

BRAND RELIABILITY AND CUSTOMER LOYALTY OF SELECTED FAST - FOOD FIRMS IN PORT HARCOURT METROPOLIS, RIVERS STATE –NIGERIA.

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to explore the effect of Brand Reliability on Customer Loyalty of Selected Fast-Food Firms in Port Harcourt Metropolis. Data for the study was collected through self-administered questionnaire from the thirty (30) respondents, however, twenty one (21) of the distributed copies of questionnaire were returned and valid for analysis. The study adopted Krejcie and Morgan (1970) techniques to determine the sample size of (28) respondents, also regression analysis was adopted to test the hypotheses. The findings revealed that, Brand Credibility has positive effect on Customer Loyalty, Brand Trustworthiness has positive effect on Customer Loyalty and, Brand Believability has positive effect on Customer Loyalty. Based on that, the study recommended that, fast- food firms should build their brands to be more reliable, that reliable brands will surely appeal higher customer loyalty and, customer prove better loyalty in the course of brands that are remarkably reliable.

Keywords: *Brand Reliability, Customer Loyalty, Brand Credibility, Brand Trustworthiness, Brand believability.*

INTRODUCTION

Business growth is progressively dynamic due to the appearance of different brands in the market place making customers to be loyal to various products or services. The fast development in consumption of fast- food has attracted the attention of numerous researchers. This development also led to strong rivalry among fast- food restaurants operators. Brand reliability, customer loyalty and customer satisfaction are very significant elements in gaining competitive benefit. Consumers purchase more firm's preferred brands, products and services that are reliable and also recommend more consumers to buy the firm's preferred brands due to the products and services credibility. In today business environment consumers are more rational because they have a decent facts about brands, products and services. Currently firms are facing high rivalry into the market with new products and services due to increase in substitute of brands, products or services and this has push consumers into a state where there level of loyalty is very much wobbly. Nowadays prospective customer can easily access to information and options to alter their choice about a specific brand, product or service due to substitute offerings in the market places. Erdem, *etal*, (2006), cited in Shoukat and Naveed (2014), asserted that, the major issue that effect consumer buying motive is brand. According to Jacoby (1975), cited in Shoukat and Naveed (2014), brand is refer to a name, term, sign, and symbol or any mixture of these that represent to signify the exclusivity and benefit an organization, and that can provide information to consumer about product features and this help to improve consumer loyalty. Jun, (2016), cited in Resista *etal* (2021), postulated that, one of the significant of branding is that it permits customers to recognize firm's preferred offering and distinguish them from those of rivalry . In the spite of Jun (2020), defined brand reliability as the trustworthiness of a brand, product or service position information contained in a brand as promised. According to Jun (2016), brand reliability means that, it is believable that a brand will deliver or offer what it has assured or capable of fulfil the promises. Sitanggang *et al*, (2019), affirmed that, the reliability of a brand is a very serious element of the customer satisfaction. It can also be incidental that the higher the reliability of brands, products and services, the higher the satisfaction of its customers. Kim,*etal* (2012), explained customer satisfaction as an valuation of the astonishment characteristic in a brand, product purchase and/or consumption experience. Kim,*etal* (2012), further asserted that Satisfaction is the sum total of overall assessment of a customer's purchase and consumption experience based on frequent communications between the consumer and the

firm. Customer Loyalty is the deliberate act of a customer rebuying firm's preferred products or services over a long period of time (Ladhari, *etal*/ 2011), cited in (Nur *etal*/ 2019). In the word of Charcle (2017), customer loyalty is an amount of customer's readiness to repeat business with a firm or brand, product or services as a result of customer's satisfaction. Customer loyalty is referred to customer retention where customers purchase the current products and services repeatedly rather than choosing other competitors' brands. (Akpabio & Oladele, 2021). In the spite of Chim (2016), stated that, brand reliability has some effective dimensions such as trustworthiness, credibility and these determine the level of customer patronage on firm's preferred brand, products and services. Today in Nigeria fast - food restaurant sector has been industrialized to offer easy and appropriate dining experiences at affordable cost irrespective of the first assemblage line scheme of eateries by McDonald's in 1948, arrival of the unpremeditated fast food market called (bukka) in Nigeria 1987, within the period, Mr. Biggs the innovator cafeterias was lunch possessed by UAC foods to request for consumers . Today in Nigeria, fast food - firms has spread all over the thirty six (36) States for full operations clutching and enticing the publicity interest. The fast - food firms includes The Kilimanjaro, The Genesis, and The Chicken Republic etc. The firms were incorporated to provide restaurants and catering services to the general public (Schlosser, 2001). Subsequently, the growth of fast- food firms today has attracted the cumulative level of rivalry, therefore, in order to increase firm's sales volume, market shares and profit level, these fast - food firms are also becoming more tactical in ensuring their brands are reliable to the potential customer. Based on these, the study sought to examine the effect of brand reliability on customer loyalty of selected fast- food firms in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State -Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Firms that develop a brand, product and service that contained required attributes for the target market create better impression in mind of potential customers towards such brand, product or service. Consumers permanently believe so much on brand , product or service reliability, trust worthiness and quality, these elements persuade consumers to make impulse purchase of such brand without advertisement processes . Service firms penetrate the right target market through the effort of brand reliability, brand trustworthiness, brand credibility brand believability and other features to convince the target market. Numerous firms today are still struggle with adversative customer loyalty, an experiential investigation have given slight stress on the nature of brand reliability and customer loyalty with mediation of customer satisfaction , have it in mind the current decline in the Nigerian economy and how it upsets the fast -food firms . Over the period of time fast- food firms frequently fight for customers in other to upsurge their sales volume and profit level. The probability of these firms to understand their affirmed objectives is reliant on their ability to manufacture brand that make customers contented the needs and wants of their favored target market improved than their rivalry. Therefore, this study investigates the effect of brand reliability on customer reliability of selected fast food firms in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State- Nigeria

Conceptual frame work

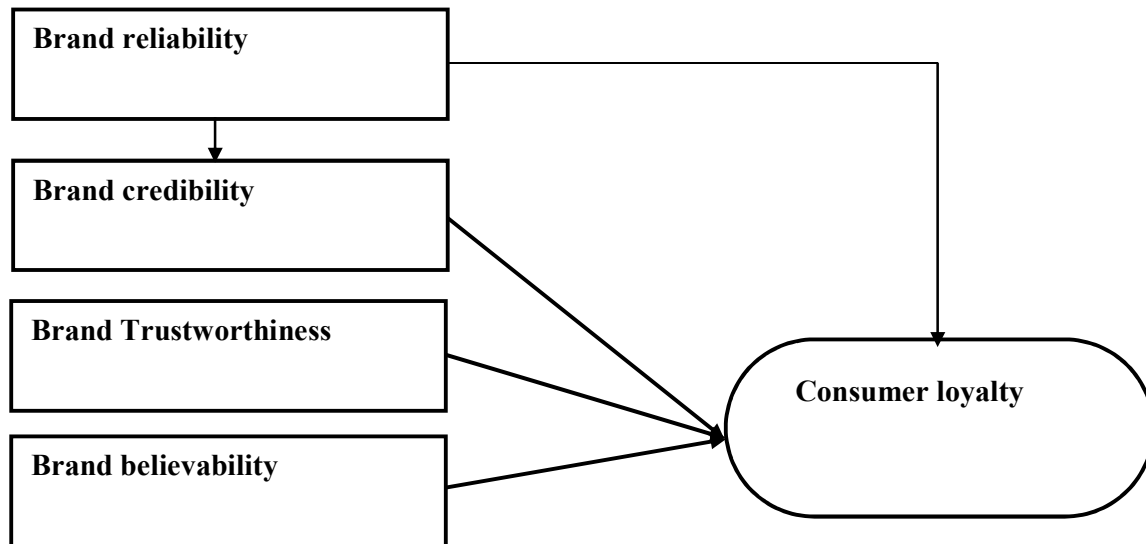


Figure 1: the study model
Source: design by Researcher, (2023)

Objective of the study

The study general objective was to explore the effect of brand reliability on customer loyalty of selected fast - food firms in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State -Nigeria. The specific objectives includes:

1. To determine the effect of brand credibility on customer loyalty.
2. To examine the effect of brand trustworthiness on customer loyalty.
3. To investigate the effect of brand believability on customer loyalty.

Research Questions

1. What effect does brand credibility has on customer loyalty?
2. What effect does brand trustworthiness has on customer loyalty?
3. What effect does brand believability has on custom loyalty?

Research Hypotheses

- Ho₁:** Brand credibility has no positive effect on customer loyalty.
Ho₂: Brand trustworthiness has no positive effect on customer loyalty.
Ho₃: Brand believability has no positive effect on customer loyalty.

Literature review

Brand reliability

Reliability of a brand determine the level of customer patronage and customer loyalty of the brand. Brand reliability refers to the degree in which customer observes a brand trustworthiness source of information and compare it with personality characteristics (appealing) (Malik *at al.*, 2014).

Brand credibility

Credibility is a significant variable influencer of brand positioning. According to Erdem and Swait (2004) cited in Harcourt and Mac-Kingsley(2019), brand credibility is considered as product condition and information rooted in a brand, hinging on customers' discrimination of whether the

brand have supremacy over the capacity and conformism to incessantly get across what has been assured. Stendhal and Craig (2002), mentioned that, brand credibility refers to believability in physiognomies of brand, product or service information and it has three rudiments: trustworthiness, expertise and attraction.

Brand Trustworthiness

In marketing today, building a brand trust is a long-lasting association with customers and it is very vital for the success of a brand in a market place. Brand trust is refers as the readiness of the customers to believe on the aptitude of a brand to perform its specified purpose and, has been revealed to be a key donor to brand equity and customer loyalty (Ladhari, 2011). Brand trust is referred to sensation of safety held by customers in their communications with brands, that it is found on the awareness that brands are reliable ,, responsible for the benefits and well-being of consumers (Elena *etal* 2001), cited in (Nur, 2019). Dithan (2011) proposed that a high level of trust can turn satisfied customers into loyal ones which implies that the firms can protected customer loyalty through indirect effect of customer satisfaction by intent on intercession.

Brand believability

Many scholars has addressed the issue of brand believability importance and optimistic impact on loyalty. Brand believability referred to total behavior demonstrated by customer's assessments after obtaining products or services (Mowen *etal* (2009), cited in (Nur, 2019).

Customer loyalty

Customer loyalty is a substituting behavior cause by potential customer on the frequent purchases of product or service, and it is a strong pledge from customers to frequently re-purchase firm's preferred products or services. Customer loyalty refers to the propensity of customers to repurchase products or services from the same firms (Kigi, 2017).

Empirical review

Malik, and Ahmad, (2014), investigated on the impact of brand credibility on consumer loyalty: A case study of fast food industry in DG Khan, Pakistan. Arabian: Sample of study was college/ sub campuses students and staff members from banking institutions in D. G. Khan. Different statistical techniques were used like factor loading (As a data reduction technique), Reliability analysis (To check the consistency among the different questions of a variable), Descriptive statistics (To check the central tendency), Correlation analysis (To check the relationship among variables) and regression analysis including model summary and ANOVA (To check the cause and effect relationship among variables). Results found that brand credibility and consumer loyalty are the most significant factors. Furthermore attitude towards brand as mediator plays a significant role.

Methaq, and Sefnedi (2017), studied on the Impacts of brand trust and brand credibility on Indonesian customers' WOM communication: the mediating role of brand commitment: The data have been collected via an online survey launched in internet between October-November 2016, and resulted 154 respondents participated in the survey used for the study. The collected data is analyzed using SPSS 22 and structural equation modeling (SEM) AMOS 21. The results revealed that brand trust has positive effect on brand commitment, brand credibility has positive effect on brand commitment and word of mouth communication, and brand commitment was also found to have positive effect on word of mouth communication.

Nur, (2019), investigated on the impact of brand trust on customer satisfaction and customer loyalty: The study uses descriptive analysis and statistical methods. Participants were selected from different specializations, where each medical center was represented proportionately within the sample. Data were collected using self-administered questionnaires. Path analysis was utilized for the analyses. The study indicated that, the existence of a brand trust effect on customer loyalty

customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between brand trust and customer loyalty, while customer satisfaction does not affect customer loyalty.

Harcourt and Mac-Kingsley (2019), investigated on the impact of Brand Credibility on Customer Patronage of Table Water Firms: Evidence from Nigeria: A causal design research and a mock-up were invented the simple random technique was assumed and quantitative facts were engendered through a 5-point Likert-type scaled questionnaire. The study espoused descriptive statistics and simple regressions *modus operandi* to establish that brand credibility was functional in manipulating metrics of customer patronage. The results put forward that brand credibility has a very strong, significant and positive influences on store traffic flow; expertise has a strong, significant and positive influence on customer referrals. The study concludes that results of quantitative analysis depict that brand credibility programs espoused by the table water firms in Rivers State affect customer patronage. The study recommends that Managers of table water firms' meeting point should anchor on those areas of brand credibility that bring into being store traffic flow and customer referrals to their firms.

Fahad (2020), examined on the effects of brand image, brand trust and brand credibility on customers' WOM communication: The study revealed that brand credibility, brand image and brand trust effect on variable of brand commitment and a variable of word of mouth communication, Brand commitment impacts on WOM communication when the brand commitment is the mediating between (brand credibility, brand image and brand trust) and word of mouth communication.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed explanatory research design and survey method. The population of the study includes thirty (30) respondents (customers and staff) of selected fast- food firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. Specifically the three (3) selected fast food firms are registered with Corporate Affairs Commission as fast food firms operators via: The Kilimanjaro fast- food Choba, university of Port Harcourt branch with staff strength of 44, The Genesis fast- food Agip junction branch by Ikwerre road Mile four (4) Port Harcourt, Rivers State with staff strength of 31, and Chicken Republic Iwofe road Rumuolumeni branch Port Harcourt Rivers State with staff strength of 22. The emphasis was positioned on the firms registered with Corporate Affairs commission in Nigeria, this brings higher municipal silhouette as well as discernibility that are activated by the media, investors, and augmented coverage from scholars. The study adopted probability sampling technique, Krejcie and Morgan (1970) was used to determine the sample size of (28) respondents. These were seen as the variables in a good location to provide the essential study information for the research. From computations, the number generated was twenty eight (28) respondents, this served as the sample size that participate in the study. Therefore, from the twenty eight (28) questionnaires administered, twenty two (21) representing 80% were returned, valid and used for the analysis, while seven (7) representing 20% were not properly completed. A validity test that presented the level of aptitude of a scale to control the planned impression, and the level to which a dimension corresponds to the construct that it was hypothetical to amount was approved out and the methodology and findings of this study were justified through a reliability test. The reliability analysis in table 1 below express that the variables have a Cronbach alpha value of > 0.7.

Table1: Result of Reliability Analysis

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	No.of Case	No. of item
Brand credibility	0.83	28	3
Brand trustworthiness	0.87	28	3
Brand believability	0.89	28	3
Customer loyalty	0.80	28	3

Source; Survey Result, 2023: (SPSS version 22) Output, window, 2007

Test of hypotheses and result**Table 2: Summary of regression analysis on the Significant Effect between Brand Reliability (BR) and Customer Loyalty (CL)**

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
C	3.514272	0.403310	8.713571	0.0000
Brand credibility	-0.209827	0.083099	-2.525020	0.0121
Brand trustworthiness	-0.140925	0.059209	-2.380129	0.0179
Brand believability	0.113723	0.066528	1.709406	0.0884
Customer loyalty	0.091683	0.065311	1.403774	0.1614
R-squared	0.063348	Mean dependent var	3.038306	
Adjusted R-squared	0.050942	S.D. dependent var	0.516235	
S.E. of regression	0.502914	Akaike info criterion	1.479359	
Sum squared resid	76.38273	Schwarz criterion	1.540057	
Log likelihood	-222.0817	Hannan-Quinn criter.	1.503632	
F-statistic	5.106283	Durbin-Watson stat	1.954778	
Prob(F-statistic)	0.000540			

Table 2 shows the summary of regression analysis on the Significant effect between Brand Reliability (BR) and Customer Loyalty (CL). The Brand Reliability (BR) proxied by Customer Loyalty (CL), Brand Credibility (BC), Brand trustworthiness (BTW), Brand believability (BB) and Customer Loyalty (CL). When the predictor variables were regressed on the Customer Loyalty (CL), the coefficient of determination (R-squared) value was found to be 0.063348. The value of the adjusted R-squared, 0.050942 indicating that the predictors explained only about 5.01% of the changes in the response variable whereas 94.99% was not explained by the given current data. The available information further shows that both Brand Credibility (BC), ($t = -2.525020$, $prob = 0.0121$) and Brand trustworthiness (BTW), ($t = -2.380129$, $prob = 0.0179$) were statistically significant at 5% alpha level. The F-statistic of 5.106283 was significant at 1% alpha level. The Durbin Watson statistic was 1.954778. This shows that Brand Reliability (BR) has positive effect on Customer Loyalty (CL) was statistically significant at 1% alpha level.

The result from Table 2 was used to test hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 respectively.

Test of hypothesis 1:

Ho₁: The Brand Credibility (BC) has no positive effect on Customer Loyalty (CL).

The result from Table 2 shows that there was a strong and inverse positive effect between Brand reliability (BR) and Customer Loyalty (CL) (Beta = -0.280070). The result shows that Brand Credibility (BC) has positive effect on Customer Loyalty (CL) ($t = -2.525020$, $prob = 0.0121$). The null hypothesis one was rejected at .05 alpha level.

Test of hypothesis 2:

Ho₂: The Brand Trustworthiness (BTW) has no positive effect on Customer Loyalty (CL).

The result from Table 2 shows that there was a strong and inverse positive effect between Brand Trustworthiness (BTW) and Customer Loyalty (CL) (Beta = -0.140925). The result shows that Brand Trustworthiness (BTW) has positive effect on Customer Loyalty (CL) ($t = -2.380129$, $prob = 0.0179$). The null hypothesis two was rejected at .05 alpha level.

Test of hypothesis 3:

Ho₃: The Brand believability (BB) has no positive effect on Customer Loyalty (CL).

The result from Table 2 shows that there was a strong and positive effect between Brand believability (BB) and Customer Loyalty (CL). (Beta 0.113723). the result shows that Brand

believability (BB) has positive effect on Customer Loyalty (CL). ($t= 1.709406$, $prob=0.0884$). The null hypothesis three was rejected at .05 alpha level.

Discussion of Findings.

This study found that, Brand Credibility (BC) has positive effect on Customer Loyalty, Brand Trustworthiness (BTW) has positive effect on Customer Loyalty, Brand believability (BB) has positive effect on Customer Loyalty and brand reliability has positive effect on customer loyalty. This finding is verified in Harcourt .and Mac-Kingsley (2019), on the impact of Brand Credibility on Customer Patronage of Table Water Firms: Evidence from Nigeria. Brand credibility is found to positively and significantly influence customer patronage they further explained that, a credible brand will certainly attract higher patronage and consumers demonstrate better patronage in the direction of brands that are exceedingly credible. Secondly, on study of Deni (2019), the Impact of Brand Trust, Brand Loyalty, Brand Image on Service Quality, the study found that towards brand trust level. Service Quality Significantly positive effect on Brand Loyalty. Service Quality Significantly positive effect on Tangible, empathy, responsiveness, reliability and guarantee. The level of brand trust has an influence on the level of re-registration and has an impact on the promotion of promotion through word of mouth .Thirdly, Methaq, and Sefnedi (2017), on the impacts of brand trust and brand credibility on Indonesian customers' WOM communication: the mediating role of brand commitment. The study result indicated that brand trust has positive effect on brand commitment and Brand credibility as a result has positive effect.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concluded that, Brand Credibility (BC) has positive effect on Customer Loyalty, Brand trustworthiness (BTW) has positive effect on Customer Loyalty, and Brand believability (BB) has positive effect on Customer Loyalty. Based on that, the study recommended that, fast- food firms should build their brands to be more reliable, that reliable brand will surely appeal higher customer loyalty and customer prove better loyalty in the course of brands that are remarkably reliable.

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