

CROSS-FUNCTIONAL RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT AND MARKETING PERFORMANCE OF MOBILE TELECOMMUNICATION FIRMS IN NIGERIA

By

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Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between cross-functional relationship management and marketing performance in a context specific of mobile telecommunication firms in Nigeria. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design, the explanatory or hypotheses testing research design was specifically employed with a correlational method of investigation. The social network theory was employed as the foundation for the study. The population of the study was the four mobile telecommunication firms in Nigeria; Globacom Nigeria limited, MTN Nigeria plc, Airtel Nigeria limited and 9mobile Nigeria limited. This population was fully studied, hence a census study. However, seven respondents were drawn from each organization; marketing director, operations director, human resource director, ICT director, the chief operating officer, finance director and corporate communications director. Thus, twenty-eight executive directors constituted the respondents of the study. The study made use of primary data, a thirty-eight items questionnaire of twenty-eight copies were distributed to the respondents. The generated data after cleansing/data editing were analyzed with both univariate and bivariate statistics with the aid of statistical package for social sciences (SPSS), version 25.0. The findings of the study revealed that cross-functional relationship management positively and significantly correlates with marketing performance. We conclude that cross-functional relationship management significantly improves marketing performance of mobile telecommunication firms in Nigeria. The study therefore recommends that mobile telecom operators in Nigeria should encourage

cross-functional relationship building through cooperation and shared values. This will enhance employee commitment, customer retention and significantly improve marketing performance.

Keywords: *Cross-functional, relationship management, marketing performance, mobile telecommunication firms, and Nigeria.*

Introduction

Business success in today's globally competitive and ever-changing environment is dependent on the harnessing of relevant resources and the application of these resources by workplace management for the going concern of the firm (Price & Stoica, 2015). Again, resource integration and operationalization for above average performance in a globally shifting world is important for all sectors of a nation's economy, including the mobile telecommunication's industry in Nigeria (Chen, 2022). Thus, the mobile telecommunications industry's players in Nigeria are faced with both national and global competition. To contend with these challenges and translate the companies to successful marketing performance, the institutions should focus on internal or endogenous resource integration which should be driven by cross-functional relationship management at work (Ryals & Knox, 2022). Hence, marketing activities in the mobile telecommunication's industry should not be limited to the marketing departments of key players of the industry. Rather, organizations should focus on cross-functional relationship management in order to provide robust support for the marketing departments functions in the work organization (Ryals & Knox, 2022; Carr, Kaynak & Kumar, 2008).

Organizations marketing performance is the effectiveness and efficiency of a company's marketing activities or programmes with regards to market related goals and objectives such as market share, sales revenue growth, customer retention, profitability, and shareholders' wealth maximization (Gao, 2010; Mone, Pop & Racolta-Paina, 2013). Thus, marketing performance is the evaluation of marketing output or outcomes compared to the predetermined marketing goals and objectives of the work organization. Hence, marketing performance management should not be left alone in the hands of the marketing department, relationships and support for the marketing unit should permeate from other functional units of the work organization (Zahari, 2017). Therefore, cross-functional relationships building, engagement and collaborations among organizations functions are highly laudable.

Cross-functional relationship management involves the building and collaborative bonding in sharing knowledge and resources among organization's functions in order to achieve synergistic goals and objectives in the workplace (Dinca & Voinescu, 2012). Thus, it involves individual teams or representatives from separate units,

departments and functions working together to achieve unified or common goals and objectives, despite the importance of cross-functional relationship management to marketing performance of organizations. The relationship between cross-functional relationship management and marketing performance in a context specific of mobile telecommunication firms in Nigeria was omitted by previous studies in the cross-functional relationship management and marketing performance literature. Chen (2022) carried out an empirical examination on the links of cross-functional integration of production, marketing, BTO competitive advantage and business performance in the context of Chinese manufacturing organization. The study made use of structural equation modeling. Akuffo (2020) on the other hand, studied the effect of cross-functional teams on innovation performance in the context of multinational firms in Estonia, using qualitative research methods. Again, Gaur and Ebrahimi (2013) evaluated workplace relationship management and business performance with the employment of qualitative research method. Mahesh and Saravanakuma (2020) investigated the nexus between employee relationship management and workplace performance with qualitative research methods. Hence, empirical literature on the relationship between cross-functional relationship management and marketing performance in the context of mobile telecommunications firms in Nigeria is missing. Again, correlational method of investigation was almost absent in the literature. This study seeks to address these gaps by investigating the relationship between cross-functional relationship management and marketing performance of mobile telecommunication firms in Nigeria, which is underpinned by the social network theory. Therefore, the specific objectives are:

- i. To investigate the relationship between cooperation and employee commitment of mobile telecommunication firms in Nigeria
- ii. To examine the relationship between cooperation and customer retention of mobile telecommunication firms in Nigeria.
- iii. To investigate the relationship between shared value and employee commitment of mobile telecommunication firms in Nigeria.
- iv. To evaluate the relationship between shared value and customer retention of mobile telecommunication firms in Nigeria.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

The Social Network Theory

The social network theory was developed by Granovetters between 1973 and 1983. However, it was made popular by Ronald Burt in 1992 on the premise of weak ties with the argument that real value in weak ties lies on the premise that when the bridge between networks becomes the conducts of knowledge, information and value between these networks' functions optimally (Liu, Sidhu, Beacon & Valente, 2017). Hence, social network theory focuses on the role of social relationships in passing

information, channeling personnel or media influence and enabling behavior or attitude change in a work organization (Borgatti & Ofem, 2010).

Social network theory is the study of how people or individuals, institutions or groups interact with others inside their networks which is the work organization. The network is the connection of people within the organization which can be interactions among employees, interactions among organizations functions, interactions between the company and other stakeholders and interactions among companies in an industry (Hammond & Glenn, 2004). Thus, these networks are divided into three dimensions; ego centric networks, socio-centric networks and open system networks (Hanneman & Riddle, 2005).

Importantly, in the workplace, social network theory focuses on relationship existing among individual employees who share common organizational network or organization are commonly expressed as shared values, culture, norms, regulations, rules and assumptions that shape the conducts of members in the network or organization (Sozen, Basin & Hazir, 2009). The implication or relevance of the social network theory to this study is that cross-functional relationship building and management requires knowledge inputs from the social network theory. Driving employees' team work, collaboration, knowledge sharing and shared values which are pre-conditions for the marketing performance of the firm.

The Concept of Cross-Functional Relationship Management

Members of every society, institutions and organizations are made up of people and functions. These people and functions should collaboratively work to ensure the going concern and continues performance of the work organization (Leo *et al.*, 2002). Thus, what is most prominent and which permeate in this collaboration of people and organization's functions is relationship management. Relationship management is the building and management of relationships among people in a given organization, institution or society. This relationship extends beyond individuals and encompass relationships between organizations functions, between organizations, institutions and between nations (Kumiko, Fernando & Claudia, 2019). Hence, relationship building and collaborative work processes among organization's functions is highly imperative in a globally shifting work environment.

Cross-functional relationship management is the building and management of relationships among organizations functions in the work organization (Carr, Muthusmey & Lee, 2008). Thus, cross functional relationship building among company's functions is by mobilizing employees and encouraging teams from various workplace functions, departments and hierarchical levels to have understanding and cooperation around a common goals and predetermined objectives; marketing,

production, finance, human resources, logistics, sales, regulations and laws (Tuominene, Rajald & Moller, 2010). Cross functional relationship management is the management of the relationships among organization functions; marketing, production, finance and human resource departments for the achievement of predetermined or common objectives of the works organization. According to Xu, Huo and Sun (2014), cross functional relationship management is the management of relationship exchanges among company's functions in order to achieve the goals and objectives of the firm. This drive the integration of internal or workplace resources such as human capital, machines, materials, methods and information in order to achieve the corporate and functional units objectives of the organization (XU, Huo & Sun, 2014).

Relationship building and management among corporate functions helps in fostering internal communication, shared values, trust, cooperation, information exchanges and team work among marketing, production, human resources and finance departments (Das, Mishra & Maharana, 2019). Therefore, a healthy cross-functional relationships existing among organizations functions is highly laudable for the success and continuous existence of the work organization. Cross-functional relationship building and team collaborations is imperative for the modern day workplace in a globally shifting business climate.

The Concept of Marketing Performance

Marketing is one of the critical functions of the workplace and its performance is important to the success and going concern of the organization. According to Hormburg (2007), marketing performance could be defined as the effectiveness and efficiency of a company's marketing activities in terms of sales revenue, market share, profitability, customer retention, employee commitment, shareholders' wealth maximization. Thus, marketing performance is the comparism between the organization's stated marketing objectives and the actual marketing results. It is measured in the light of known qualitative and quantitative factors; sales growth, profitability, market shares, return on investment, price earning ratio, shareholders' value maximization. Others are customer retention, customers' life time values' employee retention, productivity, new market exploration etc (Homburg, Artz & Wieseke, 2012; Gao, 2010). Marketing performance is the successes or drawbacks associated with the implemented marketing programme (Uford, 2017). Marketing programme implemented by a company usually yield performance outcomes such as sales revenue growth, profit growth, market share. Each of these indicators mighty be positive or negative outcomes (Atzori, 2016).

Importantly, marketing performance management is imperative in order to effectively manage company's marketing programme so as to sustain positive performance

outcomes in the medium to long term (Mone *et al.*, 2013). Thus, effective marketing performance management will yield sustainable growth in sales revenue, market share, customers' life time value, profitability, customer retention, shareholders' wealth maximization (Kotler & Keller, 2012). Hence, marketing executives in the organization should ensure that marketing performance is effectively and efficiently managed in order to ensure sustainable profitability and shareholders' value creation (Charles & Uford, 2023). This will ensure lifelong existence of the company in the market place. Again, marketing performance management requires integration of resources; human capital (employees), financial resources, materials, methods and information (Inseng & Uford, 2019). These resources should be leveraged within and outside the organization, it must be optimally integrated to ensure effective and efficient marketing performance (Kotler & Keller, 2012; Mone *et al.*, 2013). Marketing performance management and marketing performance are necessary conditions for the success and going concern of the work organization.

Study Conceptual Model

The independent variable of this study is cross-functional relationship managements which is proxied with cooperation and shared value. The dependent variable is marketing performance which is divided into two measures; employee commitment and customer retention (Haffer & Lis, 2020; Peprah & Anowua, 2019; Das, Mishra & Maharana, 2019). The model is illustrated thus

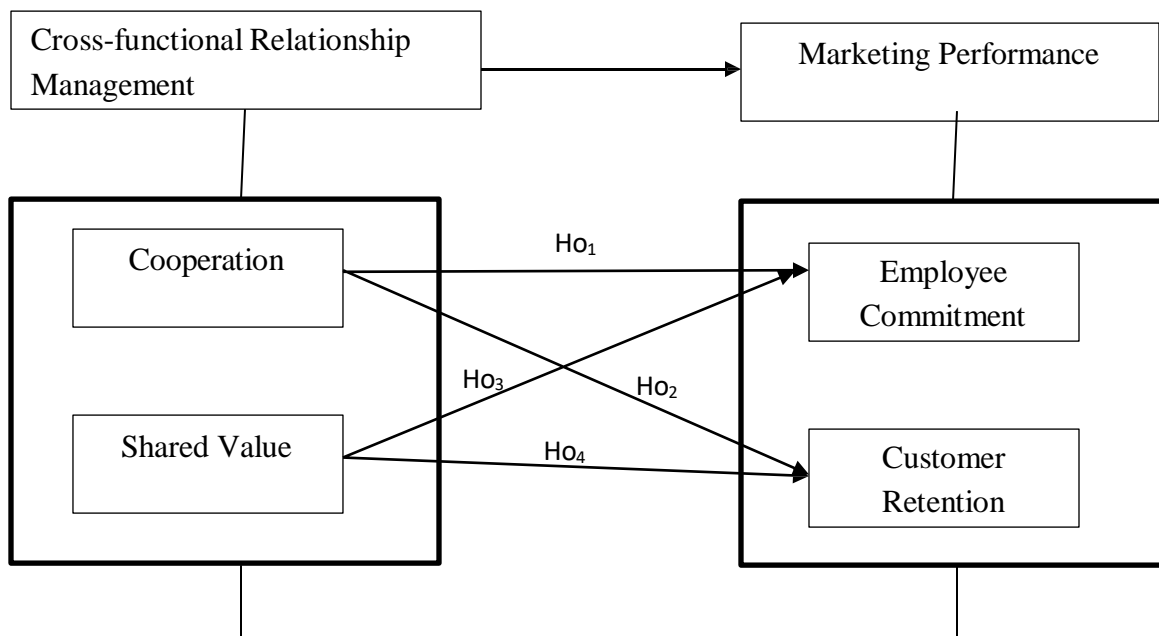


Fig. 1 Conceptual model of the relationship between cross-functional relationship management and marketing performance.

Source: Haffer & Lis, 2020; Peprah & Anowua, 2019; Das Mishra & Maharana, 2019.

Cross-Functional Relationship Management and Marketing Performance

Cross functional relationship building and management in a work organization improves corporate and functional business performance, including marketing performance. This foregoing is highly supported with empirical studies. Chen (2022) carried out an empirical examination on the links of cross-functional integration of production-marketing, BTO competitive advantages and business performance in the context of Chinese manufacturing organizations. The study employed structural equation modeling and the findings revealed that production-marketing integration positively and significantly improves business competitiveness, marketing outcomes and firms financial performance in the context of Chinese manufacturing firms. Cross functional relationship management significantly improves marketing performance.

Team relationship exchanges at work enhance business performance. Akuffo (2020) studies the effect of cross-functional teams on innovation performance in the case of multinational enterprises. The study employed content analysis with in-dept literature review as methodology. The findings of the study indicates that, cross-functional teams significantly and positively influence innovation performance in a context specific of multinational enterprises in Estonia. This finding is consistent with the empirical works of Helfert and Gemuenden (2011), the scholars evaluated relationship marketing team design as a predictor for relationship effectiveness in the workplace. The study employed LISREL analysis and findings of the study revealed that relationship marketing in a work organization significantly improves organizational effectiveness.

Relationship building and coordination of production, marketing, human resources and finance functions in the work organization significantly improves the productivity and performance of the organization. Thus, Gaur and Ebrahimi (2013) studied the understanding around workplace relationships with special reference to organizational relationships building and management. The study employed content analysis and the findings of the study revealed that workplace relationship management positively and significantly impact on the success, growth and performance of employees and organization. The foregoing study findings are corroborated with Mahesh and Saravanakumar (2020), the scholars studied the nexus between ERM and workplace performance. The research study employed qualitative methodology and the findings revealed that internal workplace relationships exchanges that involve employer, the employee and the company, significantly improves organizational performance. Thus,

operationalization of cross-functional relationship management by the mobile telecommunication firms in Nigeria will improve their marketing performance. We therefore state the following hypotheses.

- Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between cooperation and employee commitment of mobile telecommunication firms in Nigeria
- Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between cooperation and customer retention of mobile telecommunication firms in Nigeria
- Ho₃: There is no significant relationship between shared value and employee commitment of mobile telecommunication firms in Nigeria
- Ho₄: There is no significant relationship between shared value and customer retention of mobile telecommunication firms in Nigeria

Methodology

This study employed quantitative research methods. The cross sectional survey research design was adopted with an explanatory research design and a correlational method of investigation. The population of the study was the four mobile telecommunication companies in Nigeria; Globacom Nigeria limited, MTN Nigeria plc, Airtel Nigeria limited and 9mobile Nigeria limited. A census study was carried out. Hence, the population was fully studied. However, seven respondents were drawn from each organization. The respondents are marketing director, operations director, human resource director, ICT director, finance director, corporate communications director and the general manager that is, twenty eighty directors constituted the respondents of the study. The method of data collection was primary source. With a thirty eighty item questionnaire of five point likert scale, twenty eighty copies of the study instrument were distributed to the executive directors, seven copies to each company's executive directors. The generated data after cleansing/editing were analysed with univariate and bivariate statistics. The Pearson Product Moment correlation (PPMC) was used to measure the level of significance with the aid of the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 25.0

Results and Discussions

Univariate Analysis

Table 4.1 Demographic Analysis of Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Field Report		
Questionnaire distributed	28	100
Questionnaire returned	27	96
Questionnaire valid/used	25	89
Gender Distribution		
Male	15	60
Female	10	40
Total	25	100
Age Distribution (Years)		

39-49	12	48
50-59	13	52
Total	25	100
Marital Status		
Married	21	84
Single	4	16
Total	25	100
Educational Attainment		
HND/1 st Degree	15	60
Master's Degree	7	28
Ph.D	25	12
Total		100
Working Experience (Years)		
11-15	13	52
16-20	8	32
21-25	4	16
Total	25	100

Source: Survey Data, 2024

Table 4.1 explained the demographic information of the directors of the mobile telecommunication companies operating in Nigeria. The field report revealed that out of the 28 copies of the questionnaire distributed only 25 copies representing 89% were validly used after editing/data cleansing. Gender distribution of respondents revealed that fifteen directors constituting 60% were male while directors representing (40%) were female. Thus, the industry is made up of more of male executive directors. The age distribution of respondents shows that 12 (48%) respondents were in the age range of 39-49, 13 (52%) respondents were in the age range of 50-59. The industry comprises young executive directors. Marital information revealed that 21(84%) respondents were married while 4(16%) respondents were single. The respondents are more of married executives. The educational attainment of the directors shows that 15(60%) of the respondents had HND/1st degrees, 7(28%) respondents were master's degree holders while 3(12%) respondents were PhD holders. The working experience of the directors revealed that 13(52%) respondents had worked for 11-15 years, 8(32%) respondents had worked for 16-20 years, while 4(16%) respondents had worked for 21-25 years. Thus, respondents have considerable number of years of working experience.

Bivariate Analysis

Hypothesis 1

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between cooperation and employee commitment of mobile telecommunication firms in Nigeria

H_{A1}: There is significant relationship between cooperation and employee commitment of mobile telecommunication firms in Nigeria

Table 4.2 Correlation between Cooperation and Employee Commitment

		Correlation	
		Cooperation	Employee Commitment
Cooperation	Pearson Corr.	1	0.748
	Sig. (2 tailed)		0.012
	N	25	25
Employee Commitment	Pearson Corr.	0.748	1
	Sig. (2 tailed)	0.012	
	N	25	25

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Source: SPSS Output version, 25.0 (2024)

Table 4.2, shows the correlation coefficient of 0.748 which reveals a positive and very strong relationship between cooperation and employee commitment. The probability (p) value is 0.012 which is less than the critical value of 0.05. We therefore, reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis. Thus, cooperation has significant relationship with employee commitment of mobile telecommunication firms in Nigeria.

Hypothesis 2

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between cooperation and customer retention of mobile telecommunication firms in Nigeria

H_{A2}: There is significant relationship between cooperation and customer retention of mobile telecommunication firms in Nigeria

Table 4.3 Correlation between Cooperation and Customer Retention

		Correlation	
		Cooperation	Customer Retention
Cooperation	Pearson Corr.	1	0.712
	Sig. (2 tailed)		0.022
	N	25	25
Customer Retention	Pearson Corr.	0.712	1
	Sig. (2 tailed)	0.022	
	N	25	25

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Source: SPSS Output version, 25.0 (2024)

Table 4.3 explained the correlation between cooperation and customer retention. The correlation coefficient is 0.712 indicating a positive and very strong relationship existing between cooperation and customer retention. The probability value is 0.022 which is less than the critical value of 0.05. We therefore reject the null hypothesis at

the 95% level of confidence. Thus, there is significant relationship between cooperation and customer retention of mobile telecommunication firms in Nigeria.

Hypothesis 3

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between shared value and employee commitment of mobile telecommunication firms in Nigeria

H_{A3}: There is significant relationship between shared value and employee commitment of mobile telecommunication firms in Nigeria

Table 4.4 Correlation between Shared Value and Employee Commitment

		Correlation	
		Shared Value	Employee Commitment
Shared Value	Pearson Corr.	1	0.824
	Sig. (2 tailed)		0.012
	N	25	25
Employee Commitment	Pearson Corr.	0.824	1
	Sig. (2 tailed)	0.012	
	N	25	25
*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)			

Source: SPSS Output version, 25.0 (2024)

Table 4.4 illustrates the correlation between shared value and employee commitment of mobile telecommunication firms in Nigeria. The correlation coefficient is 0.824 indicating a positive and very strong relationship existing between shared value and employee commitment. The probability value is 0.012 which is less than the critical value of 0.05. We therefore, reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis at the 95% level of confidence. Thus, there is significant relationship between shared value and employee commitment of mobile telecommunication firms in Nigeria.

Hypothesis 4

H₀₄: There is no significant relationship between shared value and customer retention of mobile telecommunication firms in Nigeria

H_{A4}: There is no significant relationship between shared value and customer retention of mobile telecommunication firms in Nigeria

Table 4.5 Correlation between Cooperation and Retention

		Correlation	
Shared Value		Shared Value	Customer Retention
	Pearson Corr.	1	0.704
	Sig. (2 tailed)		0.011
Customer Retention	N	25	25
	Pearson Corr.	0.704	1
	Sig. (2 tailed)	0.011	
		N	25

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Source: SPSS Output version, 25.0 (2024)

Table 4.5 explained the correlation between shared value and customer retention. The correlation coefficient is 0.704, indicating a positive and very strong relationship existing between shared value and customer retention. Again, the probability (p) value is 0.011 which is less than the critical value of 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternate hypothesis is accepted at the 95% level of confidence. Thus, there is significant relationship between shared value and customer retention of mobile telecommunication firms in Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

This study investigated the relationship between cross-functional relationship management and marketing performance. From the empirical results, it was revealed that cross-functional relationship management and its dimensions; cooperation and shared value have positive and significant relationship with marketing performance and its measures; employee commitment and customer retention in a context specific of mobile telecommunication firms in Nigeria. These findings are consistent with the works of Akuffo (2020) who evaluated the effect of cross-functional teams on innovation performance in the context of manufacturing enterprises. It was discovered that cross functional team collaboration significantly improves innovation performance.

Furthermore, the results of our research efforts is also highly supported with the empirical study of Chen (2022), the author carried out an examination on the links of cross-functional integration of production – marketing, BTO competitive advantages and business performance in the context of Chinese manufacturing organization. With the aid of structural equation modeling, it was revealed that production – marketing, integration in the work organization significantly improves business competitiveness, marketing outcomes and firm's financial performance in a context specific of Chinese manufacturing firms. Again, our findings are also in agreement with Helfert & Gemuenden (2011), the scholars evaluated relationship marketing team design as a predictor for relationship effectiveness in the workplace. The study made use of LISREL analysis and findings of the study revealed that relationship marketing

significantly improves organizational effectiveness. Thus, cross-functional relationship management significantly improves marketing performance. This is in agreement with the social network theory. For the telecommunication firms in Nigeria to achieve superior marketing performance, collaboration and network of activities among the functional units of the organization should be encourage. Collaboration in firm's shared values, transferable knowledge and skills among with cooperation will significantly enhance marketing performance (Granovetter, 1983; Burt, 1992).

Conclusion

This study investigated the relationship between cross-functional relationship management and marketing performance in the context of mobile telecommunication firms in Nigeria. From the empirical results, we conclude that, cross-functional relationship management significantly improves marketing performance of mobile telecommunication firms in Nigeria.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made;

- i. Management of the telecommunication companies in Nigeria should encourage cross-functional team collaborations and relationships building. This will drive employee commitment, customer retention and significantly improve marketing performance.
- ii. The mobile telecommunication players in Nigeria should operationalize cross-functional cooperation and knowledge sharing in the workplace. This will enhance employee commitment, customer retention and successfully improve marketing performance.
- iii. Top echelon management of the mobile telecommunication companies in Nigeria should transmit the organizations shared values across the organizations functions. This will enhance team spirit, broader collaborations between marketing and other organizations functions. This will significantly improve marketing performance of the work organization.
- iv. The management of the telecommunication firms in Nigeria should ensure that there should be internal marketing orientation which will ensure broader shared value and cooperation among employees, enhance employee work commitment and significantly improve marketing performance.

Contribution to Knowledge

Studies were carried out around the constructs of cross-functional relationship management and business performance in different contexts (Chen, 2022; Akuffo, 2020; Gaur & Ebrahini, 2013; Mahesh & Sara-vanakina, 2020). Most of these studies employed qualitative research methods, except for Chen (2022), who employed structural equation modeling. Again, the link between cross-functional relationship

management and marketing performance among Nigeria's mobile telecommunication firms is missing in the literature. This study addresses both domain and methodological gaps in the cross-functional relationship management and marketing performance literature. Thus, this study has filled the void in the literature of cross-functional relationship management and marketing performance.

Theoretical/Practical Implications

The theoretical implication of this study is that this resource material will be of valuable intellectual asset for students, scholars and academics in the area of business management, marketing and entrepreneurship. The practical or managerial value of this study is that practitioners in the telecommunication industry and other sectors will be well guided in managing personal and workplace relationships with their interlinking functions to the marketing department.

Suggestions for Further Studies

This study can be replicated in other industries or sectors in Nigeria, other nations and cultures by further researchers. Scholars can also introduce a causal study approach, they can also introduce moderating variables like organizational structure or culture. This is to see whether similar or different results will be obtained.

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