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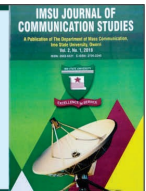
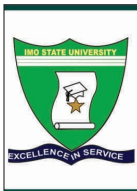
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## CONSUMERS' POST-PURCHASE DISSONANCE REINFORCEMENT STRATEGIES IN SIMS NIGERIA LIMITED

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### Abstract

This study examined post-purchase dissonance reinforcement strategies in SIMS Nigeria Limited. The objectives of the study were among others: to assess the awareness and kinds of post-purchase dissonance in consumers of SIMS Nigeria Limited. Theoretical framework of the study was drawn from the cognitive dissonance theory. The research design employed for this study was the sequential explanatory mixed methods research design. A census of twenty-six staff from SIMS Nigeria Limited advertising/marketing department was studied, interview guide and closed-ended questionnaire were used as instruments for data collection. E-mail interview was also conducted on three key costumers of SIMS Nigeria Limited which was analysed qualitatively. Quantitative data analysis was employed, data collected were presented in tabular form and analysed using simple percentage and weighted mean score. Findings revealed that consumers were fully aware of post-purchase dissonance which they referred to as customer's remorse usually exists in the consumers' mind after buying a product or service. The study concluded that SIMS Nigeria Limited uses dissonance reinforcement strategies to help consumers seek relief from doubts after the purchase by supplying them positive information about the product. The study recommended that suggestion boxes should be placed in significant position in the company to help in consumer problem identification. This would help consumer's right to be duly observed to avoid failure, which includes right to satisfy, to be informed, to choose and to be heard.

**Keywords:** Consumers, post-purchase dissonance, reinforcement strategies, advertising, SIMS Nigeria Limited

### Introduction

Advertising is one of the key elements in marketing communication mix. It is a major factor in the promotional aspect of marketing. Advertising messages are often carefully crafted to appeal to specific desires and values of the target audience. The messages usually appeal to the need for fun, mental stimulation, curiosity, social acceptance (esteem) and help consumers to reinforce purchase decision. In order to create awareness of a given product, secure patronage by a wide range of consumers and overcome a state of imbalance that sometimes accompanies purchase behaviour, advertising becomes an inevitable tool (Emetumah et al., 2022). Advertising remains the most penetrating vehicle for all the marketers to communicate with the target markets or groups of prospects. Bovee and Arens (1994) see advertising as "the non-personal communication of information usually paid for and usually persuasive in nature about products (goods and services), or ideas by identified sponsors through various media" (p.7). The use of mass media such as radio, television, newspapers, magazines, books, films, billboards, flyers, leaflets, direct mails and posters has made advertising a non-personal medium of communication. Today, new media such as Internet and GSM have added to the number with their unique feature of immediate feedback.

The history of advertising dates back in time. It is an existing dynamic and challenging enterprise with its pervasive and fascinating objectives, which include informing the target audience of the availability of the products and to create or stimulate demand for the product or service (Okon, 2006). Thus, it creates the environment in which the manufacturers can afford to set up large plans in the knowledge that mass media exist for contacting potential customers. However, dissonance or discomfort occurs when a consumer holds conflicting thoughts about a belief or an attitude towards an object/a product. When this happens after purchase, it is called post-purchase dissonance.

In the same vein, post-purchase dissonance leaves consumers with an uneasy feeling about their previous beliefs or actions, a feeling that consumers tend to resolve by changing their attitude to suit their behaviour. Post-purchase behaviour has to do with consumers seeking reassurance that the choice made was the correct one. What the consumer learns from his/her buying process has an influence on how he/she will behave the next time the same need arises. Hence, new opinions and beliefs are formed and old ones revised. But when one has doubts about his/her choice after the purchase, what he/she experiences is post-purchase dissonance or a state of anxiety brought by the difficulty of choosing from several alternatives (Brehn & Wicklund, 2006).

Unfortunately for advertisers, dissonance is quite common; if the anxiety is not relieved, the consumer may be unhappy with a chosen product. It therefore, implies that the advertisers have a sole responsibility of reducing consumer dissonance, as regards to their product to enhance repeated purchase. Post-purchase cognitive dissonance occurs when each of the alternatives seriously considered by the consumers have both alternative and unattractive features. Consumers reduce post purchase anxieties, by avoiding information that is likely to increase the dissonance, seek information that supports their decisions, such as reassurance from friends and advertisements (Harmon & Milis, 1999). Hence, advertising becomes an effective medium for post-purchase dissonance reduction strategies by an identified individual or organization.

SIMS Nigeria limited specializes in the distribution and sale of electronic products from major brands such as Samsung, Royal, Parsun and Powermatic. The business started in 1987, and has succeeded in carving a niche in the home appliances market in Nigeria. The company operates a number of branches that cut across most of Nigeria's geopolitical zones; in major cities such as Lagos, Port Harcourt, Onitsha, Enugu, Kano and Abuja. Their longstanding reputation has earned them a status as Nigeria's lead player in the electronics industry. And as a result, the company decided to go further by partnering with Samsung to establish a local manufacturing line for its air conditioners and refrigerators in 2004. SIMS Nigeria Limited is a prominent client of Nigeria media houses, devoting a substantial portion of its revenue to engage in promotions and advertisements in both electronic and print media. Advertising is an integral aspect of its sales and marketing strategy. Thus, their products advertised through Nigeria-focused newspapers, magazines, outdoor advertising platforms, such as billboards mounted in strategic locations across the country, television and radio stations.

Conversely, since dissonance is a tension state, individuals adopt various strategies in order to reduce its effects. According to the theory of cognitive dissonance, dissonance is greater when the purchase involves a large capital outlay and the greater the dissonance, the stronger the dissonance reduction attempts (Williams, 2005). Hence, the purchase of SIMS Nigeria Limited products involves a substantial capital outlay. Whilst the relationship between post-purchase decisions and the adoption of the dissonance reinforcement strategies will be evaluated, the assessment will also critically look at consumer's decision which is characterized by conscious planning especially when durable products are purchased and when the purchase is important as it requires a large capital outlay. In an environment of endless choices advertisers have realized that it is easier to keep existing customers than to attract new ones. It is against this experience, advertisers need to understand the consumers after the purchase because it is important to note that post-purchase response will depend on the type of consumer decision. This work thus, aims to synthesize the delicate relationships between post-purchase evaluation and

response after the purchase of SIMS Nigeria Limited products. Therefore, the study is set to evaluate post purchase dissonance reinforcement strategies in SIMS Nigeria Limited, in order to know how the company maintains its competitive advantage, reduces consumers' doubt or worry after purchase.

### **Statement of the problem**

Post-purchase dissonance, commonly referred to as “buyers’ remorse” is the feeling that results from holding two conflicting beliefs and it applies to a franchised outlet setting like SIMS Nigeria Limited. As soon as a consumer purchases a product, they seek consistency between beliefs and perceptions, and a pronounced feeling of discomfort occurs when this is compromised. When such a discrepancy occurs, something (reinforcement) must be employed to eliminate or at least reduce the dissonance. Often times, this translates to avoiding situations that are likely to cause dissonance. Post-purchase dissonance happens when a consumer’s decision does not align with his/her prior evaluation and it is unpleasant for brands because it generally means the end of the relationship they have worked to build through advertising.

Consumers even before opening the package or use the product, may experience doubt or worry about the wisdom of the purchase. Also, many consumers continue to read information even after purchase to justify the decision to themselves. In today’s competitive ecommerce market, it is more important than ever to actively mitigate post-purchase dissonance and keep consumers coming back happy. Dissonance reinforcement can help a consumer overcome such post purchase dissonance which is a state of psychological imbalance that sometimes accompanies purchase behaviour. It becomes peremptory to study consumers’ post-purchase dissonance reinforcement strategies in SIMS Nigeria Limited to help consumers reinforce purchase behaviour or reduce post-purchase dissonance. Therefore, this study sets to examine the consumers’ post-purchase dissonance reinforcement strategies in SIMS Nigeria Limited.

### **Objectives of the study**

This study was guided by the following objectives:

1. Assess the awareness of post-purchase dissonance in consumers of SIMS Nigeria Limited,
2. Examine the ways, SIMS Nigeria Limited help consumers reinforce post-purchase dissonance,
3. Ascertain if there are elements of persuasive advertising as a reinforcement strategy in SIMS Nigeria Limited, and
4. Identify different incentives SIMS Nigeria Limited used as dissonance reinforcement in consumers.

### **Conceptual Review**

#### **Concept of advertising**

According to Moriarty et al. (2009), advertising is seen as a paid form of persuasive communication that uses mass media, to reach broad audiences in order to connect an identified sponsor with buyers (the target audience). Okon (2016) describes advertising as an identified sponsor’s paid sales message about a product, a service or an idea delivered in a communication medium, such as newspaper or television to an audience which is representative of a market for the offering. In so far therefore, advertising can be epitomized as any persuasive communication by an identified sponsor through the media, aimed at selling an idea, product or service to a target audience. Advertising is a paid form of non-personal presentation or promotion of ideas, goods or services by an identified sponsor with a view to disseminating information concerning an idea, product or service (Puranik, 2011).

### **Advertising facilitate consumer's choice, reinforcing attitudes and values**

Advertising has been noted to facilitate consumer's choice in two ways. Firstly, it motivates competition by providing consumers with more alternatives and secondly, it stimulates people about those alternatives. Buttle (2012) opines that, without advertising "you would not hear about any new products and there would be less competition. So you would have just the one product not having a huge choice, because you have not really heard of things" (p. 169). In this sense, advertising is a catalyst to choice because even one advertisement can make a difference. Scholars have also related the idea of choice to convenience in that without advertising, more time would have to be spent in the supermarket to decide on what to buy. Crossier (2010) suggests that, "advertising can be used as an implied warranty in that a company, which advertises its brands, is seen to stand behind them" (p. 160).

### **Cognitive dissonance as a motivating state: tension**

To understand cognitive dissonance as a motivating state, it is necessary to have a clearer conception of the conditions that produce it. Cognitive elements are said to be dissonant when one implies the obverse of the other. According to Wicklund and Brehm (2009), Festinger maintains, "the simultaneous existence of cognitions that in one way or another do not 'fit together' (dissonance) leads to effort on the part of the person, to somehow make them fit better (dissonance reduction)" (p.253). This led to the conceptualization of cognitive dissonance as a functionally motivational state. Festinger (2003) points out that, dissonance functions like a drive, need, or tension. Its presence leads to action to reduce it, just as the presence of hunger leads to behaviour aimed at reducing the hunger.

### **Dissonance reduction strategies**

The dissonance reduction strategies that may be adopted in attempts to reduce a tension state have been conceptualised in the following manner. People may reduce cognitive dissonance by changing their attitudes to make them consonant with behaviour. According to Gilovich (2013), behaving contrary to your attitudes causes dissonance, which can be reduced by changing your attitude to make it consistent with the behaviour. There are three bases for attitude change: compliance, identification and internalization. These three factors represent the different levels of attitude change. Compliance: refers to a change in behaviour based on consequences, such as an individual's hopes to gain rewards or avoid punishment from another group or person. The basis for compliance is founded on the fundamental ideal that people want to be accurate and right. Identification: explains one's change of beliefs and affect in order to be similar to someone one admires or likes. In this case, the individual adopts the new attitude, not due to the specific content of the new attitude object, but because it is associated with the desired relationship. Internalization: refers to the change in beliefs and affect when one finds the content of attitude to be intrinsically rewarding, and thus leads to actual change in beliefs or evaluation of an attitude object. The new attitude or behaviour is consistent with the individual's value system, and tends to be merged with the individual's existing values and beliefs (Kolman, 1938 cited in Wikipedia, 2015).

According to Arens et al. (2011), successfully advertising department understands the complexity of consumer behaviour which is governed by three personal processes: perception, learning and persuasion, and motivation. These processes determine how consumers see the world around them, how they learn information and habits, and how they actualize their personal needs and motives, two sets of influences also affect consumer behaviour: interpersonal influences (the consumer's family, society, and culture) and non-personal influences (time, place, and environment). These factors combine to determine how the consumer behaves, and their influence differs considerably from one country to another. Advertisers evaluate the effect of these factors on groups of consumers to determine how best to create their messages. Arens, et al (2011) state further that once customers or prospects are motivated to satisfy their needs and wants, the purchase process begins. Based on certain standards they have established in their own minds, they evaluate various alternative products (the evoked set). If none of the alternatives meet their evaluative criteria, they may reject or postpone the purchase if they do buy, they may

experience cognitive dissonance in the form of post purchase doubt and concern. An important role of advertising is to help people cope with dissonance by reinforcing the wisdom of their purchase decision. The result of the post purchase evaluation will greatly affect the customer's attitude toward future purchase.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Cognitive dissonance theory**

The cognitive dissonance theory was propounded by Festinger in 1979. It is called the cognitive dissonance or consonance theory. The theory proposes that, after making a decision, people usually find a way, to magnify justification of their behaviour. Recognising that cognitions are attitudes, ideas, values, beliefs and opinions, it is a fact that the media can hardly convert but rather reinforce. Therefore, the moment a person holds two opposite cognitions; there is a competition within him between the two ideas. This state of tension is called dissonance, it can be highly disturbing. The resolution of the tension comes through a rejection of the idea that is contrary to already established cognitions. Once this is done, the person achieves consonance. If the competing view is accepted over the established one then dissonance is created.

In addition, Okpoko (2013) notes that cognitive dissonance theory is another theory of persuasion. This holds that dissonance by psychologically uncomfortable, one will motivate the individual to try reducing dissonance and achieving consonance. In trying to reduce it, the individual will try to increasingly avoid situation and information likely to increase dissonance. This implies that cognitive dissonance means the disruption of one's organized cognitive, psychological structure, and the subsequent production of disequilibrium. The application of this is that, the person who experiences such dissonance or disequilibrium feels compelled to make an adjustment. This adjustment is between the on-going cognitive structure and the new harmonious integration of all the cognition can establish. People are continually striving for consistency and harmonious relationships among thoughts, beliefs, values and behaviours. When inconsistency occurs and one becomes aware of it, psychological tension is produced. The person is hereby motivated to change action, attitudes, values, or beliefs to create consistency again. However, the theory is still relevant to this study, because is advertising that can help one overcome cognitive dissonance. Advertising helps the consumers to reinforce a purchase decision that is why the study focuses on SIMS Nigeria Limited. To evaluate how advertising can be used to reassure the consumers.

### **Empirical Review**

Milliman (1988) did an evaluation study on "improving the effectiveness of mail-order marketing through the implementation of dissonance reduction techniques proceedings." The aim of the study was to assess the close measure of dissonance expressed by customers who returned their orders for a refund compared to those who did not and examine those customers who always have repeat orders in compare to others who did not. The study made use of survey design and email-questionnaire to get to the respondents. Findings from the study indicated that those who returned their orders were significantly more dissonant. In the same wave, the study found out that those who placed orders were less dissonant than those customers who ordered only once.

Hunt and Steven (2007-2008) carried out a study on the "effectiveness of post-purchase communication on dissonance reduction." The main aim of the study was to investigate post-purchase communication as a strategy that will be used to alleviate cognitive dissonance, help in reducing the probability of negative customer reactions after sale. They both deal with traditional retail business

situations, rather than direct mail or mail-order methods of marketing. However, they are included here to illustrate the type of research that has been conducted which deals with using post-purchase communication (specifically, I in the control group the modality of a written letter mailed to the customer subject), to reduce cognitive dissonance. Findings show that the subjects who received post-purchase reassurances have more positive reactions toward the shop than the customers in the group. However, the findings only fractionally affirmed the objectives formulated, hence the behaviours of the group having the letter were more predisposed than the ones in the control group.

Bose and Sarker (2012) carried out a study on “Cognitive dissonance affecting consumer buying decision making: A study based on Khulna metropolitan area.” The study explored the factors that create cognitive dissonance in consumer buying decision making particularly among the consumer goods purchaser in the Khulna metropolitan area. The study employed a structured questionnaire to developed measuring 10 constraints variable. The factors creating cognitive dissonance in consumer buying decision in Khulna metropolitan area have been evaluated by those 10 variables in the form of: belief, norms, customs, family status, political ideology, emotional reaction, personal performance, culture, religious value & peer group influence. The relationship of the variables was evaluated by the survey outcomes. Results showed that several factors are influential in creating cognitive dissonance among the customers of consumer goods. Some of these are family status, religious value, customs, belief etc. the study also reveals the problems and identified probable solutions to overcome these problems.

Graff et al. (2012) did a paper on “Post-purchase cognitive dissonance-evidence from the mobile phone market.” This article investigates whether cognitive dissonance exists in the post-purchase phase in the mobile phone industry. It asked if mobile phone users are fully satisfied since they are usually overloaded with information during the purchasing period. Three dimensions of dissonance were measured in 283 university students. The results provide interesting insights. The major differences between the high and low dissonance groups are being influenced by other people’s opinions, difficulty in finding information, product involvement, and satisfaction with mobile phones/operators. These findings revealed that consumers are ‘not unhappy’ with their mobile phones/operators, but not extremely happy either. However, there is ample room for improvements in the level of consumer satisfaction. Marketers should give consumers’ perceptions of communicated messages high priority. The messages need to be straightforward and clear in the consumers’ interpretation as this will reduce negative feelings after purchase.

## **Methodology**

The sequential explanatory mixed methods research design was employed to execute this study. The sequential explanatory design implies the collection and analysis of qualitative data first and then quantitative data in two consecutive phases within one study. The essence of using the explanatory mixed methods was because the design aimed at persuading the staff and consumers on the post-purchase dissonance reduction strategies in SIMS Nigeria Limited. Hence, the work adopted both the qualitative and the quantitative method design. The key informant interview was the qualitative research design. The qualitative research method was the survey due to its attribute of sampling the opinion of a large number of people on specific subjects. The population of the study comprised both the staff in advertising/marketing department and customers of SIMS Nigeria Limited in Ikeja Lagos. The figure from the administration officer was given as 26 staff in the advertising/marketing department. The researcher decided to adopt a census in place of sampling, census takes place when the administration of instrument is carried out on the entire population since is manageable. Also, in line with the guideline delineated by McCracken (1988) as cited in Channel (2010) which suggested that in-depth interviews of individuals be used to qualitatively gather data, three (3) first hand contact customers of SIMS Nigeria Limited were interviewed via e-mail. They were selected from the location under study. The researcher made use of the questionnaire and the interview for primary data.

Data were also collected using the interview schedule, the internet administered questionnaire were used which was sent as attachments with e-mails that the respondents download, answer and send back to the researcher. The interview schedule segment was conducted at the SIMS Nigeria Limited Headquarters at Ikeja Lagos State. Three first hand customers were interviewed via e-mail by the customers care unit. Open ended questions were used in the interview schedule part of the interviewees to express themselves freely and elaborate on the issue at hand. The data were presented quantitatively in tables. The data collected were analysed using the weighted mean score (WMS). From, the above therefore, the criterion weighted mean score (CWMS) was established at 2.50 (i.e  $4 + 3 + 2 + 1 = 10 \div 5 = 2.50$ ). Three (2.50) points was used as the criterion for decision on the responses to each item for those items that used the five-points scale format. Hence, any mean response which is equal to or more than 2.50 is seen to be positive while any mean response less than 2.50 is considered negative. The e-mail interviews were analysed strictly in a qualitative manner and interpreted in an understandable and manageable size. It adopted the explanation building technique in summarizing the responses obtained from the interviewees.

## **Data Presentation Analysis and Discussion of Findings**

### **Interview Report**

In order to get the views of post-purchase dissonance and SIMS Nigeria Limited reduction strategies on their customers, we sent interview questions via e-mail to SIMS Nigeria Limited customers through the help of Benjamine Uju for an insight into dissonance and its reduction on customers. Mr. Benjamine Uju is a social media specialist working as the head of the specialized unit, customer care department, SIMS Nigeria Limited. To aid the data collected from the responses of the respondents, the need for an interview became important. Three (3) customers were chosen for the interview because of their first hand contact with SIMS Nigeria Limited, respectively they help provide more detailed information for the study. The below text is an extract from the interview.

**Awareness and experience of post-purchase dissonance:** from the postulations of the respondents, they agreed or affirmed positive that dissonance which they referred to as customer's remorse usually exists in the customer's mind after buying a product or service.

In respond to the kinds of imbalance or remorse they experienced after purchasing SIMS Nigeria Limited product, they vividly streamlined that they had regrets over their decisions made before and it mainly occurs due to a large number of alternatives available, good performance of alternatives and attractiveness of alternatives.

**Ways SIMS Nigeria Limited help consumers reduce post-purchase dissonance:** SIMS helped in presenting the facts in a way that makes it easy for people to assimilate the information. Sometimes this means a long-copy approach in print or an infomercial in television, both of which provide detailed information. In the copy inserted on their products, they explain concepts and ideas, as well as steps and procedures. Also, their demonstrations not only add believability; they also teach how to solve a problem, how to do something, or how something works. Meanwhile, one of the respondents emphatically pointed out that SIMS product such as Samsung has a practical effect because of the identification of the product characteristics or features also called attributes that are most important to the customer. In addition to importance to the consumer, they also pinpointed to the product's point of differentiation relative to the competition, which reflects its position. These approaches helped influence feelings of cognitive dissonance or 'buyer's remorse' following a product purchase.



**Table 1: Elements of Persuasive Advertising as Reinforcement Strategy in SIMS Nigeria Limited**

Item	Nature of response	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Total Weighted (fx)	WMS fx ÷	Decision
		4	3	2	1	26			
						(100%)		total	
1.	SIMS Nigeria Limited designs persuasive advertising to affect attitudes and creates belief as a reinforcement strategy.	80	18	0	0	26	98	3.77	Agreed
2.	SIMS Nigeria Limited uses esteem, fear, sex, security appeal of the product to consumers as focus of message strategy.	72	24	0	0	26	96	3.69	Agreed
3.	There is use of benefit by SIMS Nigeria Limited to emphasis what product can do by translating the product feature to the consumers.	56	36	0	0	26	92	3.54	Agreed
4.	We use most selling premises with facts, proof and explanation to support our messages.	68	27	0	0	26	95	3.65	Agreed
5.	To build strong, rational conviction, SIMS Nigeria Limited uses testimonies by users and experts for reinforcement strategy.	60	33	0	0	26	93	3.58	Agreed
6.	SIMS Nigeria Limited gives a benefit statement that gives consumer the reason why they should buy their products.	64	30	0	0	26	94	3.62	Agreed
	<b>Average weighted mean score</b>					<b>26</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>3.65</b>	<b>Agreed</b>

Table 1 shows that SIMS Nigeria Limited designs persuasive advertising to influence attitudes and creates belief, uses testimonies by users and experts, gives a benefit statement that gives consumers the reason why they should buy their products, emphasis what product can do by translating the product feature to the consumers among others as reinforcement strategies.

**Table 2: Different Incentives SIMS Nigeria Limited used as Reinforcement Strategy in their Consumers**

Item	Nature of response	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Total Weighted (fx)	WMS fx ÷	Decision
		5	4	2	1	26			

						(100%)		total	
7.	You drive consumers to action by offering free gifts and discounted sales in tandem with advertising to stimulate dissonance reduction.	88	12	0	0	26	100	3.85	Agreed
8.	Free gifts, discount percentages, thank you card and letter are different incentives used by SIMS Nigeria Limited.	80	18	0	0	26	98	3.77	Agreed
9.	Bringing various incentives as a reduction strategy help to entice consumers, appeal to their emotions and general sensibilities.	72	24	0	0	26	96	3.69	Agreed
<b>Average weighted mean score</b>						<b>26</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>3.77</b>	<b>Agreed</b>

Table 2 reveals that SIMS Nigeria Limited drives consumers to action by offering free gifts and discount percentages, thank you card and letter as different incentives.

### Discussion of findings

The respondents' affirmations presuppose that among the essential needs that can have adequate effect on customer decision-making and behaviour is the desire for cognitive consistency. The basic concept of balance, equilibrium and dissonance is the disposition that behaviour, beliefs, thoughts and attitudes are not only consistent to the objective observer but that people try to appear consistent to themselves. It therefore implies that all the alternatives and experiences that follow purchase are embraced in post-purchase behaviour. Usually, after making a purchase, consumers experience post-purchase dissonance.

As juxtaposed by the respondents, the ways SIMS Nigeria Limited helped the customers in reducing doubt/remorse after purchase are: SIMS assures consumer that the choice made by them is the right one, they mention and even highlight the basic features or attributes and benefits of the product to address and solve consumers concerns if any. SIMS now opts to engage their customers with post-purchase communication in an effort to influence their feelings about their purchase and future purchase. Offering warranties or guarantees also serve to extend and enrich post-purchase communication between the company and its customers. They asked for their customers contact information at the point of purchase, a follow up call that surveys the product's performance and consumer satisfaction.

Also, their honesty from beginning to end creates loyalty, it is consistent truth that delivers credibility and long - lasting - and profitable – loyalty. SIMS knows that truth is more important than sustaining a fiction in business. The results of the current study emphasize that SIMS Nigeria Limited advertisers use the above stringent strategies as a method of dissonance reduction. This upholds the theory of cognitive dissonance which posits that consumers tend to compensate or justify the discrepancies between what they actually received and what we thought we would receive. According to the respondents they engage in a variety of activities to reduce dissatisfaction or doubt after purchase. Most notably, 'we seek out information that supports our decisions, ignore and discard information that does not.' Meanwhile, SIMS Nigeria Limited plays a central role in reducing doubt or remorse for instance, the use of testimonials by satisfied customers on Samsung and a huge category of Samsung service called 'after marketing,' which is designed to keep customers happy after they buy a product.

As indicated in Table 1, range elements of persuasive advertising as dissonance reduction strategy in SIMS Nigeria Limited was found in more detail; they use esteem, fear, sex, security appeal of the

product to consumers as focus of message strategy; they emphasize the benefit by translating the product feature to the consumers and also give the reason why consumer should buy their products. This upholds the finding of Tatum (2003) that one of the more effective approaches to persuasive advertising is to focus on specific benefits of the product. While those same benefits may also be found with competing products, the idea is to convey that a given product provides that benefit in a way that is hard to find elsewhere. When advertising gives consumers permission to believe in a product, it establishes the platform for conviction and as such reduces dissonance.

However, through persuasive advertising SIMS Nigeria Limited provide their consumers with hard data about the nature and function of the product. They infuse in their consumers the desirability and the benefits that set a particular product apart from the competition. The finding is in tandem with Well et al., (2007) as posited that persuasive advertising is “designed to affect attitudes and create belief...sometimes uses the psychological appeal of the product to the consumer...” (p.340). SIMS Nigeria Limited connects some emotion that makes their product particularly attractive or interesting, such as security, esteem, fears, sex and sensory pleasure. In the same wave, they generally pinpoint the anticipated response of the audience to the product and the message.

As elucidated in the Table 2, different incentives such as free gifts inside the products, discount percentages, thank you card and letter with or without financial inducements, (personalised letter without discount and personalized letter with discount) have been used in SIMS Nigeria Limited to help entice consumers, appeal to their emotions and general sensibilities. Meanwhile, the average weighed mean score totals to 4.6 which were positive. Hence, it sheds light that different incentives in tandem with advertising help to reassure consumers and stimulate dissonance reduction.

## **Conclusion**

The study concludes that SIMS Nigeria Limited uses dissonance reduction strategies to help consumers seek relief from doubts after the purchase by supplying them positive information about the product. The decision process is circular in nature, the SIMS Nigeria Limited understands this process and develops messages through dissonance reduction strategies more likely to reach and make sense to consumers. The transformative power of product, where the product takes on character and meaning is important in their reduction strategy. In pragmatic sense, the use of image advertising as reduction strategy has helped in carrying a strong message of conviction to give the consumers passion about their product.

Also, the study establishes that through persuasive advertising SIMS Nigeria Limited provides their consumers the desirability and the benefits that set a particular product apart from the competition. They also shed light on different incentives in tandem with advertising to help reassure consumers and stimulate dissonance reduction. The transformative power of product, where the product takes on character and meaning is important in their reduction strategy. In pragmatic sense, the use of image advertising as reduction strategy has helped in carrying a strong message of conviction to give the consumers passion about their product.

The results of the study lend credence that cognitive dissonance theory proves that an individual customer strives toward consistency within the self. Since doubt disrupts equilibrium or consistency within the customer, hence, an interesting finding for advertisers and marketers, developed from this work, is that dissonant customers may choose and have one or more of the dissonance reduction strategies in a way to maintain consistency. Consumers believe those facts which are palatable to them, disregarding and dismiss unpleasant ones, thereby distorting unpleasant or irreconcilable elements from awareness. However, advertising managers may take the chance to help customers by providing the exact information necessary to foster the effectiveness of the dissonance reduction strategies. The result of this study emphasised that SIMS Nigeria Limited uses the above stringent strategies as a method of dissonance reduction.

## Recommendations

Based on the strength of the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made to improve and foster harmonious relationship between the consumers and the SIMS Nigeria Limited.

1. Suggestion boxes should be placed in significant position in the company to help in consumer problem identification. Consumer's right should be duly observed to avoid failure, which includes right to satisfy, to be informed, to choose and to be heard.
2. There should be proper evaluation of consumers and their behaviour and cognitions as they operate in the marketplace. Hence, SIMS Nigeria Limited should take cognizance of various factors that are important in dissonance reduction.
3. In order to avert post-purchase cognitive dissonance, advertisers should concentrate on truths because truth, honesty and credibility are essential to love and loyalty. This in line with Keat-in Ode to a Grecian Urn- beauty is truth, truth beauty, that is all you know on earth and all you need to know.
4. Companies should always ask for their customers/clients contact information at the point of purchase to follow up call that surveys the product's performance and consumer satisfaction. Therefore, incentives such as free rubber mats, gift items etc should be given in attempt to increase satisfaction.

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