
STORE POSITIONING AND SALES PERFORMANCE OF SUPERMARKET OPERATORS IN NIGERIA

Anucha, Victor Chima Ph.D
Department of Marketing, Faculty of Business Studies,
Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, Nigeria
Email: anucha.victor@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

This study examined store positioning and sales performance of supermarket operators in Nigeria. The study adopted the correlation survey research design. Data were collected from one hundred and six (106) supermarket operators in Port Harcourt. The study utilized questionnaire as its main instrument for data collection while the pie chart and Spearman Rank Order Correlation (ρ) were used for data analysis. The findings revealed that there is positive and significant relationship between attributes positioning and sales growth of supermarkets. The study also found a positive and significant relationship between attributes positioning and sales turnover of supermarkets. A positive and significant relationship was equally found between quality positioning and sales growth of supermarkets. The study also reported a positive and significant relationship between quality positioning and sales turnover of supermarkets. From the above findings, it was concluded that store positioning significantly enhance the sales performance of supermarkets. Based on the findings and conclusion, it was recommended that supermarket operators in Nigeria should position their store on the basis of attributes and quality as it would enhance their sales performance.

Keywords: *Store positioning, attributes positioning, quality positioning, sales performance, sales growth and sales turnover.*

INTRODUCTION

The retail industry in Nigeria is one of the fastest growing industries in Nigeria. The industry has witnessed a massive increase in the number of retail stores as many individuals who could not find a well paid job have decided to set-up a retail business to earn a living. As more and more retail stores are being set up, the level of competition in the industry intensifies. As competition intensifies, it becomes more challenging for retailers to increase their sales performance. Many retailers are now intensifying their efforts to increase their sales performance since it is the only way to survive in the midst of this intense competition. However, in order for retailers to increase their sales performance and survive in the midst of intense competition, there need to position their stores in the minds of the consumers.

Store positioning refers to the place that a store occupies in the mind of the customer and how it is distinguished from other stores within a given locality (Sayman, Hoch and Raju, 2002). It is the process of creating a desired image for a store and in the minds of the consumers (Kotler, 2006). The essence of store positioning is to make the store occupy a distinct position in the mind of the consumers in relation to other competing stores in the locality (Berman, 2010). In order to position a store in the minds of the consumers, the retailer must pay adequate attention on the distinguishing features of his or her store (store atmosphere, the store layout, the interior decoration, product assortment, store cleanliness, fragrance and lighting, as well as the quality of products being sold in the store and price) and try to create a positive image. Every retailer wants his or her store to occupy a distinct position in the minds of the consumers because it is a sign that the store is doing well against its competitors.

Store positioning is the most powerful tool for improving sales performance. This is due to the fact that positioning is something that happens in the minds of the customers (i.e. what customers think about a particular store in relation to their perceptions of other stores in the area). The crucial aspect of positioning is that it expects the customers to compare and evaluate store based on their features (the atmosphere, the store layout, interior decoration, product assortment, cleanliness, fragrance, and lighting, quality of product, price and the overall image. When a retailer is able to position his store in the minds of consumers, it will experience increased sales and profit margin (Arora, 2002). However, for a retailer's positioning strategy to be successful in terms of improving sales performance, the store must occupy a proper and distinct place in the minds of the consumers. Once the store has successfully achieved a strong position in the minds of the consumers, it becomes difficult to ease it from the minds of the consumers, thereby increasing customer loyalty and sales performance. Talukdar (2016) stated that retailers particularly those whose sales have dropped drastically can use store positioning strategy to capture customers and improve their sales performance. When a retailer adopts a positioning strategy, it will go a long way in build trust, increase customer loyalty and improve his overall sales performance (Talukdar, 2016). It is against this background that this study seeks to examine the relationship between store positioning and sales performance of supermarket operators in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The major challenge facing retail operators in Port Harcourt is how to improve their sales performance and survive in the midst of acute competition. The retail industry is highly competitive due to the large number of retail stores in the city of Port Harcourt. The different retailers such as supermarket operators are competing for the consumers' income. Given the intense competition in the retail industry, some supermarket operators have intensified their efforts to dominate the market by adding different features and qualities to their store with a view to position it in the minds of the consumers. Some of them have embarked on radical innovations, changing the physical outlook of the store, redesigning store layout and providing a pleasant atmosphere for shopping, while others have embarked on extensive painting, interior decoration with good lighting and music to give customers a pleasant shopping experience. These developments were undertaken to position the store in the minds of the consumers with a view to improve sales performance. However, ever since these developments were made, it is not yet certain whether the positioning strategy implemented by supermarket operators have yielded the desired outcome of improving sales performance as there are no substantial empirical evidence that showed the relationship between store positioning and sales performance of supermarkets within the Nigerian context. It is in view to fill this gap in literature that prompted this study.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine the relationship between store positioning and sales performance of supermarkets in Port Harcourt metropolis. The specific objectives of the study include:

1. To determine the relationship between attributes positioning and sales growth of supermarkets.
2. To ascertain the relationship between attributes positioning and sales turnover of supermarkets.
3. To investigate the relationship between quality positioning and sales growth of supermarkets.
4. To examine the relationship between quality positioning and sales turnover of supermarkets.

The above objectives are conceptualized in the model below:

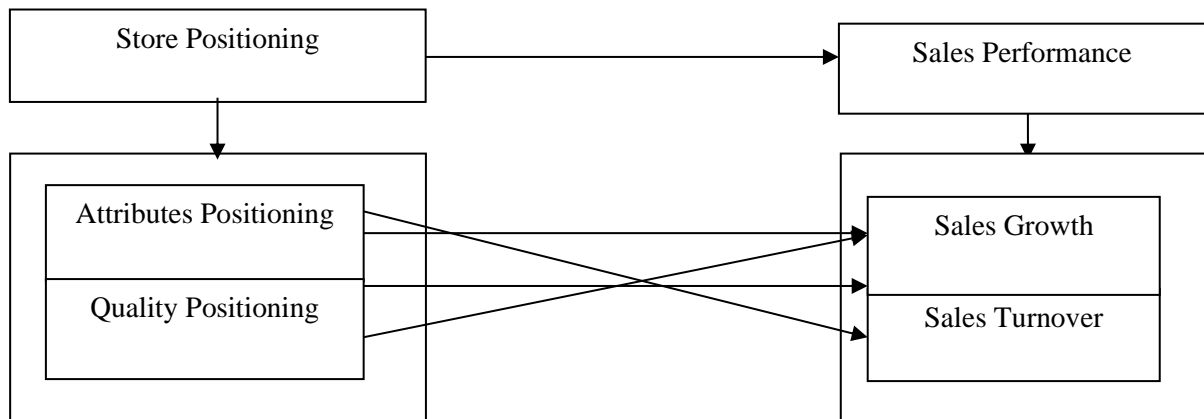


Fig 1.1: Conceptual Framework Construct
Source: Author's Conceptualization

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are postulated to guide this study:

- Ho₁: There is no positive and significant relationship between attributes positioning and sales growth of supermarkets.
- Ho₂: There is no positive and significant relationship between attributes positioning and sales turnover of supermarkets.
- Ho₃: There is no positive and significant relationship between quality positioning and sales growth of supermarkets.
- Ho₄: There is no positive and significant relationship between quality positioning and sales turnover of supermarkets.

Implications of the Study

The significance of this study lies on its usefulness. The result of the study would be useful to supermarket operators in Nigeria as it would enlighten them on how store positioning can be used to improve their sales performance. The study would also sensitize retailers on the importance of positioning their store to build trust and increase patronage. The study would also enlighten retailers on the needs to position their products on the basis of attributes and quality products so as to attract new customers and improve their sales performance. This study would also be relevant to individuals who may wish to set-up a supermarket in future as it will enlighten them on the importance of store positioning and its capacity in improving sales performance. This information would assist intending retailers in making strategic decisions that will lead to the business success. The result of this study would enable supermarket operators understand the possible areas in which they can position their store to make it more attractive to the consumers. This study would be of great importance to the academic world as it would fill the gap that exists in academic literature in this area of study. By so doing students, academicians and researchers especially those who may wish to carry out further research on this topic or related ones would find the study relevant as it would serve as a good reference material for their studies.

Literature Review

Concept of Store Positioning

Store position has been defined in various ways by different scholar and writers. For instance, Newman (2008) defined store positioning as the place which a store occupies in the minds of the consumers. Morton and Zettelmeyer (2004) defined store positioning as the image of a store in the mind of a consumer. It denotes how consumer feels about a store in relation to other stores selling similar products (Nilsson, 2004). Banker (2017) described store positioning as the process which retailers pass through to create an image or perception about their store. It involves

gathering information or data about how consumers perceive their store in relation to other stores within the locality. The purpose of gathering information about the store is to determine whether or not the store occupies a distinct position in the minds of the target audience (Banker, 2017).

Store positioning is all about visibility and recognition (Wikipedia, 2017). It is based on the way consumers compare one store against alternate stores (Berman, 2010). Consumers usually establish a position for a store based on its reliability and prestige. However, retailers need to determine the current position of their store in relation to other competing stores. This is based on the fact that such knowledge and information will enable the retailer formulate a marketing strategy that would ensure that their store occupies a distinct position in the minds of the consumers (Smollan, 2017).

There are several ways in which a retailer can determine the current position of his store in the minds of the consumers. Some retailers usually determine their store position by comparing the physical characteristics of the store (appearance of the store, its size, the store atmosphere, design and layout, the interior decoration, product assortment, store cleanliness, fragrance and lighting, as well as the quality of products being sold in the store and price) to competing stores (Talukdar, 2016). This is wrong because it does not give a true picture of current position since positioning is something (perception) that happens in the minds of the consumers (*Lamb, in Wikipedia, 2017*). Even though the physical characteristics of a store can be designed to achieve a particular position in the minds of the consumers, consumers may attach less importance to some of those characteristics, or perceive them differently, than the retailer expects.

However, Nazmul et al (2012) identified four steps to assess the current position of a store in relation to competing stores within the locality. These include:

- Identification of a set of determinants of store attributes.
- Collecting information from a sample of customers about their perception.
- Analysis of intensity of the store's current position in the customers' mind.
- Determination of store current position in the locality.

Although Nazmul and his colleagues are right about the steps outlined above but much emphasis need to be placed on information gathering from customers. Arora (2002) agreed that gathering information from the field is the best way for retailers to determine the position of their store in the minds of the consumers. This is because positioning takes place in the consumers' minds and as such consumers are in the best position to state what they think about the store in relation to other competing stores. Arora further stated that retailers need to periodically conduct surveys to know the position of their store in the minds of the consumers as this is crucial for strategic decision making. Regular survey will help retailers to determine the current position of their store in the minds of the consumers and make in-depth analysis of the store current position.

Dimensions of Store Positioning

A store can be positioned in different ways. According to Talukdar (2016), a store may be positioned on the basis of attitude or attributes, aesthetic or physical appearance, product assortment, class, price, or quality of products sold in the outlet. Berman (2010) stated that store can be positioned in six ways namely, attributes, design/layout, technology, physical appearance, product quality, and price. For the purpose of this study, we shall focus on attributes and quality positioning because they are believed to have a direct impact on sales performance.

Attribute Positioning

Some retailers attempt to position their store on the basis of attributes (Sayman, Hoch & Raju, 2002; Nilsson, 2004; Newman, 2008; Berman, 2010; Talukdar, 2016; Banker, 2017). Store attributes include the physical features of the store such as its size, physical appearance, color, structure and design, layout, and other physical characteristics that affect the store's acceptance and preference (Nilsson, 2004). Every store has a set of physical attributes which create a

perception about it. A store attributes are what makes it different from other stores. By designing a store with distinct attributes, retailers try to attract consumers to their store. Sayman, Hoch and Raju (2002) noted that consumers usually consider the attributes of a store when deciding on where to do their shopping. They evaluate the physical attributes of the different stores within the locality and used them to decide which store to patronize. The store whose attributes meet the customer's satisfaction is then patronized.

Considering the fact that consumers attached importance to store attributes when deciding on where to do their shopping, some retailers have responded by positioning their store on the basis of attributes. Some retailers especially supermarket operators have used their store attributes to gain a strong position in the market. For instance, Amazon's one-click check-out process is an example of a positioning attribute (Yednap, 2013). Yednap (2013) stated that a retailer that positions his or her store on the basis of attributes tends to set the store apart from others by showcasing specific characteristics of their store. Sometimes a store can be positioned on the basis of two or more attributes depending on what the retailer feels are the most important criteria consumers use to make a patronage decision (Shivashankar and Uma, 2017). However, it is important for retailers to decide how many attributes to build into the store, how much quality to include in each attribute, and how to put the attributes together to gain a strong position in the minds of the consumers (Smollan, 2017). Some retailers may decide to select those attributes that are crucial to customers when deciding where to do their shopping and used them as a basis of positioning (Newman, 2008). Newman further stated that once a retailer has decided on the positioning attributes, it is important for him to carry out a market survey after some period of time to determine the position of their store in the minds of the customers. During this exercise, the retailer should list all the possible attributes relating to his store and ask the customers to rate them on a five point rating scale. This information would enable the retailer determines the position of the store in the locality

Quality Positioning

Most retailers tend to position their store on the basis of quality products sold in the outlets (Morton & Zettelmeyer, 2004; Arora, 2002; Sayman, Hoch & Raju, 2002; Nilsson, 2004). Banat and Wandebori (2012) defined product quality as the ability of a product to fulfill customer's needs and expectations. Most consumers judge a store based on its ability to stock quality and original products (Morton and Zettelmeyer, 2004). Fake products are all over the place and some stores stocked fake products because they are cheaper than the original products. When a retailer stocked low quality or fake products, it creates a bad image for the store when consumers discovered this fraud (Morton and Zettelmeyer, 2004). Stocking quality and original products is a good positioning strategy that can help a store to gain a competitive advantage over its rivals in the same location. It helps to differentiate a store from others in a competitive locality (Arora, 2002). Nilsson (2004) noted that some retailers stocked only quality and original products and used it as a basis of gain a strong and distinct position in the minds of the consumers. For instance, Everyday Supermarket is a typical example of store that stocked on quality and original products which make majority of consumers to prefer the store to others within the same locality. Sayman, Hoch and Raju (2002) argued that retailers that embrace quality positioning strategy believe that stocking only quality and original products will successfully distinguish them from other stores within their locality.

Successful retailers tend to attract more customers to their store by stocking only quality products. They believe that stocking only quality and original products will give them a good public image (Arora, 2002). Berman (2010) posited that retailers that use quality parameter to position their store in the market often emphasize quality and originality in their business name. They often say that their company is committed to quality and that it is the quality which customers know them for that distinguish them from their rivals. Hartmann, Apaolaza and Sainz (2002) posited that most retailers that position their store on the basis of quality products usually narrow their focus to

certain area of expertise. They focused all their energy in one area which makes them to be branded as a trusted specialist in that area. Building a right perception of quality helps a store to succeed in the market. As Talukdar (2016) rightly stated, quality perception lies in the minds of the consumers and it is only the consumers that can tell of the quality of products stocked in a particular retail outlet.

Concept of Sales Performance

Sales performance could be defined as the difference between budgeted sales and the actual sales of a company for a specific period of time (Roberge, 2014). If the actual sales for the year exceed the budgeted or estimated sales for the year, it implies that the company has a good sales performance for the period under review. However, if the budgeted or estimated sales for the year exceed the actual sales for the year, it means that the company has experienced a poor sales performance for the period under review. Improving sales performance is one of the primary objectives of business firms. McKinsey, Baungartner and Hatami (2016) stated that increasing sales is the one of the primary objectives of business. It is the hallmark of business continuity and a pre-requisite for business survival. When the sales performance of a company is improved, it will manifest in the profit margin of the firm. Bertuzzi (2015) noted that sales performance has a direct impact on the profit margin of business firms. According to him, when the sales performance of an organization is improved, it is an indication that the company is doing well against its competitors and this has a bearing effect on the profit margin of the firm. Retailers including supermarket operators are intensifying their efforts to improve their sales performance. They believe that improving sales performance will lead to increased profit. Sara (2017) noted that every retailer wants to improve his or her sales performance because it is the only way to survive in the industry. Nelson (2015) stated that the retail industry is highly competitive and the only way for retail firms to survive is to improve their sales performance.

Measures of Sales Performance

Sales performance can be measured using various criteria. However, for the purpose of this study, sales performance is measured using sales growth and sales turnover. The measures are discussed below:

Sales Growth

Sales growth can be defined as an increase in the amount of goods sold by a company over a period of time (Bertuzzi, 2015). Sales growth can be determined by comparing the amount of sales made by a company in the present year with the amount of sales made at the previous year. For instance, a company is said to have experienced sales growth if its sales were N4 million in 2016 and are N5 million in 2017. The additional amount of N1 million in 2017 is recorded as the sales growth. Sales growth could also be expressed as a percentage increase in sales over a period of time (Roberge, 2014). This is often called the growth rate of sales. Using our initial example, the percentage increase in sales in 2017 is 20%. Sales growth helps to increase the profit margin of a company. As Reibstein et al (2006) stated, an increase in sales means a corresponding increase in revenue for the company and this lead to increase in shareholders' dividend. By selling more products from year to year, company increases its profit margin and expands its operations. Sales growth helps to increase the general health of a company; it indicates whether or not a company is meeting its target (McKinsey, Baungartner and Hatami, 2016).

Sales growth is key indicator of market competitiveness. It indicates that the company is doing well in the market (Roberge, 2014). Cross (2012) stated that sales growth is a crucial competitive factor because it demonstrates to investors that the company is doing well as against its competitors. When an investor look at the financial statement of a company, he try to concentrate more on the sales figure to know whether the company's sales is growing consistently from year to year. The reason for this is that the investor would to determine how well the company is doing in the market particularly against its competitors. If the investor discovers that the sales of the

company are growing consistently from year to year, he or she may decide to buy its share and make profit through dividend.

Sales Turnover

Sales turnover is the amount or value of goods sold by a company at a specific period of time (Schenk, Trailer, and Dickie, 2015). A company's sales turnover can be expressed in financial terms or in unit /quantity of products sold at a given period of time (Cross, 2012). A company's sales turnover can be calculated by multiplying the quantity of products sold by the price of each product. For instance, if a company like Nokia sells 500 units of phone at the rate of N25,000 per phone in the year 2017, the sales turnover of the company for that year would be $500 \times N25,000$ which is N12,500,000. Thus, an increase in sales turnover implies more revenue for the company. As company increases its revenue, so will the business grows and prosper. Sales turnover is a key indicator of a firm's market competitiveness (Roberge, 2014). Many companies use sales turnover as a basis for measuring their market competitiveness because it gives an insight into the progress made so far in terms of how customers value their products. For instance, if a company has a low sales turnover rate, it implies that the company is not doing well against its competitors. However, a high rate of sales turnover signifies that the company is doing well against its competitors (Reibstein et al, 2006). Every company strives to increase their sales in order to increase their sales turnover rate. The more sales a company make, the higher the rate of turnover which implies more revenue for the company.

Store Positioning and Sales Performance: An Empirical Review

Some related empirical studies have been conducted on positioning strategies and sales performance. For instance, Shivashankar and Uma (2017) empirically examined brand positioning and customer perception towards apparels in Bangalore. They studied three different brands of jeans namely Wrangler, Lee and Levi Strauss brands with a particular focus on their attributes, looks, durability, quality, benefits, price, image and aesthetic value. The researchers used a structured questionnaire to elicit data from 40 consumers regarding their perception on the attributes, looks, durability, quality, benefits, price, image and aesthetic value of the three brands of jean. After a simple analysis, it was revealed that consumers ranked Lee brand higher, followed by Levi Strauss brand, and then Wrangler on the basis of attributes, looks, durability, quality, benefits, price, image and aesthetic value. The study concluded that brand positioning enhance sales performance.

Akekue-Alex and Kalu (2016) empirically examined the relationship between positioning strategies and customer patronage of fast food firms in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. The researchers adopted a descriptive research design where a self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data from 123 fast food employees in Port Harcourt Metropolis. The data collected were analyzed using multiple regression analysis with the aid of SPSS version 20.0 and GRETl software packages. The result revealed that there was insignificant relationship between all positioning strategies (customer expectation, location, service quality and assortment) and customer patronage. The study also reported that only 2.5% of the variation in customer patronage was explained by the joint influence of customer expectation, location, service quality and assortment.

Kamau and Wafula (2015) examined the effects of strategic positioning of service delivery on customer satisfaction. The study employed qualitative and quantitative approaches to analyze the variables of the study. The researchers adopted a descriptive research design where questionnaire was used to elicit data from 67 customers and staff of Fina Bank in Mombosa, Kenya. The data collected by the researchers were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, as well as the Pearson's product moment correlation which was computed using the SPSS version 21.0. The result revealed that all the strategic positioning strategies (such as technological advancement, product classification, customer segmentation and brand benefits) has a positive impact on customer satisfaction.

González-Benito, Martos-Partal & de Salamanca (2013) examined the role of retailer positioning and product category on the relationship between store brand consumption and store loyalty. The researchers studied ten (10) retail store chains in Spain. The study reported that there is positive relationship between private-label consumption and store loyalty. The study also found significant differences across product categories in this relationship between in-store private-label consumption and store loyalty. The study however concluded that there is significant relationship between store brand share and store loyalty is more favorable for risky product categories.

Nazmul et al (2012) carried out an empirical study on product positioning in the soap industry. They studied six different brands of soap in Dhaka city namely, Tibet, Keya, Lux, Sandaline, Lifebuoy and Camelia with a view to determine their current position in the minds of consumers. The researchers conducted a pilot survey to obtain data from traders regarding six attributes of the different soap brands, namely size, packaging, price, quality, smell and freshness. After a thorough analysis, it was found that the most demanding brands in the market are LUX, Sandalina, Meril, Keya, Tibet and Camelia. Lux occupies the best position in respect of all the attributes except the attribute "price." Sandalina and Lifebouy are in 2nd and 3rd position with respect to the six attributes.

Hartmann, Apaolaza and Sainz (2002) empirically examined the effect of brand positioning on customer loyalty using energy utility Iberdrola as a case study. Their study aimed at ascertaining the current position of the company and its competitors and measure the loyalty effect of the company's positioning. The researchers collected data from clients (customers) of the company (energy utility Iberdrola) and applied the regression analysis for data analysis. The result showed that all the dimensions of brand positioning (attributes, quality, benefits and price positioning) have a significant effect on customer loyalty.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the correlation survey research design. The target population of this study consisted of all the supermarkets in Nigeria while the accessible population was limited to selected supermarket operators in Port Harcourt. A population of one hundred and twenty (120) supermarket operators was identified in Port Harcourt City Local Government Area. All the 120 supermarket operators were used for the study. No sampling technique was adopted because the population is of researchable size. A self-developed questionnaire was used to elicit data from the respondents (supermarket operators). The questionnaire was structured on a 4 points likert scale (strong agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree). The validity of the instrument was determined through face and content analysis while its reliability was ascertained using the test-retest method. A reliability index of 0.92 was obtained which implies that the instrument was reliable. The instrument was administered to the respondents across the 120 supermarkets in Port Harcourt City Local Government Area with the aid of five trained research assistants. A total copy of 120 questionnaires was administered to the respondents and 105 copies were collected and used for analysis. The data collected were analyzed statistically while the hypotheses were tested using the Spearman Rank Order Correlation (ρ) with the aid of the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) 21.0 version.

Empirical Results and Discussion

The result of the correlation analysis carried out on the study variables were presented in this section and interpreted accordingly.

Table 1: Relationship between attributes positioning and sales growth of supermarkets

| | | | Attributes Positioning | Sales Growth |
|----------------|------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|--------------|
| Spearman (rho) | Attributes Positioning | Correlation Coefficient | 1.000 | .735* |
| | | Sig. (2 tailed) | . | .001 |
| | | N | 106 | 106 |
| | Sales Growth | Correlation Coefficient | .735* | 1.000 |
| | | Sig. (2 tailed) | .001 | . |
| | | N | 106 | 106 |

**Correlation is significant at 0.01 levels (2 tailed)
 *Correlation is significant at 0.05 levels (2 tailed)

Source: SPSS-generated Output

Table 1 presents the result of the relationship analysis between attributes positioning and sales growth of supermarkets. The result indicates that attributes positioning is positively related to sales growth (rho = .735*) and the symbol * signifies that this relationship is significant at 0.05 level. Based on this result, the null hypothesis is rejected and alternate hypothesis is accepted. This means that we then accept that there is positive and significant relationship between attributes positioning and sales growth of supermarkets.

Table 2: Relationship between attributes positioning and sales turnover of supermarkets

| | | | Attributes Positioning | Sales Turnover |
|----------------|------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|----------------|
| Spearman (rho) | Attributes Positioning | Correlation Coefficient | 1.000 | .786* |
| | | Sig. (2 tailed) | . | .002 |
| | | N | 106 | 106 |
| | Sales Turnover | Correlation Coefficient | .786* | 1.000 |
| | | Sig. (2 tailed) | .002 | . |
| | | N | 106 | 106 |

**Correlation is significant at 0.01 levels (2 tailed)
 *Correlation is significant at 0.05 levels (2 tailed)

Source: SPSS-generated Output

Table 2 shows the result of the correlation analysis carried out on attributes positioning and sales turnover of supermarkets. The result indicates that attributes positioning is positively correlated to sales turnover (rho = .786*) and this correlation is significant at 0.05 level as indicated by the symbol *. Consequently, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis is accepted. This means that there is positive and significant relationship between attributes positioning and sales turnover of supermarkets.

Table 3: Relationship between quality positioning and sales growth of supermarkets

| | | | Quality Positioning | Sales Growth |
|----------------|---------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|--------------|
| Spearman (rho) | Quality Positioning | Correlation Coefficient | 1.000 | .812* |
| | | Sig. (2 tailed) | . | .003 |
| | | N | 106 | 106 |
| | Sales Growth | Correlation Coefficient | .812* | 1.000 |
| | | Sig. (2 tailed) | .003 | . |
| | | N | 106 | 106 |

**Correlation is significant at 0.01 levels (2 tailed)
 *Correlation is significant at 0.05 levels (2 tailed)

Source: SPSS-generated Output

Table 3 presents the result of the correlation analysis between quality positioning and sales growth of supermarkets. The result shows that quality positioning has a positive correlation with sales growth ($\rho = .812^*$) and this correlation is significant at 0.05 level as indicated by the symbol *. As a result of this, we then reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis which states that there is positive and significant relationship between quality positioning and sales growth of supermarkets.

Table 4: Relationship between quality positioning and sales turnover of supermarkets

| | | | Quality Positioning | Sales Turnover |
|----------------|---------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| Spearman (rho) | Quality Positioning | Correlation Coefficient | 1.000 | .864* |
| | | Sig. (2 tailed) | . | .004 |
| | | N | 106 | 106 |
| | Sales Turnover | Correlation Coefficient | .864* | 1.000 |
| | | Sig. (2 tailed) | .004 | . |
| | | N | 106 | 106 |

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

*Correlation is significant at 0.05 levels (2 tailed)

Source: SPSS-generated Output

Table 4 shows the result of the correlation analysis performed between quality positioning and sales turnover of supermarkets. The result shows a positive correlation between quality positioning and sales turnover ($\rho = .864^*$). This relationship was found to be significant at 0.05 level as indicated by the symbol *. Based on this result, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis is accepted. This implies that there is significant relationship between quality positioning and sales turnover of supermarkets.

Discussion of Findings

From the result of the analysis, it was reported that positive and significant relationship exists between attributes positioning and sales growth of supermarkets. This finding was derived from the result of the SPSS-generated output on the first hypothesis. The result revealed that attributes positioning is positively related to sales growth and this relationship is significant at 0.05 level (See table 4.2). Based on this result, the null hypothesis was rejected and alternate hypothesis was accepted. This means that there is positive and significant relationship between attributes positioning and sales growth of supermarkets. This finding is supported by González-Benito et al (2013) who noted that a store that position itself on the basis of attributes stand a better chance of increasing sales than those that do not adopt attributes positioning. Yednap (2013) also agreed with this finding when he stated that a retailer that positions his or her store on the basis of attributes tends to set the store apart from others by showcasing specific characteristics of their store which helps to attract more customers and increase sales volume.

This study also found a positive and significant relationship between attributes positioning and sales turnover of supermarkets. This finding was obtained from the result of the SPSS analysis performed on the two variables. The result revealed that attributes positioning is positively correlated to sales turnover and this correlation is significant at 0.05 level (See table 4.3). Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternate hypothesis was accepted. This means that there is positive and significant relationship between attributes positioning and sales turnover of supermarkets. This finding is supported by Newman (2008) who noted that retailers operating a supermarket, superstore or kiosk can increase their sales turnover if they position their store on the basis of specific attributes that can entice customers. Smollan (2017) also agreed with this finding when he stated that small scale retailers who position their store on the basis of some unique attributes or features are more likely to increase their sales turnover than those who did not position their store on the basis of unique features.

This study equally found a significant positive relationship between quality positioning and sales growth of supermarkets. This finding was derived from the result of the SPSS analysis carried on the two variables. The result revealed that quality positioning has a positive correlation with sales growth and this correlation is significant at 0.05 level (See table 4.4). As a result of this, we then rejected the null hypothesis and accepted the alternate hypothesis which states that there is positive and significant relationship between quality positioning and sales growth of supermarkets. This finding is supported by Morton and Zettelmeyer (2004) who noted that consumers judge a store based on its ability to stock quality and original products, and if a store positions itself on the basis of quality, it will increase its sales and profit margin. Arora (2002) also agreed with this finding when he stated that stocking quality and original products is a good positioning strategy that can help a store to increase sales and gain a competitive advantage over its rivals in the same location.

Finally, it was reported that positive and significant relationship exists between quality positioning and sales turnover of supermarkets. This finding was derived from the result of the SPSS analysis done on the two variables. The result shows a positive correlation between quality positioning and sales turnover and this relationship was found to be significant at 0.05 level (See table 4.5). Based on this result, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternate hypothesis was accepted. This implies that there is significant relationship between quality positioning and sales turnover of supermarkets. This finding is supported by Nilsson (2004) who noted that some retailers stocked only quality and original products and used it as a strategy to increase their sales turnover. Sayman, Hoch and Raju (2002) also supported this finding when they reported that a retailer who embraces quality positioning strategy stands a better chance of increasing their sales turnover than those who did not position their store on the basis of quality and original products.

CONCLUSION

From the foregoing, it is evident that store positioning is a crucial strategy of improving sales performance of supermarkets. This study has proven that attributes positioning strategy can help supermarket operators to increase their sales turnover and achieve sales growth. This implies that if supermarket operators can attract more customers to their store and increase sales volume if they position their store on the basis of attributes by adding some unique features in their store to differentiate it from their competitors. The study also revealed that quality positioning can help supermarket operators to increase their sales turnover and achieve massive sales growth. The implication of this is that if supermarket operators stock only quality and original products in their store, it will create unique perception in the minds of the consumers and this will help to increase sales turnover and profit margin. Based on these facts, it is concluded that store positioning significantly enhance sales performance of supermarkets in Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusion, the following recommendations are made:

1. That, supermarket operators in Nigeria especially those in Port Harcourt should adopt store positioning strategy as it would surely enhance their sales performance.
2. That, supermarket operators especially those that are experiencing low sales should adopt attributes positioning by adding some unique features to their store as this would attract more customers to their store and increase their sales volume.
3. That, supermarket operators particularly those who are still witnessing poor sales performance should adopt quality positioning strategy by stocking quality and original products in their store as this would attract more customers to their store and increase their sales performance.
4. That, supermarket operators in Nigeria should periodically innovate their store by adding some unique attributes to the store as this would not only differentiate their store from their competitors' own but would also attract more customers and increase their sales performance.

5. Finally, it is recommended that supermarket operators should create an avenue for customers to file their complaint as this would provide information which they can use to improve their services to the public.

REFERENCES

- Akekue-Alex, N. & Kalu, S. E. (2016). Positioning Strategies and Customer Patronage of Fast-Food Firms in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. *European Journal of Business and Management*, 8(36), 63-74.
- Arora, R. (2002). Consumer Involvement in Retail Store Positioning. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing*, 10 (1/2), 109-124.
- Banat, A. & Wandebori, H. S. T. (2012). Store Design and Store Atmosphere Effect on Customer Sales Per Visit. *Economics, Management and Behavioral Sciences*, 20: 167-174.
- Banker, C. (2017). Retail In-Store Positioning and Off Shelf Strategies. *The Procorr*. Blog.proccorrdisplay.com (Assessed 12/5/2018).
- Berman, B. (2010). Retail Store Positioning and Competitive Strategy. Retrieved from: www.informit.com (Assessed 17/4/2018).
- Bertuzzi, T. (2015). *The Sales Development Playbook: Build Repeatable Pipeline and Accelerate Growth with Inside Sales*. London: Prentice Hall.
- Cross, D. (2012). How to Determine Sales Turnover from Financial Statements. Retrieved from: <http://www.accountingtool.com> (Assessed 17/4/2018).
- González-Benito, O., Martos-Partal, M. & de Salamanca, U. (2012). Role of Retailer Positioning and Product Category on the Relationship between Store brand Consumption and Store Loyalty. A Paper prepared for the Working Paper Collection in Spain.
- Hartmann, P., Apaolaza, V. & Sainz, J. F. (2002). The Effect of Brand Positioning on Customer Loyalty: An Empirical Study of the Iberdrola. <http://www.researchgate.net>(Assessed 17/4/2018).
- Hickey, C. (2017). *Marketing Strategies*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Kamau, A. N. & Wafula, M. K. (2015). Effects of Strategic Positioning of Service Delivery on Customer Satisfaction - A Case Study of FINA Bank. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, 5 (1), 1-15.
- McKinsey, C., Baungartner, T. & Hatami, H. (2016). Sales Growth: Five Proven Strategies from the World's Sales Leaders Hardcover. The Amazon Book Review.
- Morton, F.S. & Zettelmeyer, F. (2004). The Strategic Positioning of Store Brands in Retailer-Manufacturer Negotiations. *Review of Industrial Organization*, 24 (2), 161-194.
- Nazmul, A. K., Islam, M. S., Hossain, F. & Chowdhury, M. T. (2012). Product Positioning: A Study of Soap Industry in Dhaka City. *European Journal of Business and Management*, 4(12), 83-95.
- Nelson, B. (2015). 12 Sure-Fire Steps to Improve Retail Sales. Business Know-how. Retried from: www.businessknowhow.com (Assessed 23/5/2018).

- Newman, A. (2008) Retail Positioning. *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Management*, 1 (23), 124-136.
- Nilsson, C. (2004). Positioning Strategies in Retail. DIVA Portal Retrieved from: www.divaportal.org (Assessed 12/5/2018).
- Reibstein, D.J., Bendle, N.T., Farris, P.W. & Pfeifer, P.E. (2006). *Marketing Metrics: 50 Metrics Every Executive Should Master*. London: Pearson Education.
- Roberge, M. (2014). *The Sales Acceleration Formula: Using Data, Technology, and Inbound Selling to go from \$0 to \$100*. New York: Macmillan Publications.
- Sara, S. (2017). How to Increase Sales in Retail: The Ultimate Guide. Shopkeep. www.shopkeep.com (Assessed 23/5/2018).
- Sayman, S., Hoch, S.J. & Raju, J.S. (2002). Positioning of Store Brands. *Marketing Science*, 21 (4), 387-397.
- Schenk, T., Trailer, B. & Dickie, J. (2015). The Impact of Sales Turnover. *CSO Insights*. <https://www.csoinsights.com/blog/the-impact-of-sales-turnover/> (Assessed 23/5/2018).
- Shivashankar, S. C. & Uma, T.G. (2017). Brand Positioning and Customer Perception towards Apparels – A Study in Bangalore. *International Journal of Applied Research*, 3(2): 213-218.
- Smollan, A. (2017). Positioning the Store of the Future. The Springer. Retrieved from: www.springer.com (Assessed 12/5/2018).
- Talukdar, T. (2016). Store Positioning Strategy. Retail Strategic Management. *Scribd*. Retrieved from: www.scribd.com (Assessed 17/4/2018).
- Unamma, A.O. (2003). *Basic Needs for Development Research – A Hint for University/Distance Learning Scientist*, Owerri: Amadera Educational Services.