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Brand Equity and Customer Patronage of Electronic Products in Port Harcourt, Rivers State

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Abstract: *This study investigated the relationship between brand equity and customer patronage of electronic products in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. Brand equity was operationalized as perceived quality, perceived value and perceived price while customer patronage was measured by customer loyalty, referral and satisfaction. Using survey design, primary data were collected using a well-structured questionnaire which were administered to 500 respondents across two selected major electronic companies in Port Harcourt while simple linear regression was employed to test three hypotheses at a 5% level of significance. The findings revealed that a statistically significant relationship exist between perceived quality and customer loyalty and as well indicated a positive relationship between perceived value and customer referrals for electronic products in Rivers State. Additionally, the results showed that perceived price serves as a major determinant of customer satisfaction in electronic product purchases. The study concluded that brand equity plays a dominant role in explaining consumer satisfaction and serves as a strong mechanism for driving customer patronage. Based on these findings, it is recommended that Organizations should adopt or integrate quality, value and fair pricing strategies into their customer-retention strategies as this will help to promote loyalty, referrals, satisfaction and sustained customer patronage. Furthermore, firms should reward customer loyalty and referrals through special incentives such as trade discounts, while leveraging on social media to build and reinforce a strong brand image in the minds of consumers.*

Keywords: brand equity; customer patronage; loyalty, perceived quality; and customer satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

Electronic products have become essential to modern living as it enhances both daily routines and overall comfort. Every organization, industry, firm and home needs electronics products to

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function effectively and efficiently. Customer loyalty of electronics products becomes imperative as it is a support to life existence (Cedere, Corrocher & Battaglia, 2014).

Keller (1993) implied that brand equity enables the customer to make distinctions between their preferred brand and others, and this influences how he or she responds to marketing of the brand. Andi (2016) opined that brand equity is a set of components that add to, or subtract from, the value provided by a product or service to both the firm and its customers. These sets of components include perceived quality, perceived value and perceived price. To manage brands properly, Andi emphasized that marketers need to clearly comprehend the value and aspects of their brands in terms of what makes them tick and what they are worth, as well as how they will measure and conduct valuation of brand equity at customer, product and financial levels. Aker (2012) highlighted that most brand equity studies have been done for two main reasons; one being the financial aspect, and the other for strategic motivation and improvement of marketing productivity. Although the need for marketers to gain a better understanding of brand equity in terms of consumer behavior has not been studied properly.

Consumer patronage is demonstrated when individuals, customers, firms, organizations, etc. are loyal to a particular product and service (Andi, 2016). Survival of firms largely relies on in-depth understanding of the consumer. Given the current competitive business environment, manufacturers and retailers have been forced to produce goods with the customer needs in mind.

Statement of the Problem

Brands suffering from a regular identity find it difficult to survive in the rigid market competition. Due to the fast growth in the global electronics market and increasing competition, management of brands has become of importance. Building strong brand equity is the top priority of many electronic companies, but attaining this objective is not always an easy task due to the fact that the products and services of many electronic companies are similar and their means of distribution are alike. Price in the form of discount and brand equity is the only possible means by which customers can differentiate one brand from another. Price promotion has been one of the most important marketing strategies relied upon by most electronics companies and which leads to a constant war price that has reduced revenue and weakened customers' loyalty.

It becomes a problem when the product cannot gain market acceptability and penetration. Presently, there is no much concept or methodology available which has thoroughly measured the brand differentiation amongst the competing brands. Hence, the need for this present research on the relationship between brand equity and customer patronage of electronic products in Rivers State has become imminent. Hence, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

i. Is there any relationship between perceived quality and customer loyalty of electronic products in Port Harcourt, Rivers State?

ii. Does perceived value has any relationship with customer referral of electronic products in Port Harcourt, Rivers State?

iii. To what extent does perceived price relates to customer satisfaction of electronic products in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Conceptual Review

Concept of Brand Equity

Aaker (1996) defines brand equity as a combination of assets and liabilities linked to a brand's name and symbol, which can enhance or diminish the value provided by a product or service. Aaker (2014) emphasizes that brands should be treated as strategic assets, as their equity directly influences overall business performance. Key components of brand equity include perceived quality, perceived value, and price. Perceived quality reflects a customer's judgment of a brand's overall superiority relative to its purpose and alternatives (Hsu et al., 2012). Zeithaml (1988) notes that product quality is judged based on its relative excellence within a consumer's evoked set. High perceived quality strengthens brand equity by increasing customer satisfaction and offering compelling reasons to buy (Al-Hawari, 2011).

Furthermore, perceived value represents the trade-off between what customers give up and what they receive (Zeithaml, 1988). Holbrook (1999) similarly describes value as a balance between benefits and sacrifices, while Banu (2015) asserts that value stems from the interaction between quality and satisfaction. Value can manifest in emotional or social forms, with emotional value holding a strong link to customer satisfaction (Ashraf, 2013). Finally, perceived price refers to the subjective sacrifice a customer makes to acquire a product (Zeithaml, 1988). Consumers rarely remember exact prices; instead, they encode them subjectively as "expensive" or "cheap" (Zeithaml, 1988). While classical economic definitions restrict price strictly to monetary terms (Agarwal & Teas, 2001; Korda & Snoj, 2007), consumer perceptions often extend beyond objective costs.

Concept of Customer Patronage

Customer patronage refers to the extent to which a purchasing unit consistently concentrates its transactions on a specific brand within a service category over time, driven by positive reinforcement and repeated purchasing behavior (Oliver, 1997). Gaining strong customer patronage serves as a foundation for securing and expanding market share. High-risk-averse consumers often remain loyal to familiar, satisfactory brands to minimize purchase risks rather than experimenting with untried alternatives (BusinessWeek, 2001). Oliver (1997) notes that enhancing customer satisfaction is essential for securing patronage, measuring the concept through three core dimensions: loyalty, referrals, and satisfaction.

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Customer loyalty represents a deeply held commitment to repurchase a preferred brand consistently, despite competitive marketing efforts designed to induce switching behavior (Oliver, 1997). Maintaining a loyal customer base provides significant market leverage and reduces marketing expenditures (Aaker, 1991). Consequently, higher retention rates and longer customer lifespans yield increased sales and profitability (Edvardsson et al., 2000). Furthermore, customer referrals often considered one of the oldest and most trusted marketing mechanisms involve leveraging word-of-mouth recommendations to attract prospective buyers (Berman, 2016). Buttle (1998) categorizes referrals into customer and non-customer groups, noting that customer-initiated referrals originate from current or past clients who experienced high satisfaction.

Finally, customer satisfaction reflects an individual's evaluation of product performance against their prior expectations (Kotler & Keller, 2012). Jahanshahi et al. (2011) expand on this by defining satisfaction as the outcome of perceived value within a relationship, where value is measured as service quality relative to price and acquisition costs. Ultimately, satisfaction reflects the overall alignment between a customer's cumulative experiences and their perception of the brand's offerings (Paul, 2010).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework shows the linkage between the predictor variable (Brand Equity) and criterion variable (Customer Patronage).

Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework showing the study variables

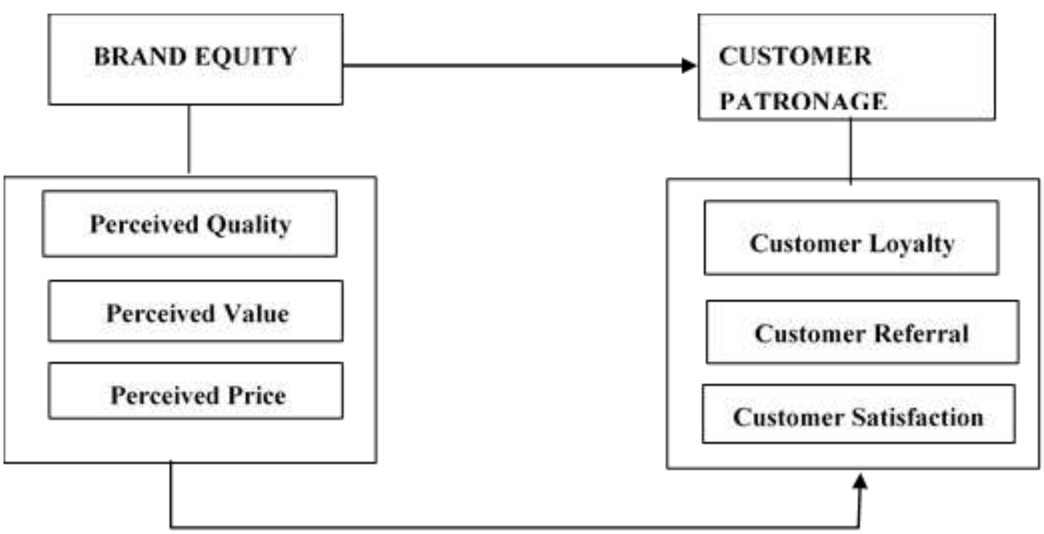

Fig 1.1: Conceptual framework of brand equity and customer patronage.
Source: Keller, (1993); Aaker & Joachimsthaler, (2000); Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, (2010).

Theoretical Review

The study was built on Equity Theory developed by Adams (1963)

Stacy Adams (1960s), in his Equity theory asserted that customer seek to maintain equity between the products and satisfaction accrued to consumption (Adams, 1963). Equity theory focuses on determining whether the distribution of resources is fair to both relational partners involved in the exchange. This theory holds that the value a company generates from a product with a recognizable name is equivalent and rationale to the consumer satisfaction of the product value when compared together. The company creates brand equity for their products by making them memorable, easily recognizable, and superior in quality and reliability so as to enhance sales volume and market share through increasing customer patronage.

Equity according to Adams (1963) is measured by comparing the ratio of contributions (or costs) and benefits (or rewards) derived from product consumption while the consumer repeated purchases comes as a result of satisfaction gained from the use of the products. Based on the assumption of this theory it is deduced that brand equity is equivalent to the consumer perceived quality, value and price which the consumer justifies to be fair and this according Adams (1963) can result to consumer repeated patronage due to reward which is obtained from the justified satisfaction. However, this patronage can as well be measured customer loyalty, referral and satisfaction, hence, inequalities in product satisfaction may lead to brand switching because of unhappiness in proportionality to money equivalent of the product (Gill, & Stone, 2010).

Empirical Review

Impact of Perceived Quality on Consumer Loyalty

A study conducted by Ndukwe-Tochi et al. (2026), investigated the relationship between perceived product quality and customer loyalty in the Home Meal Replacement (HMR) market in Lagos, Nigeria. The study adopted a quantitative approach and collected data from 412 urban consumers. The researchers employed Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) to examine the relationships among brand image, perceived product quality, and customer loyalty. Their findings revealed that perceived product quality has a significant positive influence on customer loyalty.

Madueke and Eyupoglu (2024) examined the role of e-service quality in fostering customer loyalty among Nigerian small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). using 492 respondents drawn online from the four major geographical regions of Nigeria. The study examined reliability, web design, trust, empathy, convenience and cultural inclusion as dimensions of e-service quality. The findings showed that the dimensions of service quality had significant positive effects on customer satisfaction, while customer satisfaction positively affected customer loyalty.

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Ojochide et al. (2023) analyzed e-service quality and customer loyalty in the e-commerce market in South-West Nigeria following the COVID-19 period. The study focused on the quality of electronic services provided by online businesses and its implications for customers' loyalty. They study adopted a quantitative approach and investigated consumers within the South-West Nigerian e-commerce environment. Their findings also demonstrated that e-service quality is significantly important in developing customer loyalty in the Nigerian online marketplace.

Madumere, Uche, and Agu (2020) in their own study investigated the influence of perceived service quality on customer loyalty in Nigeria's road transport industry. They adopted quantitative survey design and obtained 318 valid responses from customers of organized road transport firms operating in South-Eastern Nigeria. Using the RATER service-quality model, the study examined reliability, tangibles and responsiveness as dimensions of perceived service quality. And based on their empirical analysis their findings showed that all three dimensions of perceived service quality were significant predictors of customer loyalty.

Perceived Value and Consumer Referral

Mahmood et al. (2024) investigated the influence of perceived value, service quality, consumer trust and product quality on electronic word-of-mouth and referral intention among fast-food consumers in Bahawalpur, Pakistan. The study made use of 400 students who were consumers of fast-food products, selected through convenience sampling. Regression analysis was employed to test the proposed relationships, while electronic word-of-mouth was examined as a possible mediator. Their analysis showed that perceived value has a positive significant influence on both electronic word-of-mouth and referral intention. It also demonstrated that the relationship between perceived value and referral intention is mediated by electronic word-of-mouth.

Another study conducted by Hamilton-Ibama and Lolia (2022), examined the relationship between customer perceived value and customer satisfaction among hotels in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. The study adopted a quantitative survey approach and obtained data from 142 respondents. Customer perceived value was examined through dimensions including core-product value and relationship value, while customer satisfaction was assessed using indicators such as repeat purchase and referral. Using Spearman Rank Order Correlation, the findings revealed a significant positive relationship between perceived value and customer-related behavioural outcomes. Specifically, core-product value showed a significant positive relationship with referral, while relationship value also demonstrated a very strong positive relationship with referral ($\rho = .966$, $p < .001$).

Stein and Ramaseshan (2015) also investigated customer referral behaviour and specifically examined how perceived value and service quality influence customers' willingness to refer a service provider to others. The researchers collected referral data from 441 customers of an Internet Service Provider using a two-wave research design. The study compared customers who had recently switched to the provider (switchers) with long-term customers (stayers). The findings showed that positive changes in perceived value significantly increased customer referral behaviour. Another study on airline passengers conducted by Sadeghi et'al (2015) examined perceived value as one of the determinants of word-of-mouth and referral intention. The researchers made use of 296 passengers who had used Iran Airline Company's services and also confirmatory factor analysis, Pearson correlation and structural equation modelling were all employed for data analysis. The findings revealed that perceived value has a significant positive effect on word-of-mouth. The study further found that word-of-mouth influenced consumers' referral intentions.

Perceived Price on Consumer Satisfaction

Omoera and Rahim (2019) investigated the relationship between perceived price fairness and customer satisfaction in the Nigerian mobile telecommunication industry. Using a multistage sampling technique, the researchers obtained a sample of 610 respondents. Using Pearson Product Moment Correlation, simple regression and ANOVA, the study revealed a positive relationship between perceived price fairness and customer satisfaction ($R = .451$, $p < .001$). The study therefore established that when subscribers perceive the prices charged by telecommunications providers as fair and reasonable, they are more likely to experience satisfaction with the service.

A similar study conducted on Nigerian telecommunication industry by Ogungbade (2021) examined the influence of price perception, alongside service quality, brand image and value offer, on customer satisfaction using 81 prepaid mobile subscribers' which were drawn from customers of four major telecommunications operators in Nigeria. The data were analyzed using regression analysis which showed that price perception was a significant independent predictor of customer satisfaction ($\beta = .315$, $t = 2.457$, $p < .05$). The predictors jointly explained 24.7% of the variance in customer satisfaction. The finding also indicates that customers' perceptions of the prices they pay can significantly influence their satisfaction with telecommunications services.

Valentino and Fitriyah (2023) examined the effect of perceived price and perceived service quality on customer satisfaction among customers of Furqon Trans, a car-rental service in Sidoarjo, Indonesia. The study adopted a quantitative research design and obtained data from 85 customers who had used the service at least twice and were above 18 years of age. Data were collected using questionnaires and analysed using Partial Least Squares (PLS). The findings showed that both perceived service quality and perceived price had a positive effect on customer satisfaction. Similarly, Pritami and Surono (2024) investigated the influence of perceived price, product quality and service quality on customer satisfaction among guests of DoubleTree by Hilton Jakarta Diponegoro. Using 100 hotel guests who had stayed at the hotel more than once and also employing Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) in analysing the data, the findings showed that perceived price had a significant positive effect on customer satisfaction, alongside service quality. Meanwhile, Sujana and Yusni (2024) established that favourable price

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perceptions significantly enhanced customer satisfaction, which subsequently contributed to customer loyalty.

Collectively, these empirical findings above suggest that brand equity as measured by perceived quality, value, and price influences customer patronage customers. However, none of these studies considered customer loyalty, referral and satisfaction as a measure of customer patronage nor where conducted using tangible product retail shops like an electronic shop outlet which has a large competitive market structure and this constitutes the gap upon which this study seeks to cover.

In line with the above, the following hypotheses has been formulated to guild this study:

i. There will be a significant relationship between perceived quality and customer loyalty of electronic products in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.
ii. There will be a significant relationship between perceived value and customer referral of electronic products in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.
iii. There will be a significant relationship between perceived price and customer satisfaction of electronic products in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

METHODS

In other to identify the relationship between these variables, survey research design was adopted and applying consensus techniques, this study made use of the total population of 500 employees as the study participants, the participants comprises of all the employees of the two selected major electronic companies in Port-Harcourt metropolis. Meanwhile, a 21-item structured questionnaire was used to obtain data from the respondents. The questionnaire was rated on a four (4) points Liker type scale (Strongly Agree= 4, Agree = 3, Disagree = 2 and Strongly Disagree=l) which was used to measure both the components of brand equity (perceived quality, perceived value and perceived price) and that of consumer patronage (customer loyalty, customer referral, and customer satisfaction).

To maintain reliability and validity, a pilot study was conducted using half of the participants and a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.72 was obtained. However, the hypothesis will be tested using linear regressions analysis in other to determine the predictability and relationship between the variables.

ANALYSIS AND RESULT

Out of the 500 distributed questionnaires, 450 were completed and returned. Therefore 90% of the questionnaires were completed and returned. While 50 questionnaires which represent 10% were either returned or invalid. The 450 valid questionnaires will be utilized for this study.

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Table 1.1: linear regression showing the relationship between perceived quality and customer loyalty.

Model Summary[b]

					Change Statistics					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	Durbin-Watson
1	.785[a]	.616	.584	19.66677	.616	19.260	1	12	.001	2.567

a. Predictors: (Constant), Perceived_quality

b. Dependent Variable: Customer_loyalty

Interpretation: The results of linear regression in table 1.1 above revealed a correlation coefficient of r .785[a] and r^2 .616 are greater than 0.05 level of significance which indicates a significant relationship between perceived quality and customer loyalty. The F-change shows that test value of 57.069 is statistically significant. Based on this result, the hypothesis one (1) which states that "there will be a relationship between perceived quality and customer loyalty of electronic products in Rivers State" is accepted.

Table 1.2 linear regression analysis showing the relationship between perceived value and customer referral.

Model Summary[b]

					Change Statistics					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	Durbin-Watson
1	.833[a]	.693	.668	13.02008	.693	27.132	1	12	.000	2.402

a. Predictors: (Constant), Perceived_value

b. Dependent Variable: Customer_referral

Interpretation: The result in table 1.2 above indicated a correlation coefficient of r .833[a] and r^2 .693 which are greater than 0.05 level of significance. This result shows that there is a significant relationship between perceived value and customer referral. The F-change shows that test value of 27.132 is statistically significant. Based on the result, hypothesis two (2) which states that "there will be a relationship between perceived value and customer referral of electronic products in Rivers State" is accepted.

Table 1.3 linear regression analysis showing the relationship between perceived price and customer satisfaction

Model Summary[b]

					Change Statistics					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	Durbin-Watson
1	.916[a]	.840	.826	11.08563	.840	62.805	1	12	.000	1.704

a. Predictors: (Constant),Perceived_price

b. Dependent Variable: Customer_satisfaction

Interpretation: The result of the Linear regression analysis in table 1.3 above shows a correlation coefficient of r .916[a] and r^2 .840 which are greater than 0.05 level of significance. This indicates a significant relationship between perceived price and customer satisfaction. The F-change shows that test value of 62.805 is statistically significant. Based on the result, hypothesis three (3) which states that "there will be a relationship between perceived price and customer satisfaction of electronic products in Rivers State" is accepted.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis, it was discovered in **table 1.1** that there is a relationship between perceived quality and customer loyalty of electronic outlets in Port Harcourt, Rivers state. This result aligns with the findings of Ndukwe-Tochi et al. (2026), Madueke and Eyupoglu (2024), Ojochide et al. (2023) and Madumere, Uche, and Agu (2020) whom in their various studies showed an empirical evidence that perceived quality has a strong influence on consumer loyalty. This suggests that when consumers believe a product is of high quality, they more likely to maintain relationship with the provider which, can lead to increase in patronage.

Meanwhile, table 1.2 also indicated that perceived quality is highly correlated with customer referral. This finding is also supported by the works of Mahmood et al. (2024), Hamilton-Ibama and Lolia (2022), Stein and Ramaseshan (2015) and Sadeghi et'al (2015) Whom in their different findings concluded that a strong relationship exists between perceived value customers and customer referral. This suggests that customers who perceive that the value, and overall utility obtained from a product is worth the cost are more likely to talk positively about the provider and recommend it to other potential customers.

However, table 1.3 also indicates a significant relationship between perceived price and customer satisfaction which is also in consistent with the works of Omoera and Rahim (2019), Ogungbade (2021), Valentino and Fitriyah (2023), Pritami and Surono (2024) and Sujana and Yusni (2024) whom in their various studies identified that perceived price plays a role in determining customer satisfaction. This indicates that customers are more likely to be satisfied when they perceive that the price paid for a product is fair, reasonable and equivalent with the utility received from the product. Therefore, this study concludes that measures of brand equity have a positive impact on all aspects of customer patronage of electronic products.

Recommendation

In line with the conclusion of this study, the following recommendations are made;

i. Organizations should maintain high standards of product and service quality by ensuring reliability, durability and consistent performance, as this approach may strengthen customer loyalty.
ii. Businesses should focus on improving the value offer to customers by providing products and services that adequately meet their needs and expectations, thereby encouraging satisfied customers to refer others or talk positively about the business.
iii. Organizations should adopt or integrate quality, value and fair pricing strategies into their customer-retention strategies as this will help to promote loyalty, referrals, satisfaction and sustained customer patronage.
iv. Management should regularly collect customer feedback from customers regarding their product quality, value and pricing in other to identify areas for improvement and address customer concern.

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