VOL. 13 NO. 7,
AUGUST, 2026
E-ISSN 3026-9679
P-ISSN 3026-9423

African Scholar Publications & Research International
www.africanscholarpub.com

Journal of Business Dev. and Management Res. (JBDMR)

Physical Distribution and Marketing Performance of Beverage Firms in South East Nigeria

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.70382/ajbdmr.v13i7.0102

Abstract
This study examined the relationship between physical distribution and marketing performance of beverage firms in South East Nigeria. The study employed descriptive survey research design and questionnaire was used as the instrument of data collection. The data collected were analyzed using mean statistic. More so, Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) at 0.05 level of significance through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 23.0) was used to test the hypotheses. The study revealed that there is significant relationship between transportation system and sales volume; transportation system significantly relates with customer retention; there is significant association between warehousing and sales volume and there is significant nexus between warehousing and customer retention. The study therefore concludes that the achievement of higher performance in beverage firms depends on the effectiveness of physical distribution. Based on the findings, the study recommends that the government should invest more on road, rail and other transport systems to enhance effective and efficient transportation of products. Furthermore, beverage manufacturing firms should make their transport vehicle very effective so as to utilize such in delivering products to their channel members so as to enhance customer patronage and customer retention.

Keywords: physical distribution, marketing performance, transportation system, sales volume, customer retention, warehousing.

Introduction

Marketing can only achieve its goal in production firms when the manufactured goods get to the final consumers, hence the need for the effectiveness of physical distribution process. Physical distribution encompasses activities such as transportation, warehousing, inventory management, order processing, and material handling. However, this study focuses on transportation system and warehousing as proxies of physical distribution. Transportation facilitates

the movement of products from manufacturers to distributors, wholesalers, retailers, and final consumers. An efficient transportation system can ensure timely delivery, expand market coverage, reduce product shortages, and improve product availability. Conversely, transportation delays, poor infrastructure, rising operating costs, and inefficient delivery arrangements may negatively affect a firm's ability to serve its market effectively.

Warehousing is another important component of physical distribution. It involves the receipt, storage, protection, handling, and release of products before they reach customers or other members of the distribution channel. Effective warehousing enables firms to maintain adequate product availability, respond to fluctuations in demand, reduce stock-out situations, and facilitate timely order fulfilment. Poor storage facilities and inefficient warehouse management, on the other hand, may result in product damage, inventory shortages, increased operating costs, and delays in product delivery.

Empirical evidence from Nigerian fast-moving consumer goods firms indicates that transportation management is significantly associated with marketing performance (Bisibe & Otely, 2014; Neche & Neche, 2025). On the other hand, effective warehousing can contribute to improved organisational and marketing outcomes by ensuring that products are available when and where they are required (Ogwumike, 2021). The importance of physical distribution is particularly evident in the beverage manufacturing industry, where products are frequently purchased and distributed through extensive networks of distributors, wholesalers, retailers, supermarkets, hotels, restaurants, and other outlets. Beverage firms are required to move large quantities of finished products from manufacturing plants to geographically dispersed markets while ensuring timely delivery and proper product handling. Since consumers generally expect their preferred beverage brands to be readily available, firms that experience distribution inefficiencies may lose sales opportunities and customers to competing brands. Consequently, effective transportation and warehousing are essential for maintaining product availability and achieving favourable market outcomes (Okeudo, 2020).

The relationship between physical distribution and marketing performance can therefore be viewed from the perspective that transportation and warehousing provide an essential link between production and consumption (Ike, 2019).

Statement of the Problem

The contribution of physical distribution systems on consumer access to products, business growth, sustainability, or performance cannot be neglected. Notwithstanding, Nwankwo (2018) emphasized the neglect of effective physical distribution channels in business, and the major factors hindering effective physical distribution to include poor management, insufficient fund, lack of knowledge on distribution strategy, inadequate distribution machineries, and lack of support. Considering the above, it becomes clear that most manufacturing business firms may not be able to achieve higher performance in the face of the challenges affecting physical distribution system implementation.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the relationship between physical distribution and marketing performance of beverage firms in South East Nigeria. Specific objectives of this study are to:

1. examine the relationship between transportation system and sales volume.
2. assess the extent transportation system relates with customer retention.
3. assess the association between warehousing and sales volume.
4. investigate the nexus between warehousing and customer retention.

Research Questions

Base on the objectives the study, the following research questions were posed for the study.

1. What is the relationship between transportation system and sales volume?

2. To what extent does transportation system relate with customer retention?
3. What is the association between warehousing and sales volume?
4. What is the nexus between warehousing and customer retention?

Research Hypotheses

From the research objectives and research questions, the following hypotheses guided the study.

Ho_1: There is no significant relationship between transportation system and sales volume.

Ho_2: Transportation system does not significantly relate with customer retention.

Ho_3: There is no significant association between warehousing and sales volume.

Ho_4: There is no significant nexus between warehousing and customer retention.

Physical Distribution

Physical distribution entail that manufacturing concerns effectively use the transportation system, Warehousing, and Information Systems to make its products available to the final consumers**.** The physical distribution process begins when a supplier receives an order from a customer. Achison (2020) defined physical distribution as the process of getting products and services from producer to consumer or users, when and where they are needed. It provides time, place, possession utility and the transfer of ownership. Revzan (2021) defined physical distribution as managerial battle field in which marketing strategy and tactics either succeed or fail. Distribution involves the physical flow of products from the producer to the consumer.

According to Kotler and Armstrong (2011) physical distribution is the task involved in planning, implementing and controlling the physical flow of materials, final goods and related information from point of origin to points of consumption to meet customer requirements at a profit. Schewe and Smith (2010) defined physical distribution as the practical movement of products to the ultimate consumers. Physical distribution is not complete until goods reach the final consumers and products are worthless until they are made available to those who need them. It is this process of making goods available to those that need them that gives rise to physical distribution basis in a marketing strategy.

Marketing Performance

According to Adewale (2022) marketing performance encompasses four specific areas of firm outcomes: (a) financial performance (profit, return on assets, return on investments, etc.); (b) product market performance (patronage/sales, market share, etc); (c) shareholder return (total shareholder return, economic value added, etc.); and organizational viability (productivity of firm, industrial peace and harmony, and employee effectiveness/efficiency). To Kotler and Keller (2016), market performance of organization means that the organization is having high level of advantage, high level of sales, profitability and market values.

Depot Theory

The profounder of depot theory is Aspin wall in 1958. According to Aspinwall's (1958) depot theory emphasized the need to move goods (through transportation) and store it in a warehouse for sales to the customers. Here, depot theory stipulates that the availability of different depot in different locations, their accessibility, their sizeability etc determines the level of effective physical distribution for business firms. When the above issues of depot are favourable, it will contribute to sales volume increase, customer retention and market expansion for the business.

System Theory

System theory was propounded by Von Vantalanfy in 1940s. Distribution control system can be viewed as a system of components linked together for the efficient movement of products. Using a system approach to describe distribution control system, the components include; transportation, and

warehousing. These components are interrelated, hence: decisions made in one area affect the relative efficiency of others. For example, a noodles business firms may transport finished products by road and store the goods in a warehousing before sales. In this case, plans on distribution have to cover both transportation, and warehousing to achieve improved patronage.

Empirical Review

Ola and Shola (2024) worked on distribution control system and profitability of Dufil Prima Food Plc, Lagos State, Nigeria. Data were collected through survey questionnaire, and analysed through t-test. It found that distribution control system leads to improve profitability.

Achike, Ibeh and Ogwumike (2024) focused on the effect of distribution control on the marketing performance of cement producing firms in Nigeria using Dangote Cement Company, Calabar as the focal point. Data collected were analyzed using mean statistics. Pearson correlation, with the help of SPSS 21.0 and Microsoft Excel software, were used to test the hypotheses. The findings revealed that warehousing capacity influences sales volume, transport outsourcing influences market expansion and information systems enhance customer acquisition.

Adewale (2022) examined management control system in the management of Nigeria customs service. It recognises two main groups of players in the Nigeria customs service namely, administration and enforcement from which 100 officers responded to a validated questionnaire titled 'Nigeria Custom Service Participation Questionnaire' (NCSPQ) which was validated and the reliability coefficient was found to be 0.71. Three research questions and three hypotheses were raised and tested in the study. Analysis of data reveals that significant differences existed between internal control system and proper accountability. The study also ascertains that effective management control system ensures high revenue generation.

Chukwueke (2022) examined distribution control system and patronage in Guinness Nigeria Plc Aba, Abia State. The study employed survey research design and questionnaire was used as the instrument of data collection. The 129 senior and management staff of Guinness Aba, Abia State made up the population, and the entire population were used as sample through census method. Though only 120 were returned and used. The data collected were analysed using mean statistics. More so, Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) at 0.05 level of significance through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 20.0) was used to test the hypotheses. The findings revealed that there is significant relationship between transportation system and sales volume; transportation system enhances customer retention; warehousing influences sales volume; and there is significant relationship between warehousing and customer retention.

Beky (2021) focused on management control practices and hotel effectiveness in Lagos State as focal point. Survey research design was used and questionnaire served as the instrument for data collection. The data collected were presented in tables and analysed using Pearson correlation coefficient. The findings revealed that there is significant effect of management control on market share of hotels; there is significant effect of customer retention on customer loyalty in hotels.

Ola (2018) focused on management control system and effectiveness of cosmetics companies in Lagos State. It used survey, collected through questionnaire and used ANOVA. It found that MCS enhance distribution, and sales effectiveness.

METHODOLOGY

In this study, survey research design was used. Survey research has as its aim not only the collection of data, but the discovery of meaning in the data collected so that the facts and events can be better interpreted, explained and understood.

Population is the total number of people in the organization of study. The population of the study comprised four (4) beverage firms in South East Nigeria. The staff strength for the firms is 316. It covered the employees in production unit, marketing/sales unit and management staff of beverage firms

in South East Nigeria, specifically covering Seven-up bottling company Abia State (89), Nigeria Bottling Company, Imo State (108), International Breweries, Anambra State (62), and Seven-up bottling company, Enugu State (57) (**Source:** personnel unit of the Organisations Under Study, 2026). The researcher used the four beverage companies because they are the most viable beverage firms in the zone. More so, staff in production and sale/marketing units were used because they are in position to provide information on indices of independent/dependent variables. In addition, the management staff of the companies were used because they are the people who take decisions on physical distribution and they can provide information on both physical distribution and marketing performance of the companies. These companies are further presented in the table below.

Table 1: Study organisation and population.

S/N	Name of Company	Population
1	Seven-up bottling company Abia State	89
2	Nigeria Bottling Company, Imo State	108
3	International Breweries, Anambra State	62
4	Nigeria brewery, Enugu State	57
	Total	**316 staff**

Source: Personnel Units of the Organisations Under Study, 2026

The sample size is 177. To determine the sample size the formula of Taro Yamane was used and it gave 177. The researcher used purposive sampling technique so as to select respondents who are available/accessible and who can effectively respond to the questionnaire.
For this study, researcher used questionnaire as the instrument to gather responses from the respondents. The data collected were be analysed using Simple Percentages, Mean Statistics and The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (at 0.05% level of significance) aided by SPSS version 23.0.

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Out of 177copies of the questionnaire distributed, only 120 copies were used.

Research Questions one: What is the relationship between transportation system and sales volume?

Table 2: Responses on the relationship between transportation system and sales volume.

S/N	Statement	Scale							
		SA (4)	**A (3)**	**D (2)**	**SD (1)**	**n**	**∑X**	$\bar{X}$	**Dec.**
1	In my beverage company, transport out sourcing highly enhances sales performance	46	63	6	5	120	390	3.3	Positive
2	My factory's current arrangement of transport enhances its distribution performance	60	50	4	6	120	404	3.4	Positive
3	Our factory's trucks are in good conditions and can ensure improve sales	56	59	2	3	120	408	3.4	Positive
4	The factory has sufficient motor to distribute drinks to the customers	48	65	2	5	120	396	3.3	Positive
5	Out sourced transport for my beverage performs better in the factory's distribution and enhance the performance	50	59	6	5	120	394	3.3	Positive
6	In my company, Outsourced transport perform better than the factory's own transport in distribution	48	65	2	5	120	396	3.3	Positive
7	In our company Outsourced transport reduced costs through lower freight charges, less inventory in transit and brought better transport visibility	40	74	4	2	120	392	3.3	Positive
8	In our company, Outsourced transportation provide on-time delivery performance to the factory	50	59	6	5	120	394	3.3	Positive
9	In our company Outsourced transport enhances delivery schedule to the factory	72	41	4	3	120	422	3.5	Positive
	Grand mean							**3.3**	

Source: field survey, 2026

It was discovered in table 2 that items 1 to 9 are all positive. This is because item 1 has a mean of 3.3, item 2 has a mean of 3.4, item 3 has a mean of 3.4, item 4 has a mean of 3.3, item 5 has a mean of 3.3, item 6 has a mean of 3.3, item 7 has a mean of 3.3, item 8 has a mean of 3.3 and item 9 has a mean of 3.5, since all the items have mean scores more than 2.5 signifies that there is significant relationship between transportation system and sales volume.

Research question two: To what extent does transportation system relate with customer retention?
Table 3: Responses on the extent transportation system relates with customer retention.

S/N	Statement	Scale							
		SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	n	∑X	$\bar{X}$	Dec.
1	My company Transportation system enhances customer retention	68	47	3	2	120	421	3.5	Positive
2	Improved transportation system in our company contributes to organizational high customer base	72	41	4	3	120	422	3.5	Positive
3	Transportation system lead to customer increase in my company	56	59	2	3	120	408	3.4	Positive
4	Transportation control system contributes to high customer acquisition in our company	68	47	3	2	120	421	3.5	Positive
5	Transportation control system enhances customer preference in my company	56	59	2	3	120	408	3.4	Positive
6	My company fully use improve transport system in distribution	46	63	6	5	120	390	3.3	Positive
7	Our customer retention is based on the availability of our products in the market which is made possible through effective transport system	60	50	4	6	120	404	3.4	Positive
8	Distribution function inour company is appropriately synchronized with ordering, procurement and warehousing system in our company	70	41	5	4	120	417	3.5	Positive
9	Good road transport leads to efficiency of service and improve patronage in our company	70	41	5	4	120	417	3.5	Positive
	Grand mean							**3.4**	

Source: field survey, 2026

It was discovered in table 3 that items 1 to 9 were all positive. This is because item 1 has a mean of 3.5, item 2 a mean of 3.5, item 3 a mean of 3.4, item 4 a mean of 3.5, item 5 a mean of 3.4, item 6 a mean of 3.3, item 7 a mean of 3.4, item 8 a mean of 3.5 and item 9 a mean of 3.5. Since all the items have mean scores more than 2.5 shows that transportation system enhances customer retention.

Research Question Three: What is the association between warehousing and sales volume?
Table 4: Responses on the association between warehousing and sales volume.

S/N	Statement	Scale							
		SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	n	∑X	$\bar{X}$	Dec.
1	In my organization, available warehousing leads to organizational growth	60	50	4	6	120	392	3.3	Positive
2	Storage management enhances patronage in our company	70	41	5	4	120	408	3.4	Positive
3	Large warehousing could attract more patronage in our company	50	59	6	5	120	390	3.3	Positive
4	In my organization, The conduciveness of the warehousing enhances sales	68	47	3	2	120	404	3.4	Positive
5	In my organization , High sales could be achieved through the nearness of the warehousing	72	41	4	3	120	417	3.5	Positive

S/N	Statement	Scale							
		SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	n	∑X	$\bar{X}$	Dec.
6	Storage facilities leads to organizational recognition In my organization	48	65	2	5	120	394	3.3	Positive
7	In our beverage firm, Customer satisfaction are achieved through channel of distribution	40	74	4	2	120	421	3.5	Positive
8	In our beverage firm, Warehouse management contribute to customer knowledge of organizational products	56	59	2	3	120	422	3.5	Positive
9	In our beverage firm, Warehousing management leads to high sales of products and its accessibility	46	63	6	5	120	396	3.3	Positive
	Grand mean							**3.4**	

Source: field survey, 2026

It was discovered in table 4 that items 1 to 9 were all positive. This is because item 1 has a mean of 3.3, item 2 a mean of 3.4, item 3 a mean of 3.3, item 4 a mean of 3.4, item 5 a mean of 3.5, item 6 a mean of 3.3, item 7 a mean of 3.5, item 8 a mean of 3.5 and item 9 a mean of 3.3. Since all the items have mean scores more than 2.5 indicates that there is significant association between warehousing and sales volume.

Research Question four: What is the nexus between warehousingand customer retention?
Table 5: Responses on the nexus between warehousing and customer retention.

S/N	Statement	Scale							
		SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	n	∑X	$\bar{X}$	Dec.
1	In our beverage firm, Warehouse system makes the company to reach more new customers	68	47	3	2	120	421	3.5	Positive
2	In our beverage firm, Warehousing contributes to organizational high customer base	72	41	4	3	120	422	3.5	Positive
3	Warehousing enhances nearness of the products to customer which enhances retention in our beverage firm	48	65	2	5	120	396	3.3	Positive
4	The efficiency of warehouse management contributes to high customer acquisition In our beverage firm,	50	59	6	5	120	394	3.3	Positive
5	The inventory control system of our firm leads to customer satisfaction and retention	56	59	2	3	120	408	3.4	Positive
6	Warehousing contributes to effective distribution In our beverage firm	46	63	6	5	120	390	3.3	Positive
7	In our beverage firm, Warehousing leads to profitability through customer retention	60	50	4	6	120	404	3.4	Positive
	Grand mean							**3.4**	

Source: field survey, 2026

It was discovered in table 5 that items 1 to 7 were all positive. This is because item 1 has a mean of 3.5, item 2 a mean of 3.5, item 3 a mean of 3.3, item 4 a mean of 3.3, item 5 a mean of 3.4, item 6 a mean

of 3.3 and item 7 a mean of 3.4. Since all the items have mean scores more than 2.5 signifies that there is significant nexus between warehousing and customer retention.

Testing of Research Hypotheses

Table 6: Concise Table for Hypotheses Testing

S/N	Hypotheses	Statistical Tools Applied (Software Results)	Result
Hi_1	There is significant relationship between transportation system and sales volume	Pearson Correlation = 0.853 Critical value = 0.05 P –Value 0.000 n = 120 Grand mean = 3.3	**VALID**
Hi_2	Transportation system relate with customer retention	Pearson Correlation = 0.871 Critical value = 0.05 P –Value 0.000 n = 120 Grand mean = 3.4	**VALID**
Hi_3	There is significant association between warehousing and sales volume.	Pearson Correlation = 0.871 Critical value = 0.05 P –Value 0.000 n = 120 Grand mean = 3.4	**VALID**
Hi_4	There is significant nexus between warehousing and customer retention.	Pearson Correlation = 0.871 Critical value = 0.05 P –Value 0.000 n = 120 Grand mean = 3.4	**VALID**

Discussion of Findings

Test of hypothesis one reveals that there is significant relationship between transportation system and sales volume with a grand mean of 3.3 and Pearson r of 0.853. The findings complement Ike (2019) assertion that efficient and efficiency of transport system which adds value to vehicular movements will lead to business growth, sustainability and market penetration.

Test of hypothesis two reveals that transportation system relates with customer retention with a grand mean of 3.4 and Pearson r of 0.871. The result supports Okeudo (2020) view that effective transportation system will make firm products available to consumers and encourage more patronage, retention and acquisition of new customers.

Test of hypothesis three reveals that there is significant association between warehousing and sales volume with a grand mean of 3.4 and Pearson r of 0.871. This perspective converges with Smritiri (2015) study that warehousing enhances availability of products and therefore encourages sales increase and firm growth.

Test of hypothesis four reveals that there is significant nexus between warehousing and customer retention with a grand mean of 3.4 and Pearson r of 0.871. In line with the above findings Workalemahu (2018) asserted that effective warehousing system leads to customer retention.

Conclusion

Basically, there will be no organizational growth if the product produced did not get to the final consumers who use the product. In this direction, distributive chain covers activities on warehousing,

and transportation systems from the organization to the end users. For that, every manufacturing firm especially in noodle now tries to adopt effective distribution control system so as to achieve high sales, customer retention and customer acquisition. This study therefore concludes that the achievement of organizational performance, especially in manufacturing industry (beverage firms), depends on the extent to which distribution control system is utilize very practicable, effective and efficient in the system.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, it was recommended that:

1. The government should invest more on road, rail and other transport systems to enhance effective and efficient transportation of products for companies to achieve distribution control system.
2. Beverage manufacturing firms should effectively make their transport vehicle very effective so as to utilize such in delivering products to their channels to achieve more patronage, sales and customer retention.
3. Beverage manufacturing companies should constantly expand their warehouse base to ensure that products are effectively distributed to the warehouse to enhance high sales, and increase customer base.
4. Beverage manufacturing companies should emphasis effective warehouse control management as that is the major way of making their products regularly available to consumer.

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