



International Journal of Research in Academic World



Received: 21/November/2024

IJRAW: 2024; 3(12):181-186

Accepted: 27/December/2024

Nestle, Afghanistan: An Analytical Study on Perception of Customs with Reference to Sales Promotion

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Abstract

This analytical study delves into the intriguing realm of Nestlé's sales promotional activities in Afghanistan, offering insights into how these strategies impact brand loyalty, market share, and consumer behaviour. This analysis provides a nuanced understanding of how Nestlé's sales promotion activities resonate with Afghan consumers. A fundamental finding of this study pertains to the demographics of Afghanistan, characterized by a predominantly youthful population. Furthermore, the gender distribution among the participants revealed an overrepresentation of males, highlighting a potential area for Nestlé to tailor its marketing efforts to address this demographic imbalance. The study revealed disparities in participation in Nestlé's sales promotions, with free samples and discounts being the most engaging promotional tools. The study also revealed that a significant portion of participants did not participate in these activities, suggesting room for improvement in targeting and communication strategies to reach a broader audience. This study's recommendations provide actionable insights for Nestlé, including diversifying promotional strategies, enhancing targeting, fostering creativity, and strengthening ethical practices. These recommendations can empower Nestlé to refine its sales promotion activities in Afghanistan, align them more effectively with consumer expectations, and further solidify its market position.

Keywords: Afghanistan, nestle, sales promotion, brand loyalty, market share, consumer behaviour.

Introduction

Sales promotion is a part of marketing that aims to boost immediate sales and motivate customer action. It uses various techniques, such as discounts, coupons, contests, and loyalty programs, to persuade customers to buy a product or take a desired action.

The importance of marketing in sales promotion lies in its ability to create awareness and generate demand for promotional activities. Effective marketing strategies can help businesses convey their sales promotions to the target audience, build anticipation, and develop a sense of urgency, thereby increasing the likelihood of customer participation.

Marketing is the art and science of creating customer value by understanding their needs and wants and delivering satisfying solutions.

Following are some other well-known definitions of marketing:

- **Philip Kotler:** "Marketing is the art and science of identifying, creating, and delivering value to satisfy the needs of a target market at a profit."
- **Peter Drucker:** "The aim of marketing is to know and understand the customer so well that the product or service fits them perfectly and sells itself."
- **Seth Godin:** "Marketing is the art of telling a story that resonates with your audience and then spreads."

- **Theodore Levitt:** "Marketing is the process of creating and delivering products and services that customers consider valuable while also managing customer relationships to build loyalty and long-term brand equity."

Review of Nestle, Afghanistan and its Product Offerings

Nestlé is a renowned multinational food and Beverage Company with a rich history and global presence. Nestlé's origins date back to 1866 when a Swiss pharmacist named Henri Nestlé created "Farine Lactée," an infant formula that saved lives. This innovative product was the first step in Nestlé's journey to improve nutrition and well-being. Nestlé continued to develop quality and innovative products, such as condensed milk, chocolate, and other dairy products, becoming a trusted brand in the food industry. Nestlé, the globally recognized food and Beverage Company, has a notable presence in Afghanistan.

Nestlé has had a significant presence in Afghanistan for many years, operating through its subsidiary, Nestlé Pakistan. To distribute Nestlé products in Afghanistan, Nestlé Pakistan established a partnership with the local company Habib Gulzar Ltd. Initially, all Nestlé products were imported from Pakistan.

In 2017, Nestlé took a step further by establishing Nestlé Afghanistan under the management of Nestlé Pakistan. This

allowed for partial manufacturing of certain Nestlé products within Afghanistan while the remaining products were still imported from Pakistan. The Nestlé team in Afghanistan was crucial in managing distribution operations, devising sales strategies, and implementing promotional activities. Throughout this time, they reported directly to Nestlé Pakistan.

In 2023, faced with various challenges and risks, including security concerns, political instability, international sanctions, infrastructure issues, economic constraints, and reputational considerations, Nestlé decided to wind up its operations in Afghanistan. However, this did not mark the end of Nestlé's presence in the country. Nestlé continued its operations in Afghanistan through Nestlé Pakistan and maintained its longstanding partnership with Habib Gulzar Ltd. The Nestlé team in Afghanistan remained in their roles, overseeing distribution operations and reporting to Nestlé Pakistan. Presently, all Nestlé products in Afghanistan are imported from Pakistan.

Nestlé's ongoing presence in Afghanistan exemplifies its ability to adapt to changing circumstances and uphold its commitment to serving Afghan consumers. The partnership with Habib Gulzar Ltd and the dedication of the Nestlé team in Afghanistan ensure the availability and quality of Nestlé products in the Afghan market.

Nestlé offers a diverse range of products in Afghanistan, catering to the needs and preferences of Afghan consumers. This section provides an overview of Nestlé's product offerings, divided into two categories: those directly imported and distributed by Nestlé Pakistan and those imported by local traders from various countries.

Products Imported and Distributed by Nestlé Pakistan: Under the supervision of Nestlé's team in Afghanistan, Nestlé Pakistan imports and distributes a selection of high-quality products, including:

- Milkpack uht
- Milkpack cream
- Nido fortigrow
- Lactogen
- Cerelac
- Everyday milk powder
- Nestlé fruta vital

Products Imported by Local Traders: Apart from the products directly imported and distributed by Nestlé Pakistan, local traders import a variety of Nestlé products from different countries. These include but are not limited to:

- Nescafé
- Nescafé gold
- Nido powder milk (from other countries)
- Kitkat chocolates
- Dark chocolates
- Chocolate bars
- Snacks
- Maggie (instant noodles)

Unique Aspects and Challenges of Nestlé, Afghanistan

Operating in Afghanistan presents unique aspects and challenges for Nestlé. The country's cultural richness and culinary traditions allow Nestlé to tailor its products to local preferences. Nestlé aims to balance preserving traditional flavors and introducing innovative offerings that cater to the evolving needs of Afghan consumers.

However, Nestlé faces specific challenges in Afghanistan, including infrastructure limitations, logistics complexities, and the dynamic market landscape. Establishing efficient distribution networks requires careful planning and investment, particularly in remote areas. Furthermore, navigating the complex business environment, managing local partnerships, and respecting cultural sensitivities are crucial for Nestlé.

The challenges escalated when the Taliban assumed control of the Afghan government in August 2021. Nestlé encountered additional obstacles, such as:

- i). Security concerns endangering the safety of employees and operations.
- ii). Political instability and uncertainty impact the legal and regulatory framework.
- iii). International sanctions and isolation hinder trade and financial transactions.
- iv). Economic challenges reduce consumer demand and purchasing power.

In response to these challenges, Nestlé decided to wind up Nestlé Afghanistan in 2023. However, the company remains committed to Afghanistan by operating through Nestlé Pakistan and maintaining its enduring partnership with Habib Gulzar Ltd. The dedicated Nestlé team in Afghanistan oversees distribution operations, reporting to Nestlé Pakistan. By addressing these unique aspects and challenges, Nestlé demonstrates its resilience and commitment to serving Afghan consumers while adapting to the evolving socio-political landscape in Afghanistan.

Research Approach

In today's highly competitive business landscape, effective sales promotion activities have become essential for companies to attract and retain customers. This analytical study intends to look into the sales promotional activities of Nestlé in Afghanistan and analyse how they affect brand loyalty, market share, and customer behaviour. This research will add significant knowledge and practical implications for academia and industry by thoroughly examining the promotional methods used by Nestlé.

This study was conducted to fill a significant research gap in the area of sales promotion activities in Afghanistan. Sales promotion is essential in influencing consumer purchase decisions and brand perception, but more research on Nestlé's sales promotion activities in this country needs to be done. This study provides a detailed analysis of Nestlé's promotional activities, their effectiveness, and how they align with local market dynamics. As a result, this analytical study on the sales promotional activities of Nestlé in Afghanistan is highly significant for both theoretical and practical fields.

The present study adopts a descriptive research design to explore and analyse the sales promotional activities of Nestlé in Afghanistan. A questionnaire was utilized as the research instrument to collect consumer data, allowing for a systematic and structured approach to gathering information about their perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours toward Nestlé's sales promotion strategies.

The main objectives are

- To examine the effectiveness of Nestlé's sales promotional activities in Afghanistan.
- To identify the most impactful sales promotion tools for Nestlé in Afghanistan.
- To provide actionable recommendations for enhancing Nestlé's sales promotion strategies in Afghanistan.

The primary information for this study on the sales promotional activities of Nestlé in Afghanistan was collected through the administration of a structured questionnaire using Google Forms. The questionnaire captured consumer perceptions and behaviors. This method allowed for a comprehensive understanding of Nestlé's sales promotions in Afghanistan. Secondary data was collected through research articles, relevant websites, dissertation, thesis and educational and conceptual textbooks.

The sample size for this study on the sales promotional activities of Nestlé in Afghanistan is 500 respondents. This sample size was chosen to provide adequate data for analyzing consumer perceptions and behaviours related to Nestlé's sales promotions in the Afghan market. The data collected from this sample allowed for meaningful insights and reliable findings, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of Nestlé's sales promotion effectiveness in Afghanistan.

For this study, a list of potential respondents from the target population was created, and every 5th respondent was chosen to participate. This method helped ensure that the sample was representative of the larger population, reducing bias and increasing the validity of the findings. By using systematic random sampling, the study captured a diverse range of perspectives and experiences, enhancing the reliability of the results.

Findings

The respondents' ages have been categorized into six distinct groups and reflects a range of ages from 18 to above 65 years. Respondents, comprising 40.0%, fall within the age group of 18-24 years. Following closely, 24.3% of respondents are aged between 25-34 years, while 15.7% belong to the age bracket of 35-44 years. Additionally, 8.6% of participants are in the 45-54 age group, while 7.1% fall within the 55-64 age range. Lastly, a smaller proportion of respondents, representing 4.3%, are aged above 65 years. Overall, the age distribution of respondents was relatively young, with the majority being in their 20s or 30s. This suggests that the survey may have been skewed towards younger respondents, as there were relatively few older respondents.

In terms of demographic composition, the study participants were categorized by gender. The data reveals that 67.1% of respondents identified as male, while 32.9% identified as female.

This gender distribution within the study sample underscores the presence of a higher proportion of male participants. As the author of this thesis, it's noteworthy to consider how such gender imbalances might impact the implications and conclusions drawn from the study's findings.

The participants in the study have a wide range of occupations. 38.6% are employed, 21.4% are self-employed, 18.6% are students, 8.6% are unemployed, 9.9% are housewives, and 2.9% are retired. This diversity of occupations enriches the study's analysis by providing different perspectives from different walks of life.

In other words, the study's participants come from various backgrounds, which helps ensure that the study's findings are relevant to a wide range of people. This is because people from different occupations have different experiences and perspectives, which can lead to further insights.

The income distribution among participants underscores a diverse range of financial backgrounds. Notably, 49.2% have an income below 20,000 (AFN), while 10.8% fall within the 20,000-40,000 (AFN) brackets. Moreover, 18.4% fall within

the 40,000-60,000 (AFN) range, and 6.2% within the 60,000-80,000 (AFN) range. Interestingly, 15.4% of participants reported an income exceeding 80,000 (AFN). With 500 participants, this varied income composition provides a nuanced perspective, with each group potentially offering unique insights into the study's outcomes.

The purchasing frequency of Nestlé products in Afghanistan highlights varying purchase habits: 45.7% buy less than once a month, 10.0% purchase once a month, 17.1% buy once a week, 12.9% shop several times a week, and 14.3% make daily purchases. This distribution offers insights into participants' diverse purchasing behaviours.

The diverse purchasing habits of Afghan Nestlé consumers, implies the necessity for customized marketing. Encouraging occasional buyers to purchase more frequently and nurturing loyalty among daily purchasers can be achieved through targeted efforts. These results stress the need to adapt strategies to various consumer behaviours.

Upon the outline of favoured Nestlé products, varied preferences were identified. MILKPACK CREAM is the most popular Nestlé product, with 24.0% of the votes. This suggests that consumers are looking for a high-quality milk product that is also convenient.

- NESCAFE and KITKAT CHOCOLATES are also popular products, with 14.9% of the votes each. This suggests that consumers are looking for delicious and affordable products.
- LACTOGEN is a popular product for babies and young children, with 10.3% of the votes. This suggests that consumers are looking for products that are good for their children's health.
- MILKPACK UHT and NIDO FORTIGROW are moderately popular products, with 9.1% of the votes each. This suggests that consumers are familiar with these products but may not be as passionate about them as other products.
- EVERYDAY MILK POWDER is a slightly popular product, with 6.8% of the votes.
- NESTLÉ FRUTA VITAL and CERELAC are the least popular products, with 4.5% and 6.4% of the votes, respectively. This suggests that consumers need to become more familiar with these products or may prefer them to other Nestlé products.

The impacts of Nestlé product purchasing among participants shows: Quality leads at 32.2%, followed by taste (23.7%) and price (19.6%). Availability (15.4%) and brand name (9.1%) also play roles.

These findings underscore the multi-faceted nature of consumer choices. Quality's prominence suggests the need for maintaining product standards. Addressing varying priorities like taste and price can help cater to different segments effectively. Focusing on brand-building and ensuring availability are equally important, as they contribute to the overall appeal. Recognizing this array of influences is essential in crafting targeted strategies that align with consumer

With regards involvement in Nestlé's sales promotional activities, 18.6% indicated participation and 81.4% reporting non-participation, the majority did not engage. The low participation may be due to limited opportunities, which shows room for improvement. If Nestlé offers and promotes more chances, more people can join in. This would make customers happier and benefit Nestlé, creating a win-win situation.

Participation in engagement on different promotional activities highlights 45% have participated in free samples, 40% in discounts, 10% in coupons, and 5% in contests. Notably, no participants have taken part in the sweepstakes. Preferences for free samples and discounts indicate effective strategies. However, the lack of interest in sweepstakes suggests a mismatch. Nestlé can concentrate on favoured methods for better engagement and resource allocation, enhancing customer satisfaction.

Participation in rate sales promotion effectiveness shows: 12.9% as "not effective," 11.5% as "somewhat ineffective," 31.4% as "neutral," 15.7% as "somewhat effective," and 28.5% as "highly effective." The diverse range of ratings shows mixed perceptions about sales promotions. While a significant portion finds promotions effective, others hold neutral or negative views. This highlights the need for a more nuanced approach in designing promotions to match varying preferences and expectations better. Understanding these varied responses can guide Nestlé in tailoring promotions to resonate with different consumer segments, ultimately maximizing their impact on purchase decisions.

Nestlé's promotion communication effectiveness showed a data of 14.30% rating it "not effective," 32.90% as "somewhat ineffective," 28.60% as "neutral," 8.40% as "somewhat effective," and 15.70% as "highly effective."

The varied responses to communication effectiveness underline a need for improvement. While some view it positively, a substantial percentage remains neutral or less convinced. This highlights the significance of enhancing communication strategies to better align with consumer expectations. Strengthening communication can potentially enhance the impact of promotions, leading to increased engagement and a more positive perception among participants.

Satisfaction with Nestlé's promotion frequency showed ratings of 7.30% as "not satisfied," 26.10% as "Somewhat Dissatisfied," 27.50% as "neutral," 17.40% as "satisfied," and 21.70% as "highly satisfied." The spectrum of satisfaction levels emphasizes diverse opinions about the frequency of promotions. While some find it highly effective, others have reservations. Adjusting the frequency based on such feedback could optimize customer engagement, addressing concerns and preferences. This proactive approach can lead to higher satisfaction levels and more impactful promotional campaigns for Nestlé.

With emphasis on Nestlé's sales promotions regarding genuine discounts. Ratings range from 2.90% finding them "not effective," 20.0% seeing them as "somewhat ineffective," 38.60% taking a "neutral" stance, 17.10% considering them "somewhat effective," to 21.40% believing they're "highly effective." The diverse range of ratings reflects varied perceptions about the authenticity of discounts in Nestlé's promotions. While some participants view them as genuinely effective, others have doubts. Addressing this perception gap is crucial to building trust and credibility. By ensuring that promotions consistently offer meaningful discounts and transparently communicating their value, Nestlé can bolster customer confidence, leading to higher satisfaction levels and greater engagement with their promotional offers.

Participant perceptions of Nestlé sales promotions in the media shows opinions as 7.1%- "never" see them, 61.40% spot them "rarely", 18.60% catch "occasional" views, 7.10% notice "frequent" encounters, and 5.70% observe "very frequent" occurrences. The spectrum of responses reflects how participants observe Nestlé sales promotions in the

media. While a considerable segment notices promotions occasionally or rarely, a smaller group sees them more frequently. This highlights the importance of media placement and frequency in promotional strategies. By adjusting the visibility and timing of promotions, Nestlé can effectively target different consumer segments, potentially leading to higher engagement and brand recognition.

Participants' engagement with Nestlé sales promotions across media channels shows encounters were reported on Television (46.60%), Online (24.30%), social media (24.30%), Radio (2.90%), and Paper (1.90%). The varied media exposure highlights the significance of multi-channel promotion. While television takes the lead, the online and social media presence is substantial, too. Allocating resources across these channels in alignment with audience preferences can optimize promotional reach and impact. Understanding these patterns is vital for Nestlé to effectively target its audience, enhancing engagement and recognition across different media platforms.

Upon Nestlé's sales promotions' informativeness, ratings span from 7.20% finding them "not informative," 15.70% as "somewhat informative," 38.60% being "neutral," 21.40% considering them "somewhat informative," and 17.10% regarding them as "highly informative." These ratings highlight diverse perceptions of promotion informativeness. While some find them highly informative, others remain undecided. Ensuring consistent, clear communication in promotions can bridge this gap, delivering valuable information to all participants. Nestlé's efforts can enhance customer understanding, potentially leading to increased engagement and more informed consumer choices.

Annoyance level caused by Nestlé's sales promotions shows varying responses of: 22.90% don't find promotions annoying, 20.0% are somewhat annoyed, 35.70% remain neutral, 15.70% are moderately annoying, and 5.70% consider promotions highly annoying. The diverse ratings show varied perceptions of promotion annoyance. While a portion is neutral, others express different levels of annoyance. This highlights the importance of designing promotions that capture attention and avoid irritation. By considering participants' feelings, Nestlé can create advertisements that engage without causing undue annoyance, ultimately contributing to a more positive customer experience.

Perspectives on the ethical aspect of Nestlé's sales promotions shows 5.70% consider promotions "not ethical," 31.40% find them "somewhat ethical," 21.40% remain "neutral," 27.10% perceive them as "moderately ethical," and 14.30% deem them "highly ethical." The varied ratings highlight diverse viewpoints on the ethical nature of Nestlé's promotions. While some participants see them as highly ethical, others have concerns or hold neutral stances. Addressing this spectrum of views is essential. By maintaining transparency, adhering to ethical standards, and communicating promotion goals clearly, Nestlé can foster trust and enhance the ethical perception of their promotional efforts. This can ultimately contribute to increased customer confidence and satisfaction.

Upon the aligning of perception if Nestlé's sales promotions, 10.0% feel promotions are "not targeted," 17.10% consider them "somewhat targeted," 21.40% remain "neutral," 27.10% find them "moderately targeted," and 24.30% believe promotions are "highly targeted." The range of ratings reveals diverse perceptions of the alignment of promotions with their intended audience. While some participants view them as highly targeted, others disagree or hold neutral views. Addressing this spectrum of opinions is crucial. By refining

targeting strategies based on participant feedback and preferences, Nestlé can optimize engagement and impact. This data can aid Nestlé in creating more effective promotions, resonating better with different audience segments and improving results and customer satisfaction.

Participants' recommendations for improving Nestlé's sales promotional activities show a 20.30% suggest "increased variety," 33.30% propose "enhanced targeting" in promotions, 33.30% recommend "greater creativity" in approaches, and 13.0% advocate for "enhanced ethical" practices. Participants' suggestions underscore key areas for enhancement in Nestlé's promotional strategies. Incorporating more variety, targeted efforts, creativity, and ethical considerations can lead to more engaging and effective promotions. By integrating these recommendations, Nestlé can create a more appealing and resonant promotional landscape, fostering greater consumer engagement, satisfaction, and long-term brand loyalty.

Overall perception of Nestlé's sales promotional activities highlight: 60.90% hold a positive view, 30.40% remain neutral, and 8.70% maintain a negative perspective. The majority of participants perceive Nestlé's sales promotions positively, suggesting that these efforts generally resonate with them. While a smaller portion holds neutral or negative views, addressing their concerns could improve overall perception. The positive sentiment indicates that Nestlé effectively engages a significant part of its audience, leading to potential customer loyalty and satisfaction benefits.

In addition, the open-ended opinions of respondents provide a nuanced perspective on Nestlé's promotional activities:

- i). Certain participants highlight the variation in product availability and price discrepancies across different regions, while affirming the consistent quality of Nestlé products.
- ii). Emphasis on the appeal of Nestlé's tasty and high-quality products.
- iii). An individual expresses concern about Nestlé's water sourcing practices and ethical considerations, urging alignment with personal ethics for increased product purchase.
- iv). A brief expression of gratitude is noted by several respondents
- v). Some respondents indicate limited exposure to Nestlé's sales promotions.

These diverse opinions collectively shed light on various aspects of Nestlé's promotional activities, ranging from product quality and availability to ethical considerations and promotional strategies. The comments offer valuable insights into respondents' perceptions and expectations.

Conclusion

The promotional activities in Afghanistan, offering insights into how these strategies impact brand loyalty, market share, and consumer behaviour. Nestlé, as a global giant, was examined within the unique context of the Afghan market, where demographic diversity, consumer preferences, and economic factors play pivotal roles in shaping marketing strategies. This in-depth analysis has provided a nuanced understanding of how Nestlé's sales promotion activities resonate with Afghan consumers.

One key finding in this study is the demographics of Afghanistan, where a youthful population dominates. Understanding this demographic composition is vital for Nestlé and other businesses operating in the region, as it informs product targeting and lays the groundwork for sales

promotion strategies that resonate with the young and dynamic consumer base. Furthermore, the gender distribution among the participants revealed an overrepresentation of males, highlighting a potential area for Nestlé to tailor its marketing efforts to address this demographic imbalance.

Product preferences emerged as another significant aspect, with MILKPACK CREAM, NESCAFE, KitKat Chocolates, and LACTOGEN taking the lead. These insights provide valuable guidance for Nestlé in focusing its promotional activities on these popular products while continually innovating and refining its offerings. Furthermore, the factors influencing product purchases, such as quality, taste, and price, offer crucial cues for Nestlé's marketing teams to fine-tune their messaging and value propositions.

The study revealed disparities in participation in Nestlé's sales promotions, with free samples and discounts being the most engaging promotional tools. However, the study also revealed that a significant portion of participants did not participate in these activities, suggesting room for improvement in targeting and communication strategies to reach a broader audience. Understanding the varying perceptions of sales promotion effectiveness, promotion communication, and satisfaction with promotion frequency among participants underscores the importance of tailoring promotional efforts to meet diverse consumer expectations.

The study also revealed that Nestlé's media promotions need to be more finely tuned, with a substantial portion of participants rarely noticing them. This finding underscores the need for Nestlé to explore more targeted media strategies to ensure their promotions effectively reach their intended audience. Additionally, the engagement across different media channels, including television, online, social media, radio, and print, highlights the importance of a multi-channel approach to maximize promotional reach.

Ethical considerations played a role in participants' perceptions of Nestlé's sales promotions, with a range of views from "not ethical" to "highly ethical." This underscores the importance of transparency and ethical practices in promotional activities to maintain and enhance brand reputation.

Ultimately, this study's recommendations provide actionable insights for Nestlé, including diversifying promotional strategies, enhancing targeting, fostering creativity, and strengthening ethical practices. These recommendations can empower Nestlé to refine its sales promotion activities in Afghanistan, align them more effectively with consumer expectations, and further solidify its market position.

Hence, this analytical study has not only enriched our understanding of Nestlé's sales promotional activities in Afghanistan but has also contributed valuable insights for both academia and industry. As Nestlé and other businesses operating in the Afghan consumer goods sector navigate the complex landscape of sales promotion, these findings and recommendations offer a compass to steer their marketing initiatives towards sustainable growth and closer connections with their customers. The study's significance lies in its potential to catalyse positive change in how businesses approach sales promotion in emerging economies, fostering better engagement and long-term success.

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