

SEDUCTIVE ADVERTISING AND CUSTOMER PATRONAGE OF SKINCARE PRODUCTS IN PORT HARCOURT

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the connection between seductive advertising and customer patronage of skincare products in Port Harcourt. The objectives were to assess how sexual appeal and aspirational fantasy relates to customer loyalty in the skincare market. Employing a correlational research design, the study targeted all customers of skincare businesses in Port Harcourt. A sample of 384 respondents was initially determined using Cochran's formula for infinite populations, but valid responses were obtained from 281 participants through a questionnaire based on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." To test the two null hypotheses, Spearman Rank Order Correlation was applied. The findings indicated a significant positive relationship between the components of seductive advertising which are sexual appeal and aspirational fantasy; and customer loyalty, which served as a measure of customer patronage. Based on these results, it was concluded that skincare companies should incorporate both sexual appeal and aspirational fantasies in their marketing strategies to enhance customer loyalty. Additionally, the study recommended amongst others that marketing efforts should focus on portraying idealized beauty standards and aspirational lifestyles that align with the target audience's self-image, encouraging stronger brand association.

Keyword(s): Seductive Advertising; Customer Patronage; Sexual Appeal; Aspirational Fantasy; Customer Loyalty

INTRODUCTION

Seductive advertising has become a dominant strategy in the marketing of skincare products globally, including in Nigeria. By leveraging appealing visuals, suggestive messaging, and aspirational imagery, these strategies aim to capture consumer attention and influence purchasing behavior. In the context of Port Harcourt, a city known for its vibrant commercial activities and diverse population, the deployment of seductive advertising to market skincare products has become increasingly prevalent. This approach is often tailored to appeal to the psychological and emotional desires of consumers, creating a perceived connection between product usage and enhanced attractiveness or social desirability. As Eshio (2023) noted, the use of sexualized advertising appeals has a profound effect on the purchasing behavior of female consumers, highlighting the effectiveness of such strategies in creating an emotional bond between the product and its target audience. The relationship between seductive advertising and customer patronage is particularly complex in Nigeria, where cultural norms and values intersect with modern marketing practices. Olatunji (2017) observed that while seductive advertising can effectively capture attention, it does not necessarily guarantee long-term brand loyalty among consumers. In a market like Port Harcourt, characterized by a blend of traditional and contemporary lifestyles, the perception of such advertising strategies varies significantly among different demographic groups. Some consumers may view these strategies as empowering and reflective of modern aesthetics, while others may see them as overly suggestive or inappropriate. Despite these differences, Popoola (2018) found that seductive advertising significantly impacts the consumer decision-making process, as it creates a strong visual and emotional appeal that can lead to impulsive buying behavior. The increasing patronage of skincare products in Port Harcourt can be attributed to the growing awareness of beauty standards and the influence of social media, where seductive advertising is prominently featured. Olawuyi (2018) emphasized that skincare brands in Nigeria increasingly adopt cultural

narratives and localized content to connect with their audience more effectively. This fusion of cultural relevance and seductive appeal enhances customer engagement, reinforcing the belief that skincare products can transform one's appearance and social status. However, there is also a growing concern about the ethical implications of using seductive appeals, particularly regarding the objectification of women and the promotion of unrealistic beauty standards (Ukaegbu, 2020). These complexities necessitate a deeper exploration of the impact of seductive advertising on consumer behavior, considering the socio-cultural and economic context of Port Harcourt.

Statement of the Problem

The increasing use of seductive advertising strategies in the skincare industry has raised significant concerns about their ethical implications and actual effectiveness in influencing consumer patronage, particularly in the culturally diverse context of Port Harcourt, Nigeria. While seductive advertising has been found to create strong visual and emotional appeal, there is a growing debate about its long-term impact on brand loyalty and consumer trust. Olatunji (2017) argued that despite capturing immediate attention, seductive appeals may not sustain customer loyalty, indicating a potential mismatch between initial attraction and consistent patronage. Additionally, the use of highly sexualized and suggestive imagery may conflict with local cultural norms and values, leading to mixed reactions from the target audience (Popoola, 2018). Therefore, it is crucial to understand whether these strategies genuinely translate to increased customer patronage or merely create temporary consumer curiosity. Despite the extensive application of seductive advertising in the skincare market, limited empirical research exists on its actual impact on customer behavior in Port Harcourt. Many skincare brands in the region continue to employ sexually appealing advertising, assuming it will drive sales and create a loyal customer base. However, the lack of conclusive evidence on whether these strategies effectively influence customer decisions raises concerns about their sustainability and appropriateness. As Eshio (2023) noted, while such advertising appeals can generate impulsive purchases, they may also reinforce unrealistic beauty standards and potentially alienate more conservative consumers. This study, therefore, seeks to explore the relationship between seductive advertising strategies and customer patronage in Port Harcourt, examining the effectiveness, ethical considerations, and cultural implications of these advertising approaches.

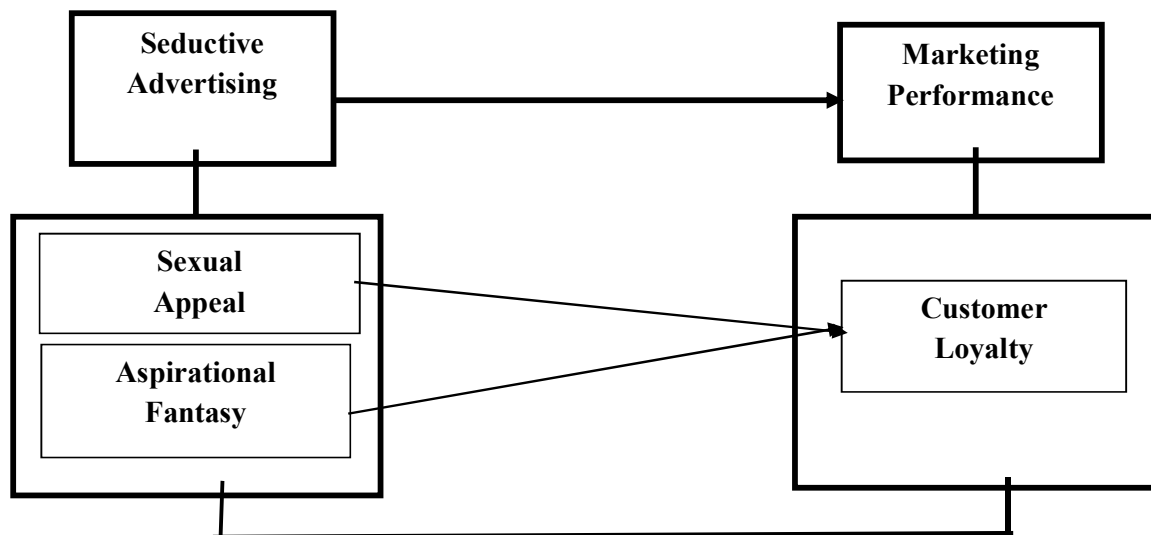


Figure 1:1: Conceptual framework of the relationship between seductive advertising and customer patronage of skincare products in Port Harcourt.

Source: Barad & Sapir, (2018).

Objectives of the study

The Objectives of this paper is to determine the relationship between seductive advertising and customer patronage of skincare products in Port Harcourt. Such as to;

1. determine the relationship between sexual appeal and customer loyalty of skincare products in Port Harcourt.
2. ascertain the relationship between aspirational fantasy and customer loyalty of skincare products in Port Harcourt.

Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between sexual appeal and customer loyalty of skincare products in Port Harcourt?
2. What is the relationship between aspirational fantasy and customer loyalty of skincare products in Port Harcourt?

Research Hypotheses

The null hypotheses for this study were tested using 0.05 level of significance as a benchmark:

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between sexual appeal and customer loyalty of skincare products in Port Harcourt.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between aspirational fantasy and customer loyalty of skincare products in Port Harcourt.

Conceptual Reviews**Seductive Advertising**

Seductive advertising is a marketing approach that uses appealing visuals, sexually suggestive messages, and emotionally charged imagery to capture attention and influence consumer behavior. This strategy aims to trigger emotional responses, leveraging the idea that attractiveness and desire can create strong connections between a product and its target audience. According to Hassan (2023), seductive advertising often involves the objectification of individuals, primarily women, to evoke feelings of allure and aspiration in the viewers. While this method can lead to increased consumer curiosity and impulsive buying, it can also generate controversy, especially when it conflicts with cultural norms or is perceived as inappropriate. In digital marketing, seductive advertising has evolved to adapt to online platforms, where quick, visually driven content is more likely to engage users.

However, the effectiveness of seductive advertising is highly debated. As Sangeetha and Bhaumik (2025) highlighted, while seductive advertising can boost short-term sales and brand recall, it may not necessarily contribute to long-term brand loyalty. In some contexts, consumers may reject overtly sexualized content, especially if it is perceived as manipulative or exploitative. The approach's success largely depends on the cultural sensitivity of the target audience, the product category, and the alignment between the seductive appeal and the brand's identity. The controversial nature of seductive advertising requires marketers to balance captivating appeal with cultural awareness to avoid potential backlash.

Dimensions of Seductive Advertising**Sexual Appeal**

Sexual appeal in advertising involves the use of provocative and alluring imagery to captivate attention and enhance the attractiveness of a product. It is strategically designed to evoke emotional arousal, create memorable impressions, and increase consumer interest. According to Eshio (2024), the use of sexual appeal can significantly influence purchasing behavior, especially among younger demographics who are often more receptive to bold advertising techniques. However, while effective in grabbing attention, this approach can lead to ethical concerns and backlash if deemed

inappropriate or objectifying. Sexual appeal is particularly common in the skincare and cosmetics industries, where attractiveness and desirability are closely linked to product benefits.

Despite its effectiveness, the use of sexual appeal in advertising is controversial. Aslam et al. (2024) argue that while it can boost short-term engagement, excessive sexualization can alienate certain consumer groups, especially in conservative cultures. This perspective is particularly relevant in the Nigerian market, where cultural norms play a crucial role in shaping public perception. Marketers need to strike a balance between attractiveness and cultural sensitivity to avoid negative brand perception. The nuanced application of sexual appeal, when culturally adapted, can enhance brand recall and foster emotional connections without crossing ethical boundaries.

Aspirational Fantasy

Aspirational fantasy in advertising refers to the use of idealized images and narratives that appeal to consumers' desires to achieve a more elevated or glamorous version of themselves. This approach capitalizes on the emotional appeal of imagining a better life, often associating products with luxury, prestige, and exclusivity. Potavanich and Arukaroon (2024) assert that aspirational fantasy can create strong emotional connections with consumers by aligning with their dreams of status and accomplishment. In the skincare industry, advertisements often depict flawless, radiant skin as a symbol of success, beauty, and social desirability, encouraging consumers to purchase products to achieve this idealized appearance. Aspirational fantasy can therefore drive customers to buy not just a product, but the lifestyle or image associated with it.

However, the use of aspirational fantasy is a double-edged sword. While it effectively boosts consumer engagement, it can also perpetuate unrealistic standards and lead to dissatisfaction among consumers when the advertised ideal remains unattainable. Carroll (2024) discusses how advertising constructs aspirational narratives that can border on fantasy, creating a dissonance between reality and consumer expectations. This tactic can lead to criticism, especially if perceived as manipulative or exploitative. Despite this, when implemented thoughtfully, aspirational fantasy can strengthen brand identity and foster consumer loyalty by appealing to deeper psychological motivations related to self-improvement and aspiration.

Customer Patronage

Customer patronage refers to the consistent preference and repeated purchase behavior exhibited by customers toward a particular brand, product, or service. It is a key indicator of customer satisfaction and loyalty, often influenced by factors such as product quality, perceived value, brand image, and marketing strategies. Olokonla and Busayo (2024) identified that effective digital marketing strategies can significantly enhance customer patronage by creating engaging and personalized interactions. In the context of skincare products, especially in culturally diverse areas like Port Harcourt, customer patronage can be shaped by the alignment between advertising strategies and local cultural expectations. Additionally, the emotional appeal of seductive advertising can attract new customers, but sustaining patronage often requires a balance between attractiveness and ethical considerations.

Customer patronage is not only essential for revenue generation but also for fostering long-term customer relationships. Anwar et al. (2025) emphasized that businesses capable of building trust and maintaining positive brand perceptions are more likely to experience consistent patronage. In Port Harcourt, where consumers are exposed to a mix of traditional and contemporary influences, seductive advertising can either strengthen brand appeal or generate criticism if perceived as culturally inappropriate. Therefore, understanding customer preferences and strategically deploying marketing efforts can maximize patronage while minimizing the risk of backlash. The exploration of seductive advertising's impact on customer patronage is crucial for marketers seeking sustainable success in such complex and dynamic markets.

Measure of Customer Patronage

Customer Loyalty

Customer loyalty refers to a customer's consistent preference for a specific brand or product, marked by repeat purchases and positive word-of-mouth recommendations. It is a critical factor for businesses seeking sustainable success, as loyal customers not only contribute to stable revenue streams but also act as brand advocates. According to Rumokoy et al. (2025), customer loyalty is influenced by several factors, including trust, satisfaction, and perceived value. In the context of skincare products, effective use of seductive advertising can strengthen brand loyalty by creating strong emotional connections. However, if such advertising is perceived as manipulative or culturally insensitive, it can lead to a decline in customer trust and loyalty.

Moreover, the relationship between customer loyalty and advertising strategies is not linear. As Olaley et al. (2025) assert, while emotional and aspirational advertising can enhance customer engagement, it requires consistency in brand quality and ethical marketing practices to convert engagement into loyalty. In competitive markets like skincare, customer loyalty can be fragile, easily swayed by competitors offering more authentic or relatable brand experiences. Businesses that successfully balance seductive advertising with authenticity and cultural appropriateness are more likely to cultivate long-term loyalty. This understanding is particularly relevant for the Nigerian market, where cultural norms and consumer expectations strongly influence buying behavior.

Theoretical Review

The theory that underpinned this paper's elaboration likelihood model

The elaboration likelihood model (ELM) developed by Petty and Cacioppo (1986) is a relevant theoretical framework for examining the impact of seductive advertising strategies on customer patronage of skincare products in Port Harcourt. ELM posits that individuals process persuasive messages through two distinct routes: the central and the peripheral routes. The central route involves careful and thoughtful consideration of message content, while the peripheral route relies on superficial cues, such as attractiveness or emotional appeal. Seductive advertising typically appeals to the peripheral route by leveraging visually appealing models, suggestive language, and emotionally charged imagery to create an immediate, albeit often temporary, impact on consumer attitudes. In the context of skincare products, these seductive appeals may capture attention and generate curiosity, potentially leading to impulsive purchases (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

The relevance of ELM to this study lies in its ability to explain how seductive advertising influences different consumer segments in Port Harcourt. Given the cultural diversity in the city, consumers' engagement with seductive advertising may vary significantly, with some individuals responding positively to the emotional and aesthetic appeal, while others may view it as inappropriate or deceptive. ELM helps explore whether consumers engage with seductive advertising through the peripheral route, leading to short-term patronage, or if they process these messages more critically through the central route, considering product efficacy and brand credibility (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Understanding these pathways can help skincare brands optimize their advertising strategies, ensuring they resonate with their intended audience while maintaining ethical and cultural sensitivity.

Empirical Reviews

Eshio (2023) conducted a study to examine the impact of Carotone's sexual advertising appeal on the purchasing behavior of female students at the University of Benin, Nigeria. The research adopted a survey method, utilizing a structured questionnaire administered to a sample of 300 female students. The study aimed to understand the relationship between sexually suggestive advertisements and customer patronage, particularly focusing on skincare products marketed with the promise of enhancing beauty and attractiveness. The findings indicated a significant positive relationship between sexual appeal in advertising and consumer purchase decisions, as the majority of respondents admitted being influenced by the visual and suggestive elements of the

advertisements. Additionally, the study revealed that such advertisements often appealed to the students' desire to conform to societal standards of beauty, thereby enhancing product appeal and boosting sales. However, the study also noted that while sexual appeal might stimulate initial purchases, it does not necessarily guarantee customer loyalty, as some participants expressed discomfort over the overt sexualization in the ads. The study's implications suggest that marketers must balance appealing advertising with cultural sensitivities to sustain long-term customer relationships.

Popoola (2018) explored the influence of sexual appeal in television advertising on product consumption and service patronage behaviors of consumers in Lagos State, Nigeria. The research utilized a mixed-method approach, combining surveys with in-depth interviews to gather insights from a diverse group of 400 participants. The study found that sexual appeals in advertisements effectively captured the audience's attention and positively influenced their purchase intentions. However, the effectiveness varied among different demographic groups, with younger consumers more receptive to such appeals compared to older and more conservative respondents. The research highlighted that while sexual appeal could increase immediate sales, it might not foster long-term brand loyalty. Respondents indicated that if a product failed to deliver the promised benefits, the initial attraction created by sexual advertising diminished, leading to dissatisfaction and potential negative word-of-mouth. Popoola recommended that marketers focus on creating a balance between provocative appeal and product quality to ensure sustainable customer patronage. The study also emphasized the need for culturally adaptive advertising to resonate effectively with the diverse Nigerian market.

Mafini and Dhurup (2015) examined the impact of sexual advertising on customer loyalty within South African retail stores, extending the analysis to consumer behavior across different African markets, including Nigeria. Using a quantitative research design, data was collected from 350 respondents through structured questionnaires. The study's objectives were to investigate whether sexual content in advertisements influenced customers' emotional engagement and subsequent patronage behaviors. Findings revealed that while sexual advertising could enhance brand recall and initial purchase interest, it had a mixed impact on customer loyalty. Respondents generally associated sexual appeal with temporary excitement and impulsive buying but not necessarily with consistent brand preference. Interestingly, the study found that customers exposed to overtly sexualized content without substantive product value expressed feelings of manipulation, which negatively impacted their loyalty. Mafini and Dhurup recommended that marketers aim for congruence between the advertised message and product benefits to avoid misleading consumers. The research concluded that while sexual advertising could serve as an effective tool for attracting attention, its long-term effectiveness in cultivating loyal customers depends on ethical considerations and product satisfaction.

METHODOLOGY

The study utilized a correlational research design to explore the relationship between seductive advertising and customer patronage of skincare products in Port Harcourt. The target population comprised customers of skincare products within the city. Due to the extensive presence of skincare businesses and the consistent influx of customers, the population was considered infinite. Consequently, Cochran's formula was applied to calculate an appropriate sample size, resulting in a required sample of approximately 384 respondents. To ensure unbiased representation, a simple random sampling technique was employed. Primary data was collected using a structured questionnaire distributed to the selected respondents. The analysis of the data was conducted using the Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient (ρ) to test the formulated hypotheses. This analysis was performed with the assistance of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 27.0.

Data Analysis

The researcher produced and distributed all 384 questionnaires ensure extensive coverage of the target respondents, however 281 were deemed valid, accounting for 74% of the total sample.

Testing of Hypotheses

Research Question One: What is the relationship between sexual appeal and customer loyalty of skincare products in Port Harcourt?

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between sexual appeal and customer loyalty of skincare products in Port Harcourt.

Table 1: Computation of relationship between sexual appeal and customer loyalty of skincare products in Port Harcourt

		Correlations	
		Sexual Appeal	Customer Loyalty
Spearman's rho	Sexual Appeal	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
		N	281
	Customer Loyalty	Correlation Coefficient	.798**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
		N	281

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

Source: SPSS output, 2025.

The SPSS output in Table 1 indicates that a Spearman's Correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between sexual appeal and customer loyalty of skincare products in Port Harcourt, based on a sample of 281 customers of skincare products. The resulting correlation coefficient (r-value) of 0.798 which demonstrates a strong and positive relationship between sexual appeal and customer loyalty of skincare products in Port Harcourt. More so, the significance of this relationship is confirmed by a probability value of 0.000, which is substantially below the 0.05 threshold, indicating that the relationship is statistically significant. Therefore, it can be said that there is a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship between sexual appeal and customer loyalty of skincare products in Port Harcourt.

Research Question Two: What is the relationship between aspirational fantasy and customer loyalty of skincare products in Port Harcourt?

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between aspirational fantasy and customer loyalty of skincare products in Port Harcourt.

Table 2: Computation of relationship between aspirational fantasy and customer loyalty of skincare products in Port Harcourt

		Correlations	
		Aspirational Fantasy	Customer Loyalty
Spearman's rho	Aspirational Fantasy	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
		N	281
	Customer Loyalty	Correlation Coefficient	.867**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
		N	281

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

Source: SPSS output, 2025.

The SPSS output in Table 2 reveals that a Spearman's Correlation analysis was conducted to evaluate the relationship between aspirational fantasy and customer loyalty of skincare products in Port Harcourt, based on responses from a sample of 281 customers of skincare products. The correlation coefficient (r-value) of 0.867 indicates a very strong positive relationship between aspirational fantasy and customer loyalty of skincare products in Port Harcourt. Furthermore, the significance of this relationship is confirmed by a probability value of 0.000, which is well below the 0.05 threshold, indicating that the relationship is statistically significant. Consequently, we can conclude that there is a very strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship between aspirational fantasy and customer loyalty of skincare products in Port Harcourt.

CONCLUSION

The analysis reveals that sexual appeal has a strong, significant correlation with customer loyalty for skincare products in Port Harcourt.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were offered to skincare firms in Port Harcourt based on the findings:

1. Skincare firms should design marketing campaigns that depict aspirational lifestyles and idealized beauty standards that resonate with their target audience, motivating customers to associate the products with their desired self-image.
2. Develop advertising strategies that tastefully incorporate sexual appeal, focusing on confidence, allure, and attractiveness, while ensuring that messaging aligns with cultural norms and does not appear inappropriate or offensive.

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