firms, a study of MTN in Southern Senatorial District of Taraba State, Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study were to; examined the effect of sales force management strategy on sales volumes, effect of product differentiation strategy on number of usage, sale competitive strategy on area of coverage and effect of customer relationship management strategy on accessibility area of MTN in the study area. The study employed a survey research design to generate and collect primary data from employees of MTN Plc in the study area. Sample sizes of 163 respondents were selected for the study and questionnaire administered. The study employed descriptive and inferential analytical techniques such as; frequency distribution, simple percentages, tables, charts and simple linear regressions for the presentation and analysis of the data. The result of the simple regressions revealed that; sales force management strategy has positive and significant effect on sales volumes as 1% increase in sales force management strategy would increase sales volumes of MTN Plc by 95%. Similarly, the study revealed a positive and significant effect of product differentiation strategy on number of usage as 1% increase in product differentiation strategy would increase number of usage of MTN Plc by 87%. In the same vein, the study found a positive and significant effect of sale competitive strategy on area of coverage as 1% increase in sale competitive strategy would increase area of coverage of MTN Plc by 84%. It was further revealed that, customer relationship management strategies has positive and significant effect on area of accessibility as 1% increase in customer relationship management strategies would increase area of accessibility of MTN Plc by 61%. On the bases of these findings, it was recommended that, MTN Plc should continue to invest in training and development as well as motivation of its sale force to enhance the sales team's knowledge, continue to enhance the existing differentiated offerings, introducing new differentiated products and services, and effectively communicating these differentiators to the target audience, deepen market penetration by developing and implementing localized promotional campaigns that resonate with the specific needs and preferences of new customers in the expanded area and priorities personalized service delivery by utilizing customer relationship management data to understand customer preferences and tailor communication and service offerings.

**Keywords**: Sales Management Strategies, Business Performance & Simple Linear Regressions

## INTRODUCTION

The increasing competitiveness of the business environment has made effective sales management strategies essential for achieving sustainable business performance. Across industries, organisations adopt different approaches to managing sales activities, attracting customers, increasing revenue, and maintaining competitive advantage. Sales management has evolved beyond the traditional emphasis on selling products and services to incorporate customer-oriented approaches, sales force development, product differentiation, competitive positioning, and customer relationship management. These strategies enable firms to respond to changing consumer preferences, improve customer satisfaction, and strengthen their market positions. Ingram et al. (2019) emphasised the strategic importance of sales management in achieving organisational objectives, while Wamariu (2021) highlighted the relationship between sales management practices, sales personnel attitudes, and performance. Consequently, effective sales management has become an important consideration for businesses

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seeking to improve sales volumes, market reach, customer engagement, and profitability.

In Nigeria, the telecommunications sector has developed into a highly competitive component of the economy, with major operators including MTN, Airtel, Globacom, and 9mobile competing to attract and retain subscribers. The competitive environment places considerable pressure on operators to improve sales performance, expand network reach, increase service usage, and maintain customer satisfaction. However, telecommunications firms operate amid challenges such as changing market conditions, regulatory requirements, security concerns, and the need for continuous investment in technology and service improvements (Ifidon & Edenkwo, 2024). These challenges make the application of appropriate sales management strategies particularly important. For MTN, effective sales force management may help increase sales volumes through better supervision, motivation, and coordination of sales personnel. Product differentiation may encourage greater usage by offering services that respond to customers' needs, while competitive strategies may support network expansion and stronger market positioning. Customer relationship management may also improve customer engagement and facilitate access to services. The extent to which these strategies translate into measurable business performance, however, requires empirical investigation.

In Taraba State, particularly within the Southern Senatorial District, examining the relationship between sales management strategies and MTN's business performance is important for understanding how sales-related decisions contribute to the company's market outcomes at the local level. Although sales management is widely recognised as a means of improving organisational performance, the effectiveness of individual strategies may vary according to local market conditions, customer preferences, network accessibility, and competitive pressures. Furthermore, evidence from studies conducted in other industries or geographical settings may not adequately explain the specific circumstances of MTN's operations in the study area. The available background literature identifies a need for more location-specific empirical evidence on how sales force management, product differentiation, competitive strategy, and customer relationship management relate to sales volumes, service usage, network coverage, and service accessibility.

Against this background, this study examines the effect of sales management strategies on the business performance of MTN telecommunications in the Southern Senatorial District of Taraba State, Nigeria. Specifically, it evaluates the effect of sales force management strategy on sales volumes; investigates the effect of product differentiation strategy on the level of MTN service usage; determines the effect of competitive strategy on network coverage; and ascertains the effect of customer relationship management strategy on service accessibility. By examining these relationships, the study seeks to provide empirical evidence that can inform sales management decisions, improve customer-oriented service delivery, and strengthen MTN's competitive position in the study area. In view of the above, the study sought to answer the following research questions;

i. To what extent does a sale force management strategy affect sales volumes of MTN telecommunication in Southern Senatorial District of Taraba State?

ii. To what extent does product differentiation strategy affect number of the usage of MTN telecommunication in Southern Senatorial District of Taraba State?

iii. To what extent does sale competitive strategy affect area of coverage network of MTN telecommunication in Southern Senatorial District of Taraba State?

iv. To what extent does customer relationship management strategy affect area of accessibility of MTN telecommunication network in Southern Senatorial District of Taraba State?

## LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### Conceptual Review

### Sales Management Strategies

Sales management strategies refer to the systematic approaches adopted by organisations to plan, organise,

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direct, motivate, and evaluate sales activities to achieve specified business objectives. These strategies encompass decisions relating to sales force recruitment and supervision, performance targets, product positioning, competitive responses, customer engagement, and the allocation of resources to sales operations. Ingram et al. (2019) explain sales management as a managerial function concerned with developing sales strategies, implementing sales programmes, and evaluating sales performance to support organisational goals. In a competitive business environment, sales management extends beyond the immediate process of selling goods and services to building customer relationships, understanding market needs, differentiating organisational offerings, and ensuring that sales personnel operate in line with corporate objectives. Effective sales management strategies therefore provide a framework through which organisations coordinate their sales activities, respond to changing market conditions, and pursue sustainable business performance.

Sales management strategies are particularly important in telecommunications because operators compete not only on the availability of their services but also on network quality, pricing, service accessibility, customer experience, and the attractiveness of their product offerings. Telecommunications companies must continuously adjust their sales approaches to changing consumer preferences, technological developments, and competitive pressures. For MTN in Southern Senatorial District of Taraba State, the relevant strategies in this study are sales force management, product differentiation, competitive strategy, and customer relationship management. These dimensions capture different but complementary ways through which the organisation may influence subscriber acquisition, service usage, network reach, and customer access. Their effectiveness depends on how well they are designed, implemented, monitored, and adapted to local market conditions.

**Sales Force Management Strategy**

Sales force management strategy refers to the processes used by an organisation to recruit, train, motivate, supervise, deploy, and evaluate its sales personnel. Sales representatives often serve as the direct link between a company and its customers; consequently, their knowledge, communication skills, responsiveness, and ability to explain products can influence customer decisions and sales outcomes. Effective sales force management includes setting realistic sales targets, providing appropriate training, establishing clear responsibilities, monitoring performance, and designing incentives that align employees' efforts with organisational objectives. Ingram et al. (2019) emphasise the importance of integrating sales force activities with the broader sales strategy to improve effectiveness and achieve organisational goals. Where sales personnel receive adequate training and support, they may be better positioned to identify potential customers, explain available service plans, address customer enquiries, and encourage subscriptions.

In the context of MTN, sales force management may influence sales volumes through the effectiveness of sales representatives, dealers, agents, and other personnel involved in promoting and distributing telecommunications services. Well-supervised and motivated sales personnel may reach more prospective subscribers, provide accurate information about service packages, and facilitate customer registration and recharge transactions. Conversely, inadequate training, weak supervision, unclear targets, or ineffective incentive systems may reduce sales effectiveness. Sales force management is therefore an important conceptual dimension for assessing how MTN's sales practices relate to sales volumes in Southern Senatorial District of Taraba State.

**Product Differentiation Strategy**

Product differentiation strategy refers to the deliberate effort by an organisation to distinguish its products or services from competing offerings through unique features, quality, pricing options, functionality, accessibility, or customer experience. The strategy seeks to create a perceived difference that encourages customers to prefer one provider over another. In telecommunications, differentiation may involve customised data bundles, voice and internet packages, value-added services, flexible pricing, promotional offers, and improvements in network reliability and service quality. Such differentiation can help a telecommunications operator attract new subscribers, encourage existing customers to use its services more frequently, and strengthen customer loyalty. However, differentiation is most effective when the features offered respond to actual customer needs and provide benefits that customers recognise as valuable.

Empirical evidence from Nigeria supports the relevance of this strategy to telecommunications performance.

ISSN No. 2321-2705 | DOI: 10.51244/IJRSI |Volume XIII Issue XI November 2026

Nseobot et al. (2023), in a study of MTN Nigeria Limited in Uyo, examined product differentiation and organisational performance, while Akingbade (2024) reported that product differentiation was associated with stronger performance among selected Nigerian telecommunications companies. More broadly, Guo and Chen (2024) found that the relationship between digital product differentiation and firm performance depended on the type and extent of differentiation. These findings suggest that differentiation can improve competitiveness, although its effectiveness depends on the value of the offering and the market context.

For MTN in Southern Senatorial District of Taraba State, product differentiation may influence the number or frequency of service usage by providing subscribers with packages that fit their communication needs, spending capacity, and usage patterns. When customers perceive MTN's offerings as useful, affordable, and distinct from competing services, they may increase their use of voice, data, and other available services. Conversely, poorly targeted packages or limited awareness of differentiated offerings may reduce their effectiveness. Product differentiation is therefore conceptually relevant to the study because it provides a possible link between MTN's marketing decisions and customers' use of its telecommunications services.

**Competitive Strategy**

Competitive strategy refers to the long-term approach adopted by an organisation to establish and maintain a favourable position relative to its competitors. It involves identifying the needs of target markets, assessing competitors' strengths and weaknesses, and using organisational resources and capabilities to deliver value more effectively. Competitive strategies may include cost leadership, differentiation, market penetration, service innovation, promotional activities, and expansion into underserved markets. Porter's (1985) framework identifies cost leadership, differentiation, and focus as major generic competitive strategies. In telecommunications, these approaches may be reflected in competitive pricing, attractive service bundles, improved customer experience, distribution-network expansion, and investment in network infrastructure. The effectiveness of a competitive strategy depends on the organisation's ability to align its resources with market opportunities while responding to changes in technology, regulation, and customer expectations.

Recent empirical research demonstrates the relevance of competitive strategy to telecommunications performance. Akingbade (2024) found differences in performance among Nigerian telecommunications firms adopting different organisational strategies, with product differentiation showing a favourable performance association. Abdullahi and Muriuki (2024) also examined business strategies and organisational performance among telecommunications firms in Kenya, highlighting the importance of strategic approaches in a competitive industry. These studies indicate that firms' strategic choices matter, although results from other locations cannot automatically be generalised to MTN's operations in Taraba State.

In the present study, competitive strategy is examined in relation to the area of MTN's network coverage in Southern Senatorial District of Taraba State. Competitive efforts may encourage an operator to expand infrastructure, strengthen distribution channels, improve service availability, and reach communities that are inadequately served. A stronger market presence can potentially increase the geographical area in which customers can access telecommunications services. Nevertheless, network coverage is also determined by infrastructure investment, terrain, electricity supply, regulatory conditions, and technical capacity. Competitive strategy should therefore be understood as one potential influence on network coverage rather than its sole determinant.

**Customer Relationship Management Strategy**

Customer relationship management (CRM) strategy refers to the coordinated practices and systems through which an organisation develops, maintains, and improves its relationships with customers. It involves understanding customer needs, managing customer information, responding to enquiries and complaints, personalising communication, and encouraging continued engagement. CRM may be supported by digital platforms, customer-service centres, feedback systems, customer segmentation, and follow-up activities. Its central purpose is to create lasting customer value rather than treating each transaction as an isolated sale. In telecommunications, effective CRM is particularly important because customers frequently require assistance with subscriptions, data plans, billing, network problems, account management, and service complaints. Timely

ISSN No. 2321-2705 | DOI: 10.51244/IJRSI |Volume XIII Issue XI November 2026

and effective responses can strengthen trust, improve satisfaction, and reduce the likelihood that customers will switch to competing providers.

Recent Nigerian evidence supports the relevance of CRM to telecommunications performance. Orevba (2024), in a study of MTN in Abuja, reported that customer relationship management had a significant relationship with organisational performance. Research on telecommunications firms in Anambra State has also examined CRM practices in relation to customer knowledge, retention, and organisational performance (Mbamalu et al., 2026). These studies reinforce the importance of customer-oriented practices, although their findings should be evaluated in light of their respective research designs and settings.

For MTN in Southern Senatorial District of Taraba State, CRM may influence service accessibility through the quality and availability of customer support, clarity of information about service options, responsiveness to complaints, and effectiveness of channels through which customers obtain assistance. Customers, who can easily obtain information, resolve service problems, and access support may be better able to use MTN's services. However, the concept of accessibility should be operationally defined in the study to distinguish customer-service accessibility from geographical network coverage, affordability, and digital access. This distinction is important because CRM may improve the ease of obtaining assistance without necessarily expanding the physical reach of the network.

**Business Performance**

Business performance refers to the extent to which an organisation achieves its established objectives and uses its resources effectively to generate desired outcomes. It is a multidimensional concept that may include financial outcomes, sales results, market position, operational efficiency, customer satisfaction, and organisational growth. Financial indicators, such as revenue and profitability, measure the economic returns generated by business activities, while non-financial indicators, such as customer retention, service quality, market reach, and customer satisfaction, reflect the organisation's ability to create and sustain value. The appropriate indicators depend on the nature of the organisation and the objectives of the assessment. In the telecommunications industry, business performance is particularly complex because operators must combine revenue generation with service reliability, subscriber growth, network investment, and customer experience.

For this study, business performance is examined through four specific indicators: sales volumes, level of service usage, network coverage, and service accessibility. Sales volume reflects the quantity or volume of services sold or subscriptions generated within a specified period. Service usage concerns the extent to which customers use the operator's available services, such as voice calls and mobile data. Network coverage refers to the geographical areas in which the operator's network is available, while service accessibility concerns the ease with which customers can obtain or use the services offered. These indicators capture different aspects of performance and should not be treated as interchangeable. For example, expanding network coverage may increase the potential customer base, but it does not automatically guarantee higher service usage or sales. Similarly, improved customer support may enhance accessibility and satisfaction without necessarily increasing geographical coverage. Akingbade (2024) and Abdullahi and Muriuki (2024) provide relevant evidence on the relationship between strategic choices and performance in telecommunications, although the present study focuses specifically on MTN in Southern Senatorial District of Taraba State.

**Theoretical Framework**

The study is anchored on the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory of the firm which is a strategic management theory associated with Wernerfelt (1984) and further developed by Barney (1991). A Resource-Based View of the Firm, shifted attention towards the resources controlled by an organisation as potential sources of competitive advantage. Barney (1991), in Firm Resources and Sustained Competitive Advantage, developed this perspective by explaining how differences in firms' resources and capabilities can account for variations in competitive advantage and organisational performance. According to Barney (1991), resources are more likely to generate sustained competitive advantage when they are valuable, rare, imperfectly imitable, and non-substitutable. The theory therefore emphasises that organisational success depends not only on external market conditions but also on how effectively a firm develops, combines, and deploys its internal resources and capabilities.

ISSN No. 2321-2705 | DOI: 10.51244/IJRSI |Volume XIII Issue XI November 2026

The RBV is based on two central assumptions: resource heterogeneity and resource immobility. Resource heterogeneity means that firms possess different combinations of resources and capabilities, while resource immobility suggests that certain resources cannot be transferred or replicated easily across competing firms. From these assumptions, the theory advances several propositions. First, firms with resources and capabilities that create value for customers can achieve superior performance. Second, resources that are uncommon among competitors may provide a competitive advantage. Third, resources that competitors find difficult or costly to imitate can help sustain that advantage. Fourth, resources for which there are no strategically equivalent substitutes are more likely to protect a firm's competitive position. Barney (1991) expresses these conditions through the value, rarity, imperfect imitability, and non-substitutability criteria, commonly referred to as the VRIN framework. The central implication is that possessing resources alone does not guarantee superior performance; firms must deploy them effectively to create value and differentiate themselves from competitors.

The RBV provides a suitable theoretical foundation for examining the relationship between sales management strategies and business performance of MTN in Southern Senatorial District of Taraba State. Under this perspective, sales personnel, customer information, marketing expertise, organisational processes, brand reputation, distribution channels, and customer-service capabilities can be regarded as resources or capabilities that contribute to business performance when deployed effectively. Sales force management represents the organisation's ability to develop and coordinate its human resources through recruitment, training, supervision, motivation, and performance evaluation. Product differentiation reflects its capacity to design and communicate service offerings that customers perceive as valuable. Competitive strategy concerns how the firm deploys its resources to strengthen its market position, while customer relationship management represents its capability to acquire, organise, and use customer information to improve service interactions and maintain customer relationships.

The theory suggests that these strategies can contribute to business performance by enabling MTN to use its organisational capabilities to attract subscribers, encourage service usage, improve its market reach, and make its services more accessible. For instance, a well-trained sales force may increase sales volumes through effective customer engagement; differentiated service packages may encourage greater usage; competitive resource allocation may support network expansion; and effective customer relationship management may improve the ease with which subscribers obtain information and assistance. This application is consistent with research by Panagopoulos and Avlonitis (2010), which found that sales strategy was positively associated with sales force and firm performance, and with Oli and Ibrahim (2024), who applied the RBV to the performance of mobile service providers in Nigeria.

The RBV is relevant because it explains why the effective management of sales-related resources and capabilities may contribute to differences in business performance, even among firms operating in the same telecommunications industry. Although MTN operates in a competitive environment characterized by changing customer expectations and technological developments, its performance may partly depend on how effectively it coordinates its sales personnel, differentiates its services, responds to competitors, and manages customer relationships. The theory provides a logical basis for linking the study's four independent variables—sales force management strategy, product differentiation strategy, competitive strategy, and customer relationship management strategy—to its performance indicators of sales volumes, service usage, network coverage, and service accessibility.

**Empirical Review**

The empirical literature on sales management strategies and business performance has examined various approaches through which organisations improve sales effectiveness, customer relationships, competitive positioning and organisational growth. The studies reviewed in this section are synthesised under four major dimensions: sales force motivation, product and service differentiation, competitive strategies, and customer relationship management. These dimensions provide the empirical foundation for examining the relationship between sales management strategies and the business performance of MTN in Southern Senatorial District of Taraba State, Nigeria.

ISSN No. 2321-2705 | DOI: 10.51244/IJRSI |Volume XIII Issue XI November 2026

**Sales Force Motivation and Business Performance**

Sales force motivation is an important sales management strategy because it influences the commitment, productivity and effectiveness of sales personnel. Amobi (2020) examined sales force management and organisational growth among selected SMEs in Aba, Abia State, Nigeria. Using a descriptive survey design, questionnaire data were obtained from 150 respondents and analysed using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation. The findings revealed positive relationships between sales promotion and organisational performance, sales force training and market share, and sales force motivation and organisational profitability. Similarly, Bakhtiyar and Muhammad (2020), in their study of pharmaceutical companies in Karachi, Pakistan, employed multiple regression analysis on data collected from 200 respondents. Their findings indicated that extrinsic motivational factors significantly influenced sales force motivation and that increased motivation contributed to effective sales performance and organisational goal achievement.

In the Nigerian manufacturing sector, Anucha (2020) investigated the relationship between sales force motivation and marketing performance among selected manufacturing firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. Using a correlational survey design and data from 258 sales personnel, the study employed Spearman Rank Order Correlation for hypothesis testing. The findings established significant relationships between intrinsic motivation and sales growth, intrinsic motivation and market share growth, extrinsic motivation and sales growth, as well as extrinsic motivation and market share growth.

Collectively, these studies indicate that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation can improve sales personnel's performance and contribute to organisational profitability, sales growth and market share. However, the studies were conducted mainly in SMEs, pharmaceutical and manufacturing organisations rather than focusing specifically on telecommunications firms. Therefore, the extent to which sales force motivation influences the business performance of MTN in Southern Senatorial District of Taraba State requires further empirical investigation.

**Product and Service Differentiation Strategies and Business Performance**

Product and service differentiation involves developing distinctive product features, improving service quality and providing unique customer experiences to distinguish an organisation's offerings from those of competitors. Chinyere (2020) examined the effect of product differentiation on the performance of MTN products in Abia State, Nigeria. Using primary data collected through structured questionnaires and descriptive and inferential analytical techniques, the study found that product availability, timely sales, promotions, bonuses, discounts and marketing capabilities influenced the sales performance of MTN product wholesalers and retailers. The findings also identified product quality, unique features, market share, customer satisfaction and consumer preference as important factors associated with product differentiation and sales performance.

Similarly, Musyoka, Arasa and Ombuki (2019) investigated the influence of differentiation strategy on firm performance in the Kenyan telecommunications industry. Using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques, including regression analysis, the study established that differentiation strategy had a positive and significant influence on firm performance. The findings further indicated that innovation, technological leadership, promotional activities, brand image and the range of products and services contributed to firms' competitive positions.

Nseobot et al. (2023) also examined product differentiation strategies and organisational performance using MTN Nigeria Limited, Uyo, as a case study. The study adopted a survey design and collected questionnaire data from 103 respondents selected from a population of 137 staff members. The findings indicated that product quality differentiation was important to organisational performance, while product design differentiation influenced customers' decisions to switch to competing products. In addition, Akingbade (2019), in a study of SMEs in Lagos State, Nigeria, found that organisations adopting service differentiation strategies recorded substantial improvements in business performance and market share compared with those that did not adopt such strategies.

ISSN No. 2321-2705 | DOI: 10.51244/IJRSI |Volume XIII Issue XI November 2026

The reviewed studies generally establish that product and service differentiation can enhance business performance through improved product quality, innovation, customer satisfaction, brand image and competitive positioning. Nevertheless, most of the studies were conducted outside Southern Taraba State, while some focused on SMEs and product distributors rather than the overall business performance of telecommunications firms. This creates the need to examine the contribution of product and service differentiation to MTN's business performance in the study area.

**Competitive Strategies and Business Performance**

Competitive strategies are approaches adopted by organisations to establish and maintain favourable positions within their operating markets. They commonly include cost leadership, differentiation and market focus strategies. In the telecommunications industry, these strategies are relevant because firms compete through pricing, service quality, technological innovation, product availability and customer value.

Musyoka, Arasa and Ombuki (2019) found that differentiation strategy positively and significantly influenced the performance of telecommunications firms in Kenya, particularly through innovation, technological leadership and brand image. Similarly, Mwaniki and Anene (2023) examined competitive strategies and firm performance among six telecommunications companies in Kenya. Using data from 384 employees and quantitative and qualitative analytical approaches, the study established that telecommunications firms adopted differentiation, market focus and cost leadership strategies to strengthen their competitive positions. The findings showed that market focus enabled firms to segment their products according to customers' desired benefits, while differentiation helped distinguish their products and services from those of competitors. Cost leadership was also identified as an approach for controlling costs and expanding market share.

In Zambia, Mutemba and Malama (2024) assessed the effects of competitive strategies on customer satisfaction in the telecommunications industry. The study obtained 223 valid responses from questionnaires distributed among university students and employed correlation and multiple regression analyses. The findings revealed that cost leadership, differentiation and focus strategies had significant positive effects on customer satisfaction. Likewise, Daahir (2021), in a study of telecommunications companies in Mogadishu, Somalia, found significant positive relationships between cost leadership, differentiation, market focus and organisational performance.

These studies suggest that competitive strategies contribute to organisational performance by improving cost efficiency, customer satisfaction, market segmentation, product differentiation and competitive advantage. However, the evidence is largely drawn from telecommunications industries in Kenya, Zambia and Somalia. Consequently, the extent to which these strategies influence MTN's business performance in Southern Senatorial District of Taraba State remains insufficiently examined. Furthermore, the studies' emphasis on customer satisfaction and competitive positioning indicates the need to assess broader business-performance indicators within the Nigerian telecommunications context.

**Customer Relationship Management and Business Performance**

Customer relationship management (CRM) involves the systematic identification, acquisition, development and retention of customers to strengthen organisational relationships and improve business outcomes. It is particularly important in telecommunications because customer satisfaction, service responsiveness, complaint resolution and subscriber retention can influence revenue generation and business performance.

Mazikana (2022) examined customer relationship management in telecommunications organisations in Zimbabwe, focusing on Econet, Telecel and NetOne in Harare. Using a quantitative cross-sectional research design and data from 291 respondents, the study found that CRM involved organisational processes for identifying, acquiring, developing and retaining customers. The findings further indicated that effective CRM could improve customer satisfaction, profitability and the achievement of organisational objectives. Similarly, Akinade (2023) investigated customer relationship marketing capabilities and organisational performance using Airtel Telecommunications Company in South-Western Nigeria. The study employed logistic regression analysis and found that maintaining good customer relationships contributed to improved profitability and competitive advantage.

ISSN No. 2321-2705 | DOI: 10.51244/IJRSI |Volume XIII Issue XI November 2026

In the Nigerian mobile telecommunications industry, Mohammed, Barde and Gbande (2022) examined the effect of CRM on customer retention and customer loyalty among MTN, Glo, Airtel and 9Mobile subscribers in Abuja. Using questionnaire data from 400 respondents and ordinal regression analysis, the study found that CRM had a positive and significant effect on customer retention, although its positive effect on customer loyalty was statistically insignificant. This suggests that effective customer relationship practices may contribute more directly to retaining existing subscribers than to guaranteeing their loyalty.

Furthermore, Viriri, Chufama and Mupeti (2021) investigated the impact of CRM on firm performance in the Zimbabwean telecommunications sector. Using a case study design, structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews involving subscribers, employees and management, the study established a positive relationship between CRM implementation and firm performance. However, the researchers identified implementation challenges, including inadequate critical resources and demotivated personnel, which could constrain the effectiveness of customer relationship management.

Generally, the findings indicate that customer relationship management contributes to business performance through customer retention, satisfaction, profitability and competitive advantage. However, the studies also suggest that effective CRM implementation depends on adequate organisational resources and employee commitment. Although some studies examined Nigerian telecommunications companies, their geographical coverage was concentrated in Abuja and South-Western Nigeria. Therefore, further investigation is required to establish how customer relationship management influences MTN's business performance in Southern Senatorial District of Taraba State.

**Gap in Literature**

The reviewed empirical studies generally establish that sales force motivation, product and service differentiation, competitive strategies and customer relationship management are relevant to organisational and business performance. However, some studies focused on SMEs, pharmaceutical companies and manufacturing firms rather than telecommunications organisations. Other studies investigated telecommunications firms in Kenya, Zambia, Somalia and Zimbabwe, while the Nigerian studies were concentrated in locations such as Abia State, Uyo, Abuja and Lagos. Consequently, there is limited geographical and contextual evidence on the relationship between sales management strategies and business performance in MTN's operations in Southern Senatorial District of Taraba State. In addition, the reviewed studies employed different performance measures, including profitability, market share, sales growth, customer satisfaction and customer retention. The present study therefore seeks to address these gaps by examining the effects of sales force motivation, product and service differentiation, competitive strategies and customer relationship management on the business performance of MTN in Southern Senatorial District of Taraba State, Nigeria.

# METHODOLOGY

The research design adopted for this study was survey design. This method was chosen because of its capability of obtaining data from large samples of the population. The target population for the study consists of the total number of employees of MTN telecommunication in Southern Senatorial Districts of Taraba State Nigeria. Based on reconnaissance survey, total number of MTN employees in Southern Senatorial Districts of Taraba State is 281 made up of 63 in Wukari, 59 in Takum, 53 in Donga, 49 in Ibbi and 57 in Ussa local government areas Hence, the population of the study is 281 employees of the MTN in Southern Senatorial Districts of Taraba State Nigeria. The study employed the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) procedure to determine 163 as the sample size of the study. The study employed both stratified and random sampling technique so as to ensure that every elements of the population have equal chance of being selected in the sample. Data were collected through administering of structured questionnaire with five Likert scale (L-S) system to generate data and a mean benchmark for the establishment of acceptance and rejection of self-reported instrument to the respondents. The instrument sought to obtain data on respondents' demographic characteristics and evaluate the respondents' opinion on sales management strategies and the business performance of MTN telecommunications in the Southern Senatorial District of Taraba State, Nigeria. To establish the reliability of the instrument in the study, the Cronbach Alpha method was adopted. This was conducted according to recommended threshold of 0.7 (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1993). Therefore, the instrument was considered acceptable and highly reliable for use if

ISSN No. 2321-2705 | DOI: 10.51244/IJRSI |Volume XIII Issue XI November 2026

the above condition is fulfilled. The result of the Cronbach Alpha is presented in Table 3.1 as thus;

Table 3.1: Reliability Test Results

| **Variables** | **Cronbach's Alpha** |
|---|---|
| Sales Volume (SVL) | 0.956 |
| Number of Usage (NUS) | 0.953 |
| Area of Coverage (ACG) | 0.966 |
| Accessibility Area (ACA) | 0.987 |
| Sale Force Management Strategies (SFMS) | 0.954 |
| Product Differentiation Strategies (PDS) | 0.833 |
| Sales Competitive Strategies (SCS) | 0.927 |
| Customer Relationship Management Strategies (CRMS) | 0.964 |
| Average Reliability | 0.943 |

**Source: Researcher's Computation from SPSS Output, 2025.**

The rule of thumb for Cronbach's Alpha reliability statistical test is that; an instrument should be high (above 0.7) or at least marginally acceptable (above 0.5), when selecting an instrument. (Nunnally, 1994). Table 3.1 indicated that, data collected for all variables of the study demonstrated high reliability

The study utilised a factorial specification design to establish if any, cause and effect relationship existing between criterions sales volumes (SVL), number of usage (NUS), area of coverage (ACG) as well as accessibility area (ACA) of telecommunication MTN in Taraba state and their respective predictors such as; sales force management strategies (SFMS), product differentiation strategies (PDS), sales competitive strategies (SCS) and customer relationship management strategies (CRMS). This relationship is established in functional form as follows:

SVL= f(SFMS,)…….……...….....(1)

NUS=f(PDS)……..……..……(2)

ACG =f( SCS)……..……..…..(3)

ACA =(CRMS)…….……...(4)

The model is restated in stochastic form for estimation as thus;

$$SVL_t = \beta_0 + \sum_{i=1}^{n} \beta_1 SFMS + e \ldots\ldots\ldots\

ISSN No. 2321-2705 | DOI: 10.51244/IJRSI |Volume XIII Issue XI November 2026

$$ACG_t = \lambda_0 + \sum_{i=1}^{n} \lambda_1 FDS + \in \ldots\ldots\ldots\

ISSN No. 2321-2705 | DOI: 10.51244/IJRSI |Volume XIII Issue XI November 2026

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | SFMS | .948 | .023 | .955 | 40.646 | .000 |
| | Adjusted R Square ($R^2$) | | 0.911 | | | |
| | F-statistic | 1,652.083 | Degrees of freedom | | 1, 161 | .000 |
| a. Dependent Variable: SVL | | | | | | |

**Source: Author's Computation using SPSS Version 20 (2025)**

The estimated simple linear regressions for model1 revealed that, sales force management strategy (SFMS) has positive effect on sales volumes (SVL) of MTN telecommunication in Taraba State. This further implies that, 1-unit increase in sales force management strategy would increase sales volumes of MTN telecommunication in Taraba State by 0.95 unit. The effect is statistically significant because the associated P-Value (0.000) is less than 0.05 level of significance. This was supported by a calculated t-statistic of 40.646 which is larger than the critical t-statistic of 1.96. The result indicated the rejection of the null hypothesis which states that Sales force management strategy has no significant effect on sales volumes of MTN telecommunication in Taraba State. This implies that the company's sales performance is strongly influenced by how effectively its sales force is managed. Specifically, it suggests that MTN's strategies for motivating, training, compensating, and organizing its sales team are directly contributing to increased sales of the company in Taraba State, Nigeria. the result corroborate with Amobi (2020), Bakhtiyar and Muhammad (2020) as well as Anucha (2020) who found that, there was a positive impact of sales forces motivation on organizational profitability that increased level of , sale force training, motivation of sales force as well as extrinsic motivation results in effective sales performance that leads towards effective process of organizational goals establishment.

The coefficient of determination $R^2$ of 0.911 indicates that sales force motivation strategies (SFMS) explain approximately 91.1% of the variation in sales volume **(SVL)**. The remaining 8.9% is attributable to other factors not captured in the model. Furthermore, the F-statistic of 1,652.083, with degrees of freedom (1, 161), is statistically significant at the 1% level ($p < .001$). This demonstrates that the regression model provides a statistically significant explanation of variations in sales volume

**$H_{O2}$** Product differentiation strategy has no significant effect on number of usage of MTN telecommunication in Taraba state. The simple linear regression coefficients that indicated the result of this hypothesis is presented in table 2.

Table 2: Simple Linear Regression Coefficients for Hypothesis Two

| **Model** | | **Unstandardized Coefficients** | | **Standardized Coefficients** | **T** | **Sig.** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| 1 | (Constant) | -.511 | .773 | | -.661 | .509 |
| | PDS | .867 | .045 | .837 | 19.383 | .000 |
| | Adjusted R Square ($R^2$) | | .698 | | | |
| | F-statistic | 375.710 | Degrees of freedom | | 1.161 | .000 |
| a. Dependent Variable: NUS | | | | | | |

**Source: Author's Computation using SPSS Version 20 (2025)**

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The estimated simple linear regressions for model 2 revealed that, Product differentiation strategy (PDS) has positive effect on number of usage (NUS) of MTN telecommunication in Taraba State. This further implies that, 1-unit increase in Product differentiation strategy (PDS) would increase number of usage (NUS) of MTN telecommunication in Taraba State by 0.87- unit. The effect is statistically significant because the associated P-Value (0.000) is less than 0.05 level of significance. This was supported by a calculated t-statistic of 19.383 which is larger than the critical t-statistic of 1.96. The result indicated the rejection of the null hypothesis which states that Product differentiation strategy has no significant effect on number of usage of MTN telecommunication in Taraba state. This implies that MTN's efforts to make their products and services stand out from competitors are successful in attracting and retaining customers. Essentially, if MTN differentiates itself effectively, more people will choose and use their services, leading to a larger customer base in Taraba State Nigeria. The result agreed with similar findings by Musyoka, et al. (2019) who revealed positive and significant influence of product differentiation strategy on firm performance in telecommunication industry in Kenya. It is also in line with Nseobot et al. (2023) who revealed that, product quality differentiation is a key element of a successful business. Hence, Product design differentiation plays a central role in the decision to switch to competitors in Nigeria. It also corroborates with study by Akingbade (2019) who found that, SMEs that used product differentiation strategy recorded substantial progress, while those that did not had low performance and market share sales.

The coefficient of determination $R^2$ of 0.698 indicates that Product differentiation strategy (PDS) explain approximately 70% of the variation in number of usage of MTN telecommunication in Taraba state. The remaining 30% is attributable to other factors not captured in the model. Furthermore, the F-statistic of 375.710, with degrees of freedom (1, 161), is statistically significant at the 1% level ($p < .001$). This demonstrates that the regression model provides a statistically significant explanation of variations in number of usage of MTN telecommunication in Taraba state.

**$H_{O3}$:** Sale competitive strategy has no significant effect on area of coverage of MTN telecommunication network in Taraba state. The simple linear regression coefficients that indicated the result of this hypothesis is presented in table 3.

Table 3: Simple Linear Regression Coefficients for Hypothesis Three

| **Model** | | **Unstandardized Coefficients** | | **Standardized Coefficients** | **T** | **Sig.** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| 1 | (Constant) | .881 | .835 | | 1.055 | .293 |
| | SCS | .839 | .045 | .827 | 18.638 | .000 |
| | Adjusted R Square ($R^2$) | | .681 | | | |
| | **F-statistic** | 347.370 | **Degrees of freedom** | | 1, 161 | .000 |
| a. Dependent Variable: ACG | | | | | | |

**Source: Author's Computation using SPSS Version 20 (2025)**

The estimated simple linear regressions for model 3 revealed that, Sale competitive strategy (SCS) has positive effect on area of coverage (ACG) of MTN telecommunication in Taraba State. This further implies that, 1-unit increase in Sale competitive strategy (SCS) would increase area of coverage (ACG) of MTN telecommunication in Taraba State by 0.84-unit. The effect is statistically significant because the associated P-Value (0.000) is less than 0.05 level of significance. This was supported by a calculated t-statistic of 18.638 which is larger than the critical t-statistic of 1.96. The result indicated the rejection of the null hypothesis which states that Sale

ISSN No. 2321-2705 | DOI: 10.51244/IJRSI |Volume XIII Issue XI November 2026

competitive strategy has no significant effect on area of coverage of MTN telecommunication network in Taraba state. This implies that implementing effective sales strategies is directly linked to an increase in the geographical reach of MTN's network. In simpler terms, when MTN uses strategies like promotions, pricing adjustments, or targeted campaigns to boost sales, it also results in the expansion of their network coverage area in Taraba State, Nigeria. The result is aligned with studies by Mutemba and Malama (2024) who reveal a significant positive relationship between competitive strategies and customer satisfaction and organizational performance of telecommunication companies in Zambia, Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja, Mogadishu-Somalia and Port Harcourt, Nigeria respectively.

The coefficient of determination $R^2$ of 0.681 indicates that sale competitive strategy (SCS) explain approximately 70% of the variation in area of coverage of MTN telecommunication network in Taraba state. The remaining 30% is attributable to other factors not captured in the model. Furthermore, the F-statistic of347.370, with degrees of freedom (1, 161), is statistically significant at the 1% level ($p < .001$). This demonstrates that the regression model provides a statistically significant explanation of variations in area of coverage of MTN telecommunication network in Taraba state.

**$H_{O4}$:** Customer relationship management strategies have no significant effect on area of accessibility of MTN telecommunication network in Taraba state. The simple linear regression coefficients that indicated the result of this hypothesis is presented in table 4.

Table 4: Simple Linear Regression Coefficients for Hypothesis Four

| **Model** | | **Unstandardized Coefficients** | | **Standardized Coefficients** | **T** | **Sig.** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| 1 | (Constant) | 6.666 | 1.445 | | 4.612 | .000 |
| | CRMS | .608 | .076 | .534 | 8.015 | .000 |
| | Adjusted R Square ($R^2$) | | .581 | | | |
| | **F-statistic** | 64.236 | **Degrees of freedom** | | 1, 161 | .000 |
| a. Dependent Variable: ACA | | | | | | |

**Source: Author's Computation using SPSS Version 20 (2025)**

The estimated simple linear regressions for model 4 revealed that, Customer relationship management strategies (CRMS) has positive effect on area of accessibility (ACA) of MTN telecommunication in Taraba State. This further implies that, 1-unit increase in Customer relationship management strategies (CRMS) would increase area of accessibility (ACA) of MTN telecommunication in Taraba State by 0.61-unit. The effect is statistically significant because the associated P-Value (0.000) is less than 0.05 level of significance. This was supported by a calculated t-statistic of 8.015 which is larger than the critical t-statistic of 1.96. The result indicated the rejection of the null hypothesis which states that Customer relationship management strategies have no significant effect on area of accessibility of MTN telecommunication network in Taraba state. This implies that, implementing effective CRM practices enhances the company's ability to reach and serve customers in various locations and through different channels. This suggests that CRM strategies are contributing to improved customer service, wider network coverage, and easier access to MTN's products and services. The result is in agreement with similar studies conducted in relation with the effect customer relationship management strategy on accessibility area of telecommunication in different geographical locations. For instance, the result is aligned with a study conducted by Akinade (2023) whose findings revealed that, good relationship with their customers help the organizations to enhance their profitability and get the competitive advantage in the market place of Airtel Telecommunication Company in the South-Western part of Nigeria. Similarly, the result agrees with Mohammed

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et al. (2022) whose study found that customer relationship management has a positive and significant effect on customer retention. In the same vein, the result is in support of finding obtained by Viriri, Chufama and Mupeti (2021) who revealed that, there is a positive relationship between CRM implementation and firm performance in Zimbabwe mobile telecom industry

The coefficient of determination $R^2$ of 0.581 indicates that Customer relationship management strategies explain approximately 58% of the variation in area of accessibility of MTN telecommunication network in Taraba state. The remaining 42% is attributable to other factors not captured in the model. Furthermore, the F-statistic of 64.236, with degrees of freedom (1, 161), is statistically significant at the 1% level ($p < .001$). This demonstrates that the regression model provides a statistically significant explanation of variations in area of accessibility of MTN telecommunication network in Taraba state.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the study concludes that, sales force management strategy has positive and significant effect on sales volumes of MTN telecommunication, an indication that, the company's sales performance is strongly influenced by how effectively its sales force is managed in Taraba State, Nigeria. In the same vein, it is concluded that, product differentiation strategy has positive and significant effect on number of usage of MTN telecommunication, an indication that, MTN's efforts to make their products and services stand out from competitors are successful in attracting and retaining customers in Taraba State, Nigeria. Also, the study concludes that, sale competitive strategy has positive and significant effect on area of coverage of MTN telecommunication, an indication that, effective sales strategies is directly linked to an increase in the geographical reach of MTN's network in Taraba State, Nigeria. The study further concludes that, customer relationship management strategies has positive and significant effect on area of accessibility of MTN telecommunication, an indication that, customer relationship management strategies are contributing to improved customer service, wider network coverage, and easier access to MTN's products and services in Taraba State.

Based on the findings and the conclusions drawn from the study, this study suggests the following recommendations;

1. MTN Plc should continue to invest in training and development as well as motivation of its sale force to enhance the sales team's knowledge of MTN's products/services, target market, and competitive landscape.

2. MTN Plc should also continue to enhance the existing differentiated offerings, introducing new differentiated products and services, and effectively communicating these differentiators to the target audience.

3. MTN Plc should continue to deepen market penetration by developing and implementing localized promotional campaigns that resonate with the specific needs and preferences of new customers in the expanded area. These campaigns could include introductory offers, discounts on data bundles, or free trial periods for new services.

4. MTN Plc should priorities personalized service delivery by utilizing customer relationship management data to understand customer preferences and tailor communication and service offerings. This could include personalized promotions, targeted information about network coverage in specific areas, and customized service packages.

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