

EXTERIOR DESIGN PRACTICES INFLUENCE ON PATRONAGE OF HYPERMARKETS IN PORT HARCOURT

Songo Lawson

Department of Marketing, Faculty of Business Studies

Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumeni, Port Harcourt, Nigeria

Email: lawsonsongo@yahoo.co.uk

ABSTRACT

This study determined the relationship between exterior design practices and customer patronage of hypermarkets in Port Harcourt. The study adopted cross-sectional approach; since the study time frame is short on a population of three (3) registered hypermarkets in Port Harcourt. They are: Spar at Port Harcourt Mall, Azikiwe Road, Nest Cash and Carry, Trans-Amadi Road and ShopRite, Rumuomasi Road, Port Harcourt which also constituted the sample size of the study. A structured questionnaire was used in generating data which was analyzed via descriptive and inferential statistics. The study employed Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) as a suitable analytical tool with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 22. The findings shows that exterior design has significant relationship with customer patronage. The study concluded that there is a significant relationship between exterior design and customer patronage of in Hyper market in Port Harcourt. The study recommended that operators of hypermarkets should ensure effective technological inclusions in the business environment to ensure effectiveness in the business place.

Keywords: Exterior Design Practices, Customer Patronage, Hypermarket

INTRODUCTION

The activities of hypermarkets in a given economy borders on rendering need satisfying services that meet customers' expectations at a profit. They accomplish this by turning in actions and ingenious services that create value for them, and empower the hypermarkets to attain their corporate objectives sufficiently. In spite of the numerous plans and programs put in place by hypermarkets to satisfy customers, there is still evidence of low patronage. The question that begs for answer is: what could have begot the low customer patronage in the hypermarkets in recent times? It seems that customer patronage might not be incoherent with physical structure or brand appeal.

Gibbs (2011) argued that window designs is a useful strategy for selling merchandise, promoting an idea or marketing the business and the window designs strategy is intended to mediate different kinds of messages to the customer, to show seasonal trends or looks, to show how to use or wear specific merchandise to achieve a particular taste or look, or show what the store has available at various price lines. Chaudhary and Jadhav, (2014) opined that window designs create a unique impression on the consumer mind and the basis for the business survival.

The lack of adequate physical structure and effective-business strategies may contribute to the failure of hypermarkets (hypermarkets) in Rivers State (Adisa, Abdulraheem, & Mordi, 2014; Osakwe, 2016). It is believed that lack of good infrastructure, location of business, poor quality of service and inadequate power supply inhibits the establishment and survival

of any business venture, and perhaps these are some of the reasons why there are not many hypermarkets in Port Harcourt.

The general business problem is that managers embark on small business initiatives without adequate preparation. It seems that some hypermarkets managers lack the strategies to survive. Thus, this study investigated physical evidence consideration and customer patronage among hypermarkets in Port Harcourt.

The following null hypotheses controlled the study at 0.05 level of significant.

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between exterior design and repeat purchase of hypermarkets in Port Harcourt.

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between exterior design and customer referral of hypermarkets in Port Harcourt.

Ho₃: There is no significant relationship between exterior design and customer retention of hypermarkets in Port Harcourt.

Exterior Designs (ED)

Exterior designs represent whatever a customer sees outside the interior. This could be a fenced parking space or garage, gardens, architectural designs, armed security, cleanliness of the store environment, landscaping, entry and window designs, etc. These attributes give potential customers first information about the store. Some scholars explain exterior designs interns of storefront and window designs only (Dhove, 2010). A number of factors affect customers' level of patronage of a hypermarkets. Feng, Chuan, *et al.*, (2008) observed that exterior designs account for the highest level of satisfaction among all other ambience factors. These factors include among others the store appearance, characteristics of the building, store front, entrance, window designs, the surrounding area, and parking space (Berman & Evans, 2005). Turley and Milliman (2000) opined that store exterior includes exterior signs, exterior designs, windows, entrances, height of building, size of building, colour of building, surrounding, stores, lawns and gardens, address and location, architectural design, availability of parking space and exterior walls. Sangvikar, *et al.*, (2012) suggested that retailers usually give customers a special shopping experience that begins with the store exterior environment of the hypermarkets, experience that leads to higher pleasure and arousal and consequently increased purchase intentions. However, Hu and Jasper (2006) viewed business environment as the total impression a business environment makes on the minds of its customers. Thus areas built near a business environment site with a scenic landscape, designed and maintained for the satisfaction of the customers will have a considerable impact on customer satisfaction. The reason is that customer loyalty will be more likely remain when the customer perceive the appearance of a store to be inviting to them. Delvin, *et al.*, (2003) opined that desirable hypermarkets appearance facilitated by an effective positioning strategy is an important component of the retail mix and can positively influence store choice.

The hypermarkets building front consists of the area that surrounds the entrance. Scholars posits that storefront design should convey the merchandise and the store image and brand since it is the first impression that the customer gets of the store (Gibbs, 2011). The author further emphasized that colorful lightening can also be used at the entrance to attract customers that are passing by.

Customer Patronage

The word customer or consumer patronage mean a person or thing that eats or uses something or a person who buys goods and services for personal consumption or use (Oxford English Dictionary 2008). People patronize organizations at one time or the other. Customer patronage can be described as the placing of order after order by a consumer from the same organization; it can also be seen as the buying of services by a consumer of the same brand. Repeat patronage customers are customers', who are satisfied emotionally, intellectually, physically by an organization offering which could be in form of a service which exceeds their expectations.

Customer patronage is a key concept in marketing. The concept has been described from the behavioural and attitudinal point of view. For instance, Kumar (2016) defined customer patronage behaviour as a choice behaviour of consumer which represents the preference for a particular service provider over the other in the same industry Jere et al., (2014) defined customer patronage as the result of a consumer's assessment on one service provider being better than others based on their experience. 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, customer 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 (Jere et. al., 2014).

Attribution theory

Marketing experts have studied attribution for many decades, with current theory dating to the 1950s work of F. Heider. It is the study of human behavior as it relates to purchasing products and services. Businesses must do much more than tout the virtues of their wares. They must convince the consumer that he needs that particular item to solve a problem or improve his lifestyle.

Attribution theory associated with Weiner, Frieze, Kukla, and Reed (1971) explains that majority of customers' in the hypermarkets see service as a bundle of attributes and characteristics which customers assign different levels of importance to depending on the need. Customers' judgment before a hypermarkets is visited is dependent on the value of the offering (attributes and importance). Attribution theory also helps customers to evaluate a purchase experience whether it is satisfactory or not using the key quality attributes.

Research Design

The study adopted cross-sectional approach since the study time frame is short. Cross-sectional approach means collection data at one single time and draw conclusions of the snapshot (Aaker et al, 2010).

Population of the Study

Ahiauju (2006) defines population as the entire individuals, persons, group of persons, organizations or things of interest the researcher wishes to investigate. Therefore, the population of this study was three (3) registered hypermarkets in Port Harcourt. They are: Spar at Port Harcourt Mall, Azikiwe Road, Nest Cash and Carry, Trans-Amadi Road and ShopRite, Rumuomasi Road, Port Harcourt. As obtained from the traffic flow device of each

of the hypermarkets revealed that over 500 shoppers were recorded on daily bases. Therefore 500 active customers was randomly selected from each of the hypermarkets making a total target population one thousand five hundred (1500).

Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

The sample size of this study was 3 registered hypermarkets in Port Harcourt; Spar, Next Cash and Carry, and ShopRite. This is because the population size is small enough to be used for the study. From each of the firms three (3) hypermarkets, respondents were randomly or purposively selected, thus giving a total of 260 respondents who were issued questionnaire.

Sources of Data

When it comes to data collection there are two different types of data: primary data and secondary data. Primary data is data that is collected for a specific purpose. Secondary data, are data sourced from journals, books, published articles, unpublished articles and firm's documentaries. In this study primary data was sourced for since it provides up to date information and reduces the risk of results being out of date (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In addition, secondary data was employed through literature review. The materials gathered was reviewed to obtain information about Physical evidence considerations and customers' patronage of hypermarkets in Port Harcourt, Rivers State,.

Instrument for Data Collection

Instrumentation is the process of creating the instrument. In research, the term instrument means any device that a researcher uses to collect information with regards to conducting a study. Example of instrument include questionnaire and interview schedule. Collection of primary data specific to a study require constructing a research instrument. This study made use of questionnaire in generating data.

Questionnaire Design

The researcher made use of structured questionnaire in gathering data for the study. The questionnaire was structured in multiple choice format. It was divided into four sections: Section A was questions on the demographic profile of the respondents. Section B contained questions relating to Physical evidence considerations (PEC) while section C contained questions relating to customers' patronage (CP), and section D was concerned with technological inclusions in the study. The questionnaire was graded into five point Likert rating scale format of strongly disagree = 1; disagree = 2; neutral = 3; agree = 4; strongly agree = 5. Questions in the instruments were in conformity with the guidelines for the application of the computer-based Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Information in section A included questions on respondent's demographic profile which was measured on nominal scale while information in sections B, C and D were measured on ordinal scale.

Method of Data Analysis

The major aim of using data analysis techniques is to understand and interpret information collected (Zikmud, *et al.*, 2010). This study employed both descriptive and inferential statistics to analyze the data that was generated. This study used Pearson's Product

Moment Correlation (PPMC) as a suitable analytical tool with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 22.

Results

Test of Research Hypotheses

H₀₁: There was no significant relationship between exterior designs and repeat purchase of hypermarkets in Port Harcourt

Table 1: Exterior Designs and Repeat purchase

Correlations

Variables		Exterior Designs	Repeat purchase (CE)
Exterior Designs	Pearson Correlation	1	.752**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	176	176
Repeat purchase (CE)	Pearson Correlation	.752**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	176	176

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.000 level (2-tailed).

Source: Survey data, 2023

The result in table above shows that exterior designs correlates with repeat purchase ($r = 0.752$, $p < 0.001$). This signifies a very high correlation indicating a normal relationship. The relationship that exists between external designs and repeat purchase is shown to be significant at 0.000 level of significance.

H₀₂: There was no significant relationship between interior designs and customer referral of hypermarkets in Port Harcourt

Table 2 Interior designs and Customer referral

Correlations

Variables		Interior designs	Affective Evaluation (AE)
Interior designs	Pearson Correlation	1	.792**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	176	176
Affective Evaluation (AE)	Pearson Correlation	.792**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	176	176

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.000 level (2-tailed).

Source: Survey data, 2023

The result in table above shows that interior designs correlates with customer referral ($r = 0.792$, $p < 0.001$). This signifies a very high correlation indicating a normal relationship. The relationship that exists between interior designs and customer referral is shown to be significant at 0.001 level of significance.

H₀₃: There was no significant relationship between exterior designs and customers' retention of hypermarkets in Port Harcourt.

Table 3 Exterior Designs and Customers' retention
Correlations

Variables		Exterior Designs	Customers' retention
Exterior Designs	Pearson Correlation	1	.502**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	176	176
Customers' retention	Pearson Correlation	.502**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	176	176

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.000 level (2-tailed).

Source: Survey data, 2023

The outcome in table 3 shows that exterior designs correlates with customers' retention ($r = 0.502$, $p < 0.001$). This signifies a very high correlation indicating a normal relationship. The relationship that exists between exterior designs and customers' retention is shown to be significant at 0.000 level of significance.

Discussion of Findings

Null hypothesis one (H_{01}) was constructed to examine the relationship that exists between exterior designs and repeat purchase. The results indicate that there is a positive significant relationship between exterior designs and repeat purchase ($r = 0.752$, $p = 0.00$). This signifies a very high correlation between the two variables. The relationship that exists between exterior designs and repeat purchase is therefore shown to be significant at 0.00. There is a positive relationship between exterior designs and customer referral of hypermarkets in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Rivers State. Null hypothesis two (H_{02}) was formulated to examine the relationship between exterior designs and customer referral. Exterior designs were tested against customer referral of hypermarkets in Port Harcourt using the Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient analytical tool. The result revealed that exterior designs correlate with customer referral, where $r = 0.446$, $p = 0.00$. This signifies a very high correlation among the two variables. The relationship that exists between exterior designs and customer referral therefore significant at 0.00, level of significance. The findings are consistent with Feng et al (2008) which observed that exterior designs account for the highest level of satisfaction among all other ambience factors. Gibbs (2011) posits that exterior designs should carry the factors that will depict the store image, since it is the first expression a customer sees when going into the store.

Null hypothesis three (H_{03}) showed that there is no relationship between exterior designs and customer retention of hypermarkets in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Rivers State. **The findings on table 4.22 revealed that the r values are less than 0.20 ($r = 0.20$) since the yardstick of** (no table 4) accepting the null hypotheses is rejected, when r value is greater than or equal to 0.20 ($r = 0.20$) it means that the hypotheses is rejected. The result revealed that exterior designs correlates with customers' retention ($r = 0.502$, $p = 0.00$). This signifies a very strong relationship that exists between exterior designs and customers' retention shown to be 0.000 which is significant levels. The findings are in line with Bagozzi

(1986) who stated that customers' retention is associated with a psychological reaction, such as attitude and behavioural pattern towards a particular hypermarkets ambience.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concluded that there is a significant relationship between exterior design and customer patronage of in Hyper market in Port Harcourt.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the implications of the study outcomes, the following recommendations are made:

- 1) Hypermarkets operators in Port Harcourt, Rivers State Rivers State should improve their business environment with innovative facilities. So as to influence customers' patronage.
- 2) Operators of hypermarkets should ensure proper exterior designs such as landscaping, window designs, store entrance and aesthetic design of the environment such that it will be appealing to the customers which will garner positive patronage.

REFERENCES

- Ahiauazu, A.I. (2006). *Advanced research methods in management sciences for doctoral students*. (unpublished manuscripts). Faculty of management science, Rivers state university of science and technology, Port Harcourt.
- Breugelmans, E. & Campo, K. (2011). Effectiveness of in-store designs in a virtual store environment. *Journal of Retailing*. 87(1),75-89
- Brown, D; Melian, V., Solow, M., Cheng, S; & Parker, K. (2015). Culture and engagement. Retrieved from <https://www2.deloitte.com/insights/US/en/focus/human-capital-trends/2015/employee-engagement-culture-human-capital-trends-2015>. *Html*.
- Cooper, D.R., & Emory, C.W. (1995). *Business research methods* 5th ed. Chicago, IL:Irwin
- Crowley, A.E. (1993), The two – dimensional impart of colour on shopping. *Marketing Letters*, 4(11),59-69
- Cui, X. & Hu, J. (2012). A literature review on organization culture and corporate performance. *International Journal of business Administration*, 3(2), 30-31.
- Ezirim. A.C.. (2006). *Retailing and wholesaling management* (Millennium Version). Davidstones Publishers Ltd. Pipeline Road, Ozuoba. Port Harcourt. Rivers State.
- Faisal. Q., Sadia, H. & Sheikh, F.A. (2015). Influence of retail atmospherics on consumer patronage in specialised department stores. *Journal of Management and Administration . Sciences Review*; 4(5)758-765.

- Feng-Chuan Pan., Suh-Jean Su., & Che-Chao Chiang. (2008). Dual attractiveness of winery: atmospheric cues on purchasing. *International Journal of Wine Business Research*, 20(2), 95-110.
- Kenneth, C.A. & Bright, C.O. (2014). Physical architecture and customer patronage of banks Rivers State: An empirical study. *African Journal of Marketing Management. Academic Journals*, 6(8), 110-116.
- Otterbring, T., Ringler, C., Sirriani, J.J. & Gustafsson, A. (2013). *Entering consumption: A greater at the store entrance positively influences customers' spending, satisfaction, and employee patronages*. Paper presented at Association for Consumer Research (ACR) North American Conference Chicago, October 3-6, 2013
- Padgett, Dan & Michael Mulvey (2007). Differentiation via technology: Strategic positioning of services following the introduction of disruptive technology. *Journal of Retailing*, 83(4), 375-391
- Palacios, L. L., Lopez, R.P. & Redondo, Y.P. (2016). Cognitive, affective and behavioural responses in mall experience: A qualitative approach, *International Journal of Retail and distribution Management*, 44(1):4-21
- Trott, P. (2008). *Innovation management and new product development*. Harlow; Financial Times/Prentice Hall. Business and Economic
- Turley, L. & Milliman, R. (2000). Atmospheric effects on shopping behaviour: A review of the experimental evidence. *Journal of Business Research*, 49(20), 193-211.
- Zeithami, V.A. (1988). Consumer patronage of price, quality and value: A means-end model and synthesis of evidence. *Journal of Marketing*. 52(2) 2-22.