

**PRODUCT ASSORTMENT AND CONSUMER PATRONAGE OF SUPERMARKETS IN PORT HARCOURT RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA.****Tumba, Monday<sup>1</sup> & Azuonwu, Benneth Elekwachi<sup>2</sup>****<sup>1</sup>Department of Marketing, Faculty of Management Sciences, Ignatius Ajuru University Of Education, Rivers State, Nigeria, <sup>2</sup>Department of Marketing, Entrepreneurship and Procurement, Faculty of Management Sciences, Federal University Otuoke, Bayelsa State, Nigeria**<sup>1</sup>Email: [mondaytumba@yahoo.com](mailto:mondaytumba@yahoo.com), 07063196080,<sup>2</sup>Email: [azuonbenneth12@gmail.com](mailto:azuonbenneth12@gmail.com), 07036590862,**ABSTRACT**

This study investigated product assortment and consumer patronage of everyday emporium in Port Harcourt. Research questions were answered and hypotheses tested. The study adopted a descriptive research design using questionnaire for data collection. The data collected were presented on tables while the values were expressed in percentage. Spearman rank coefficient correlation was the statistical technique used to test the hypotheses formulated for the study. It was found that there is a significant relationship between product mix and consumer preference; the findings also showed that there is a significant relationship between product extension and customer loyalty and choice of shopping malls has significant relationship with repeat purchase in Everyday Supermarkets in Port Harcourt. It was then recommended amongst others that Product mix and extension should be adopted by beverage companies in order to increase customer patronage. Skilled personnel should be employed to improve product extension in order to increase customer patronage. In addition to influencing the overall purchase probability from an assortment, providing a default option can also influence which particular option consumers will choose a strategy that is particularly effective in the case of larger assortments when consumers are faced with an extensive set of options. The implication of this study was that it will aid shopping malls to understand consumers purchase behaviour and to develop effective marketing strategies.

**Keywords: Products Quality, Product Size, Choice of Supermarkets, Preference, Customer`s Loyalty and Repeat Purchase.**

**INTRODUCTION**

The importance of assortment decisions for both retailers and manufacturers has been underscored by numerous research articles, marketing textbooks, and the popular press (Kahn, 2009; Kay and Jost, 2013; Lerner, 2012; Levy and Weitz, 2016; Iyengar, 2011, Schwartz, 2013). Common assortment decisions involve issues such as assortment size, reflecting both the breadth (i.e., number of categories) and the depth (i.e., number of items within a category) of the available product lines; the type of items (e.g., overall attractiveness); the relational properties of the items (e.g., item similarity); pricing policies; and the variety of items over time. In modern competitive retail markets, growth markets are increasingly scarce and consumers are sovereign in dictating what shape the market will take. Returns can only be made if the customer decides to purchase and purchase again, as a part of relationship with the store and the brand (Gilbert, 2011).

Evans (2017) contends that, in today's low growth and highly competitive markets, retaining loyal customers is vital for survival. He says keeping customers is a more efficient strategy than attracting new customers. Keeping customers loyal has however been a hard task to achieve since modern consumers have become more confident and demanding. They simply want products and services that satisfy them and have no time for the ones, which do not (Baker, 2012) says that today's

customers are tougher and more informed and so sensitive to poor service that they often walk away and never come back. The average dissatisfied customer (Bearden, 2015) tells nine out of ten people.

The retailer should therefore devise strategies that will improve the image of his store in order to increase shopping activities, which will eventually lead to greater profitability. This can be achieved through trying to convert consumers into loyal customers by identifying their needs and wants and providing an offering that will satisfy the consumers and win their Royally.

Therefore, consumers' behaviour must be studied because their behaviour or expected actions affect certain decisions taken by firms. (Loudon and Bitta Delia, 2011) contend that consumers collectively influence economic and social conditions within an entire society. In market systems based on individual choice, consumers strongly influence what will be produced and what resources will be used to produce it Furthermore, marketing when viewed in the broadest sense is about placing focus of any business venture on the consumer, where a consumer may, be looked at as a potential purchaser of a firm's goods and services offered for sale. Effective business managers realize the importance of marketing to the success of their inn. A sound understanding of consumer behaviour is therefore essential to the long run success of any marketing program. It is seen as the cornerstone of any marketing effort. Consumers' behaviour is intricate, difficult to influence and often mystifying.

However, since increased competition in markets, among businesses, products and brands is resulting into greater shift of market power and choice to consumers, it is important to understand consumer behaviour, what influences consumers' preferences on goods and services, not only as an important prerequisite to improved marketing practices but also as a way of avoiding business failure. Li trying to find out what influences consumers choice on goods and services, (Kotler, 2007) contends that, a vast array of product and brand choices, prices and suppliers, affect consumer choice. So consumers estimate which offer will deliver the most value since they are value maximisers. They form an expectation of value and act on and whether or not the offer lives up to their expectations, affect both satisfaction and repurchase probability. So Kotler sees customer satisfaction as the major method businesses can use to influence consumer choice and ultimately retain them as loyal customers.

Thomas et al (2013) also agrees that, as a primary tool for managing customer retention, customer satisfaction has received unflagging attention in the marketing literature. Firms around the world have adopted customer satisfaction measures as a defacto standard for monitoring progress; motivated by the belief that customer retention probability will follow. While the role of satisfaction in retaining customers is now perceived as more complex than initially thought (Thomas et al 2013) abundant evidence supports the common sense expectation that satisfied customers are more likely to stay with their existing providers than are dissatisfied customers. Satisfaction influences repeat purchase behaviour (Szymanski and Henard 2001) but only explain a quarter of the variances in behavioural intentions and he relationship between satisfaction and loyalty are now recognized as more complex than originally proposed. Nevertheless, customer satisfaction is still widely used as a tool for customer retention.

Retailing occupies an important position in the economies of all moderns societies. Seeman and Cullen (2012) say that the retailer is part of the supply chain for any produce The retailer comes at the end of the supply chain and provides the final link the producer and consumer. The retail sector where Shopping malls fall is a very competitive one increasing prices, competition, falling groups margins and returns and closure various outlets characterize it as the industry continues to rationalize itself and become more concentrated (Wambugs, 2012). The market is therefore

becoming more segmented with each Shopping malls focusing on the needs of particular consumer groups.

Retailing has become one of the most dynamic sectors of the economy. This can be from the emergence of new forms of retailing in response to consumers increasing demand for various goods and service (Wambugu, 2012). The traditional forms of independently owned small businesses have a significant market share in the retail market traders sprawling the veranda's of almost all streets, some being just adjacent to perks. This makes customer choice wider and retailer's competition stiffer. With this increased competitor activity, there is need for companies to improve the way they approach il marketing. Retailers and especially those in supermarkets must look at their business through the eyes of the customer so as to be successful.

### **Statement of Problem**

How keen the customer is in purchasing different products at different point in time is not in doubt. Hence the quest so have a study on what really intrigues the customer to buy From certain Shopping malls is what this study intends to examine.

### **Purpose of Study**

The general purpose of this study will be to evaluate product assortment and customer patronage of everyday emporium in Port Harcourt. However, the specific object will be

- To determine how product quality influence consumer preference
- To determine how product size influence consumer choice
- To determine how choice of Shopping malls influence repeat purchase.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions will be answered:

- To what extent does product quality influence consumer preference?
- To what extent does product size influence choice?
- To what extent does the choice of Shopping malls influence repeat purchase?

### **Research Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses will be tested:

- Product quality has no influence on consumer preference
- Product size has no influence on choice
- Choice of Shopping malls has no influence on repeat purchase

### **Scope of the Study**

The scope of study covers the three known branches of Every Emporium (Rumuola, Eligham/GRA, and Rumuigbo in Port-Harcourt.

### **Significance of Study**

This study will aid Shopping malls to understand consumers purchase behaviour to develop effective marketing strategies. This findings will portray relevant information on customers require from Shopping malls and this study will form a research base for further research on product assortment, Shopping malls.

### **Limitations of the Study**

There are some major constraints in the production of this research study which includes time, finance, weather, traffic jam and the numerous consumers involved in the study. However, despite these limitations, the finding will be useful to Shopping malls.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Customer:** A potential buyer of products and services offered for sale by Shopping malls personal consumption.

**Consumer Choice Factor:** They are the specifications used by customers to evaluate product brands and Shopping malls for the purpose of patronage decision.

**Supermarkets:** Places where customers can buy what they are looking for or need for consumption; like Genesis, Skippers, Kilimanjaro etc.

### **Review of Related Literature**

Since the development of the marketing efforts of human needs and wants at increase. However, a lot of into has been recorded to be deterring consumer buying behaviour in purchase of an item. This is considered on the large increasing fashion changes or trends, desertions of goods and service in our various sales outlets. Designing of our retails and otherwise outlets most times thrills consumers to purchase large amount of and service. These methods of designing shops are strategically a motive to entice and persuade price a prospective buyer to make. (Impulse Purchase/buying). The necessity of these strategies was brought about as a result of large competitive of same product offerings in the market place. It was obvious that most forms eateries, joints, Restaurants etc. are in a competitive bidding market in Port Harcourt and otherwise other locations where these operations are strategically improving on achieving performance through inducing consumers. Many stores have taken great pains to come specific aesthetic with their catalogs, graphic design and their sure mood. A stone ample of this kind of aesthetic branding is the clothing retailer Anthropologies. Anthropologies stores generally echo the style of their products. Just as its products, features, the Anthropologies stores use installations of old "found and rustic hardwood flooring French flea-market kind of feel. Meanwhile, Big retailers, such as the apple store, use clean lines and simple gray and white furniture to stimulate the look of its clean laptops in this way these stores connect the look of their woodcuts with their stores. In fact, it is on this note that the selected eateries: Mr. Biggs and Pepperoni fast food on this study employs shop design to help establish a brand identity or sales store shop design can help to curb shoplifting. The set up of specific stores can make sight lines more clear from store employees. If shoplifting is a concern, setting up a mere shop with few blocked-off corners and easy to-view spaces is one step towards reducing the incidence of shoplifting.

### **Explanation of Major Concepts**

The process or act of reducing an individual or group of persons to purchase an item passes through selection, evaluate etc. to decide on what to buy through an influence of an atmosphere, designs/graphics etc. that is in a shop or sales outlets is known as shop Design/Retail Store Design. Apparently, Shop design is an influence to purchases (Awa, 1005). It arouses or thrills one to make purchases at even when not desired. It is another strategic means to sales communication. Because, it has the characteristics of, convictions, ser suaveness, stimulating, communicating etc. Okoro, (2011) viewed it as an appealing actor that deranges individuals/organization to make purchases or influence their buying motives. Thus, buying motives of consumers are those impulses desires, and considerations the consumers, which impel or induce the purchases of certain foods from particular firms.

buying motives can be classified as product motives and patronage motives. These consumer impulses, desire and considerations explaining why consumer buys certain products are earned "Product-Buying motives" or simply "Products motives", whereas, those influences in the consumers explaining why their buy from particular firms or outlets are designated patronage motives",

### **Shop Assortment**

The topic of shop assortment has generated a plethora of research across various fields, including economics, analytical and empirical and modelling, individual and group decision making, and social psychology. Despite the voluminous assortment research, however, the key findings have remained scattered across down. In fact, the very domain of assortment research has not been clearly defined, thus complicating the understanding of the current state of assortment research (Charnev, 2012). Patronage motives are design in the shop, which impulses, desire and considerations within the consumer to induce the purchase of goods from certain outlets, shop or stores (Anayo, 2013). Sometimes, a consumer can be more influenced by the store or company selling the product than by the product itself. In that case, the customer/consumer is motivated by patronage motives, which causes a customer/consumer will be influenced by patronage motives when very similar products, any one of would be satisfied, are available from several sources. In this situation, a consumer may choose to buy household goods from a favorite store/shop. The reason for the consumer/customer's patronage preference may be dependability that the sales organization is built an image of reliability and hopefulness, created in past by its friendly and capable staff, it may be that a store has a large assortment of merchandise to choose from an inviting layout. In any case, the sales person dealing with a patronage motivated will be able to suggest wider varieties of products than the salesperson with a product-oriented customer

### **Shop Design Strategy on Consumer Buying Behaviour**

Obviously, Shop design according to Johnson, (2006) involves developing your environment space to best appeal your consumers/customers with an adequate and suitable strategy. Market surveys of these selected eatery joints has shown attracting to how to configure your store or shop, what kind of marketing displays you use and your products is displayed. Use shop design strategy to inspire your clients to spend time, and more money, in your retail store or fast food eatery joint etc.

### **Accessibility**

Cluttering your retail floor space with multiple marketing displays as physical (Le. des of approach) or (service either) confuses your customers or consumer. Begin your shop design strategy with a clean and simple layout that is easy for clients to navigate, create clear segment areas such as packaged meat-pie and sausage-rolls etc. (snacks) and allow plenty of clear access for customer/consumers to comfortably pass each other. Make an effective use of your shop design to reduce the amount of marketing displays you install. For example, rather than putting up product displays posters for several different products, use a digital displays board to display them all on a rotating system.

### **Streamlining**

This is the aspect through which media reaches consumers. And it's by print, radio, television and internet. With the internet being available through Wi-Fi and cellular connections people can get information on products almost anytime. Use a streamlined approach for the product that is receiving significant advertising and marketing. For example, rather than putting up several marketing displays in order to induce consumer buying behaviour in your video, games, areas, allow the frame systems and frame to sell themselves putting them clearly on display. In some cases, the customer already knows what she is looking for. A simple and streamlined shop design makes products easy to find. Offer only most essential information, such as the name of product and where it is located

in your sop. It is a practical kind which the approach is in a society where volumes of marketing formation are readily available.

### **Conceptual Meaning of Consumer Buying Behaviour**

It is pertinent to understand who is a consumer? A consumer is refers to as an dividual who makes purchases of an item for initial consumption. This person does the chases in order of deriving utmost satisfaction. The consumer is that whose central causes of all marketing activities depend on. While, buyers i.e. customers remains the proofs which the profitability, growth, expansion, and overall viability of business firms rotates. However, consumer's behaviour has often explained by lots of scholars. But Ilonuba (2005) Kotler (2013) that consumer behaviour has an overall performance in the operation of sing of goods and service He posited that the fields of consumer behaviour studies how, groups and organizations, select buy use and disposes of goods, service ides or evidences to satisfy their needs and desires. This definition added the disposal of purchased which also interests the marketers to do better or improves. Consumer behaviour was as an action of a person to purchase and use products and service including the mental social processes that proceed and follow these actions. It is understand that certain of the consumer are tacit (in the mind) of expressed (physical) in the process of at satisfaction. The most commonly thought of consumer situation is that of an individual makes purchases with little or no influences from others. Marketers in these 21" century interested in studying the consumption behaviour of that individual who purchases a pact, it is obvious that before this purchases was done such consumer mush have asked self situational questions as why, which, when, where and how? As to enhance decision-song or guide to purchase, and this brought about the decision on buying process of a consumer. In fact, the behaviour towards attaining answer to the questions made it a consumer buying behaviour (Kalu, 2004).

Consequently consumers are concerns with processes and activities of purchase Fissions. It is in the interest of marketers to understand the nature of consumer decision-ing in terms of what, how, where, which, and when they purchase products and of course, motivates these purchases is referred to as consumer buying behaviour. This is because must evaluate, select, arrange in their order of interest before the purchase (Awa, 2007). ever, in the words of mask (2004) consumer buying behaviour is refers to as the process to which an individual organizations to final user selects, determines, evaluate, decides on the kind of goods to purchase in order of satisfying self motives on the item to consumed. Ozi (2002) agreed that it is indeed a decision process on how acquisition of a product is gotten to satisfy individual purchasers' needs and wants/desires

### **Perception of Assortment Variety**

Consumer's choice of an item from an assortment, as well as consumer choice among assortments, is often determined by the perceptions of the variety of items comprising these assortments. In particular, perceived assortment variety can be viewed as a function of two key factors: assortment size and assortment structure. The basic notion that perceived variety is a function of assortment size is fairly straight forward: larger assortments tend to be perceived as having greater variety (Harpen and Pieters, 2002). In addition to assortment size, perceived variety is a function of assortment structure; that is the organization of the items within a give assortment. Three key aspects of assortment structure can be identified:

a) The degree of distinctiveness of the options which refers to the attribute in level difference between individual items. Existing research has shown that perceived variety of an assortment is a function of the magnitude of the differences between its options, such that perceived variety is smaller in assortment comprising similar rather than dissimilar options (Hoch etral, 1999; Van Herpen and Pieters, 2002, 2007; Van Ryzin and Mahajan, 1999). It has further been documented

that the impact of option distinctiveness on perceived variety is independent of the number of items comprising an assortment. Thus, the distinctiveness of options attribute values only moderately correlates with assortment size with respect to its impact on and can be used as an independent predictor of variety (Van Herpes and Pirtan, 2002)

b) The entropy of the options comprising an assortment is a metric of the dispersion of items, which incorporates with the number of different items and their relative frequencies into a single measure of variability (Kaluck, 1959, Young and Wasserstan, 2001) When describing the variety of intent, the term entropy has been used in two similar (1) as a measure of the dispersion of attribute levels within an attribute (Van Herpen and Pieter, 2002) and (i) as a measure of the dispersion of the frequency with each option appears in a given assortment (Kahn and Wank, 2004, Shan and Weaver, 1999). This entropy is highest when all attribute levels occur in equal proportion (in the case of attribute based entropy) or when all options with equal frequency in the case of option based

c) The organization of the assortment it has been documented that for large assortments, disorganized sets are likely to be perceived as offering less variety than organized self-an effect attributed to the lack of structure, which makes it more difficult for consumers to recognize the existing variety. In contrast, for small assortments, disorganized sets are likely to be perceived as offering greater variety because they can obscure the fact that the available assortment is fairly small (Kahn and Wigan, 2004).

Udegha (1999), argued the product sets limit of business activities of a firm and determines, in distinct manner, firm's survival, growth and profit base. It is often thought that example).

### **Product Mix**

Kotler (1984), distinguishes three levels of products. They are the core-product, the tangible products and the augmented product. The core-product, according to him, representing the solution to the problem offered by the product is the most fundamental aspect of the product. Next to the core product is the tangible product which is followed by the augmented product. It is the duty of the product planner to turn the core product into a tangible product of means of branding, packaging and styling as well as determining the qualities and other features. Product augmentation is affected by offering such additional services and benefits as delivering and installation, personal attention, credit, warranty etc.

It should be noted that these factors are not of equal importance in the marketing of all types of product (e.g. industrial/consumer goods). Also, to be noted is that the most important meaning of a product is what it means to the consumer and not what it means to the producer.

"Mary Kay Lipstick" may mean a product to the Mary Kay company but it means a lot more to the customers. It means a lot of scope to the customer's hope of looking good, beautiful, attractive (Levitt, 2000). It is in this connection that a distinction is made between product offering and market offerings, whereby the product offering refers to the physical product or service being offered or provided while market offering refers to the expectation of benefits and elements that go along with the product offering. Therefore, in designing a product, the marketer should find out the buyer's perspective. This is because this often differs from the producer's view of a product. The buyer views a product as a bundle of attributes for providing satisfaction. It is a bundle of utilities. This is one area of the application of the marketer's knowledge of consumer behaviour and motivation.

Business organizations face product decisions, one of such decisions is about the number of products to offer in the market. It may decide to offer many products to their customers or market consequently, most firms have to make several basic decisions about the scope or range of products

to be offered by them. That is, they have to customer's needs and wants (Levit, 2000). A line of product is defined as a group of products that are closely related either because they are intended for basically similar uses or function in a similar way, have similar physical characteristics and are sold to the same group of customers.

Others still may decide to offer more than one line or range of products.

The combination of the firms separates product item/product line makes up the firm's, product mix (Kotler, 2006). The product mix is often described in terms of its depth and with. It is wide when the firm offers many product line e.g, autos, steel, shopping, holidays etc and narrow when this is not the case. It is deep when a product line contains several varieties of the product and shallow when this is not the case. Several variations mean several types, colours, sizes, shapes and qualities etc of a product (Kotler, 2006).

Instead of product mix, we speak of the production programme of the manufacturing firm or the sales programme of a pure distribution or trading firm. It is the goal of management to, achieve an attractive product mix i.e., a well rounded up mix that will enable the customer to satisfy all his wants fully. This is easier to achieve in a pure trading than in a manufacturing organization, where product goals often conflict with marketing goals (production strives to reduce cost by avoiding frequent batch switching). Also, it is more easily achieved in large organization than in the small firms with heavy limitation of resources (Kotler 2006).

Generally speaking, a company offering a wider product mix carries less risk but also usually has a lower profit margin. That is, the profit margin for a company like Walk Mart may not be high but so long as most of its product has strong sales, it is in no danger of bank ply. On the other hand, a company may only offer a few products, that is high risk because there may be low demand for the products, but specializing in a niche market can result in exceptionally large profits. A limited product mix tends to increase the firm's risk at the same time it increases the potential for large profits. Thus, a firm specializing in a niche market in electronics is likely how demand and competition develops for its specialized output also called sales mix. (Scott, 2003)

### **Product Extension**

Brand extension or brand stretching is a marketing strategy in which a firm marketing a product with a well developed image uses the same brand name in a different product category. The new product is called a spin-off, organizations use this strategy to increase and leverage brand equity (Aaker, 1991). A brand's extendibility is a function of how strong consumer's association are to the brand's values and goals.

Ralph Lauren's Polo brand successfully extended from clothing to home furnishings, such as bedding and towels. Both clothing and bedding are made of lines and fulfil a similar consumer function of comfort and business. Arm and Hammer leveraged its brand equity from basic baking soda into the oral care and laundry care category.

By emphasizing its key attributes, the cleaning and deodorizing properties of its core product, Arm and Hammer was able to leverage those attributes into new categories with success. Another example is the virgin group, which was initially a record label that has extended its brand successfully many times from transportation (aeroplanes, trains) to games stores and video stores such as virgin megaspores (Viregin Group, 2008).

In the 1990's 81% of new products used brand extension to introduce new brands and to create sales. Launching a new product is not only time consuming but also needs a big budget to create

awareness and to promote a product's benefits. Brand extension is one of the new product development strategies which can reduce financial risk by using the parent brand name to enhance consumers' perception due to the core brand equity (Muroma, 1996).

While there can be significant benefit in brand extension strategies, there can also be significant risks, resulting in a diluted or severely damaged brand image. Poor choice for brand extension may dilute and deteriorate the core brand and damage the brand equity. Most

In this scenario, the brand owner works with a partner (sometimes a competitor), who takes on the responsibility of manufacturing and sales of the new products, paying a royalty every time a product is sold.

### **Customer Patronage**

Customer patronage is a used in marketing. An entrepreneur is considered successful when he has gotten a good number of customers who consistently patronize his products or services. It is the dream of every businessman to have satisfied customers returning time and time against to make more purchase (NaijaEcash, 2008). Patronage is the business given to a commercial establishment by its customers. It is the financial support provided to a store, restaurant, hotel or the like by customers, clients, or paying guests. It can also be the control of or power to make appointments to government jobs or the power to grant other political favours. The word "patron" derives from the latin patroness, "patron" one who gives benefits to his clients (Hillman 2014). Grant philanthropists are often known for their patronage, or financial support, of the arts. In the days of classical are, composers like Bach or Painters like Michelangelo were supported by patrons whose patronage or financial support paid the artists way. Patronage is still an important part of our world (Vocabulary com/2014). In some countries the term is used to describe political patronage, which is the use of state resources to reward individuals for their electoral support. Some patronage systems are legal, as in the Canadian tradition of the prime minister to appoint senators and head of a number of commissions and agencies, in many cases, these appointments, go to people who have supported the political party of the prime minister. As well, the term may refer to a type of corruption or favouritism in which a party in power reward groups, familiars, ethnicities for their electoral support using illegal of gifts or fraudulently awarding appointment or government contracts, (Hillman, 2014).

### **Consumer Loyalty**

Brand loyalty is a result of consumer behaviour and is affected by a person's performance. Loyal customers will consistently purchase products from their preferred brands, regardless of convenience or price. Brand loyalty is one of the most important applications of learning theory to consumer behaviour. However, there is no single definition for brand loyalty. Aaker (1991), says it is a measure of the attachment that a customer has to a brand and it reflects how likely in customer will be to switch to another brand, especially when that brand makes a change, either in price or product features. Assail (2001), describe brand loyalty is representing a favourable, attitude towards a brand, resulting in consistent purchase of the brand over time; and it is the result of consumer's learning that one brand can satisfy, their needs. Brand loyalty reflects the commitment of a customer to re-buy the company's product consistently in the future.

Customer retention can be achieved only through fostering premium loyalty by establishing an emotion, as well as a normative attachment between the brand and the consumer (Gannar's & Stakakopoulus, 2004). Such loyal buyers can contribute to the positive word of mouth communication for the brand. A study by Chaudhari and Holbrook (2001), found that attitudinal and purchase aspects of brand loyalty related to market share and the relative price of brands. The

study showed that brand trust and brand affect combine to determine purchase loyalty and attitudinal loyalty. Purchase loyalty in turn, leads to greater market share, and attitudinal loyalty often enables the marketer to charge a higher price for the brand relative to competition. An integrated conceptual framework views consumer loyalty of the function of three groups of influence (Gaunaris & Stathakopoulos 2004):

- a) Consumer drivers (i.e. personal degree of risk aversion and variety seeking).
- b) Brand drivers (ie the brand's reputation and availability of substitute products)
- c) Social drivers (social group influence and peer recommendations).

These influences produce four types of loyalty.

No loyalty: No purchase at all and no cognitive attachment to the brand.

b) Covetous loyalty: No purchase but string attachment and predisposition towards the brand that was development from the person's social environment.

c) Inertia loyalty: Purchase the brand because of habit and convenience but without any emotional attachment to the brand.

Premium Loyalty: High attachment to the brand and high repeated purchase.

The framework also reflects a correlation among consumer involvement and the cognitive and behavioural dimensions of brand loyalty. Due to social perceptions regarding the importance of a car, and the symbolism of a particular car brand (e.g. Mercedes Benz) as representing prestige and achievement, consumers may become involved with and attached to the brand without purchasing it (covetous loyalty), but may purchase the brand when they have the money. Low involvement leads to exposure and brand awareness and then to brand habit (inertia loyalty), consumers operating in this condition perceive little differentiation among brand, and buy the brand repeatedly due to familiarity and convenience.

On the other hand, premium loyalty represent true brand loyal consumers who have a strong commitment to the brand and are less like to switch to other brands in spite of the persuasive promotional efforts of competitors and any even go out of their way to obtain the strongly preferred brand (Gaunaris & Stathakopoulos, 2004).

### **Consumer Choice**

In microeconomics, the theory of consumer choice relates preferences (for the consumption of both good and services) to consumption expenditures, ultimately, this relationship between preferences and consumption, and the demand curve is one of the most closely studied relations in economical.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This chapter discussed the methods by which the data needed to achieve the aim of this study is to be generated, gathered and analyzed. More so, it tells how the work is to be organized and concisely explains certain terms and procedures. This was discussed under the following headings: Research design, Research population, Research sample/sampling Techniques, Instrumentation, Validity of instrument, Reliability of instrument, Administration of instrument, and Method of data analysis.

**Research Design**

The research design is a frame work or plan that is used as guide in collecting and analyzing data for the study. This study adopted the descriptive survey design. Kothari (2011) stated that descriptive survey is concerned with describing, recording, analyzing and interpreting condition that either exist or existed.

**Research Population**

The research population consists of (100 employees and consumers) of five fast food Shopping malls in Port-Harcourt.

**Sample/Sampling Technique**

The sampling technique adopted was the random sampling which ensured that each member had an equal chance of being selected.

**Instrumentation**

The data for this study is obtained from two principle source: The primary and secondary sources. Primary sources: This work is based on findings got through the use of questionnaire, personal interview and direct observation. Secondly, source: These are data that has been previously, published which existed and are stored somewhere. They can be collected from textbook, journals, magazines, library and previous project reports etc.

**Validity of Instrument**

Validity is the degree to which the instrument measures what it is expected to measure; however, the instrument was validated of experts who checked to ensure that the instrument contains all the aspect of the subject that should be included in the questionnaire.

**Reliability of Instrument**

Reliability is the degree consistency of a test instrument in measuring whatever it is designed to measure. In this study, the test re-test method is used in establishing the reliability. The coefficient of reliability is 0.7. The coefficient of reliability is calculated using the Kuder Richardson Formular 21. The questionnaire was administered to ten employees of Everyday supermarket in Port Harcourt. The retest was carried out three weeks after the first test. An average of 70% response is recorded on each occasion. This result indicates a good reliability level of the instrument for the study.

**Method of Data Analysis**

The data collected are presented on tables while the values are expressed in percentage. Spearman rank coefficient correlation is the statistical technique used to test the hypothesis formulated for the study. It is used to determine of a correlation, relationship, or association exist between two variables. The researcher identified two variables in the study, which are independent and dependent variables. The dependent variable is customer patronage while the independent variable is Shop assortment. The dependent variable is measured by customer loyalty and consumer choice while the independent variable is measured by product mix and product extension.

The formular for spearman rank coefficient of correlation is:

$$r = 1 - \frac{6 \sum d^2}{N(N^2 - 1)}$$

Where;

$r$  = Rank order value

$n$  = Number

$N^2$  = Square of Number

$D^2$  = Square of difference

### **DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND RESULTS PRESENTATION Introduction**

The primary data generated for this study through the questionnaire administered is presented here. This chapter focuses on the presentation and classification of the data in a form that will make the important features of the subject to be easily grasped and interpreted.

#### **Data Presentation and Analysis**

**Table 1: Questionnaire Rate of Return**

<b>Beverage Company</b>	<b>Questionnaire Distributed</b>	<b>No of return</b>	<b>%</b>
Pabod Breweries Ltd (Now International Breweries)	20	20	50
Nigeria Bottling Co. Plc	20	20	50
Total	40	40	100

**Source:** Survey Data, 2019

The data presented in table 1 show the number of questionnaire distributed and returned. A 100% return was recorded for the questionnaire.

**Table 2: Gender of Respondents**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Male	30	75
Female	10	15
Total	40	100

**Source:** Survey Data, 2019

The data presented in Table 2 shows the gender of the respondents 30 respondents were male while 10 respondents were female.

**Table 3: What is the name of your favourite beverage company?**

<b>Beverage company</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Pabod Breweries Ltd	20	50

Nigeria Bottling Co. Plc	20	50
Total	40	100

**Source:** Survey Data, 2019

Table 3 shows the response to favourite beverage company name. 20 respondents patronize Pabod breweries Ltd. While the other 20 respondents patronize Nigeria Bottling Co. Plc.

**Table 4:** To what extent does Shop assortment influence customer patronage?

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Great extent	30	75
Considerable	4	10
Moderate	3	7.5
Slight extent	2	5
No extent	1	2.5
Total	40	100

**Source:** Survey Data, 2019

Table 4 shows the extent of Shop assortment influence on customer, patronage. 30 respondents ticked great extent, 4 ticked considered extent, 3 ticked moderate extent, 2 ticked slight extent while 1 respondent ticked no extent.

**Table 5:** How would you rate the level of shop assortment in your favourite beverage company?

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Very high	37	92.5
High	2	5
Low	1	2.5
Very low	-	-
None of the above	-	-
Total	40	100

Source: Survey Data, 2019

Table 5 shows how respondents rate the level of product assortment in their favourite beverage company, 27 respondent ticked very high, 2 ticked high, 1 respondent ticked low while nobody ticked very low and none of the above.

**Table 6:** To what extent would you rate product mix in Pabod Breweries Ltd and Nigeria Bottling Company Ple?

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Great extent	18	45
Considerable	10	25
Moderate	6	15
Slight extent	4	10
Slight extent	2	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Survey Data, 2019

Table 6 shows how respondents rate product mix in Pabod Breweries Ltd. and Nigeria Bottling Company Plc. 18 respondents ticked create extent, 10 considerable, 6 moderate, 4 slight extent and 2 no extent.

Table 7: To what extent would you rate product extension in Pabod limited and Nigeria Bottling Company Pic?

<b>Response</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Great extent	10	25
Considerable	18	45
Moderate	6	15
Slight extent	4	10
Slight extent	2	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Survey Data, 2019

Table 7 shows the extent at which respondents' rate product extension in Pabod limited and Nigeria Bottling Company Plc. 10 respondents, ticked great extent 18 ticked considerable extents, 6 ticked moderate extent, 4 ticked slight extent and 2 ticked no extent

**Table 8:** How would you rate the customer loyalty of Pabod Breweries Ltd. and Nigeria Bottling Company Plc.?

<b>Response</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Great extent	14	35
Considerable	14	35
Moderate	7	15
Slight extent	3	7.5
Slight extent	2	7.5
Total	40	100

**Source:** Survey Data, 2019

Table 8 shows the extent at which respondents rate the customer loyalty of Pabod Breweries Ltd. and Nigeria Bottling Company Plc. 14 respondent, ticked great extent, 14 respondents also ticked considerable extent, 7 ticked moderate extents, 3 ticked slight extent and 2 respondent ticked no extent.

Table 9: How would you rate the consumer choice of Pabod Breweries Ltd. and Nigeria Bottling Company Plc.?

<b>Response</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Great extent	8	20
Considerable	20	50
Moderate	2	5
Slight extent	6	15
Slight extent	4	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Survey Data, 2019

Table 9 shows the rate of consumer choice in Pabod breweries Limited and Nigeria Bottling company Plc. 8 respondents ticked great extent, 20 respondents, ticked considerable extent, 2 ticked moderate extent, 6 ticked slight extent and 4 ticked no extent.

**Hypothesis Testing and Interpretation of Data**

Given a careful analysis of the responses obtained from the respondents, the hypothesis shall each be ready for testing and the result or implication fully discussed. Four hypotheses were considered and tested using spearman's ranking coefficient correlation, given as:

$$r = 1 - \frac{6 \sum d^2}{N(N^2 - 1)}$$

Where;

R = Rank order value

N = Number

N = Square of Number

D = Square of Difference.

**Hypothesis 1**

**H0<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between product mix and customer loyalty to beverage brand in Port Harcourt.

S/N	Product Mix X	Customer Loyalty Y	RX	RY	D	D <sup>2</sup>
1	18	14	1	1.5	0.5	0.25
2	10	14	2	1.5	0.5	0.25
3	6	7	3	3	0	0
4	4	3	4	4	0	0
5	2	2	5	5	0	0
Σ						0.5

Source: Survey Data, 2019

$$r = 1 - \frac{6 \sum 0.5}{5(5^2 - 1)} = 1 - \frac{3}{5(24)}$$

$$= 1 - \frac{3}{120} = 0.975$$

$$RS = 0.975$$

The decision rule states that if the calculated value is greater than the tabulated value, we reject the null hypothesis; since the calculated value is greater, we reject the null hypothesis, this means that there is a positive relationship between product mix and consumer loyalty.

**Hypothesis 2**

**H0<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between product mix and consumer choice of beverage brand in Port Harcourt.

S/N	Product Mix X	Consumer Choice Y	RX	RY	D	D <sup>2</sup>
1	10	8	1	2	-1	1
2	18	20	2	1	1	1
3	6	2	3	5	-2	4
4	4	6	4	3	1	1
5	2	4	5	4	1	1
Σ						8

Source: Survey Data 2019

$$r = 1 - \frac{6 \sum 8}{5(5^2 - 1)} = 1 - \frac{48}{5(24)}$$

$$= 1 - \frac{48}{120} = 1 - 0.4$$

The decision rule states that if the calculated value is greater than the tabulated value, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis. This means there is no relationship between product mix and consumer choice.

**H0<sub>3</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between product extension and customer loyalty to beverage brand in Port Harcourt

S/N	Product Extension X	Consumer Choice Y	RX	RY	D	D <sup>2</sup>
1	10	14	2	1.5	0.5	0.25
2	18	14	1	1.5	0.5	0.25
3	6	7	3	3	0	0
4	4	3	4	4	0	0
5	2	2	5	5	0	0
Σ						0.5

Source: Survey Data 2019

$$r = 1 - \frac{6 \sum 0.5}{5(5^2 - 1)} = 1 - \frac{3}{5(24)}$$

$$= 1 - \frac{3}{120} = 0.957$$

$$RS = 0.975$$

The decision rule states that if the calculated value is greater than the tabulated value, we reject the null hypothesis. This means there is a strong relationship between product extension and customer loyalty.

Hypothesis 4

**H0<sub>4</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between product, extension and consumer choice of beverage brand in Port Harcourt

S/N	Product Extension X	Consumer Choice Y	RX	RY	D	D <sup>2</sup>
1	10	8	2	1	1	1
2	18	20	1	2	-1	1
3	6	2	3	5	-2	4
4	4	6	4	3	1	1
5	2	4	5	5	1	1
Σ						8

**Source:** Survey Data 2019

$$r = 1 - \frac{6 \sum 8}{5(5^2 - 1)} = 1 - \frac{48}{5(24)}$$

$$= 1 - \frac{48}{120} = 1 - 0.4$$

The decision rule states that if the calculated value is greater than the tabulated value, we reject the null hypothesis. This means there is no significant relationship between product extension and consumer choice

### Summary of Findings

The results and findings of this study can be summarized as below:

1. The findings show that there is a significant relationship between product mix and customers loyalty to beverage brand in Port Harcourt.
- 2 It was also discovered that there is no relationship between product mix and consumer choice of beverage in Port Harcourt.
3. The findings research that there is a strong relationship between product extension and customer loyalty to beverage brand in Port Harcourt.
4. It is seen that product extension affects consumer choice of beverage brand in Port Harcourt

### Discussion of Findings

In the analysis of the first research question, a good number of the respondents agreed that Shop assortment has a great extent of influence on customer's patronage of beverage brand. This is in agreement with (Kahn and Lehmann, 1991) stating that "the most intuitive benefit, featured prominently in economics research is that the greater the number of options. in the choice set, the higher the likelihood that consumers can find an option matching their purchase goals. From the findings, it was also discovered that assortments grants one stop shopping customers a greater efficiency of time and effort in identifying the available alternatives, thus increasing patronage. It

was also discovered that assortments increases purchase quantity. Reibstein et al (1975) stated that a great variety of items can also lead to increased consumption.

From the second research question, the result of the findings shows that product mix has a great deal of impact on consumers choice of beverage company. This finding has been attributed to consumers' uncertainty about future preferences, such that when making purchases for multiple consumption occasions, consumers tend to select a broad variety of items. The proposition that consumer seek variety when purchasing multiple items in order to hedge against uncertainty is consistent with the findings reported by Harlam and Lodish (1995), who show that across purchase occasions consumer tend to buy the same flavour, brand and package size, whereas within a single purchase occasion they tend to buy different flavours, even though they buy the same brand and package size.

From the third research question that the effect of product extension on customer's loyalty to the various beverage companies, the respondents established that there is no relationship between product extension and customer loyalty to their favourite company and brand. This is so because most of the consumers are already associated with the values and goals of their preferred brands.

The findings of the fourth research question which deals with the relationship between product extension and consumer choice indicates that there's no significant relationship between brand stretching and customers choice of preferred brand. Fox et al, (2005) stated that "the choice of an option is a function of assortment structures, such that consumers tend to spread their choices among the categories into which the options are partitioned".

## **CONCLUSIONS**

From the study, efforts were made to examine how Shop assortment affects customer patronage in terms of product mix, product extension, customer loyalty and consumer choice. The result of finding in this study has clearly revealed that having a proper understanding of a customer's needs does not only guarantee patronage, but also customer loyalty and recommendations. Shop assortment should be given its deserved attention as it relates to customers patronage. As revealed from the study findings, the effect of Shop assortment on customer patronage cannot be overemphasized. The key findings in this research can be relied on to facilitate managerial decisions as well as to guide further empirical research.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The above, findings have been carefully considered by the researcher and based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Product mix and extension should be adopted by beverage companies in other to increase customer patronage.
2. Skilled personnel should be employed to improve product extension in other to increase customer patronage.
3. In addition to influencing the overall purchase probability from an assortment, providing a default option can also influence which particular option consumers will choose a strategy that is particularly effective in the case of larger assortments when consumers are faced with an extensive set of options. Thus, default-option strategies such as showcasing specific options in marketing communications, end-of-aisle displays, and online are likely to facilitate choice by providing a simple decision rule for consumers without well-articulated preferences.

4. Recent research has further shown that consumer choice among an assortment is a function of the attractiveness of the options contained in these assortments. Thus, producers should ensure that assortments are attractive enough to appeal to customers.

### **Limitations of Study**

The limitations encountered in this study includes, not getting a hundred percent return of questionnaires administered, delay in obtaining some of the questionnaires, and time.

### **Area for Further Research**

1. Shop assortment and Consumer Choice.
2. Customer Perception and Product Strategy.
3. Assortment Size and Option Attractiveness in Consumer Choice.

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