

SALES PASSION AND CUSTOMER PATRONAGE OF FOOD AND BEVERAGE FIRMS IN PORT HARCOURT

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ABSTRACT

The research looked at the connection between customer support of food and beverage businesses in Port Harcourt and sales enthusiasm. The population of this research comprised of 120 food and beverage SMEs in Port Harcourt that were identified using the Yellow Pages of the Fact Book and the Rivers State Ministry of Trade and Industry. The correlational survey methodology was used. The sample size of 92 was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan Sampling Table. The reliability of the instrument was calculated using SPSS version 23, and it was found to be 0.88 points higher than the baseline of 0.7. This study employed both descriptive and inferential statistics to analyse the information obtained. Using the Spearman Rank-Order Correlation Technique, the many hypotheses that had been established were examined. According to the data, repeat business and referrals for food and beverage companies in Port Harcourt are significantly and positively correlated with harmonious passion and obsessive passion. As a result, the article came to the conclusion that customer support is dependent on salespeople's obsessive and harmonious desire. It was advised that salespeople in the food and beverage industry should be enthusiastic about sales since this will impact consumer patronage. They should also be passionate about harmony because this would encourage consumers to engage in their activities.

Keywords: *Sales Passion, Obsessive passion, harmonious passion and consumer patronage.*

INTRODUCTION

Sales management is the process of building a sales force, coordinating sales efforts, and implementing tactics to consistently achieve or exceed sales goals. Every company aims to create a platform where their goods and services are readily discovered and used by their target audience. This will pave the path for the realisation of intended outcomes. So, it is reasonable to assume that corporations are formed to achieve certain ends, such as maximisation of profit, repeat business, customer happiness, recommendations, growth, expansion, and market share. Thus, organizations need to set up a system for fulfilling their stated goals. Employing salespeople with enthusiasm will help organizations accomplish their goals (Ibojo & Akinruwa, 2014). According to Vallerand et al. (2013), passion is a strong predisposition to devote a significant amount of time and energy to a specific endeavor. A person who is passionate about something has a strong propensity toward it and devotes a lot of time and effort to it (Vallerand et al., 2003). Passion may be either "obsessive" or "harmonic," as described by Vallerand and colleagues (2003). Harmonious passion is defined by a strong, although controllable, urge to participate in an action, whereas obsessive passion is characterised by an internal need to carry out an activity.

Passionate salespeople will affect customer purchasing decisions. The success and sustainability of a firm depend on customer support. That is the most important characteristic that separates successful businesses from failing ones. A company might be deemed successful if it has an increase in client loyalty. Kotni (2016) found that rising client patronage results in significant increases in sales and profitability. Every business, regardless of the sector to which it belongs, seeks to expand the number of customers it serves. When a business experiences a rise in client spending, it gives the appearance that it is outperforming its rivals.

In the face of unsure passion, passion has been shown to provide focused coherence, energy, and business execution (Baum et al., 2001; Cardon et al., 2009). (Cardon et al., 2009). The leaders of

the company may place a high value on enthusiasm during difficult financial circumstances. Yet whether or not job involvement is harmonious depends on the fundamental essence of desire (Thorgren & Wincent, 2015). The nature of a job's engagement also influences performance and environmental fit performance via a harmonious and compelling passion. To that aim, this research looked at the connection between customer support of food and beverage businesses in Port Harcourt and sales enthusiasm.

Statement of the Problem

The expansion and development of the country's Economy has been greatly aided by the food and beverage industry. Yet, according to a preliminary research, the majority of the businesses in the industry have seen a reduction in customer support. Food and beverage businesses in Port Harcourt had significant difficulties with regard to customer patronage in terms of referrals and repeat purchases. Existing research has shown that customers would support and remain loyal to businesses whose salespeople are enthusiastic about what they do (e.g. Vallerand et al., 2003). Passion enhances the possibility of getting investor resources from relevant research literature, according to Sudek and Cardon (2012). To improve company performance, passion has been shown. Nevertheless, this field of research (sales passion) has received little attention, and the literature is lacking. In Nigeria's Rivers State, little study has been done on the idea of sales passion. This foundation served as the basis for this study's development, which examined customer support for food and beverage businesses in Port Harcourt and sales passion.

Conceptual Framework

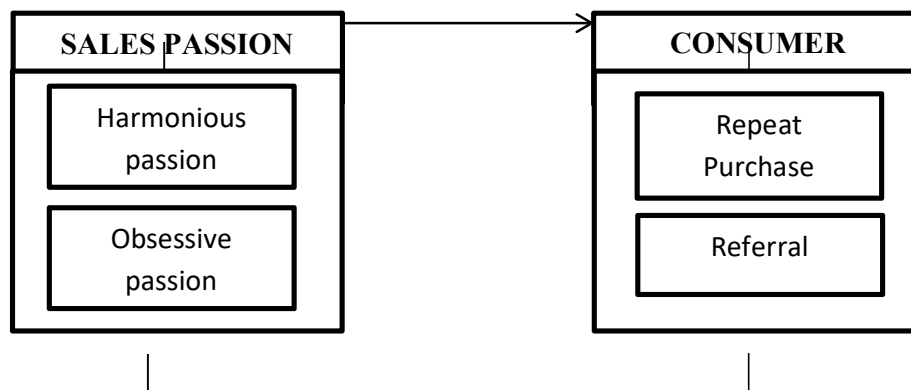


Fig.1.1: Conceptual framework of sales passion and consumer patronage.

Source: Vallerand & Lavigne (2013).

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this essay is to ascertain how customer support for food and beverage businesses in Port Harcourt relates to sales enthusiasm. The following list contains the paper's particular goals:

- Ascertain the link between harmonious passion and recurring business with Port Harcourt's food and beverage companies.
- ascertain the connection between ecstatic enthusiasm and the recommendation of food and beverage businesses in Port Harcourt.
- Look at the connection between obsessive zeal and recurrent patronage of Port Harcourt's food and beverage businesses.
- Look at the connection between a person's obsessive devotion and recommendations for food and beverage businesses in Port Harcourt.

Research Questions

To further the study's goals, the following research topics were proposed:

- a) How closely does Port Harcourt's food and beverage industry's repeat business connect to harmonic passion?
- b) How much does harmonious passion influence recommendations of food and beverage businesses in Port Harcourt?
- c) To what degree does recurrent business with Port Harcourt's food and beverage companies correlate with obsessive passion?
- d) How closely is Port Harcourt's food and beverage industry related to obsessive passion?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were postulated to guide this study:

- Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between harmonious passion and repeat purchase of food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt.
- Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between harmonious passion and referral of food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt.
- Ho₃: There is no significant relationship between obsessive passion and repeat purchase of food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt.
- Ho₄: There is no significant relationship between obsessive passion and referral of food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt.

Review of Related Literature

Concept of Sales Passion

Simply said, passion is a strong predisposition toward anything that a person enjoys, values, and invests time and effort in (Vallerand et., al., 2003). Salespeople that are passionate about their work are motivated to close deals. Like nothing else, sales passion can establish trust between a salesperson and a prospect. Prospects and customers can tell when a salesperson is really passionate about what they do, and they will react by putting their faith in them and the company they work for (Claire, 2017).

One of the best things about having a love for sales is that it may enable salespeople to keep their pipelines filled without having to put in as much work as salespeople without such a drive. A salesperson with love for their craft will convert clients into promoters who will tell others about them and the products they provide, generating word-of-mouth advertising that brings in fresh clients who are eager and prepared to make a purchase. In any industry, having these "converts," who are also prepared to serve as references for others, is precious (Claire, 2017).

Salespeople that are passionate about their profession may transmit that enthusiasm to their coworkers and clients as well, which can have a revolutionary effect on the rest of the sales team (Claire, 2017). Continuous improvement is a common way for salespeople who are passionate about their work to demonstrate their enthusiasm. No salesperson is flawless, but not all of them are prepared to invest the time, money, and effort necessary to advance. Passionate salespeople are prepared to commit to this not just because it is beneficial for their careers but also because it is what they want to do. It is a demonstration of selling enthusiasm (Claire, 2017).

Measures of Sales Passion

Harmonious passion

The drive for harmony may be characterized as the inspiration to get others involved in their activities. People are free to put up the time and effort while deciding how much they want to participate. This results in a desire and support for taking action on a personal level (Vallerand et., al., 2003). Also, as its name implies, the desire for stability or agreement in other living conditions is HP. Contrarily, compulsive passion is characterized by internal stress activities. People become uncontrollable in their actions and experience internal or external pressure all the time. There is a

clash between passion and other facets of life since this activity takes up an excessive amount of the personality's identity and everyday existence. The desire for harmony is often shown to be connected with favorable results in studies of passionate emotions, actions, and cognitive outcomes. For instance, the findings indicate that the desire for harmony is linked to higher levels of vitality, passionate confidence, and good emotions, as well as more instances of (Vallerand et., al., 2003).

Obsessive Passions

Obsession with a passion may cause a person to become dependent on their behavior as if they were dependent on drugs (Vallerand & Houliort, 2003). These activities, in turn, are rigorously persistent, motivating individuals to pursue their passions even in the face of setbacks or subpar output. For instance, those who are enthusiastic about something are more likely to engage in injury-prone activities (Rip, Fortin & Vallerand, 2006). Compulsive behavior may lead to favorable or unfavorable results (Carbonneau, et., al., 2013). Compulsive passion is linked to unfavorable results, such as a passionate attachment to these desirable outcomes or an obsessive commitment to one activity (Sguin-Lvesque et., al., 2003).

Concept of Customer Patronage

The frequency with which a consumer utilizes a company's products or services despite the availability of other businesses that may fulfill his or her needs is known as customer patronage (Ramly et al, 2004). According to Kotni (2016), consumer patronage is the extent to which a client consistently buys the same products from a certain business without taking into consideration other comparable brands available on the market.

Customer service is essential to a company's success and long-term viability. It is the key feature that distinguishes successful companies from those that fail. An rise in client loyalty may indicate that a business is successful. Kotni (2016) observed that increased customer spending leads to significant gains in revenue and profitability. Regardless of the sector to which it belongs, every company aims to expand the clientele it services. An increase in customer spending provides the appearance that a company is outperforming its competitors.

Measures of Customer Patronage

Repeat Purchase

According to Forbes and Vespoli (2013), repurchase intention refers to the possibility that a consumer would make a subsequent purchase of a product after the first one. A client who has already used or eaten a product from a company's brand and is happy with it is likely to do so again when the time comes to replace it (Grewal et al, 2004). According to Chinomona and Sandada (2013), satisfied consumers are more inclined to make further purchases. They argue that if a consumer is unhappy with the products or services offered by a certain company, he or she won't feel inclined to do business with that company again. Echanisms et al. (2014) agreed with this school of thinking when they said that a consumer's satisfaction with using a product during his first trial had a substantial influence on his propensity to repurchase.

Referral

A referral occurs when someone recommends a product, service, business, or other thing to someone else (Biyalogorsky et al, 2001). A referral, according to Kornish et al. (2010), occurs when a customer recommends a business's goods or services to their friends, relatives, and colleagues. While seeking for a product or service to fill a need, a person often asks a friend, colleague, or member of their family for recommendations. The recommendations of friends, colleagues, or family are the sources of information about a company that 84% of consumers trust more than any other, according to Nielsen (2020). By exposing them to new customers, referrals help firms grow their clientele, increase their revenues, and increase their market share, claim Kumar et al. (2010).

Businesses may acquire new customers for free or at a reduced cost via recommendations by doing away with the expenses of radio and television advertising.

Theoretical Review

The study adopted the Push Theory

This hypothesis was introduced in 1993 by Blattberg and Neslin. The push theory of sales promotion methods states that you should advertise your goods to intermediaries like wholesalers and merchants who would then resell them to their clients. A "push" promotional strategy seeks to raise consumer demand for a product by using a company's sales force and trade marketing campaigns. The product is advertised by the manufacturer to wholesalers, wholesalers to retailers, and retailers to consumers. Because to its connection to the independent variable, this hypothesis is pertinent to the investigation. Salespeople push the goods to wholesalers with zeal.

Empirical Review

The efficiency of sales force strategy in the primary market unit of the Nigerian beverage sector was examined by Ade-Johnson (2014). The study's primary goal was to analyze how sales promotion affected the firm's performance. In the research, a descriptive survey design was used. The research included both primary and secondary data. The research employed a survey technique of data collection with 500 respondents and two field managers at the two biggest malt producers in Nigeria. The tools used were a questionnaire and an interview guide. It was discovered that sales promotions are a successful kind of advertising for introducing and maintaining brand recognition and consumer loyalty. According to the report, organizations should inspire their sales representatives to improve their sales marketing.

Ibojo and Amos (2011) conducted a research of Cadbury, Nigeria Plc to assess the effects of sales force strategies on organizational performance. The study's goals were to determine if the company's sales volume will be impacted by the sales promotion strategies to be used at a certain time, as well as to examine the impact of sales promotion on organizational performance. A survey approach was utilized, allowing for the collection of primary data through a questionnaire, and a simple random sample methodology was used for the sampling process, giving each member of the population an equal chance of being chosen. There were 109 workers that answered the survey. The hypothesis was tested using the chi-square approach, which also looked at how sales promotion affected organizational performance. The results showed that the majority of respondents agreed that sales promotion had an impact on an organization's performance and sales volume.

METHODOLOGY

The population of this study was 120 food and beverage SMEs in Port Harcourt that were identified using the yellow pages of the phone book and the Rivers State Ministry of Trade and Industry. The research used a correlational survey methodology. The Krejcie and Morgan Sampling Table was used to get the sample size of 92. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23 was used to calculate the instrument's dependability, which was found to be 0.88 points greater than the benchmark of 0.7. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to examine the data that were gathered for this research. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.0 was used to create the different hypotheses, and the Spearman Rank-Order Correlation Method was used to test them.

Data Analysis and Presentation

The information gathered from the questionnaire was displayed in tables and explained in this section. The questionnaire was sent to the respondents (managers and sales representatives) of SMEs producing food and beverages in Port Harcourt in a total of ninety two (92) copies.

Questionnaire Distribution and Retrieval

Questionnaire Distribution	Questionnaire Retrieval	Useful Questionnaire	Not Useful
92	77	70	7

Source: Survey Data, 2023.

The respondents' collection rates and the sequence in which they received questionnaire copies are shown in the table above. According to the table, 77 of the 92 questionnaires that were sent to the managers and sales representatives of the food and beverage SMEs in Port Harcourt as respondents were recovered, and 70 of those copies were utilized for the research.

Test of Hypothesis One (1)

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between harmonious passion and repeat purchase of food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt.

Correlations

		harmonious passion	repeat purchase
Spearman's rho	harmonious passion	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.738*
		N	70
	repeat purchase	Correlation Coefficient	.738*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	1.000
		N	70

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

Source, Survey Data 2023.

The final product examined how closely harmonies of passion link to repeat business for food and beverage businesses in Port Harcourt. Spearman's correlation coefficient (Rs=0.738) shows a significant link between the two variables. The significance test shows that we may reject the null hypothesis, according to which there is no significant correlation between a person's level of harmonic passion and their likelihood to make further purchases from food and beverage companies in Port Harcourt, with P 0.05. Hence, we may conclude that in Port Harcourt, larger levels of harmonious passion were linked to higher levels of repeat business.

Test of Hypothesis Two (2)

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between harmonious passion and referral of food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt.

Correlations

		harmonious passion	referral
Spearman's rho	harmonious passion	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.857**
		N	70
	Referral	Correlation Coefficient	.857**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	1.000
		N	70

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

Source: Survey Data 2023.

The final product examined how closely harmonies of passion link to recommendations of food and beverage businesses in Port Harcourt. Spearman's correlation coefficient ($R_s=0.857$) shows a significant link between the two variables. According to the significance test, the null hypothesis—according to which there is no significant association between harmonious passion and recommendations of food and beverage companies in Port Harcourt—can be rejected with $P 0.05$. Hence, we may conclude that in Port Harcourt, greater levels of harmonious passion were linked to higher levels of food and beverage company referrals.

Test of Hypothesis Three (3)

H_{03} : There is no significant relationship between obsessive passion and repeat purchase of food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt.

		Correlations	
		obsessive passion	repeat purchase
Spearman's rho	obsessive passion	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.922**
	repeat purchase	N	155
		Correlation Coefficient	.922**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	155	

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

Source: Survey Data 2023.

The report examined the relationship between obsessive enthusiasm and repeat business with food and beverage businesses in Port Harcourt. The Spearman correlation coefficient ($R_s=0.922$) shows a fairly significant link between the two variables. According to the significance test, the null hypothesis—according to which there is no significant correlation between obsessive passion and repeat business with food and beverage companies in Port Harcourt—can be rejected with a $P.001$ 0.01 threshold. Hence, we may conclude that in Port Harcourt, greater levels of obsessive passion were linked to higher levels of repeat business.

Test of Hypothesis Four (4)

H_{04} : There is no significant relationship between obsessive passion and referral of food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt.

		Correlations	
		obsessive passion	referral
Spearman's rho	obsessive passion	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.905**
	referral	N	155
		Correlation Coefficient	.905**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	
	N	155	

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

Source: Survey Data, 2023.

The results assessed how closely obsessive passion relates to recommendations of food and beverage businesses in Port Harcourt. The Spearman correlation coefficient ($R_s=0.905$) shows a fairly significant link between the two variables. According to the significance test, the null hypothesis—according to which there is no significant correlation between obsessive passion and recommendations of food and beverage companies in Port Harcourt—can be rejected with a $P.001$

0.01 threshold. Hence, we may conclude that in Port Harcourt, greater degrees of obsessive passion were linked to higher levels of food and beverage company referrals.

Summary of Findings

The analyses revealed the following conclusions:

- i. In Port Harcourt, there is a high correlation between harmonic passion and repeat business.
- ii. In Port Harcourt, there is a strong correlation between harmonious passion and recommendations of food and beverage companies.
- iii. In Port Harcourt, there is a strong correlation between obsessive passion and recurring patronage of food and beverage businesses.
- iv. In Port Harcourt, there is a strong correlation between obsessive devotion and the recommendation of food and beverage businesses.

Discussion of Findings

The study's conclusions indicate a strong correlation between symbiotic passion, recurring business, and referrals of food and beverage businesses in Port Harcourt. There was a significant and positive link between the variables, as shown by ($r = .738^*$) and ($r = .857^*$). Also, with coefficient values of ($r = .922^{**}$ and ($r = .905^{**}$), obsessive passion demonstrated a substantial link with recurring business and referrals from food and beverage companies in Port Harcourt. The research by Muhammad (2018), who claimed that both harmonious and obsessive passion had a substantial and favorable impact on sales performance and the mediating variable of self-efficacy, validated the results. Although some marketers seem to have been happy with their job, others don't seem to have benefitted (Day 2004, Nias, 1989). Our findings therefore lend credence to the idea that the level of market enthusiasm influences how well marketers perform.

CONCLUSION

It was clear from the study that obsessive passion and harmonious passion had a strong and favorable link with repeat business and referrals for food and beverage businesses in Port Harcourt. This was supported by the study's empirical findings, which showed that each aspect of sales passion was a strong predictor of client loyalty. As a result, the article came to the conclusion that customer support is dependent on salespeople's obsessive and harmonious desire.

RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the study's recommendations,

- i. which are in accordance with the study's result, food and beverage companies' sales representatives should be obsessed about closing deals since their enthusiasm will impact customer purchasing decisions.
- ii. Salespeople should be passionate about harmony since this will encourage consumers to take part in their activities.

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