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CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AND MARKETING PERFORMANCE OF COMPUTER ACCESSORIES FIRMS IN PORT HARCOURT, RIVERS STATE

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ABSTRACT
This study examines the relationship between customers experience and market performance of computer accessories firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. This study adopted a correlational survey research design as the study seek to determine the relationship between both variables under study. The population of the study consisted of 11 computer accessories firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. The study adopted a census population. 3 Managers were selected from each firm multiplied 11 firms give us a total of 33 respondents under study. Structured questionnaire instrument title "customers experience and market performance questionnaire" was developed on five-point likert scale. The result of the Cronbach's Alpha reliability test indicates .702 which is above .70 which implies that the items are reliable. The primary data for this study were generated through questionnaire. hypotheses were tested using Pearson product moment correlation on SPSS. The study revealed that there is a significant relationship between transactional experience and sales growth of computer accessories firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. There is a significant relationship between emotional experience and market share of computer accessories firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. The study concluded that there is significant relationship between customers experience and market performance. The study recommended that computer accessories firms should focus on improving the transactional experiences of their customers by streamlining purchasing processes, offering competitive pricing, and ensuring efficient customer service, computer accessories firms should develop strategies to foster emotional connections with their customers.

INTODUCTION

Customer experience is a key determinant of business success, particularly in the modern market where competition is intense, and customer preferences rapidly evolve. It encompasses every interaction a customer has with a business, from the initial contact to post-purchase service, creating an overarching impression of the brand (Meyer & Schwager, 2007). Two critical dimensions of customer experience are the transactional experience and emotional experience. The transactional experience focuses on the efficiency and ease with which a customer can complete a purchase or interaction, while the emotional experience deals with the feelings or emotional responses elicited during and after the interaction (Verhoef et al., 2009).
The transactional experience is primarily concerned with processes, such as the speed of service, user-friendly interfaces, and convenience in completing purchases. Customers value seamless and frictionless interactions that meet their needs with minimal effort, which can directly influence their loyalty and willingness to return (Schmitt, 2010). On the other hand, emotional experience addresses how the customer feels during their interaction with the business. Positive emotional experiences, such as feeling valued and appreciated, can significantly enhance customer satisfaction and foster long-term relationships (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). These two dimensions work in tandem to shape a customer's overall perception and relationship with a brand.
Market performance is a critical aspect of assessing the success of firms in a competitive environment, with dimensions such as sales growth and market share serving as key indicators. Sales growth reflects a company's ability to increase revenue over time, signifying its ability to attract new customers and retain existing ones. According to Malik et al. (2022), steady sales growth is often seen as a marker of customer satisfaction and effective product or service offerings. It also shows how well a firm is able to respond to market changes and consumer needs, making it a vital performance measure for long-term sustainability.

As noted by Kotler and Keller (2021), market share is often regarded as an indicator of competitive advantage, showing how well a firm is performing relative to other players in the industry. A firm with a large market share can leverage economies of scale, increase brand visibility, and exert more influence over market pricing. The ability to maintain or expand market share, especially in a dynamic market, is crucial for firms seeking to solidify their position and enhance profitability.

Statement of the Problem

The performance of firms in the computer accessories industry in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, has faced challenges linked to changing customer experiences. Customer experience, a key determinant of organizational success, is directly related to how firms perform in terms of sales growth and market share. Sales growth reflects the ability of firms to attract and retain customers over time, while market share indicates a firm's competitiveness relative to its peers. However, many computer accessories firms in Port Harcourt have struggled to maintain consistent sales growth and expand their market share, possibly due to gaps in delivering positive customer experiences. As Homburg et al. (2017) argue, a superior customer experience is critical in differentiating businesses and enhancing their overall market performance, yet these firms seem to lag behind.

Transactional experiences, which encompass customers' direct interactions with the products and services offered by these firms, can significantly influence sales growth. When firms fail to meet customers' expectations during transactions, they risk losing sales opportunities and reducing their market share. According to Lemon and Verhoef (2016), transactional experiences are not just about the quality of the product but also the entire process, from purchase to post-purchase services. Therefore, computer accessories firms that neglect the quality of transactional experiences may see negative impacts on both sales growth and competitive positioning in the market.

Additionally, emotional experiences, which involve how customers feel when interacting with a brand, play a significant role in influencing customer loyalty and brand advocacy. A lack of emotional connection between customers and a firm can limit repeat purchases and hinder market share expansion. Gentile, Spiller, and Noci (2007) highlighted that emotional experiences often drive brand loyalty, which is crucial for maintaining long-term sales growth. In Port Harcourt, where customers have a variety of choices, firms that fail to establish emotional connections with their clientele may struggle to achieve sustainable market growth.

In light of these challenges, it becomes critical to assess how customer experience, both transactional and emotional, impacts the sales growth and market share of computer accessories firms in Port Harcourt. As Verhoef et al. (2009) noted, businesses that do not prioritize customer experience risk underperforming in competitive markets. Therefore, addressing the gaps in delivering superior customer experiences may offer a pathway for these firms to boost their sales growth and expand their market share in a highly competitive environment.

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Conceptual Framework

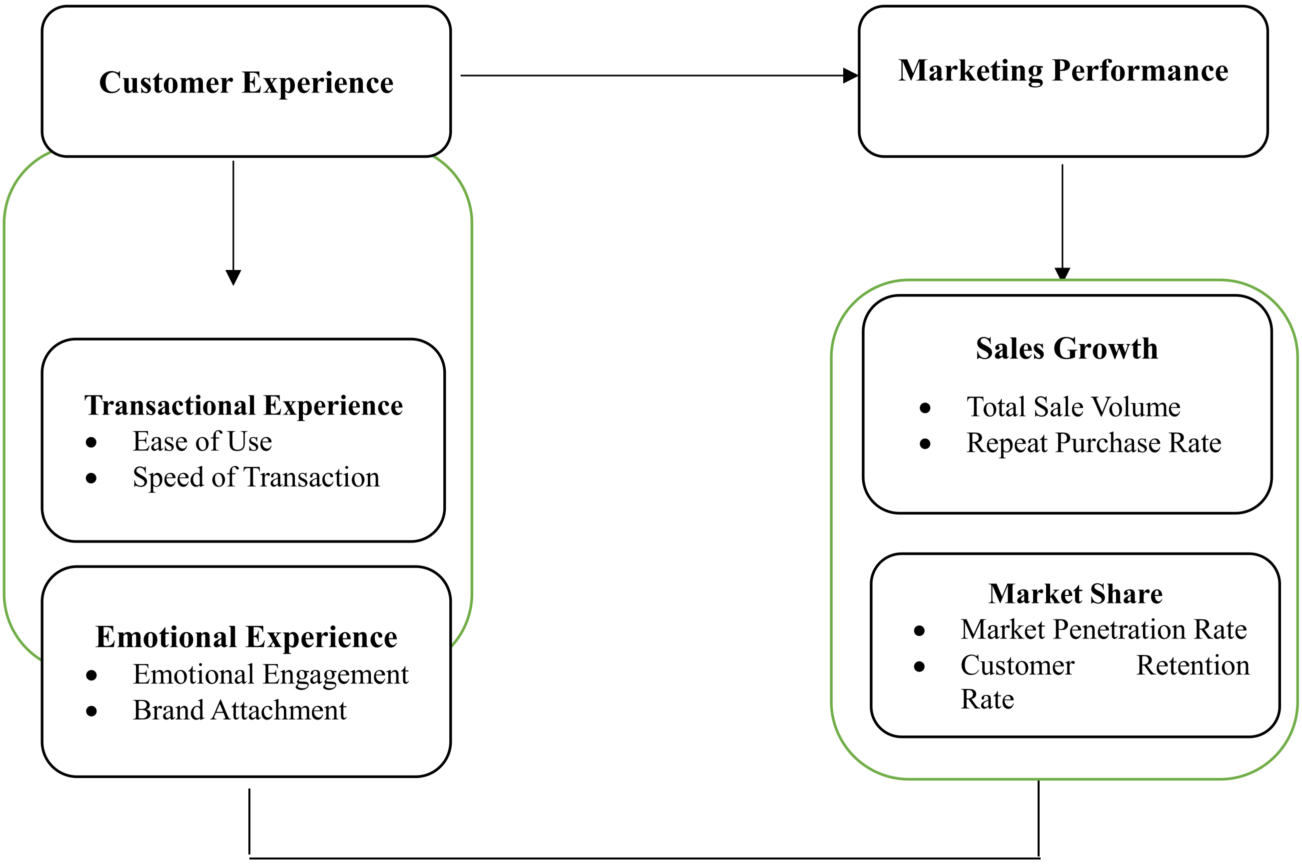

Figure 1.1: Conceptual framework of Customers Experience and Market Performance of Computer Accessories Firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State
Source: Adapted from Lee, & Broderick (2007), Schiffman et al., (2009).

Aims & Objectives

The aim of this study is to determine the relationship between customer experience and market performance of computer accessories firms in Port Harcourt. The specific objectives are to:

1) determine the relationship between transactional experience and sales growth of computer accessories firms in Port Harcourt.
2) determine the relationship between emotional experience and market share of computer accessories firms in Port Harcourt.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study

1) What is the influence of transactional experience on sales growth of computer accessories firms in Port Harcourt?
2) What is the influence of emotional experience on market share of computer accessories firms in Port Harcourt?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at a significant level of 0.01.

Ho_1: Transactional experience does not significantly influence sales growth of computer accessories firms in Port Harcourt.

Ho_2: Emotional experience does not significantly influence market share of computer accessories firms in Port Harcourt.

Significance of the Study

The significance of studying customer experience and market performance extends across various stakeholders, including employees, employers, policymakers, researchers, and academics.

1. **Employees**: Understanding customer experience can enhance employee engagement and satisfaction. When employees are aware of how their roles impact customer perceptions and experiences, they may feel more motivated to deliver quality service.
2. **Employers**: For employers, insights into customer experience directly correlate with market performance. By investing in strategies that enhance customer satisfaction, businesses can increase loyalty, reduce churn rates, and ultimately drive revenue growth.
3. **Researchers**: For researchers, the study of customer experience provides a rich area for exploration regarding consumer behavior theories, marketing strategies, and economic impacts on industries. It allows for empirical studies that contribute to the academic discourse surrounding business practices.

Scope of the Study

The scope of the study will be discussed under content scope, geographical scope, and unit of analysis.

Content Scope: The content scope of the study is limited to customers experience and market performance. Discussions on customer experience are restricted to transactional experience and emotional experience; while market performance as the dependent variable is measured and discussed through sales growth and market share.

Geographical Scope: The geographical scope of this study is delimited to computer accessories firms operating in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

Unit of Analysis: This study adopted a macro level analysis; this implies at the organisational level (management) of computer accessories firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This section reviews various review of related literature related to the study under investigation under the heading of conceptual review, theoretical review and empirical review.

Conceptual Review

Concept of Customer Experience

Customer experience (CX) refers to the cumulative perception a customer forms during their interactions with a business, including before, during, and after a purchase. Gentile, Spiller, and Noci (2007) defined customer experience as a multidimensional concept shaped by various stimuli or factors, such as a company's products, services, and brand image, which together elicit cognitive, emotional, and sensory responses from the customer. This experience is not limited to the product itself but is also influenced by service quality, the environment, and even online interactions, all of which contribute to a holistic experience (Verhoef et al., 2009). Understanding customer experience involves recognizing that it is an internal and subjective response, which differs from one customer to another, shaped by the emotional, psychological, and behavioral interactions with the brand. These touchpoints, whether online or in-person, are vital to the construction of a positive or negative experience (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

The concept of customer experience is further supported by Lemon and Verhoef (2016), who argued that it is dynamic and extends across multiple stages of the customer journey. From their perspective, customer experience encompasses the entire customer lifecycle, from initial awareness and consideration to the post-purchase evaluation, thereby influencing long-term loyalty. The authors emphasize that businesses must understand the significance of the customer journey and design processes that ensure positive and consistent experiences throughout. The touchpoints in this journey can be physical, such as the quality of customer service, or digital, like a brand's online presence, and must be managed carefully to create a coherent and engaging experience (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Moreover, Verhoef et al. (2009) highlighted the importance of a customer-centric approach, where companies focus on building long-term relationships rather than merely facilitating transactions, as this approach leads to sustained competitive advantage.

Dimensions of Customers Experience
Transactional Experience
Transactional experience refers to the interaction a customer has with a company during the purchasing process, including the ease, convenience, and satisfaction derived from completing a transaction. This dimension of customer experience encompasses various touchpoints such as navigating the company's website, dealing with sales personnel, and the effectiveness of post-purchase services. The transactional experience significantly influences customer perceptions, as it directly relates to the speed and smoothness of their interactions with a brand (Meyer & Schwager, 2007). Customers tend to favor businesses that provide seamless, hassle-free transactions, which is often achieved through efficient systems, user-friendly interfaces, and responsive customer service (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). As a result, transactional experience is not only pivotal to customer satisfaction but also plays a crucial role in fostering customer loyalty, as customers who encounter fewer obstacles in their purchase process are more likely to return to the same brand for future purchases (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020).

Emotional Experience
Emotional experience plays a crucial role in shaping customer experience, as it reflects the affective responses customers have during their interaction with products, services, or brands. Emotions often drive customers' perceptions of value, loyalty, and satisfaction, influencing their future behaviors. For instance, customers who feel positive emotions like joy, excitement, or comfort during their interaction with a brand are more likely to remain loyal and develop a strong connection with the brand (Brakus, Schmitt, & Zarantonello, 2009). On the other hand, negative emotions such as frustration or disappointment can lead to dissatisfaction and a loss of trust. Emotional experience extends beyond the functional benefits of a product or service and taps into the psychological and emotional needs of customers. According to Verhoef et al. (2009), emotional experience encompasses both direct and indirect encounters with a brand, which can occur before, during, or after the actual purchase. As a result, businesses need to carefully manage these emotional touchpoints to enhance customer satisfaction and foster long-term loyalty.

Concept of Market Performance
According to Cavusgil and Zou (1994), market performance refers to the extent to which an organization achieves its sales, market share, and profitability goals in a given market. This definition emphasizes the importance of measuring key financial indicators to assess market success. Cavusgil and Zou further argued that factors such as marketing strategies, market conditions, and competition levels significantly influence an organization's market performance. As such, businesses must continually adapt their strategies to maintain or improve their performance metrics in highly dynamic markets.
Porter (1985) suggests that a firm's ability to achieve superior market performance is directly tied to its competitive strategies and ability to maintain a distinctive position in the market. By adopting cost leadership, differentiation, or focus strategies, businesses can secure a competitive edge, which in turn positively affects their market share and sales volume. Porter's framework underscores that market performance is not only about financial results but also about sustaining competitive advantage in a constantly evolving market environment, where consumer preferences and competitor actions continually shift.

Measures of Market Performance
Sales Growth
Sales growth is a critical indicator of market performance, reflecting an organization's ability to increase its sales over time. It represents the percentage change in sales volume or revenue within a specific period, and it is a direct measure of a company's competitiveness, product demand, and customer satisfaction. Sales growth is essential for a firm's long-term sustainability, as it not only signifies an increase in market share but also signals the firm's ability to penetrate new markets and retain existing customers. According to Verbeke et al. (2018), consistent sales

growth often correlates with a company's innovative strategies and strong marketing efforts. Companies that achieve significant sales growth tend to outperform their competitors in terms of customer retention and brand loyalty. Furthermore, a robust sales growth rate can attract new investments, as investors view it as a sign of potential profitability and the company's capacity to scale. Therefore, many firms continuously monitor and optimize their sales growth rates to ensure their market relevance and success.

Market Share

According to Doyle (2020), gaining market share allows companies to enhance their profitability through a stronger bargaining position with suppliers and distributors. Furthermore, firms with significant market shares often benefit from increased brand visibility, which can attract more customers and lead to higher sales volumes. Therefore, improving market share is frequently seen as a primary objective for firms aiming to secure long-term success in a competitive marketplace. Market share is not only a reflection of a company's current market standing but also serves as a predictor of its future growth potential. This measure is often used by investors and analysts to assess the firm's ability to outperform its competitors over time (Kotler & Keller, 2021).

Theoretical Review

Cognitive Dissonance Theory

Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory (EDT) was primarily propounded by Richard L. Oliver in the 1980s, who posited that customer satisfaction is influenced by the gap between expected and perceived performance of a product or service. According to this theory, when customers' expectations are met or exceeded, they experience positive disconfirmation, leading to satisfaction; conversely, when expectations are not met, negative disconfirmation occurs, resulting in dissatisfaction (Oliver, 1980). This framework is highly relevant to the study of customer experience and market performance as it provides insights into how businesses can manage customer expectations to enhance satisfaction levels and improve overall market outcomes. By understanding the dynamics of expectation versus reality, companies can tailor their offerings and marketing strategies to better align with consumer anticipations, ultimately driving loyalty and competitive advantage.

Assumptions of Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory

1. Customers have pre-existing expectations based on prior experiences, marketing communications, and social influences.
2. The evaluation of a product or service is subjective and varies among individuals.

Implications of Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory

1. Businesses must manage customer expectations through effective communication and marketing strategies to enhance satisfaction.
2. Understanding the disconfirmation process allows companies to identify areas for improvement in their offerings.

Empirical Review

Adebayo and Adeyemi (2021) studied the impact of customer experience on market performance in computer accessories firms in Nigeria. This study aimed to investigate how customer experience influences market performance among computer accessories firms in Nigeria. The specific objectives included assessing the dimensions of customer experience that significantly affect customer satisfaction, loyalty, and ultimately market performance. The research employed a descriptive survey design targeting computer accessories firms in Lagos State, Nigeria. The population comprised 500 employees from various firms within this sector. A sample size of 200 was determined using stratified random sampling techniques to ensure representation across different firm sizes. Data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to employees who interact with customers directly. To ensure validity, a pilot test was conducted with a separate group of respondents, leading to necessary adjustments based on feedback. Reliability was established using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, achieving a value above 0.7, indicating acceptable reliability. Data analysis involved both descriptive statistics and inferential statistics using SPSS software for correlation and regression analyses. The findings revealed that positive customer experiences significantly correlate with increased customer satisfaction and loyalty, which in turn enhance market performance metrics such as sales growth and market share among the firms studied. Specifically, dimensions such as service quality and emotional engagement were highlighted as critical factors influencing customer perceptions. The study concluded that enhancing customer experience is vital for improving market performance in the competitive landscape of computer accessories firms in Nigeria. Firms that prioritize customer-centric strategies are likely to outperform their competitors by fostering stronger relationships with their clientele. It was recommended that firms invest in training staff to improve service delivery and develop personalized marketing strategies that resonate with customers' needs and preferences.

Ibrahim and Bello (2023) worked customer experience as a driver of market performance: evidence from computer accessory companies in Nigeria. This research aimed to explore how various facets of customer experience serve as drivers for market performance specifically within the context of Nigerian computer accessory companies; objectives focused on analyzing how product quality perception affects overall market success. A cross-sectional survey design was adopted involving a sample size of 250 customers from five major cities including Lagos, Kano, Ibadan, Enugu, and Port Harcourt through convenience sampling methods due to accessibility constraints during data collection phases influenced by logistical challenges posed by regional differences within Nigeria's infrastructure landscape. Validity checks involved content validity assessments while reliability testing achieved an alpha coefficient exceeding 0.8 indicating high reliability levels across instruments used for data gathering which consisted primarily of Likert-scale questionnaires distributed online due to pandemic-related restrictions at the time. Data analysis utilized regression modeling techniques alongside descriptive statistics performed via R software packages. Findings showed significant positive correlations between perceived product quality dimensions such as durability and overall market performance indicators including sales volume growth rates over specified periods analyzed post-implementation changes made based upon initial feedback received from customers regarding their experiences interacting with products offered by these companies. It concluded that prioritizing product quality improvements directly enhances overall market performance outcomes thereby establishing strong links between effective management practices surrounding consumer experiences related specifically towards product offerings available within this industry segment. Recommendations emphasized continuous improvement initiatives focusing particularly on enhancing product features based upon ongoing consumer feedback loops established through regular engagement channels maintained throughout purchase cycles.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a correlational survey research design as the study seek to determine the relationship between both variables under study. The population of the study consisted of 11 computer accessories firms in Port Harcourt. The study adopted a census population.

Table 1: Population of the Study

S/N	FIRMS
1	Benjy Oddy Technologies
2	Flourish Computers
3	Sutchelinks Technology
4	Amstine Nig. Ltd
5	Beon Computers
6	Ctec Repairs
7	Dbweb Technology
8	DHTechnologies
9	Derock Technology Ltd.

10	Easyclick Computers Technology
11	Elis Investor Communication Services

Source: Nigeria Directory, 2024

3 Managers were selected from each firm multiplied 11 firms give us a total of 33 respondents under study. Structured questionnaire instrument title "Customers experience and market performance" was developed on five-point likert scale. The questionnaire was independently subjected to content and construct validity by two Lecturers in the Department of Management, Faculty of Management Sciences, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rivers State. The corrections and suggestions of the validators were affected on the finale copy of the instrument. The reliability of empirical measurement is indicated by the internal consistency, one of the most commonly used indicators of internal consistency is Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Questionnaire item statements with Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient below the 0.70 threshold were eliminated. the test-re-test method was used. 10 copies of the questionnaire instrument were issue and some later same copies were issue through electronic media. the results were used in computation using Cronbach's alpha test of reliability.

Table 1: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.702	4

Source: Researcher Computation via SPSS Version 25

The result of the Cronbach's Alpha reliability test indicates .702 which is above .70 which implies that the items are reliable. The primary data for this study were generated through questionnaire. hypotheses were tested using Pearson product moment correlation on SPSS.

Data Analysis

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between transactional experience and sales growth of computer accessories firms in Port Harcourt.

Table 1: Correlations on Transactional Experience and Sales Growth

		Transactional Experience	Sales growth
Transactional experience	Pearson Correlation	1	.442*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.010
	N	33	33
Sales growth	Pearson Correlation	.442*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.010	
	N	33	33

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 1 Correlations on transactional experience and sales growth revealed there is a significant relationship between transactional experience and sales growth of computer accessories firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State where P. .442 = .010 leading to the acceptance of alternate hypothesis: There is a significant relationship between transactional experience and sales growth of computer accessories firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between emotional experience and market share of computer accessories firms in Port Harcourt.

Table 2: Correlations on Emotional Experience and Market Share

		Emotional Experience	Market Share
Emotional Experience	Pearson Correlation	1	.745**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	33	33
Market Share	Pearson Correlation	.745**	1

Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
N	33	33

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 2: Correlations on emotional experience and market share revealed that there is a significant relationship between emotional experience and market share of computer accessories firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State where P. .745 = .000 leading to acceptance of alternate hypothesis: There is a significant relationship between emotional experience and market share of computer accessories firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

Discussion of Findings

Table 1 Correlations on transactional experience and sales growth revealed there is a significant relationship between transactional experience and sales growth of computer accessories firms in Port Harcourt where P. .442 = .010 leading to the acceptance of alternate hypothesis: There is a significant relationship between transactional experience and sales growth of computer accessories firms in Port Harcourt. Similarly, Ibrahim and Bello (2023) worked on customer experience as a driver of market performance: evidence from computer accessory companies in Nigeria. Findings showed significant positive correlations between perceived product quality dimensions such as durability and overall market performance indicators including sales volume growth rates over specified periods analyzed post-implementation changes made based upon initial feedback received from customers regarding their experiences interacting with products offered by these companies. It concluded that prioritizing product quality improvements directly enhances overall market performance outcomes thereby establishing strong links between effective management practices surrounding consumer experiences related specifically towards product offerings available within this industry segment. Recommendations emphasized continuous improvement initiatives focusing particularly on enhancing product features based upon ongoing consumer feedback loops established through regular engagement channels maintained throughout purchase cycles.

Table 2: Correlations on emotional experience and market shares revealed that there is a significant relationship between emotional experience and market share of computer accessories firms in Rivers State where P. .745 = .000 leading to acceptance of alternate hypothesis: There is a significant relationship between emotional experience and market share of computer accessories firms in Port Harcourt. Also, Adebayo and Adeyemi (2021) studied the impact of customer experience on market performance in computer accessories firms in Nigeria. The findings revealed that positive customer experiences significantly correlate with increased customer satisfaction and loyalty, which in turn enhance market performance metrics such as sales growth and market share among the firms studiedThe study concluded that enhancing customer experience is vital for improving market performance in the competitive landscape of computer accessories firms in Nigeria. Firms that prioritize customer-centric strategies are likely to outperform their competitors by fostering stronger relationships with their clientele. It was recommended that firms invest in training staff to improve service delivery and develop personalized marketing strategies that resonate with customers' needs and preferences.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that customers experience significantly influences market performance of computer accessories firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Computer accessories firms should focus on improving the transactional experiences of their customers by streamlining purchasing processes, offering competitive pricing, and ensuring efficient customer service.

2. Computer accessories firms should develop strategies to foster emotional connections with their customers.

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