

AGRO-BRANDING OF FISH PRODUCE AND MARKET PERFORMANCE IN PORT HARCOURT METROPOLIS, RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This research seeks to validate empirically, the agro-branding of fish produce and market performance in Port Harcourt metropolis, Rivers State. Four objectives and four research questions were posed and four hypotheses were tested. The study adopted descriptive research design using a survey method. A total of 200 respondents made of fish marketers were surveyed through structured questionnaire administration. Data analysis was done using descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation and variance while inferential statistics like the Multiple Regression was used to test the stated hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance on SPSS version 25. The result of the study showed that the sales promotion increased sales volume by 3.48% and marketing profit by 3.80, while brand positioning increased sales volume by 4.09% and market profitability by 2.58% respectively. It was concluded that sales promotion and brand positioning positively influenced marketing performance of fish produce in Port Harcourt metropolis, Rivers State to a high extent. The study therefore recommended that in order to be competitive in the market and remain in business, it is imperative for fish marketers to implement sales promotional technique, have the right information and packaging techniques and intensive distribution strategy which will further enhance their brand visibility in the marketing outlets.

Keywords: Agro, Brand, Fish, Marketing, Sales

Introduction

Agriculture is the foundation of most economies globally, particularly in developing nations such as Nigeria. Contributing approximately 24% of Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and providing employment for over 32% of the population (Oyaniran, 2019), agriculture remains a critical driver of economic and social development. Among its subsectors—crops, livestock, forestry, wildlife, and fisheries—the fisheries

subsector is gaining increasing importance due to the nutritional, recreational, and medicinal benefits of fish products. Fish is a vital source of animal protein, particularly in developing nations, where 60% of the population relies on it for over 30% of their animal protein needs. This contrasts with developed nations, where fish contributes less than 20% of animal protein consumption. However, growing global awareness of fish's health benefits has led to rising demand and prices, further

emphasizing the sector's importance (Food and Agricultural Organization, 2015).

In Port Harcourt, the growing demand for fish and fish products presents opportunities for improved market performance through strategic marketing approaches. Marketing plays a pivotal role in bridging the gap between production and consumer demand. Effective marketing not only ensures the delivery of fish products to consumers at the right time, place, and price but also enhances the socio-economic conditions of fish marketers and producers. However, Agro-branding faces challenges such as perishability, inadequate storage and processing facilities, and quality inconsistencies (Ali et al., 2008; Nwankwo, 2017).

Agro-branding, comprising sales promotion and brand positioning, offers a strategic pathway to address these challenges and enhance market performance. Sales promotion involves immediate tactics like discounts, bundled offers, and public awareness campaigns to stimulate consumer demand. Brand positioning, on the other hand, focuses on creating a unique and desirable perception of fish products in the minds of consumers. Together, these dimensions of agro-branding can improve the visibility, accessibility, and value perception of fish products in the competitive market landscape.

The marketing of fish products in Port Harcourt involves various activities, including packaging, labeling, storage, distribution, sorting, grading, and advertising. These activities are undertaken by key stakeholders such as fishermen,

cooperatives, wholesalers, retailers, and vendors. Despite the significance of these operations, the absence of a coherent and sustainable marketing strategy limits market performance and growth. Empirical research has highlighted a lack of strategic marketing culture and insufficient integration of agro-branding principles, leaving fish marketers in Port Harcourt with limited capacity to compete effectively.

Given this background, this study investigates the agro-branding of fish produce and its impact on market performance in Port Harcourt metropolis, Rivers State. By examining the sub-dimensions of agro-branding—sales promotion and brand positioning—this research seeks to identify how strategic marketing practices can bridge demand-supply gaps, enhance profitability, and support the growth of the fisheries subsector in Rivers State. Furthermore, it aims to provide actionable insights to stakeholders for overcoming marketing challenges and leveraging branding to boost market performance.

Statement of the Problem

The fisheries subsector is a critical component of Nigeria's agricultural economy, providing significant nutritional, economic, and social benefits. Fish products are not only a vital source of protein for a majority of the population but also contribute to employment and income generation for producers and marketers. However, despite the growing demand for fish and fish products in Port Harcourt metropolis, as revealed in a study by Ojimba

and Akoma (2019) which focused on meat and fish demand among households in Port Harcourt Local Government Area using the Linear Approximate Almost Ideal Demand Systems (LA/AIDS) model and found that fish is considered a necessary good with an expenditure elasticity of 0.682, the marketing of fish remains fraught with challenges that limit its market performance. These challenges include perishability, inadequate storage and processing facilities, poor quality control, and a lack of coordinated marketing strategies.

One significant gap lies in the adoption of agro-branding practices, specifically the integration of sales promotion and brand positioning into Agro-branding strategies. Sales promotion techniques such as discounts, public awareness campaigns, and bundled offers are often underutilized, resulting in limited consumer engagement and low sales turnover. Similarly, brand positioning, which involves creating a distinct and desirable image of fish products in consumers' minds, is weakly implemented or entirely absent among fish marketers in the metropolis. This deficiency affects consumer perceptions and reduces the competitiveness of local fish products in a rapidly growing market.

The lack of structured agro-branding strategies has led to inefficiencies in the Agro-branding chain, contributing to market saturation in some areas while leaving others underserved. These issues have not only impeded the profitability of fish marketers but have also hindered the overall growth and sustainability of the fisheries subsector in Port Harcourt. Existing research and

interventions have largely focused on production and distribution challenges, with limited attention given to marketing strategies that could enhance market performance and value addition (Adebayo & Yusuf, 2015; Olukosi&Isitor, 2017; Eze *et al.*, 2019). Motivated by the need to bridge these gaps, this study seeks to examine the agro-branding of fish produce and its impact on market performance in Port Harcourt metropolis by providing answers to the following research questions:

1. How does sales promotion influence sales volume of fish produce in Port Harcourt metropolis?
2. How does sales promotion influence profitability of fish produce in Port Harcourt metropolis?
3. What is the influence of brand positioning on sales volume of fish produce in Port Harcourt metropolis?
4. What is the influence of brand positioning on profitability of fish produce in Port Harcourt metropolis?

Objectives of the Study

The study sought to:

1. Examine how sales promotion influence sales volume of fish produce in Port Harcourt metropolis.
2. Examine how sales promotion influence profitability in fish produce in Port Harcourt metropolis.
3. Ascertain the influence of brand positioning on sales volume of fish produce in Port Harcourt metropolis.
4. Ascertain the influence of brand positioning on profitability in fish

produce in Port Harcourt metropolis.

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance

H₀₁: Sales promotion does not significantly influence sales volume of fish produce in Port Harcourt metropolis.

H₀₁: Sales promotion does not significantly influence profitability in fish produce in Port Harcourt metropolis.

H₀₂: Brand positioning does not significantly influence sales volume of fish produce in Port Harcourt metropolis.

H₀₂: Brand positioning does not significantly influence profitability in fish produce in Port Harcourt metropolis.

Methodology

The study was conducted in Port Harcourt City and Obio/Akpor Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Rivers State, Nigeria. Port Harcourt, the state capital, lies between latitudes 4°45'N and 5°00'N and longitudes 6°55'E and 7°05'E, while Obio/Akpor lies between 4°45'N and 4°60'N and longitudes 6°50'E and 8°00'E. Both areas experience a tropical monsoon climate with heavy rainfall from April to October, annual precipitation ranging between 2,100 mm and 4,600 mm, and average temperatures of 25°C to 33°C. Port Harcourt is a rapidly expanding metropolis with an estimated population of about 3.48 million in 2023, while Obio/Akpor's population was projected at 665,000 in 2022. These areas are economic hubs in the Niger Delta region, with Port

Harcourt serving as a center for oil and gas activities, shipping, manufacturing, and services, while Obio/Akpor hosts industries such as Pabod Breweries and Coca-Cola, and supports a vibrant trade and market economy. The combination of dense population, strategic location, and economic activities makes them ideal for studying the agro-branding of fish produce and its market performance.

This study applied a descriptive research survey design. According to Cooper and Schindler (2006), descriptive research design is a non-experimental design in that it deals with the relationships between non manipulated variables in a natural rather than laboratory setting. The study was carried out in two local government areas, Port Harcourt and Obio/Akpo local government area of Rivers State. This study targeted 374 fish traders from within Port Harcourt City and Obio/Akpor Local Government Areas of Rivers State. Simple random sampling technique was adopted while Taro Yamane formula for sample size determination was used. The formula is given as:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+n(e)^2}$$

Where:

n= sample size sought ; N= population; e = level of significance

$$n = \frac{374}{1+374(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{374}{1.935} = 193$$

the sample size for this study calculated using Yaro Yamane formula was 193. This number was rounded up to 200 which was now used as the sample size for the study. The sample size was rounded up to 200 to

account for potential non-response, incomplete responses, or errors in data collection, ensuring a sufficient number of valid responses for robust statistical analysis.

Table 1: Major Fish Market in Port Harcourt and Obio/Akpor Local Government Areas

S/N	Name of Designated Fish Market	LGA	Sample Size
1	Oroworukpo Town Market	PHC	20
2	Trans-Amadi Market	PHC	20
3	Creek road Market	PHC	20
4	Mile 1 Market	PHC	20
5	RumuKalagbo Market	PHC	20
6	Eleme Market	Obio/Akpor	20
7	Rumumasi Market	Obio/Akpor	20
8	Mile 4 Whimpy Market	Obio/Akpor	20
9	Ugwuruta Market	Obio/Akpor	20
10	Mile 3 Market	Obio/Akpor	20
Total Sample Size			200

Source: Field Survey Data, 2024.

The selected fish traders in the major fish markets in the Local Government Areas were interviewed with the aid of structured questionnaire. The respondents were briefed on how to respond to the questions. The researcher with the aid of two research assistants administered the questionnaire. In order to ascertain both the face and content validity of the instrument, the instrument was given to two (2) lecturers in agric economics in Agriculture Department of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education Rivers State for vetting of test items in terms of its relevance to subject matter, coverage of content areas, appropriateness of language usage and clarity of purpose. Their

comments and suggestions were incorporated in the final draft of the instrument and forwarded to my supervisor for the final correction and validation of the instrument. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach's alpha for measure of its consistency and stability. A reliability coefficient of 0.86 was obtained which shows an acceptable level of reliability.

The data collected from the respondents were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 25. The research questions were analyzed using mean and standard deviation in the

distributive statistics tables. A criterion means of 2.5 was set as a guideline for accepting and rejecting option. The criterion mean was calculated as follows: $4+3+2+1/4 = 2.5$. Fixing the criterion mean at 2.5 implies that for any item to be accepted, it must score a minimum mean value of 2.5 or above, while anything less than 2.5 is rejected. The formulated hypotheses were tested using the multiple regression analysis with model summary explaining the effect and determinant percentage of the relationship by the R and R-square respectively, hypotheses accepted and rejected at 0.05 levels of significance.

Model Specification

- **Sales Promotion (SP):** Measured using a Likert scale (e.g., 1 = Never, 5 = Very Frequent), capturing the frequency and type of promotional strategies used.
- **Brand Positioning (BP):** Measured using respondents' perceptions on factors like uniqueness, recognition, and customer loyalty, rated on a Likert scale.
- **Sales Volume (SV):** Measured as the total quantity of fish sold over a specific period, reported in kilograms or revenue value.

- **Profitability (PT):** Measured using percentage profit margins or net income from sales.

2. Modify the Regression Model to Reflect Variable Quantification

The model can be rewritten as:

Model 1: Effect of Sales Promotion and Brand Positioning on Sales Volume

$$SV = b_0 + b_1(SP) + b_2(BP) + U$$

Where:

- **SP** = Average rating of promotional activities from the Likert scale
- **BP** = Average rating of brand perception from the Likert scale
- **SV** = Sales Volume (in kilograms or revenue)

Model 2: Effect of Sales Promotion and Brand Positioning on Profitability

$$PT = c_0 + c_1(SP) + c_2(BP) + U$$

Where:

- **PT** = Profitability (measured by net profit or profit margin)
- **SP** and **BP** remain as previously defined.

Result

The model summary in Table 3 produced a correlation coefficient; 'R' of 0.894^a which shows that there is a very strong significant correlation between Sales Promotion (SP), Distribution (DT) and Sales Volume (SV) of

fish products in Port Harcourt and Obio/Akpor local government areas of Rivers State. The R^2 stood at 0.799 meaning that about 80% of the variation in the dependent variable (Sales Volume) was explained or caused by the independent or explanatory variables. The standard error is 0.15598, thus, measure of variation of the observation made from the (actual values of Y) around the computed value of Y on the regression line is close to 0 and far from 1.

Interpretation

The regression equation above has established that taking Sales Promotion (SP) and Brand Positioning (BP) constant at zero, Sales Volume (SV) will be 1.622. This shows that if all the dimensions of independent variable were held constant, sales volume will increase by 1.6 which is significant at 1%.

The regression result in Table 1 shows a model constant (a) value of 1.622 and $SP(bx_1)$ value of 0.348, indicating that, for every 10 unit increase of Sales Promotion

(SP) value, the dependent variable Sales Volume (SV) value will rise by 0.348unit. T-value for $SP(bx_1)$ coefficient of X_1 produced 6.933, is significant at 1% level and P value (.000), which is less than the chosen alpha of α (0.05). Hence, null hypothesis two (H_{01}) is rejected meaning there is a very strong 1% significant linear relationship between Sales Promotion (SP) and Sales Volume (SV) of fish Port Harcourt metropolis Rivers State.

Also, the regression result in table 1 shows a model constant (a) value of 1.622 and $BP(bx_2)$ value of 0.409, indicating that, for every 10 unit increase of Brand Positioning (BP) value, the dependent variable Sales Volume (SV) value will rise by 0.409unit. T-value for $BP(bx_2)$ produced 6.843, is significant at 1% and P value (.000), which is less than the chosen alpha of α (0.05). Hence, hypothesis four is rejected meaning there is a strong 1% significant linear relationship between Brand Positioning (BP) and Sales Volume (SV) of fish products in Port Harcourt and Obio/Akpor local government areas of Rivers State.

Table 2: The Regression analysis result on sales volume of Agro-branding in the study area

Marketing and Performance variables	Predictors	Coefficient Values	Standard Error	t-value	Significance level (sig.)
Constant	α	1.622	0.186	8.737	0.000
Sales Promotion	SP	0.348	0.050	6.933	0.000
Brand Positioning	BP	0.409	0.060	6.843	0.000
R	0.894				
R square (R^2)	0.799				
Adjusted R square (R^2)	0.794				
Standard error of estimate R^2	0.15598				

Dependent variable = Sales Volume (SV) *** = value significant at 1% level.

Source: Field Survey, 2024 estimated value of SPSS output.

Table 3: ANOVA

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	48.889	4	12.222	186.520	.000 ^b
	Residual	12.319	188	.066		
	Total	61.209	192			

a. Dependent Variable: SV

b. Predictors: (Constant), SP, PP

Source: SPSS output (2024)

The probability value of 0.000 in table 3 indicated that the regression relationship was significant in determining how Sales Promotion (SP) and Brand Positioning (BP) influence Sales Volume (SV) of fish products in Port Harcourt and Obio/Akpor

local government areas of Rivers State. The F calculated at 5 percent level of significance was 186.520. Since F calculated is greater than the F critical (value = 2.4472), this shows that the overall model was significant.

Second model: $PT = c_0 + c_1(PP)_1 + c_2(SP)_2 + c_3(DT)_3 + c_4(BP)_4 + U_i \dots \dots \dots$ (Eq.4b)

Table 4: Regression analysis results on Agro-branding profitability in the study area

Marketing and Performance variables	Predictors	Coefficient Values	Standard Error	t-value	Significance level (sig.)
Constant	α	0.881	0.147	6.000	0.000
Sales Promotion	SP	0.380	0.051	7.398	0.000
Brand Positioning	BP	0.258	0.060	4.277	0.000
R	0.909				
R square (R^2)	0.826				
Adjusted R square (R^2)	0.823				
Standard error of estimate R^2	0.14742				
Durbin-Watson	2.206				

Dependent variable = Sales Volume (SV) *** = value significant at 1% level.

Source: Field Survey, 2024 estimated value of SPSS output.

The above model summary in table 4 produced a correlation coefficient; 'R' of 0.909^a which shows that there is a very strong significant correlation between Sales Promotion (SP), Brand Positioning (BP) and Profitability (PT) of fish Port Harcourt metropolis Rivers State. The R^2 stood at 0.826 which implies that about 82.6% variation in Profitability (PT) is attributed to changes in the independent variable (Sales Promotion and Brand Positioning). The standard error is 0.14742, thus, measure of variation of the observation made from the (actual values of Y) around the computed value of Y on the regression line is close to 0 and far from 1. The Durbin-Watson "d" = 2.206, is between the two critical values of $1.5 < d < 2.5$ and therefore we can assume that there is no first order linear auto-correlation in the data. Hence the model is of absolute good fit.

The regression equation (Eq 2b) has established that taking Sales Promotion (SP),

and Brand Positioning (BP) constant at zero, Profitability (P) will be 0.881 statistically significant at 1%. This shows that if all the dimensions of independent variable were held constant, profitability will increase by 0.8.

The regression result in table 4 shows a model constant (a) value of 0.881 and SP(c_{x2}) value of 0.380, indicating that, for every 10 unit increase of Sales Promotion (SP) value, the dependent variable Profitability (PP) value will rise by 38 unit. T-value for SP(c_{x2}) produced 7.398, is significant at P value (.000), which is less than the chosen alpha of α (0.05). Hence, hypothesis six is rejected meaning there is a very strong 1% significant linear relationship between Sales Promotion and Profitability of fish products in Port Harcourt and Obio/Akpor local government areas of Rivers State.

Finally, the regression result in table 4

shows a model constant (a) value of 0.881 and BP(cx₄) value of 0.258, indicating that, for every 10 unit increase of Brand Positioning (BP) value, the dependent variable Profitability (PT) value will rise by 25.8 unit. T-value for BP(cx₄) produced 4.277, is significant at 1% and P value (.000), which is less than the chosen alpha of

α (0.05). Hence, hypothesis eight is rejected meaning there is a very strong 1% significant linear relationship between Brand Positioning (BP) and Profitability (PT) of Agro-branding in Port Harcourt and Obio/Akpor local government areas of Rivers State.

Table 5: ANOVA

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	54.779	4	13.695	223.701	.000 ^b
	Residual	11.509	188	.061		
	Total	66.288	192			

a. Dependent Variable: PT

b. Predictors: (Constant), PP, SP

Source: SPSS output (2024)

The probability value of 0.000 in Table 5 indicates that the regression relationship was significant in determining how Sales Promotion, and Brand Positioning influence Profitability of fish Port Harcourt metropolis Rivers State. The F calculated at 5 percent level of significance was 223.701. Since F calculated is greater than the F critical (value = 2.4472), this shows that the overall model was significant.

Discussion of Findings

An analysis of the findings revealed that sales promotion positively related with market performance in the study area. The findings of this study agree with Isaac (2015) who revealed that the impact of sales promotion on marketing performance in Port Harcourt is intense. The finding of this study is also consistent with Tandoh and Sarpong

(2015). The authors maintained that sales promotional techniques tend to motivate present users to buy larger sizes, as it discourages current users from buying competitors' products. The findings of this study further corroborate the result of Ricky (2005) that sales promotion enhances product recognition and can increase the size and amount of product which consumers patronize in a certain organization. This leads to the development of brand loyalty. However, the researcher is of the opinion that consumers form very strong opinion about products as a result of conversations with friends and acquaintances. It can therefore be inferred that the use of good sales promotional techniques will position the company's brand in the minds of its customers. In essence, a well implemented sales promotional technique develops loyal customers who have positive view of the brand that they enjoy.

The study proved that brand positioning significantly influenced market performance. Fish marketers with consistent and remarkable track record in the area of price, size, quantity, quality have made good sales and larger market share. The finding of this study is consistent with the view of Lynn (2019) that a good positioning strategy elevates the marketing efforts and helps a buyer move from knowledge of a product or service to its purchase. The study also corroborates with the finding of Michael, Kasamba and Mutambuki (2014) who investigated marketing strategies of commercial fish farming under economic stimulus programme (ESP). The results from the study indicated that market positioning

and core competences marketing strategies affect commercial fish farming under economic stimulus. The finding of the study also agree with Hooley and Dodd (2015) who affirmed that a firm's long-term competitive advantage stems, in part, from positioning activities and maintained that the effectiveness of a particular offering's position in the marketplace requires identification of exactly what positioning strategy is pursued and whether and to what extent that chosen strategy actually impacts performance.

Conclusion

The fisheries subsector holds immense potential for economic growth and food security in Nigeria, particularly in Port Harcourt metropolis, where the demand for fish produce continues to rise. However, challenges such as poor marketing practices, inadequate sales promotion, and weak brand positioning have hindered the optimal market performance of fish products. This study underscores the importance of agro-branding as a strategic approach to addressing these challenges and improving the competitiveness of fish products in the local market. By integrating effective sales promotion techniques and strong brand positioning strategies, fish marketers can enhance sales volume and achieve higher profitability. This not only benefits individual marketers but also contributes to the broader socio-economic development of the fisheries subsector and the local economy.

The findings of this study aim to provide valuable insights for policymakers, fish

marketers, and other stakeholders, encouraging the adoption of innovative marketing strategies tailored to the unique needs of the fisheries subsector. Ultimately, implementing agro-branding practices can bridge existing gaps in fish marketing, ensuring a more efficient and sustainable market system in Port Harcourt metropolis and beyond.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made in line with the findings of the study:

1. Fish marketers should implement regular promotional campaigns, such as discounts, loyalty programs, and bundled offers, to attract and retain customers.
2. Increase consumer awareness of fish products through targeted advertising and public outreach programs, emphasizing their nutritional and health benefits.
3. Develop distinctive branding elements, such as logos, packaging, and slogans, to create a strong and memorable identity for fish products.
4. It is imperative for fish marketers to implement sales promotional technique, have the right information and packaging techniques and intensive distribution strategy which will further enhance their brand visibility in the marketing outlets

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