

ENTREPRENEURIAL BRAND REPUTATION AND SERVICE QUALITY DELIVERY OF FOOD AND BEVERAGE FIRMS IN PORT HARCOURT.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between Entrepreneurial Brand Reputation and Service Quality Delivery in the Food and Beverage Industry in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. Specifically, the study focused on how brand quality and brand reliability influence timeliness and efficiency in service delivery. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The population comprised 30 registered food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt, from which a census approach was applied. Data were collected from 171 valid responses using a structured questionnaire designed on a four-point Likert scale. Reliability was confirmed with a Cronbach's Alpha method. Descriptive statistics and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) were employed for data analysis, with hypotheses tested at a 0.01 significance level. The results revealed that brand quality had a strong and significant positive relationship with both timeliness and efficiency. Brand reliability also showed a moderate but significant positive relationship with timeliness and efficiency. This study concluded that entrepreneurial brand reputation anchored on quality and reliability is a critical intangible resource that shapes service quality delivery in Port Harcourt's food and beverage sector. This study recommended that Food and beverage firms should consistently prioritize high product quality in terms of taste, presentation, and packaging to strengthen brand reputation and improve service timeliness.

Keywords: *Entrepreneurial Brand Reputation, Service Quality Delivery, Brand Quality, Brand Reliability, Timeliness and Efficiency in Service Delivery.*

INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly competitive and consumer-driven marketplace, brand reputation has emerged as a vital intangible asset influencing consumer choice, business performance, and long-term sustainability. For firms operating in the food and beverage industry, brand reputation is especially critical, as it directly affects customer perceptions of quality, trustworthiness, and service integrity (Keller, 2013). As markets evolve and consumer expectations heighten, businesses are being compelled to build strong, reliable brands that not only reflect product excellence but also deliver consistent and efficient services. Entrepreneurial brand reputation refers to the credibility and trust a brand earns through its actions, communications, and customer interactions often shaped by perceptions of brand quality and brand reliability. Brand quality, in this context, denotes the consumer's overall judgment of a brand's excellence and superiority, especially in terms of ingredients, taste, packaging, and consistency. Brand reliability, on the other hand, emphasizes the extent to which a brand keeps its promises and delivers predictable experiences, which is crucial in ensuring customer trust and repeat patronage (Aaker, 1991; Adewale et al., 2021). It encompasses the responsiveness, accuracy, and customer-centric nature of service encounters. Two key components timeliness and efficiency are frequently used to assess how well firms meet consumer expectations in this regard. Timeliness refers to how promptly services are delivered (e.g., food served hot, orders processed quickly), while efficiency reflects how resources are managed to deliver maximum value with minimal waste or delay (Parasuraman et al., 1988).

In the city of Port Harcourt, consumers are becoming more discerning, expecting not only tasty meals and beverages but also exceptional service quality. However, many local food and beverage firms struggle to balance product excellence with service reliability. Complaints of delayed service, inconsistent food quality, and lack of professionalism in customer handling are common and have the potential to harm brand reputation, reduce customer loyalty, and weaken market performance (Okonkwo & Nwachukwu, 2022). Although extant literature supports a strong link between brand reputation and service quality, there remains a lack of localized empirical studies that explore how entrepreneurial brand attributes such as quality and reliability influence service delivery outcomes like timeliness and efficiency in the Nigerian food and beverage sector. This gap is even more pronounced when considering indigenous or emerging entrepreneurial brands that must compete with global franchises and changing consumer expectations. Therefore, this study is motivated by the need to examine how entrepreneurial brand reputation anchored on brand quality and brand reliability affects service quality delivery, focusing on timeliness and efficiency, within food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt.

Statement of the Problem

Globally, consumers are increasingly demanding not only high-quality products but also fast, efficient, and reliable service experiences. This shift in customer expectations places significant pressure on firms to maintain strong brand reputations that are supported by consistent service excellence. As businesses strive to meet these expectations, the ability to deliver services with timeliness and efficiency has become a core component of competitive advantage and customer retention (Parasuraman et al., 1988).

A firm's brand reputation specifically its perceived brand quality and reliability plays a crucial role in shaping service expectations and customer satisfaction. When a brand is known for consistently delivering high-quality products and reliable experiences, customers are more likely to develop trust, demonstrate loyalty, and exhibit favorable word-of-mouth behavior. This reputation becomes especially valuable in industries where customer choices are influenced by both tangible product quality and the intangible experience of service delivery. However, establishing and maintaining a positive brand reputation requires more than advertising or visual identity; it must be supported by consistently high service performance.

Despite this understanding, many food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt continue to struggle with service delivery challenges. Customers frequently report dissatisfaction with delayed orders, inconsistent food temperatures, inattentive service, and overall inefficiency in operations. These service lapses undermine the perceived reliability of brands and erode customer trust over time. Even when the product itself meets acceptable standards, poor service delivery can result in negative brand associations, low customer retention, and declining profitability.

A more specific concern arises from the apparent disconnect between the entrepreneurial efforts to build reputable brands and the actual service experiences customers receive. Many emerging food and beverage businesses in Port Harcourt have invested heavily in brand image, packaging, and product promotion, yet fall short in delivering on basic service expectations such as order accuracy, prompt delivery, and courteous interaction. This inconsistency between brand promise and service reality not only diminishes customer satisfaction but also weakens brand reliability one of the key components of entrepreneurial brand reputation. Therefore, the core problem this study seeks to address is the gap between entrepreneurial brand reputation and actual service quality delivery in food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt. Specifically, it aims to investigate how brand quality and brand reliability influence the effectiveness of service delivery in terms of timeliness and efficiency.

Conceptual Framework

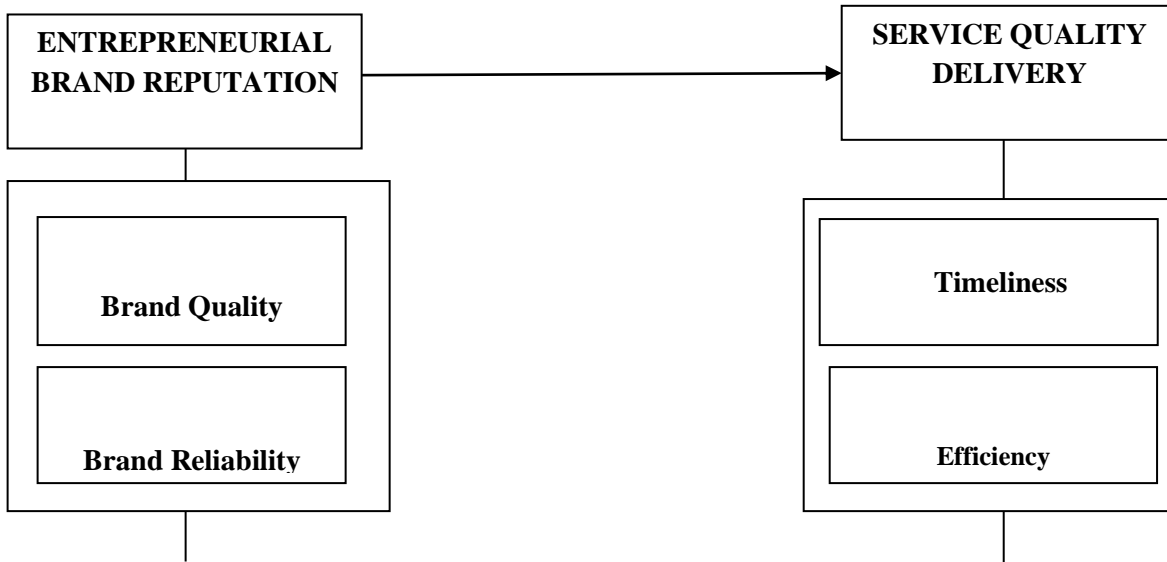


Figure 1.1: Conceptual framework showing the relationship between entrepreneurial brand reputation and service quality delivery.

Source: Adapted from Nwekeala (2023); Kim et al (2003); Aaker (1991) and Sin et. al., (2002).

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study was to examine the relationship between entrepreneurial brand reputation and Service quality delivery of Food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt. In order to achieve this broad aim, the study intends to:

1. determine the relationship between brand quality and timeliness of food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt;
2. ascertain the relationship between brand quality and efficiency of food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt;
3. explore the relationship between brand reliability and timeliness of food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt;
4. determine the relationship between brand reliability and efficiency of food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt;

Research Questions

The following research questions were put forward to address the objectives of the study:

- i. What is the relationship between brand quality and timeliness of food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt?
- ii. What is the relationship between brand quality and efficiency of food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt?
- iii. What is the relationship between brand reliability and timeliness of food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt?
- iv. How does brand reliability relate with efficiency of food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were postulated to guide this study:

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between brand quality and timeliness of food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt.

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between brand quality and efficiency of food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt.

Ho₃: There is no significant relationship between brand reliability and timeliness of food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt.

Ho₄: There is no significant relationship between brand reliability and efficiency of food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Conceptual Review

Concept of Entrepreneurial Brand Reputation

Entrepreneurial brand reputation refers to the perception of trustworthiness, quality, and reliability that stakeholder including customers, suppliers, and the public associate with a firm or brand, especially one in its early growth stages (Okechukwu&Nwachukwu, 2022). Reputation in entrepreneurial settings is typically co-created through customer experiences, brand communication strategies, and consistency in product or service delivery. Scholars like Keller (2013) and Aaker (1991) argued that a positive brand reputation if built on authenticity and consistency can evolve into brand equity, conferring both symbolic and financial value to the enterprise.

Entrepreneurial brand reputation has transformed from a simple marketing tool into a multidimensional strategic asset that fuses identity, innovation, and ethical responsibility. Recent scholarship emphasizes that entrepreneurs today operate as brand architects who consciously construct reputations grounded in authenticity, transparency, and moral legitimacy. Holt (2025) and Cao (2025) show that in the digital economy, entrepreneurial reputation is increasingly shaped by data analytics and AI-driven visibility tools that monitor trust and credibility across platforms. Meanwhile, Ibahrine (2025) highlights how entrepreneurial states like the UAE leverage national branding to project innovation and trust globally, indicating that reputation building now extends beyond individuals and firms to entire ecosystems.

Dimensions of Entrepreneurial Brand Reputation

Brand Quality

Brand quality is a consumer's perception of the overall excellence or superiority of a product or service relative to competing alternatives. In the context of entrepreneurial food businesses, brand quality encompasses various tangible and intangible attributes, such as taste, freshness, portion size, packaging, and presentation (Aaker1991). A high level of perceived quality can directly influence repeat patronage and serve as a barrier to switching to competitors. Parasuraman et al. (1988) emphasized that service-based businesses; especially those in the food and hospitality sector, must invest in consistent quality to maintain customer trust and brand integrity.

High-quality products tend to reduce post-purchase dissonance, reinforce brand satisfaction, and generate positive word-of-mouth. This is particularly important for start-ups and small-scale food vendors whose sustainability depends on favorable first impressions and customer retention. In Port Harcourt, where food delivery services are booming through platforms like Jumia Food and Bolt Food, the perceived quality of meals has become a central determinant of competitive advantage (Renner, 2025).

Brand Reliability

Brand reliability refers to the extent to which a brand consistently delivers on its promises. It involves punctuality in service, accuracy in order fulfillment, and overall consistency in customer experience. Customers often develop expectations based on prior interactions with a brand; when those expectations are met or exceeded repeatedly, trust is formed (Okoro&Chinedu, 2022). Entrepreneurial firms that develop reputations for reliability are more likely to gain repeat customers and enjoy long-term growth (Keller, 2013). Reliability also encompasses how brands

handle mistakes. A brand that quickly acknowledges errors and takes corrective actions can still maintain a strong reputation. In the food and beverage sector, issues such as late delivery, missing items, or incorrect orders are common. How an entrepreneurial brand responds to such incidents directly affects consumer trust and willingness to recommend or return. Inconsistent service undermines credibility, damages customer relationships, and erodes brand equity even when product quality is high (Adewale et al., 2021).

Concept of Service Quality Delivery

Service quality delivery in the food and beverage industry refers to how well a company meets or exceeds customer expectations through its service offerings. It is a multifaceted concept that includes responsiveness, competence, empathy, and reliability. Two of the most operationally measurable dimensions particularly in the fast-paced food sector are timeliness and efficiency (Parasuraman et al., 1988). Consumers today are increasingly impatient, expecting quick turnaround times from order to delivery, especially in urban environments where convenience is a major value driver. Service quality delivery not only affects consumer satisfaction but also influences brand perception and long-term loyalty (Nwachukwu&Uchenna, 2020). In entrepreneurial businesses where operational systems are still maturing, lapses in service delivery often stem from resource constraints, staff training issues, or supply chain inconsistencies. These deficiencies, if unaddressed, diminish the competitive strength of such firms and negatively impact their brand reputation (Okoro&Chinedu, 2022).

Measures of Service Quality Delivery

Timeliness

Timeliness refers to the promptness with which a service is initiated, executed, and completed. In the food and beverage industry, timeliness is often measured by order processing time, delivery turnaround, and waiting periods for in-store or online service. Studies have consistently shown that delays especially unexplained ones create customer frustration, which can lead to negative reviews and loss of patronage. Timeliness is not only a functional attribute but also a psychological one; customers associate prompt service with competence and respect (Okechukwu&Nwachukwu, 2022).

In entrepreneurial food firms, timely service is often constrained by staffing issues, inadequate automation, or logistical challenges. Despite these limitations, firms that succeed in maintaining timeliness often benefit from customer retention, referral traffic, and positive digital footprints. For instance, firms that provide estimated delivery times and meet or beat those expectations signal dependability and professionalism.

Efficiency

Efficiency relates to how well an organization utilizes its resources—human, technological, and logistical to deliver maximum value with minimal waste or delay. For food and beverage firms, this includes operational systems for inventory management, order tracking, staff coordination, and customer communication. Efficient service delivery reduces costs, increases throughput, and improves customer satisfaction. Importantly, it allows firms to serve more customers without compromising quality, which is essential for scaling operations (Parasuraman et al., 1988).

Efficiency also ties into the customer's experience how seamless, hassle-free, and accurate their interaction with the brand is. An efficient process not only boosts internal performance but enhances the brand's image of professionalism and preparedness. In competitive food hubs like Port Harcourt, efficiency is not a luxury but a necessity for entrepreneurial firms seeking to survive and grow amid high consumer expectations (Barney, 1991).

Theoretical Review

This study is anchored on Resource-Based View (RBV) Theory

The Resource-Based View (RBV) theory is a foundational concept in strategic management that posits that a firm's internal resources when valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN) form the basis for sustained competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). Unlike external market-focused theories such as Porter's Five Forces, RBV emphasizes the role of internal capabilities and assets in driving firm performance. In the context of service-based entrepreneurial firms, particularly in the food and beverage sector, RBV is instrumental in understanding how brand reputation and service quality can serve as intangible yet strategic resources.

Entrepreneurial brand reputation, including dimensions like brand quality and brand reliability, aligns strongly with the RBV's criteria for competitive resources. For instance, a brand known for consistent quality and service becomes rare and difficult to imitate, especially when customer loyalty is driven by personal experiences, emotional trust, and word-of-mouth reputation. These reputational assets are socially complex and path-dependent, making them a source of long-term differentiation (Wernerfelt, 1984).

Furthermore, service quality particularly timeliness and efficiency can also be viewed through the RBV lens. When a food firm consistently delivers fast, accurate, and pleasant customer experiences, this process competence becomes an operational resource. Firms that can systematize these service practices internally through staff training, process optimization, and digital platforms transform them into strategic assets that competitors find difficult to replicate without significant investment and organizational learning (Teece et al., 1997).

However, RBV has been critiqued for underestimating the influence of external environments and market dynamics (Priem & Butler, 2001). While it is excellent for understanding internal strengths, RBV assumes a relatively stable environment where resources alone determine outcomes. In contrast, sectors like food and beverage are often turbulent, with evolving consumer preferences and frequent disruptions. Thus, RBV is best applied in conjunction with dynamic capability frameworks that incorporate responsiveness and innovation. Despite this limitation, RBV remains highly relevant for food firms in Port Harcourt aiming to build sustainable reputations and improve service quality. It provides a theoretical foundation to explore how entrepreneurial branding efforts when supported by efficient and timely service delivery can drive long-term customer loyalty, cost advantages, and market competitiveness.

Empirical Review

Okoro and Chinedu (2022) examined the relationship between brand quality and customer loyalty in Nigeria's quick service restaurants. Survey of 120 restaurant customers in Enugu using structured questionnaires. The findings revealed that high brand quality was positively associated with customer retention and perceived service value. The study concluded that entrepreneurs should invest in consistent product and service quality to build a trusted brand identity.

Adewale and Ibrahim (2021) examined the relationship between impact of brand reliability on repeat patronage in Lagos Food Retail. Mixed-method approach involving interviews and Likert-scale surveys of 80 participants. The findings revealed that perceived reliability significantly influenced customer willingness to recommend and repurchase. The study concluded that entrepreneurial food firms must prioritize consistency in delivery and fulfillment.

Nwachukwu and Uchenna (2020) examined the relationship between timeliness as a driver of customer satisfaction in Fast Food Outlets. Cross-sectional study using SERVQUAL model in three urban centers in Southern Nigeria. The findings revealed that delays in service reduced perceived value even when food quality was acceptable. The study concluded that timeliness should be integrated into the brand's value proposition and service training.

Yusuf and Okafor (2023) examined the relationship between Service Efficiency and Brand Trust in Food Delivery Startups. Regression analysis based on online review sentiment and delivery time data from three delivery platforms. The findings revealed that fast and error-free service builds

higher levels of customer trust and brand preference. The study concluded operational efficiency is not just internal but a visible brand signal to customers.

Onyema and Okocha (2022) examined the relationship between Brand Reputation and Market Performance in Small-Scale Restaurants in Port Harcourt. Survey of 95 customers and interviews with 10 restaurant managers. The findings revealed strong brand reputation correlated with higher customer retention and referral marketing success. The study concluded that building reputation is a low-cost yet powerful marketing strategy for emerging entrepreneurs.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design, which is considered suitable for obtaining data from a population through a well-structured questionnaire. The population of this study comprised of 30 registered food and beverage business operators within the Port Harcourt metropolis. This includes small-scale entrepreneurial restaurants, food trucks, cafés, and quick-service outlets. The population of the study was adopted as the sample size of the study since it is not too large for a study. To generate data for the study, one hundred and eighty (180) copies of questionnaire were given to the 30 food and beverage firms in the frame of six (6) copies per firm for their customers in Port Harcourt. The primary source of data for this study was a structured questionnaire. The data collected was coded and entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27 for analysis. Both descriptive and inferential statistics will be used. Descriptive statistics (frequency, charts and tables) was summarized demographic data and item responses. Inferential statistics Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was used to test the hypotheses regarding the relationships between the independent variables (brand quality, brand reliability) and dependent variables (timeliness, efficiency). Hypotheses were tested at a 95% confidence level ($p \leq 0.05$) to determine statistical significance.

Data Presentation

Here, the data collected in the questionnaire were presented in tables and interpreted. A total of one hundred and eighty (180) copies of the instrument were issued to the customers of food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt. The questionnaire administration and the collection rate are shown in table 4.1 below:

Table 1: Questionnaire Administration and Collection

Distributed	Retrieved	Useful	Not Useful
180	175	171	4

Source: Survey Data, 2025.

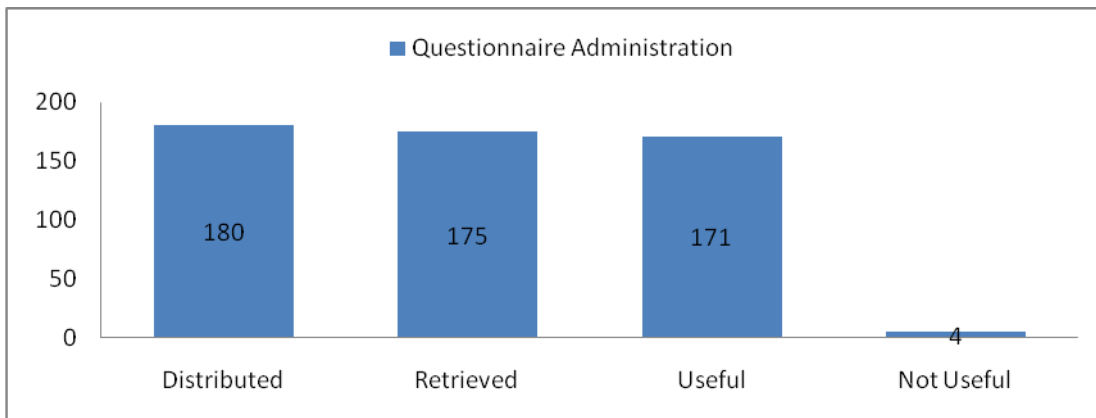


Table 1 and Figure 1 contains the number of questionnaire administered to respondents (customers) food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt and their collection rate. Out of the 180 copies of questionnaire administered to the respondents, 175 copies were retrieved, 171 copies were useful and 4 copies were not useful.

Data Analysis and Results

The data collected from the respondents were analyzed in this section. In analyzing the data collected, the researcher focuses on the demographic, univariate, and bivariate analysis. The results of the analysis carried out were used to provide answers to the research questions and hypotheses.

Demographic Analysis

The demographic analysis covers the respondents' sex, marital status, age, years of patronizing favourite food and beverage firm, and educational qualification. The demographic variables of the respondents are presented in tables and analyzed accordingly.

Table 2: Sex of the Respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	92	54%
Female	79	46%
Total	171	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

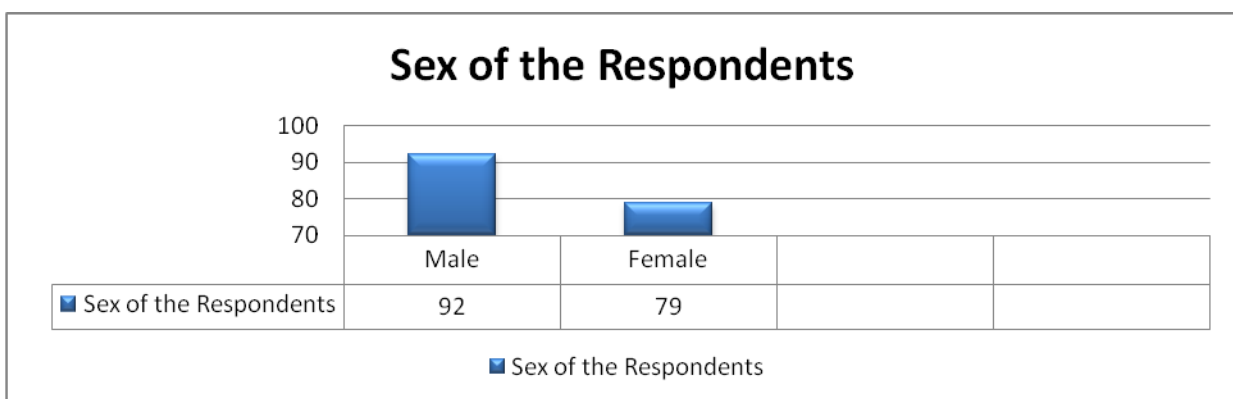


Table 2 and fig.2 shows the sex of the respondents who completed and returned the questionnaires. From the table, it is observed that out of the 171 respondents who completed and returned the questionnaire, 92 of them were male representing 54% of the respondents while 79 of them were female representing 46% of the respondents.

Bivariate Analysis**Hypothesis 1**

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between brand quality and timeliness of food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt.

Table 3: Result of bivariate analysis between brand quality and timeliness of food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt

			Brand quality	Timeliness
Pearson Correlation (r)	Brand quality	Correlation	1.000	.659**
		Coefficient	.	.001
		Sig. (2 tailed)	142	142
		N		
	Timeliness	Correlation	.659**	1.000
		Coefficient	.001	.
		Sig. (2 tailed)	142	142
		N		

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

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

Source: SPSS-generated Output

Table 3 presents the result of bivariate analysis carried out between brand quality and timeliness of food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt. The result shows that brand quality is strongly and positively correlated to timeliness ($r = .659^{**}$) and the symbol ** indicates that this correlation is significant at 0.01 level. Based on this result, the null hypothesis (Ho₁) is rejected and the alternate hypothesis is accepted. This means that we then accept that there is a strong positive and significant relationship between brand quality and timeliness of food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt.

Hypothesis 2

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between brand quality and efficiency of food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt.

Table 4: Result of bivariate analysis between and efficiency of Food and beverage firms

			Brand quality	Efficiency
Pearson Correlation (r)	Brand quality	Correlation	1.000	.723**
		Coefficient	.	.001
		Sig. (2 tailed)	142	142
		N		
	Efficiency	Correlation	.723**	1.000
		Coefficient	.001	.
		Sig. (2 tailed)	142	142
		N		

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

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

Source: SPSS-generated Output

Table 4 shows the result of bivariate analysis carried out between brand quality and efficiency of Food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt. The result indicates that brand quality has a strong positive correlation with efficiency of Food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt ($r = .723^{**}$) and this correlation is significant at 0.01 level as indicated by the symbol **. As a result of this, we then reject the null hypothesis (Ho₂) and accept the alternate hypothesis which states that there is strong positive and significant relationship between brand quality and efficiency of food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt.

Hypothesis 3

Ho₃ There is no significant relationship between brand reliability and timeliness of food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt.

Table 5: Result of bivariate analysis between brand reliability and timeliness of Food and beverage firms

			Brand reliability	Timeliness
Pearson Correlation (r)	Brand reliability	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.429**
		Sig. (2 tailed)	.	.001
		N	142	142
	Timeliness	Correlation Coefficient	.429**	1.000
		Sig. (2 tailed)	.001	.
		N	142	142

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

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

Source: SPSS-generated Output

Table 5 presents the result of bivariate analysis carried out between brand reliability and timeliness of Food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt. The result shows that Brand reliability has a moderate positive correlation with timeliness of Food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt. ($r = .429^{**}$) and the symbol ****** signifies that this correlation is significant at 0.01 level. Based on this result, the null hypothesis (Ho₃) is rejected and the alternate hypothesis is accepted. This means that we then accept that there is moderate positive and significant relationship between brand reliability and timeliness of Food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt.

Hypothesis 4

Ho₄: There is no significant relationship between brand reliability and efficiency of food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt.

Table 6: Result of bivariate analysis between Brand reliability and efficiency of Food and beverage firms

			Brand reliability	Efficiency
Pearson Correlation (r)	Brand reliability	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.478**
		Sig. (2 tailed)	.	.001
		N	142	142
	Efficiency	Correlation Coefficient	.478**	1.000
		Sig. (2 tailed)	.001	.
		N	142	142

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

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

Source: SPSS-generated Output

Table 6 contains the result of bivariate analysis carried out between brand reliability and efficiency of Food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt. The result indicates that brand reliability is moderately and positively correlated with efficiency of Food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt. ($r = .478^{**}$) and this correlation is significant at 0.01 level as indicated by the symbol ******. Consequently, the null hypothesis (Ho₄) is rejected and the alternate hypothesis is accepted. This means that we then accept that there is moderate positive and significant relationship between brand reliability and efficiency of Food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt.

Summary of Findings

Based on the results of the analysis carried out on the study variables, the findings are:

- i. There is significant relationship between brand quality and timeliness of Food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt.

- ii. There is significant relationship between brand quality and efficiency of Food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt.
- iii. There is significant relationship between brand reliability and timeliness of Food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt.
- iv. There is significant relationship between brand reliability and efficiency of Food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt.

Discussion of Findings

Brand Quality and Timeliness

The study established a strong and significant positive relationship between brand quality and timeliness ($r = .659, p < 0.01$). This implies that firms with consistently high food quality, appealing presentation, and reliable packaging are more likely to deliver timely services. High brand quality motivates firms to uphold operational discipline, which enhances order processing speed and prompt service. This aligns with Nwachukwu and Uchenna (2020), who found that timeliness is a major driver of customer satisfaction in Nigerian fast food outlets. Similarly, Okoro and Chinedu (2022) reported that consistent product quality fosters trust and encourages repeat patronage, further reinforcing the link between quality and service speed.

Brand Quality and Efficiency

The findings also revealed a very strong positive relationship between brand quality and efficiency ($r = .723, p < 0.01$). This indicates that firms recognized for superior quality also tend to optimize resources, streamline processes, and ensure smooth, organized service delivery. Quality-focused firms appear more likely to institutionalize efficient systems that prevent wastage and enhance productivity. This corroborates Parasuraman et al. (1988), who argued that perceived quality in service industries is inseparable from operational efficiency. Likewise, Okoye and Eze (2021) observed that SMEs with high-quality standards achieve stronger performance through more effective use of resources.

Brand Reliability and Timeliness

The results further showed a moderate but significant positive relationship between brand reliability and timeliness ($r = .429, p < 0.01$). Customers who perceive brands as dependable also experience greater satisfaction with timeliness of services. Reliable firms communicate waiting times, honor service commitments, and minimize avoidable delays, thereby strengthening their reputations. This finding supports Adewale and Ibrahim (2021), who demonstrated that reliability is a strong predictor of repeat patronage in Lagos food retail. It also resonates with Okonkwo and Nwachukwu (2022), who emphasized that Nigerian consumers often equate brand dependability with service speed.

Brand Reliability and Efficiency

Finally, the study found a significant positive relationship between brand reliability and efficiency ($r = .478, p < 0.01$). This suggests that dependable brands are also more likely to coordinate staff, process orders correctly, and effectively utilize resources in delivering services. Reliability appears to reinforce operational discipline, which in turn boosts efficiency. This is consistent with Yusuf and Okafor (2023), who showed that efficient service enhances brand trust in food delivery start-ups. Similarly, Onyema and Okocha (2022) found that a strong reputation for reliability supports higher customer retention and positive word-of-mouth in Port Harcourt restaurants.

Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate that brand quality significantly enhances both timeliness and efficiency in food and beverage service delivery. Firms that prioritize high standards in food preparation, taste, packaging, and overall service quality are better positioned to deliver timely

and efficient services that meet customer expectations. This implies that a strong reputation for quality is directly linked to operational excellence. The study also found that brand reliability contributes positively to timeliness and efficiency, though at a moderate level compared to brand quality. Customers tend to associate dependable brands with better service coordination, order accuracy, and resource utilization. Firms that consistently fulfill their service promises, correct errors promptly, and maintain dependable standards enjoy stronger reputational capital that translates into better service delivery. The study concluded that entrepreneurial brand reputation anchored on quality and reliability is a critical intangible resource that shapes service quality delivery in Port Harcourt's food and beverage sector.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Food and beverage firms should consistently prioritize high product quality in terms of taste, presentation, and packaging to strengthen brand reputation and improve service timeliness.
2. Managers should invest in service efficiency tools such as order-tracking systems, automated point-of-sale systems, and customer feedback platforms to enhance operational coordination.
3. Firms should develop staff training programs to ensure reliability in fulfilling promises, correcting errors, and managing peak service periods effectively.
4. Entrepreneurs should adopt brand communication strategies that highlight both quality and reliability as part of their value propositions to customers.
5. Service timeliness should be built into performance evaluation metrics, with regular monitoring to ensure prompt order processing and delivery.

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