

**PRODUCTS INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES AND CONSUMER PATRONAGE OF MADE IN NIGERIA HANDBAGS AND SHOES.**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Our study examined products innovative strategies and consumer patronage of made in Nigeria handbags and shoes. The study adopted the correlation survey research design. Data were collected from customers and marketers of made in Nigeria handbags and shoes, in Port- Harcourt, Rivers State. A sample size of 261 respondents was used for the study. The sample size was determined using the Taro Yamene formula. A structured questionnaire was used to elicit data from the respondents. The data collected were analyzed statistically while the hypotheses were tested using Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient ( $\rho$ ). The SPSS 22.0 version was used to aid correlate the data of the study variables. At the end of the study, it was established that a significant relationship exist between packaging innovation and consumer patronage intention of made in Nigeria handbags and shoes. The study equally found a significant relationship between product quality innovation and repeat purchase of made in Nigeria handbags. Based on these findings, it was concluded that innovative products quality and packaging strategies significantly enhance consumer patronage of made in Nigeria handbags and shoes. The study therefore recommended among others that manufacturers and dealers of made in in Nigeria handbags should embrace innovative products quality and packaging strategies in a bit to enhance consumer patronage of their products.*

***Keywords: Packaging innovation, consumer patronage, quality innovation, consumer, patronage intention, repeat patronage.***

**INTRODUCTION**

**Background of the Study**

One difficult task facing marketers the world over, is understanding the perception and behavior of consumers. A good understanding of the needs and wants of consumers of a brand is key to success of every business. This is why, business owners especially manufacturers/dealers of locally made products in Nigeria (handbags and shoes) must always keep abreast with the trend in the fashion world with a view to understanding what truly appeal to their customers especially in this era of competitive marketing, when customers always wish or want to be associated with world renowned brands in the fashion industry like Gucci, Chanel, Prada, Lious Vuitton etc. Customers preference for these foreign brands, have negatively impacted the patronage of made in Nigeria products in the fashion industry especially handbags and shoes. It is assumed that the foreign made are better off.

Several factors have been adduced to be responsible for the low patronage of these made in Nigeria products. Factors such as perceived poor quality of most of these products, to wrong orientation by customers that all made in Nigeria products are inferior and a desire to be perceived as belonging to a special social class for using a known foreign brand just to mention a few. The level of apathy for Nigerian made goods is such that some dealers in the fashion industry are compelled to engage in brand identity theft just to secure customers patronage. In fact, to show the level of appetite of Nigerians for foreign products; if a study is conducted where foreign shoes are labeled made -in- Nigeria while the made in Nigeria shoes are labeled made- in- Italy, customers would show preference for the local shoes bearing made in Italy. Again, some local manufacturers of furniture

decided to export their homemade furniture to Turkey and relabeled it made -in-Turkey and brought it back to Nigeria, interestingly, because customers now perceive these sets of furniture as foreign products decides to purchase them while neglecting same products bearing made in Nigeria.

Dealers of made in Nigeria handbags and shoes are having their own share of the same experience finding it extremely difficult to convince potential customers to patronize their product due to the negative perception towards all made in Nigeria products by Nigerians. This negative perception by consumers really affected sale volumes and profitability of these local dealers so much so that some of them have closed shop. Innovation in product quality, packaging, improved services delivery strategies will no doubt change this sad narrative.

In a competitive market where customers can easily switch from one product to another, increasing consumer patronage becomes the only way for businesses to survive. The fashion market in Port-Harcourt the Rivers State capital in Nigeria, is so competitive due to the large numbers of brands in the market – all performing similar functions and targeting the same sets of customers. This competitive nature has made many dealers to devise strategies to increase consumer patronage. Increasing consumer patronage seems to be the only way for business survival and sustainability in the market. However, to increase the level of consumer patronage of their brands, dealers of made in Nigeria handbags and shoes need to make their products designs, quality and packaging more attractive and inviting.

Innovation is essential to an organization's success. The appropriate use of innovative strategies can create additional value for customers and shareholders and increase enterprise competitiveness (Baker, Grinstein, & Harmancioglu, 2015) (Rubera & Kirca, 2017). Innovation can also lead to increased organizational performance and revenue as business leaders develop and implement more efficient and effective processes for reducing costs or facilitating the development of better products (Chowhan, 2016; Simester, 2016). Organizations can take advantage of innovative initiatives to move toward cutting-edge development resulting in increased productivity and ability to compete in their respective markets (North & Kumta, 2018). In a dynamic international business environment, innovative strategies offer opportunities to secure a competitive position in a given market (Prajogo, 2016) (Visnjic, Wiengarten, & Neely, 2016) and businesses may experience an increase in profits. A strategic activity facilitates positive developments in goods and procedures. In turn, contact with consumers and suppliers successfully facilitates creative performance. Linking innovation to strategy is essential for the effective management of innovation. No doubt, effective invention has conceptual direction established with innovation policy points and how the organization employs creativity to execute its business strategy (Meeus & Oerlemans, 2000) (Gilbert, 1994). Several researchers have explored dimensions of innovation strategy, but this study shall be limited to just packaging and quality innovation.

According to Anthony, (2010) Packaging innovation is the process whereby companies change the style and design of their product package to make it more attractive to target consumers. It involves the modification of the product package by adding a set of meaningful and valued design to it in order to gain the attention of consumers (Kotler, in Komaromi, 2015). Chelumbrun (2014) stated that companies periodically modify their products design, quality and package in order to make it more attractive to the customers, and the use of attractive package in enhancing purchase intention could be established. Companies do this to gain an edge in industries where multiple competitors produce similar products (Hawks, 2015). The purpose of innovation is to arrive at a position where consumers would see the product as being unique when compared to other competing brands (Dirisu, Iyiola & Ibiduni, 2013) as giving it quality cum attractive package makes the difference.

Interestingly, creating an attractive and valued design to a product involves modification of its physical attributes. Here, the product is modified and improved in terms of outlook, durability, reliability, style and design (Chand, 2016). Even though the physical product oftentimes did not change, the minor changes and modification usually attract more customers as the product now wears a new look thereby making it to be perceived as a product that has been innovated or improved upon. However, an important point to note is that a change or modification attempt that

is not attractive to buyers does not count. This implies that products innovation only counts when buyers are attracted to the unique features and design of such changes. If consumers are attracted to the innovative features, they will be tempted to buy the product and become less sensitive to other competing brands. Churchfield (2016) aptly stated that consumers always look out for something new, something different, and something that can grab their attention. For this reason, companies continuously innovate their products to pass a message of continuous improvement and innovation to the target customers, having total quality as watchword (Chukundah, 2023). Churchfield (2016) observed that companies embark on innovation in order to make their products more visible when arranged alongside with other competing brands in shelves. Commenting on the visibility of product in shelves, Pranevicius (2018) noted that most products that stay longer in shelves would have stayed a shorter time in shelf if their packaging was innovated. Marinac (2013) argued that those products whose packages are innovated are more likely to get a second look and increase consumers' chances of making purchase.

Packaging innovation can therefore help to increase the level of consumer patronage of made in Nigeria brands. Anthony (2010) held that packaging innovation can make customers to develop positive perception towards the product and draws fewer comparisons with other competing brands. Once the packaging is attractive to customers, they will be tempted to buy the product. A good innovative strategy would increase customer patronage and ultimately increase sales performance of firms. It is against this backdrop that this study intends to examine the relationship between products innovative strategies and consumer patronage of made in Nigeria handbags and shoes.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The fashion market in Port-Harcourt is experiencing a rapid growth. This is as a result of the level of patronage experienced in the sector. A crop of fashion sensitive youths constitute the target market for this sector. The result is intense competition for control of market share amongst dealers of fashion products notably handbags and shoes. Sadly enough, dealers of made in Nigeria handbags and shoes are experiencing very low customer patronage as a result of customers preference for notable foreign brands like Gucci, Lious Vuitton, Prada, Channels etc. Customers perceive the locally manufactured handbags and shoes as inferior and of poor quality. This wrong notion that all made in Nigeria product are inferior has hampered growth in that sector as some dealers are compelled to close shop due to low patronage and low sales volume.

It is believed that if local dealers can apply various product innovation strategies that can improve the quality, packaging and other features of their brands, customers patronage for these locally produces handbags and shoes will improve thereby enabling them to compete favourably with dealer of the foreign brands. It is therefore the desire of this study to establish the nexus between product innovative strategies and customer patronage of made in Nigeria prodducts, drawing our empirical analysis from dealers of made iin Nigeria handbags and shoes in Port Harcourt.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework of this study is shown in figure 1 below:

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Fig.1: Conceptual Framework

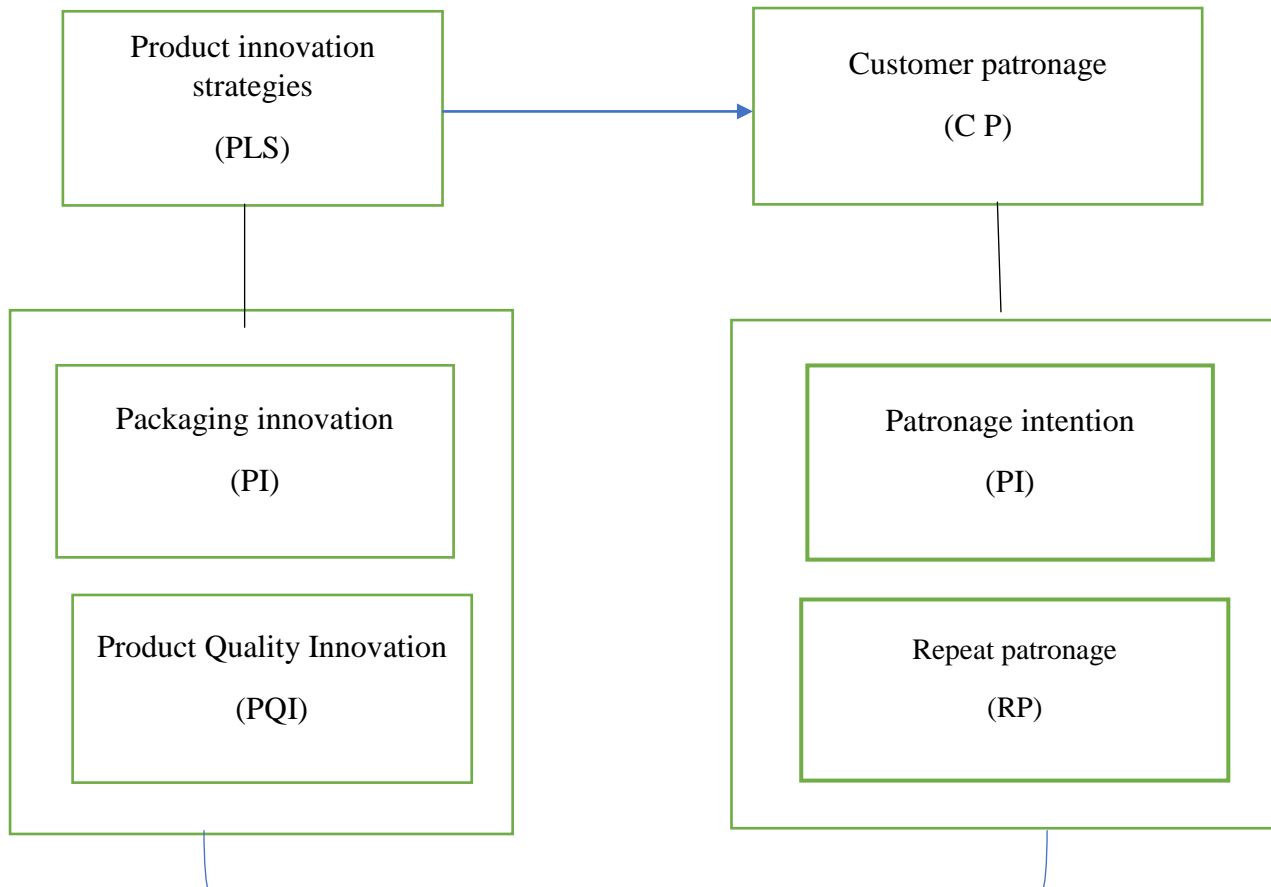


Fig.1: Conceptual Framework of product innovative strategies and customer patronage of made in Nigeria handbags and shoes

Fig.1: Conceptual Framework of product innovative strategies and customer patronage of made in Nigeria handbags and shoes

Source: Researchers Conceptualization, 2023.

### Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine the relationship between product innovative strategies and customer patronage of made in Nigeria handbags and shoes in Port Harcourt. The specific objectives of the study include to:

1. determine the relationship between products packaging innovation and customer patronage intention of made in Nigeria handbags and shoes.
2. ascertain the relationship between product quality innovation and customer repeat patronage of made in Nigeria handbags and shoes .

### Research Questions

In order to effectively address the objectives of the study, the following research questions are put forward:

1. What relationship exists between product packaging innovation and customer patronage intention of made in Nigeria handbags and shoes?
2. What relationship exists between products quality innovation and repeat patronage of made in Nigeria handbags and shoes?

### **Research Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses are formulated in null form to guide our study:

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between packaging innovation and customer patronage intention of made in Nigeria handbags and shoes.

**Ho<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between product quality innovation and repeat patronage of made in Nigeria handbags and shoes.

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

### **CONCEPTUAL REVIEW**

#### **Concept of Innovation**

The term innovation has acquired various meanings over the years. In general terms, it is the process of developing a new item, the new item itself, and the process of adopting the new item (Zaltman et al., 1973). Other authors define innovation –in a broad concept– as the idealization, development, and commercialization of substantially new products, services or businesses which facilitates the development of new sources of competitive advantage (Alegre, Lapiedra & Chiva, 2006).

On the other hand, product innovation consists of the successful exploitation of new ideas (Myers & Marquis, 1969). More specifically, product innovation is a new technology or combination of technologies introduced commercially to meet a user or a market needs (Utterback & Abernathy, 1975). Product innovation is considered by Freeman (1982) as a process in the marketing of a new (or improved) product that includes: the technical design, R&D, manufacturing, management and commercial activities. Several authors make distinctions according to different types of innovation. For example, Christensen (1997) distinguishes between sustaining and disruptive technological change. In his paper, he explains why firms that are successful innovators based on sustaining technologies ignore crucial innovations based on disruptive technologies (Christensen, 1997). On the one hand, what Christensen (1997) describes as sustaining technologies are the ones that improve the performance of established products that are already known and valued by customers, whereas what he calls disruptive technologies consist of products with a new value proposition that only few customers know and value (Christensen, 1997). Elaborating on Christensen's (1997) argument (Meeus & Oerlemans, 2000), conclude that in turbulent markets a focus on continuous innovation (adaptation) is a better innovation policy than inertia and gradual innovation (selection) and vice versa (Verhees & Meulenber, 2004).

We may classify product innovations into two concepts: radical and incremental innovations (Jansen, Van Den Bosch, & Volberda, 2006). On the one hand, radical innovations are exploratory in nature and are designed to meet the needs of emerging customers or markets (Benner & Tushman, 2003; Danneels, 2002). These types of innovation offer new designs, create new markets and develop new channels of distribution (Abernathy & Clark, 1985). They require new knowledge or departure from existing knowledge (Benner & Tushman, 2002; Child & McGrath, 2001; Levinthal & March, 1993). Radical innovation is not the only choice for new product introduction. Evidently, there can only be one pioneer in any product market, therefore what some authors describe as imitation remains a viable and sometimes more common strategy than innovation (Golder & Tellis, 1993; Kerin, Varadarajan & Peterson, 1992; Schnaars, 1994). This imitation strategy can take different degrees, from pure clones, which represent me-too products, to creative imitation or incremental innovation, which takes an existing product and improves on it (Schnaars, 1994; Shankar et al., 1998). Product development accordingly can take a mixed form between two extremes on a continuum, from brand new or radical, disruptive innovation to pure imitation (Zhou, 2006).

This incremental or exploitative innovation is that which is designed to meet the needs of existing customers or markets (Benner & Tushman, 2003; Danneels, 2002). That is, they broaden existing knowledge and skills, improve established designs, expand existing products and services, and increase the efficiency of existing distribution channels (Abernathy & Clark, 1985; Jansen, Van Den Bosch & Volberda, 2006). Hence, incremental innovations build on existing knowledge and therefore reinforce existing skills, processes, and structures (Abernathy & Clark, 1985; Benner & Tushman, 2002; Levinthal & March, 1993; Lewin, Long, & Carroll, 1999). Incremental innovation refers to product line extensions or adding modifications to existing platforms and products (Ali, 1994; Ali, Kalwani, & Kovenock, 1993). Marketing managers design such products to satisfy a perceived market need (Ali, 1994). These types of innovation are expected to be developed in a relatively short period of time (Ali, 1994) and typically they contribute to larger market share for firms (Banbury & Mitchell, 1995). Therefore, the introduction of incremental innovation is critical for the long time survival of firms (Iyer, Laplaca, & Sharma, 2006)

### **Theoretical Review**

This study is anchored on the Porter's Generic Strategy Approach which was developed in 1980. This approach explains that firms can gain a competitive advantage by adopting any of these three competitive strategies namely; cost leadership, differentiation or focus strategy. According to Porter (1980), cost leadership strategy denotes that a firm can gain a competitive advantage in the market by producing goods at the lowest possible costs than its competitors. The differentiation strategy explains that a company can gain a competitive advantage by differentiating its product from competitors' offerings i.e. on the basis of quality, attributes, features, packaging or price. The focus strategy connotes that a company can gain a competitive advantage by focusing on a geographical segment of the market and offers products that will meet the needs of that segment (Pulaj, Kume & Cipi, 2015).

The Porter's generic approach is very relevant in explaining the prospects of packaging innovation. The approach supports the notion that a company should innovate its product package to make it more attractive to consumers. This would enable the company differentiate itself in the market and gain a competitive advantage over its rivals. Valipour, Birjandi & Honarbakhsh (2012) argued that the differentiation strategies of Porter can be utilized by firms to increase their level of consumer patronage if they innovating and differentiate their product packaging. Haarla (2003) stated that a company that innovates its product package stands a better chance of distinguishing itself in a competitive market and increases its level of consumer patronage.

### **Dimensions of Innovation strategies**

#### **Packaging Innovation**

Packaging innovation can be defined as the process of modifying the packaging of a product to make it portray a new look or improve product appearance and quality (Brown, 2012). New shapes, sizes, colour and even new slogan for the same product constitute packaging innovation (Brown, 2012). Packaging innovation is crucial to product success in the market. Hence, companies need to innovate their product packaging to give the product a new look and make it visible in shelf when arranged alongside with other similar products (Marinac, 2013). Generally, packaging innovation alongside with minor improvement in product quality can make a product to stand out among the crowd and gain a competitive advantage over their rivals (Anthony, 2010). Brown (2012) stated that a creative and eye-catching packaging design generates curiosity among consumers which could motivate them to try the product. Packaging innovation is highly essential for companies because consumers generally get tired of seeing the same old things. They always look out for something new, something different, something that can grab their attention. For this reason, companies continuously innovate their product packaging to pass a message of continuous improvement and innovation to the target customers.

Churchfield (2016) observed that companies embark on innovation in order to make their products more visible when arranged alongside with other competing brands in shelves. Commenting on the visibility of product in shelves, Pranevicius (2018) noted that most products that stay longer in shelves would have stayed a shorter time in shelf if their packaging was innovated. Marinac (2013) argued that those products whose packaging are innovated are more likely to get a second look and increase consumers' chances of making purchase.

Generally, innovative strategies are aimed at attracting customers, but of all the dimensions of innovative strategies, packaging innovation is a more strategic way of improving a product's competitiveness in the market. According to Eastlack, di Benedetto & Chandran (2008), the most important strategy in winning the battle of consumer attention lies on the packaging the product. The product packaging presents visual attractions that will makes consumers want to try the product and experience its excellent qualities and functionality. Sims (2016) posited that unique packaging is what makes a product stand out in retailing shelf, drives people to make impulse purchases, and engages the customer far beyond the initial transaction. Given what is at stake, brand owners (marketers) need to manage their innovative strategies especially packaging innovation with a three-pronged approach beginning with a well- defined brand, staying within the functions of packaging, and avoiding the three major pitfalls that lead to consumer rejection (Anthony, 2010). Eastlack, di Benedetto & Chandran (2008) stated that a well managed innovative package can pre-empt a market position, create a new market and lead to greater sales and profits, just as an improved or reformulated product can.

### **Quality innovation**

Strategic Innovation can be applied in a number of areas namely; materials quality, design, size, packaging and process (Anthony, 2010; Eastlack, di Benedetto & Chandran, 2008; Sims, 2016). Each of these areas has the potentials of impacting on the entire company's value chain. The major reason given by customers for their preference for foreign products is because they are more durable and of superior quality. This position, places the need for improvement in product quality as an issue of utmost importance both to the dealers and the customers.

As noted by Brown, 2012. There are several factors that drive companies to innovate their product. One of such factors is the decline in sales. He posited further that, decline in sales normally create a stir among marketers and this immediately drive them to embark on research to determine the factors that are responsible for the decrease in sales. Once these factors are identified, marketers then do some brainstorming and develop innovative marketing strategies to resolve this issue. One of such solutions is the improvement in the product quality to boost it's competitiveness with similar brands.

### **Benefits of Innovated Products**

An innovated product has the following benefits:

1. Improved product perception: We have earlier stated that the major issue facing the made in Nigeria handbags and shoes dealers is the perception that they of inferior quality as compared to their foreign brands. A marketer's message is usually delivered by the product quality. Once, customers perceive that these products are of good qualities, their perception will change thereby increasing the patronage.
2. Functionality and satisfaction: A good product quality innovation equally communicates the functional benefits of the product, which eventually motivates consumers to try the product and get a firsthand user experience and satisfaction. This experience and satisfaction makes the customer a loyal customer and eventually becoming an advocate telling other customers about the product.

### **Concept of Consumer Patronage**

Consumer patronage is a key concept in marketing. The concept has been described from the behavioural and attitudinal point of view. For instance, Ding, Lu and Ge (2015) defined consumer

patronage as choice behaviour whereby a consumer prefers to patronize an organization over others in the same industry. Here, consumer patronage represents the preference for a company's products or services. Garga and Bambale (2016) defined consumer patronage as the extent to which a consumer patronizes a particular company's products or services based on the result of his or her assessment and personal experience. Osman in Kumar (2016) proposed more simplified definition of patronage behaviour of consumer as "the repeat purchase behaviour at a particular company for either the same products or any other products."

Based on the theory of planned behaviour, consumer patronage behaviour is preceded by attitudes and intentions that are formed prior to a customer's behaviour. Attitude refers to one's overall positive or negative evaluation of performing a particular behaviour. The stronger the positive attitude towards the behaviour is, the stronger the intention and likelihood of performing the behaviour (Armitage & Conner in Jere, Aderale & Jere, 2014).

Consumer patronage is the only economic and social justification for the existence of any business and this existence is to create customer satisfaction (Garga & Bambale, 2016). When customers are satisfied with their quality of service delivery, they are more likely to consistently patronize the company. Kumar (2016) added that other factors influence customer patronage. Some of these factors include the company's location, organizational image, quality of service delivery, product quality, price, pleasant dressing rooms and parking space.

### **Measures of Consumer Patronage**

Consumer patronage can be measured using various criteria. However, for the purpose of this study, consumer patronage is measured using patronage intention and repeat patronage.

#### **Patronage Intention**

Patronage intention is defined as the desire and willingness of a person to patronize the products or services of an organization (Ding et al, 2015). Every company wants to increase customer patronage intention in order to maximize profitability. However, increasing consumer patronage intention would depend on how customers perceived the quality of service delivery of an organization. Basically, customers' intention to patronize a product would increase if they are certain that the product delivers expected performance. However, when customers are not certain that they can get the expected performance from the product, their patronage intention would decrease (Kumar, 2016). Customer patronage intention is function of utility. Panda (2013) stated that a product would be attractive to consumers if it meets customer expectations. If customers do not feel that they can get satisfaction from the product, their patronage intention will decrease.

Time and money also have a great influence on customer patronage intention. According to Saini, Rao and Monga in Ding et al (2015), when consumers are considering whether or not to buy a product, they would weigh the time and effort spent to search for the product and money saving. Mogilner and Aaker in Ding et al (2015) added that money and time have psychologically distinct characteristics that would affect consumers' decision. Marketers need to understand what drive the patronage intention of their target customers (Choi & Chu, 2001). Understanding what drives consumer patronage intention would help marketers predict consumers' future purchasing behaviour. Marketers can get information on consumer patronage intention by assessing their level of satisfaction toward their products or services. This information would help them influence consumer patronage decisions by delivery top quality product/services that customers expect (Panda, 2013).

#### **Repeat Patronage**

Repeat patronage is the willingness and desire of a consumer to re-patronize a particular product or organization in future (Jere, et al, 2014). Panda (2013) defined repeat patronage as a behaviour whereby a consumer repeatedly purchases his or her needs from a particular company despite the fact that there are other companies rendering the same product or services. Kumar (2016) described repeat patronage as the behaviour in which a customer frequently patronize the products and

services of a particular company without considering the products and services offered by other competing organizations. Repeat patronage is a crucial factor that enhances organizational competitiveness. According to Amelia (2017), repeat patronage gives a company an edge over its competitors. It helps to sustain sales growth and increase profit margin. Garga and Bambale (2016) posited that repeat patronage is the desire of every organization because it helps to sustain the customer base of the organization. An organization that enjoys repeat patronage from its customers stands the chance of achieving business success. Panda (2013) stated that increasing repeat patronage is the key priority for business managers as it helps to sustain the customer base of the firm and increase profit margin.

### **Empirical Review**

A number of studies have been conducted on products innovation and customer patronage. For instance, Sajuyigbe et al (2012) empirically examined the impact of innovation on organizational sales turnover. Structured questionnaire was employed to collect data with the aid of face to face interview from eighty participants through purposive sampling method. Inferential statistics was used to analyze the data, specifically, ordinary least squares multiple regression method was employed. Result showed that innovative packaging strategies has significant effect on sales turnover. Result also found that packaging and other factors such as brand name, pricing and promotion jointly predict organizational sales turnover, which accounted for 98% variance of sales turnover. The study concluded that a specific package must be developed for each product because variations in packaging can make a product saleable in various target markets.

Kesinro, Ojo & Adenugba (2015) empirically examined the relationship between product package and consumer brand commitment in the Food and Beverages markets of Lagos State, Nigeria. The descriptive survey design was adopted to examine 17,552,940 consumers of packaged food products in Lagos State (Lagos State Bureau of Statistics, 2005). The proportionate sampling technique (a variant of stratified sampling method) was used to draw a sample of 2,500 consumers across the 20 local government areas of Lagos State. Questionnaire was the main instrument for data collection rated on a 6 – point Likert scale. 2374 copies of questionnaire were successfully returned representing a response rate of 94.96%. Data were analysed using the descriptive statistical techniques of Pearson Product moment correlation ( $r$ ) and Simple Regression Analysis. The findings of the study revealed that product package significantly influence consumer brand commitment and that to guarantee consumer commitment as a result of brand physical attractiveness, brand and logo should be simplified and contain accurate information as consumers will like them.

Pranevicius (2018) carried out a study on soft drink packaging innovation and trends. His study adopted the descriptive survey research design and used a structured questionnaire for data collection. The data collected were analyzed using frequency counts, mean, standard deviation, standard error mean and multiple regression analysis. The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient which was computed using the SPSS software program version 20.0. After analyzing the data collected, the researchers found that packaging innovation enhance sales performance of soft drink producers.

Marinac (2013) investigated innovation in food and beverage packaging in the United States of America. Their data were collected from 54 beverage firms in Netherlands using as a structured questionnaire. The data collected from the respondents were analyzed statistically using multiple regression analysis which w computed with the aid of SPSS software program version 21.0. The findings revealed that packaging materials innovation and design enhance customer patronage.

Anthony (2010) carried out a study on managing packaging innovation. Their study employed the exploratory survey design and judgmental sampling method. The researchers used structured questionnaires to collect data from 147 food and beverage firms in Nairobi County. The data collected from the respondents were analyzed statistically using tables, graphs, charts while the

hypotheses were tested using linear regression analysis. The findings revealed that packaging innovation enhance customer preference.

From the empirical studies reviewed, it was obvious that a number of studies have been conducted on product packaging and customer patronage but none of these studies focused on packaging innovation and consumer patronage of made in Nigeria handbags and shoes. Most of the studies conducted on products quality and packaging innovation did not relate it's dimensions to consumer patronage of made in Nigeria handbags and shoes rather they came to the conclusion that packaging innovation influence customer patronage without any detail empirical analysis. This has created a gap in empirical literature which this study stands to fill.

### METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the correlation survey research design. The target population of this study consisted of all the dealers of made in Nigeria handbags and shoes in Port- Harcourt while the accessible population was limited to fifteen selected dealers of the products in Port- Harcourt , Rivers State. A population of 400 customers and dealers was identified in fifteen (15) selected locations

A sample size of 261 customers and marketers was used for the study. The sample size was determined using the Taro Yamene's formula. The simple random sampling technique was used to select the sample size for the study. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents. The questionnaire was structured on a four (4) points rating scale which range from Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, to Strongly Disagree. Out of the 261 questionnaire administered to, 215 copies were correctly filled and returned. The data collected were analyzed statistically while the hypotheses were tested using the Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient (rho). The statistical package for social sciences, SPSS 22.0 version was used to correlate the data collected on the study variables.

### Empirical Results and Discussion

The data collected on product innovative strategies dimensions (packaging innovation and product quality innovation) and consumer patronage measures (patronage intention and repeat patronage) were correlated using the SPSS version 22.0.

The results of the correlation analysis are presented in the tables below:

**Table 1:** Result of the correlation analysis between packaging innovation and consumer patronage intention of made in Nigeria handbags and shoes

			Packaging Innovation	Patronage
Spearman Rank (rho)	Packaging Materials Innovation	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.733*
		Sig. (2 tailed)	.	.002
		N	215	215
	Repeat Patronage	Correlation Coefficient	.733*	1.00
		Sig. (2 tailed)	.002	.
		N	215	215

\*\*Correlation is significant at 0.01 levels (2 tailed)

\*Correlation is significant at levels (2 tailed)

#### Source: SPSS-generated Output

Table 1 contains the result of the correlation analysis carried out between packaging innovation and consumer patronage intention of made in Nigeria handbags and shoes. The result shows that packaging innovation is positively correlated to consumer patronage intention of made in Nigeria handbags and shoes (rho = .733\*) and this correlation is significant at 0.05 level as indicated by the symbol \*. Based on this result, the null hypothesis (Ho1) is rejected and the alternate hypothesis is accepted. This implies that we then accept that there is significant relationship between packaging innovation and consumer patronage intention of made in Nigeria handbags and shoes. This finding

is supported by Sajuyigbe, Ayanleke & Ola (2013) when they stated that packaging design innovation is a crucial strategy to increase customer patronage of goods and services.

**Table2:** Result of the correlation analysis between product quality innovation and repeat patronage of made in Nigeria handbags and shoes

			Packaging Innovation	Patronage
Spearman Rank (rho)	Packaging Materials Innovation	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.812*
		Sig. (2 tailed)	.	.003
		N	215	215
	Repeat Patronage	Correlation Coefficient	.812*	1.00
		Sig. (2 tailed)	.00	.
		N	215	215

\*\*Correlation is significant at 0.01 levels (2 tailed)

\*Correlation is significant at 0.05 levels (2 tailed)

**Source:** SPSS-generated Output

Table2 presents the result of the correlation analysis carried out between product quality innovation and repeat patronage of made in Nigeria handbags and shoes. The result shows a positive correlation between product quality innovation and repeat patronage of made in Nigeria handbags and shoes ( $\rho = .812^*$ ) and the symbol \* signifies that this correlation is significant at 0.05 level. As a result of this, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is rejected and the alternate hypothesis is accepted. This implies that there is significant relationship between product quality innovation and repeat patronage of made in Nigeria handbags and shoes.

The study is therefore in agreement with several other studies that products quality innovation significantly enhances consumer repeat patronage. This is further exemplified in some sectors of the Nigerian economy where local products now compete favourably with similar foreign products due to improvement in products quality.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study examined product innovative strategies and consumer patronage of made in Nigeria handbags and shoes. The empirical results of the study showed a significant relationship between packaging innovation and consumer patronage intention of made in Nigeria handbags and shoes. This study also found a significant positive relationship between products quality innovation and repeat patronage of made in Nigeria handbags and shoes. Based on these findings, it was concluded that products innovative strategies significantly enhance consumer patronage of made in Nigeria handbags and shoes.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions thereof, the following recommendations are made:

1. That, manufacturers of made in Nigeria products should evolve innovative strategies to improve on their products.
2. That, specifically, manufacturers and dealers of made in Nigeria handbags and shoes should improve on the quality of their product as it would boost customer patronage intention and repeat patronage of their products. Hence, change the wrong perception that local products are of inferior quality when compared to their foreign competitors.
3. That, manufacturers/dealers of made in Nigeria handbags and shoes should innovate their products package to wear a new and more attractive look as it would attract more consumers patronage and increase the level of customer patronage and repeat purchase.
4. Finally, it was recommended that manufacturers of made in Nigeria should not increase their brand awareness and service delivery level to let their customers become conscious of the satisfaction they stand to gain from patronizing the local brand.

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