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Competitive Positioning on Customer Satisfaction of Fast-Food Firms in Rivers State

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***Abstract**: This study investigated the impact of competitive positioning on customer satisfaction of Fast-food Firms in Rivers State. The objectives of the study were to ascertain the extent to which competitive positioning impacts on customer loyalty and customer retention. The study adopted a cross sectional research design particularly the explanatory design to ascertain the impact of competitive positioning on customer satisfaction. The population of the study comprised 79 fast-food firms that are registered with Rivers State Ministry of Commerce and Industry. All the 79 fast-food firms were studied and 195 respondents from the firms comprising (i) branch managers (ii) marketing managers and (iii) general managers provided primary data for this study through a questionnaire designed in Likert 5-point scale of Very High Extent to Very Low Extent. The reliability of the study instrument was determined through Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Test, and two null hypotheses were tested using Regression Analysis with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 22.0. From results of the analysis, it was revealed that competitive positioning has a strong and positive impact on customer loyalty of Fast-food Firms in Rivers State. Similarly, the study showed that competitive positioning has a moderate and positive impact on customer retention of Fast-food Firms in Rivers State. Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that competitive positioning impacts positively on customer satisfaction of Fast-food Firms in Rivers State. Therefore, it was recommended that Fast-food Firms in Rivers State should have in-depth knowledge of their target markets, competitors, and own businesses to enable them to design and implement strong positioning strategies. Again, they should develop and implement positioning strategies that will give their products the greatest advantage in selected target markets so as to improve the satisfaction of their customers.*

***Keywords**: competitive positioning, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, customer retention.*

INTRODUCTION

The nature of the modern environment exposes consumers to enormous amounts of information. Therefore, to create value and stand out from the crowded marketplace, marketers must give their brands meaning and relevance by creating a 'position' in the mind of the consumer (Schiffman, O'Cass, Paladino & Carlson, 2014). Positioning is not about the product but what the buyer thinks about the product or organisation. This emphasises both the significance and the subjectivity of the concept. Bronwyn (2017) observes that there has been much literature written on the topic because the idea means different things to different people.

While theorists have broken the concept down into baseline features, all of these strategies rely on the consumer perception and the symbolic values placed on products and brands. Theorists accept that consumers prefer products that are congruent with their own self-image and reject products that are not. For this reason, the image or position a product has in the mind of the consumer is more important to success than the product itself (Jamal & Goode, 2001). As a result, the determination of a positioning strategy is crucial to the success and financial value of the brand (Aaker, 2012). Some brand positioning strategies include umbrella or corporate positioning, positioning against competitors, positioning by attribute, positioning by price-quality, by filling several positions and use of packaging (Schiffman et al., 2014). Brand positioning requires continual monitoring and adjustment of strategies as the marketplace evolves (Aaker, 2012).

As commonly defined, brand is “a product or service which a customer perceives to have distinctive benefits beyond price and functional performance” (Knox & Bickerton, 2003, p.999). These intangible qualities are communicated by marketers via brand positioning techniques. The brand-positioning concept is particularly important in today’s crowded marketplace where a multitude of brands compete for attention (Bronwyn, 2017). A consumer is only capable of receiving a limited amount of information therefore, marketers can use positioning to simplify the brand message and create meaning for the consumer (Schiffman et al., 2014). When used successfully, positioning is a powerful tool that is more effective than the characteristics of the actual product itself (Schiffman et al., 2014). This concept relies on the application of Maslow’s needs hierarchy and the notion that a need is never ever fully satisfied (Kapferer, 2008).

Thus, by stressing the attributes of their products, marketers can move beyond the utilitarian values of the product and address consumer needs using behavioural concepts such as imagery, symbolic value and self-concept to create a desired representation of a service or product in the mind of the consumer (Bronwyn, 2017). These techniques are important to the success of a brand because consumers evaluate the relevance of brands by comparing them with the consistency of their self-image, purchasing brands that are congruent with this image and avoiding brands that are not (Schiffman et al., 2014).

A brand creates a successful position in the market and results in a devoted loyal following when an organisation relies on several strategies. An overall corporate brand is an important marketing strategy because a positive company brand image can result in a positive impact on brand extensions and new products (Bronwyn, 2017). According to Aaker (2012), marketers should focus on the emotional and self-expressive benefits of a brand by introducing the brand as an organisation, a person, and a symbol. Thus, organisations appeal to the consumer by providing validation, namely, that it is acceptable to be different, feeding the need for uniqueness (Schiffman et al., 2014).

This position provides a deeper connection by leaving the consumer to complete the message subjectively and creating a corporate image of innovation and individualism. Bronwyn (2017) observes that the traditional notion of absolute positioning is no longer appropriate in today’s marketplace and that conditional positioning is more relevant. Conditional positioning allows the consumer to define the marketplace and supports current trends towards pull marketing strategies. It allows the company to send direct memorable messages, which subjectively reinforces the consumer centricity and originality of the company to the consumer. Strong corporate position also affects consumer perceptual interpretation by creating a halo effect (Schiffman et al., 2014).

This is important to marketers because a consumer will appraise multiple objects based on the evaluation of one appealing dimension. Using this concept, marketers can build on brand reputation and extend brand association to products or brand lines (Schiffman et al., 2014). In view of the above, this study examined the impact of competitive brand positioning on customer satisfaction of fast-food firms in Rivers State. The study is conceptualised in a framework and underpinned by brand personality theory.

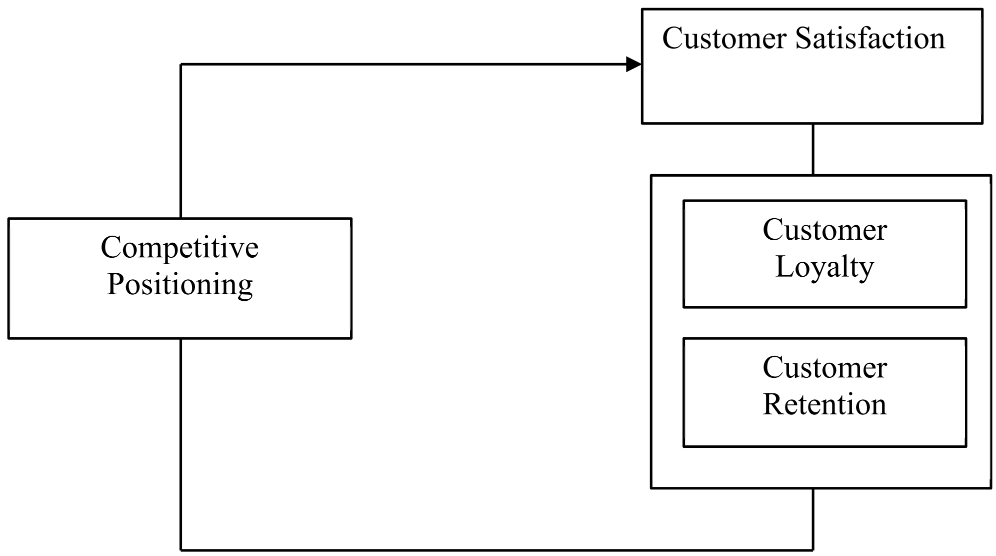

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Impact of the Impact of Competitive Positioning on Customer Satisfaction of Fast-food Firms in Rivers State.

Source: Natasha, S., (2019). Positioning – A literature review. *PSU Research Review, 5* (2), 141-169.

Macro, G.V. (2008). *Measuring customer satisfaction in a service company combining approaches for quality service improvement* (Published Thesis). Javier Santamaría García Department of Terotechnology.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION - BRAND PERSONALITY THEORY

This study is founded on brand personality theory. The most widely used brand personality theory used in marketing was developed by Jennifer Aaker in 1997. Human personality is the theoretical basis for brand personality (Gary, José, Whelan, Mete & Loo, 2018). Aaker developed a theoretical framework of the brand personality construct by determining the number and nature of dimensions of brand personality. The dimensions which are personality are; sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness (Evan, 2021). Thus, the term brand personality refers to a set of human characteristics that are attributed to a brand name. An effective brand increases its equity by having a consistent set of traits that a specific consumer segment enjoys. This personality is a qualitative value-add that a brand gains in addition to its functional benefits. As such, a brand personality is something to which the consumer can relate.

The brand personality theory is centred on how the business stakeholders; customers, suppliers, distributors, community etc perceive the brand. The brand therefore, should build a good personality in order to evoke positive perception “in the minds of customers and other stakeholders.” This theory also touches on the character of the brand (Kotler & Keller, 2012). Hence, brands are expected to build quality reputations for better perceptional management in the eyes of stakeholders. Customers are more likely to purchase a brand if its personality is similar to their own (Evan, 2021). A brand with a superior personality image will enjoy customer patronage and competitive advantages in the markets.

Brand personality is a framework that helps a company or organisation shape the way people feel about its product, service, or mission. A company's brand personality elicits an emotional response in a specific consumer segment, with the intention of inciting positive actions that benefit the firm (Evan, 2021). Brand personality theory helps organisations to effectively manage image and reputation challenges as brand personality touches on the character of the brand, and how firms can build outstanding and long-lasting character. Hence, the character of a brand is very important to the effect that people like associating with institutions and individuals with outstanding character, reputation, and integrity. Conversely, a brand that lacks a positive image, character, and reputation will always lose friendship and association with the business stakeholders; customers, suppliers and distributors, community, government, and other stakeholders.

The baseline theory of brand personality serves as a building block for the development of corporate brand strategy. Brand strategy is built around value, outstanding identity, and good personality. All these intangible attributes of brand strategy development are laudable in driving consumer perceptions and emotions. Therefore, this theory is appropriate in providing underpinning to this study.

COMPETITIVE POSITIONING

Competitive positioning is a strategy that defines how a business establishes and maintains a competitive advantage. There are many ways to get a competitive advantage in the marketplace, and many businesses will focus on a few tried and true methods of gaining a leg up on the competition. These methods can be classified into four different categories which form the basis for understanding how businesses try to compete. The four primary methods of gaining a competitive advantage are cost leadership, differentiation, defensive strategies, and strategic alliances (Jared, 2019).

Competitive brand positioning references who the organisation is selling to, what the business scope is, and what the company does to create value for its customers. It drives the business strategy and operating plan (Yohn, 2011). It is difficult to see any business that does compete with something; either it will compete with another company, a changing market, or an emerging technology, etc. And to effectively compete, it must understand what it is competing against, and how best to position its brand to leverage its strengths and take advantage of market opportunities. A product’s position is the way the product is defined by consumers on important attributes—the place the product occupies in consumers’ minds relative to competing products. Products are made in factories, but brands happen in the minds of consumers. Consumers are overloaded with information about products and services. They cannot re-evaluate products every time they make a buying decision. To simplify the buying process, consumers organise products, services, and companies into categories and "position" them in their minds. A product's position is the complex set of perceptions, impressions, and feelings that consumers have for the product compared with competing products. Consumers position products with or without the help of marketers. However, marketers do not want to leave their products' positions to chance. They must plan positions that will give their products the greatest advantage in selected target markets, and they must design marketing mixes to create these planned positions (Kotler & Armstrong, 2008).

Without a competitive brand positioning, the company's brand might only remain a conceptual vision or a set of cultural values that sound great but do not really make a difference in the marketplace. A meaningful, powerful, and valuable brand is based on a clear, crisp articulation of the company's competitive strategy (Yohn, 2011). For an organisation to develop a competitive brand positioning, it must have in-depth knowledge of its target, competitors, and own business, to enable it to define a strong positioning. It is necessary to engage in rigorous market research and competitive intelligence to uncover new insights and develop a proprietary point of view about the market opportunities and competitive landscape. The company also needs a fresh and objective assessment and analysis of its own capabilities, resources, and assets.

There are three primary ways by which a company can create competitive value for its products. Each of them focuses on a specific aspect of customer interest to appeal to their audience and increase sales. They are operational excellence, product leadership, and customer relationship (Hyams, 2021). When an organisation uses operational excellence to add competitive value to its company, it means the company provides a high volume of products at a low cost while maintaining satisfactory quality. To achieve this, the company's management may focus on manufacturing more efficiently to produce a lot of goods they can sell quickly. Often, this means the products are necessary items that rarely require changes to their design, like hairbrushes or silverware.

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Customer satisfaction is the extent to which a product's perceived performance matches a buyer's expectations (Kotler & Armstrong, 2008). It can also be defined as a measurement that determines how happy customers are with a company's products, services, and capabilities. It is a measurement that determines how products or services provided by a company meet customer expectations (Smaby, 2021). It is the consumer's subjective evaluation of the consequences and experiences associated with using a product. It is also seen as a measure of how the product and service a firm provides meets or exceeds customer expectations. Customer satisfaction can also constitute a higher barrier against switching from a particular service provider to another competitor. The key benefits of customer satisfaction include loyalty, as loyal customers can create a steady stream of future cash flow for a firm.

Satisfaction is determined by expectations before purchase is made and the performance of the product/service after purchase; the pre-purchase expectation held might be conscious, active or subconscious, passive expectations. Customer satisfaction is the measure of the way a firm's product matches or exceeds customer expectations. Customer satisfaction is important to measure because of its significant impact on firms' long-term performance and also customer purchasing behaviours; and in academics, consistently providing high customer satisfaction is well acknowledged by other factors other than customer satisfaction that form customer loyalty and retention such as personal determinism and social factors. Satisfaction plays a vital role in marketing because it is a good predictor of purchase behaviour (Anyaogu, 2019).

The fact that customers share their displeasure does not only mean they are sharing their pains: they are teaching the organisation how to make its product, service, and business better. The main focus of every customer-oriented organisation is to satisfy its customers. Hence, customer service organisations should be designed so that issues about customers can be effectively communicated and addressed (Smaby, 2021). Kahan (2021) notes that customer satisfaction information, including surveys and ratings, can help a company determine how to best improve or change its products and services. This data can reveal major insights into how customers relate to the firm or products and how they will interact with the firm in the future.

Therefore, it is important to satisfy customers. Great customer satisfaction and high customer retention are strongly linked. Customer retention powers sales and helps businesses maintain sustainability. While metrics like sales and shares show important details on how well a company is performing at a specific time, customer satisfaction scores are one of the best indicators to reveal how a company will perform in the future. Kahan (2021) identifies some specific areas in which customer satisfaction surveys can help businesses. They are; helping the firm to identify unsatisfied customers, happy customers, make forecasts and the firm to prioritise areas of operations, empower internal processes, attract new leads, improve sales and guide product updates. In this study, customer satisfaction is measured in terms of customer loyalty and retention.

Customer Loyalty

Customer loyalty is the act of choosing one company's products and services consistently over their competitors. Customer loyalty is defined as the strength of the relationship between an individual's relative attitude towards an entity (brand, service, store, or vendor) and repeat patronage. It is the strength of the relationship between an individual's relative attitude and re-patronage. It is the continual relationship between deposit money banks and their customers. Customer loyalty is the result of a company consistently meeting and exceeding customer expectations. A loyal customer is that customer who purchases from the same service provider continuously and recommends the service provider to other people; or maintains a positive attitude toward the service provider. Positive attitude towards customers and provision of quality service enhance satisfaction, which leads to close and successful relationships.

According to Berry (2002) if it is admitted that it is more profitable to hold on to existing customers than winning new customers the firm will try to achieve the satisfaction of their existing customers by providing them incentives such as discounts, free products, or fidelity cards. These loyalty programs are structured marketing efforts that reward and therefore encourage loyal behaviour; and customers should show changes in repeat purchase loyalty which is not evident amongst non-program members (Imran, Muhammad, Muhammad & Noor, 2011). Imran et al. (2011) further posit that the influence of satisfaction on customer loyalty is rather complex. Supporting this, Fisher (2001) posits that customer satisfaction contributes only part of why consumers switch from one product or service provider to another.

Thus, a firm can introduce a reward scheme for customers. A reward system for the most loyal customers is a great way to keep them coming back. The simplest and probably the most popular loyalty programs use a point system, that is, customers earn loyalty points every time they buy from the brand. Then, these points, when accumulated, earn them a reward, e.g., discounts, special client treatment, freebies, etc. Another type of loyalty program is a card-based system where customers get rewarded for loading up and spending money through the card. With a loyalty program that rewards customers - with monetary or non-monetary gifts, people will feel compelled to keep coming back. Rozenshtraus-Makarov (2021) further states that, when a customer is loyal to a specific brand, they are not easily influenced by availability or pricing. They are willing to pay more as long as they get the same quality product or service, they are familiar with and love.

Customer Retention

The concept of customer retention is rooted in planned behaviour theory, and it is something that consumers may exhibit to brands, services, and products or activities. Berry (2002) posits that customer retention has experienced various interpretations to the extent that nobody has been able to give a generally accepted definition of the concept and its dimensions. In other words, several scholars have defined it differently. In this regard, it is a decision to maintain business transactions or exchanges with a particular service provider on an ongoing basis. Similarly, Boohene, Agyapong, and Gonu (2013) define customer retention as a long-term commitment on the part of the customer and the firm to maintain the relationship. It is the decision of a customer to maintain an exchange relationship with a particular service provider or an organisation for a long time. It is the customer's continuous patronage of a business.

Boohene et al. (2013) also describe it as a customer's liking, identification, commitment, trust, and willingness to recommend and repurchase intentions, with the first four being emotional-cognitive retention constructs and the last two being behavioural intentions. Customer retention can also be defined as maintaining long-term exchange relationships with existing customers and preventing them from going to a competitor. It is closely related to repeat purchase, loyalty, and repeat patronage. The term customer retention in literature is often used interchangeably with customer loyalty and further clarification should be made in the conceptualization of customer retention. That is to say, the two constructs refer to different things and so they are not surrogates of each other.

But anyhow customer retention is conceptualised; its significance is anchored on its ability to determine the firm's profitability, growth, and long-term survival. Boohene et al. (2013) posit that customer retention brings benefits such as employee retention and satisfaction, better service, lower cost, lower price sensitivity, positive word-of-mouth, higher market share, higher efficiency, and higher productivity. More so, through customer retention firms can protect themselves from market shrinkage that may result from a contracting economy. Losing a customer means more than losing a single sale; rather it means losing the entire stream of purchases that the customer would make throughout his lifetime of buying that product (Kotler & Armstrong, 2008).

In the fast-food industry, customers can easily switch from one service provider to another because restaurants offer nearly identical services. In other words, the fast-food industry is not highly diversified in terms of the products and services they offer. This carries the danger of creating a situation where firms fight for customers using all kinds of unethical strategies. Also, with the upsurge in the setting up of restaurants, the ability to maintain effectiveness, especially by retaining customers remains one of the greatest tasks for fast food restaurants. Considering the foregoing, upscale dining restaurants in Port Harcourt can only survive, compete effectively, and protect their market share if they take all necessary steps to retain customers.

As such, strategies towards customer retention are vitally important for firms especially when loyalty is decreasing as a result of the bewildering number of fast-food restaurants that face consumers, and in such cases, losing an important customer to a competitor may impact significantly on the firm's profitability, survival and growth (Walsh, Dinnie & Wiedmann, 2006). Fast food restaurants are thus challenged to focus their marketing activities on customer management and to minimise the defection of customers to competitors. Especially in the service marketing literature, customer retention (or its inverse, switching) is considered a central theme of the relationship marketing concept (Walsh et al., 2006).

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Ntsiful (2016) investigated the effect of brand positioning on customer loyalty in the Ghanaian universal banking sector. The main objectives of the study were to assess the effects of brand positioning dimensions on customer loyalty, and also to examine the effect of switching costs on the relationship between brand positioning dimensions and customer loyalty in the Ghanaian banking sector. Data were collected using questionnaires from 272 customers of universal banks within the Greater Accra Metropolis. The study found that price, trust, and core service as the brand positioning dimensions had significant positive effects on customer loyalty. Core service was found to be the most important influence of customer loyalty, followed by trust and price in the sector. Similarly, the study revealed that some universal bank customers are loyal to their banks because of high switching costs and not because they are satisfied with the banks' performance.

Correia, Sarmento, and Berllego (2017) investigated the effect of corporate brand reputation on brand attachment and brand loyalty. It was revealed that the perception of corporate brand reputation is more effective in enhancing brand loyalty than brand attachment. It was noted that the effect is mostly dependent on the brand strategy. Hence, brand strategy implemented by firms enhances brand emotional attachment and brand loyalty. In the same vein, Amic (2017), through an exploratory study investigated emotional branding strategy on consumer emotional attachment; Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to measure the relationship between the variables; and it was discovered that emotional brand management improves the emotional connections of clients with brands. Thus, effective brand management helps to develop consumer emotional ties with brands.

Akgun, Kocoglu, and Imamoglu (2013) studied the effect of emotional branding on consumer experience. Emotional branding strategy execution helps enhance strong brand attachment for the consumers; regression analysis was used to analyse the data; and it was found that the emotional branding strategy of a firm helps improve consumer emotional bonding with the brand. Khan et al (2016) studied the nexus between corporate branding, emotional attachment, and brand loyalty in the context-specific of luxury fashion branding. It was discovered that corporate branding impacts brand loyalty through the mediating influence of emotional attachment in the luxury fashion market. Thus, corporate branding efforts have a role in building customer emotional attachment and loyalty toward luxury brands.

Balmer (2001) studied the relationship between corporate identity, corporate branding, and corporate marketing on consumer emotional attachment and brand attachment; the least square method was used to analyse the data; and it was found that corporate identity influences brand attachment. Again, corporate branding influences the emotions of consumers and creates brand loyalty. Hence, branding strategies of differentiation and brand positioning strategy also help in driving consumer emotional attachment. Thus, corporate identity affects both the cognitive and affective or emotional perceptions of the markets and helps influence brand emotional attachment. Therefore, the brand identity construct positively influences the brand's emotional bonding with consumers.

Viachos (2012) studied the determinants and outcomes of brand attachment. The study revealed that brand attachment is a function of self-congruity, experiences, responsiveness, quality, reputation, and trust. These are the strong determinant factors of brand attachment. Hence, these variables are laudable predictors of consumer emotional attachment. It is important that companies reinforce these determinant variables for customers to be continuously attached emotionally to their brands (Viachos, 2012). Hence, organisational band success can be enhanced by the consumer brand attachment. In the same vein, Thomson (2005) studied brand strategies and consumer emotional attachments; regression analysis was used to analyse the data and it was discovered that brand management leads to consumer emotional attachment.

Karaosmanoglu, Melewar, and Paterson (2005) investigated the contribution of the corporate identity construct; using regression analysis to measure the influence of corporate identity, and it was found that corporate identity is a source of competitive advantage as customers are made to identify with all aspects of the company brand not only the firm's product services. Corporate identity helps enhance customer bonding with the company and its brands. Thus, when making buying decisions, clients are mostly concerned with the firm character and reputation which are laudable characteristics of the brand identity construct (Balmer, 2001). Hence, corporate identity management such as building the character and integrity of the brand helps drive consumer emotions.

Perez and Basque (2015) studied the association between corporate identity and brand attachment; Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to measure the relationship between the variables; and it was revealed that corporate identity has a significant association with brand attachment, corporate identity particularly; the sub-variable of reputation influences the emotional attachment of clients. It is, therefore, imperative for organisations to develop strategies for emotional branding; and manage brands to positively influence consumer emotions. In view of the findings above, it can be stated that the application of competitive positioning will improve customer satisfaction of fast-food firms in Rivers State. However, the following null hypotheses are stated:

H_{01}**:** Competitive positioning does not significantly impact customer loyalty of Fast-Food Firms in Rivers State.

H_{02}**:** Competitive positioning does not significantly impact on customer retention of Fast-Food Firms in Rivers State

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a cross sectional research design particularly the explanatory design to ascertain the impact of competitive positioning on customer satisfaction. The population of this study consists of 79 Fast-food firms that are registered with the Rivers State Ministry of Commerce and Industry. All the elements in the population were studied and 195 respondents comprising (i) branch managers (ii) marketing managers and (iii) general managers provided primary data for this study through a questionnaire designed in a Likert 5-point scale of Very High Extent to Very Low Extent (Very High Extent = 5, High Extent = 4, Moderate Extent = 3, Low Extent = 4, Very Low Extent = 1). The reliability of the study instrument was determined through Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Test, and two null hypotheses were tested using Regression Analysis with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 22.0. The Tables below show the results of the reliability test and the hypotheses tested.

Table 1: Reliability Analysis

S/N	Variables	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients
1	Competitive Positioning	4	0.978
2	Customer Loyalty	4	0.925
3	Customer Retention	4	0.920

Source: SPSS Output form Survey Research

The reliability analysis of the research in instruments is shown in Table 1. As indicated in the Table, all the variables in the study instrument have high Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients that are greater than the minimum acceptable level (0.70) set by Nunally (1978). This means that, if this study is carried out again in a similar context the results will produce similar results of this study.

Test Hypotheses

Table 2: Model Summary of the Impact of Competitive Positioning on Customer Loyalty of Fast-Food Firms in Rivers State

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.709[a]	.502	.499	2.882

a. Predictors: (Constant), Competitive Positioning

Source: SPSS output from field data

From results of the analysis shown in Table 2, the regression coefficient (R) is 0.709.This means that Competitive Positioning has a strong and positive impact on Customer Loyalty of Fast-Food Firms in Rivers State. Again, the coefficient of determination (R Square) is 0.502; indicating that approximately 50% of the changes in the criterion variable - Customer Loyalty are accounted for by Competitive Positioning while the remaining 50% are due to external factors not included in the model.

Table 3: ANOVA[a] of the Impact of Competitive Positioning on Customer Loyalty of Fast-Food Firms in Rivers State

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1615.974	1	1615.974	194.553	.000[b]
	Residual	1603.072	193	8.306		
	Total	3219.046	194			

a. Dependent Variable: Customer Loyalty
b. Predictors: (Constant), Competitive Positioning

Source: SPSS output from field data

From results of the analysis in Table 3, it is shown that Competitive Positioning significantly predicts Customer Loyalty at $F(1, 193) = 194.553$, $p < 0.05$, R Square = 0.502. This means the regression model is a good fit for the data.

Table 4: Coefficients[a] of the Impact of Competitive Positioning on Customer Loyalty of Fast-Food Firms in Rivers State

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	7.851	.669		11.741	.000
	Competitive Positioning	.562	.040	.709	13.948	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Customer Loyalty

Source: SPSS output from field data

In Table 4 the unstandardized coefficients indicate how much the dependent variable - customer loyalty varies with the independent variable - competitive positioning. As shown in the Table, 1 unit increase in competitive positioning will bring about a 0.562 unit increase in customer loyalty. Also, the probability value is 0.000 < 0.05 which means competitive positioning significantly predicts customer loyalty. Hence, we reject the null hypothesis which states that Competitive Positioning does not significantly impact customer loyalty of Fast-food Firms in Rivers State.

Table 5: Model Summary of the Impact of Competitive Positioning on Customer Retention of Fast-Food Firms in Rivers State

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.480[a]	.231	.227	3.623

a. Predictors: (Constant), Competitive Positioning

Source: SPSS output from field data

From results of the analysis shown in Table 5, the regression coefficient (R) is 0.480.This means that competitive positioning has a moderate and positive impact on customer retention of Fast-food Firms in Rivers State. Again, the coefficient of determination (R Square) is 0.231; indicating that approximately 23% of the changes in the criterion variable - customer retention are accounted for by competitive positioning while the remaining 77% are due to external factors not included in the model.

Table 6: ANOVA[a] of the Impact of Competitive Positioning on Customer Retention of Fast-Food Firms in Rivers State

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	759.282	1	759.282	57.839	.000[b]
	Residual	2533.590	193	13.127		
	Total	3292.872	194			

a. Dependent Variable: Customer Retention

b. Predictors: (Constant), Competitive Positioning

Source: SPSS output from field data

From the results of the analysis in Table 6, it is shown that competitive positioning significantly predicts customer retention at $F(1, 193) = 57.839$, $p < 0.05$, R Square = 0.231. This means the regression model is a good fit for the data.

Table 7: Coefficients[a] of the Impact of Competitive Positioning on Customer Retention of Fast-Food Firms in Rivers State

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	10.944	.841		13.018	.000
	Competitive Positioning	.385	.051	.480	7.605	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Customer Retention

Source: SPSS output from field data

In Table 7 the unstandardized coefficients indicate how much the dependent variable - customer retention varies with the independent variable - competitive positioning. As shown in the Table, 1 unit increase in competitive positioning will bring about a 0.385 unit increase in customer retention. Also, the probability value is 0.000 < 0.05 which means competitive positioning significantly predicts customer retention. Hence, we reject the null hypothesis which states that competitive positioning does not significantly impact customer retention of Fast-food Firms in Rivers State.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

From the results of the analysis, it was revealed that competitive positioning has a strong and positive impact on customer loyalty of Fast-food Firms in Rivers State. The analysis also showed that approximately 50% of the changes in the criterion variable - customer loyalty is accounted for by competitive positioning while the remaining 50% are due to external factors not included in the model. Similarly, the study showed that competitive positioning has a moderate and positive impact on customer retention of Fast-food Firms in Rivers State. Also, approximately 23% of the changes in the criterion variable - customer retention is accounted for by competitive positioning while the remaining 77% are due to external factors not included in the model.

These findings are consistent with the findings of previous studies examined. For example, the findings aligned with the findings of Ntsiful (2016) who investigated the effect of brand positioning on customer loyalty in the Ghanaian universal banking sector. These findings are also consistent with the findings of Akgun et al. (2013) who studied the effect of emotional branding on consumer experience. The findings of this study are also in line with the findings of Balmer (2001) who studied the relationship between corporate identity, corporate branding, and corporate marketing on consumer emotional attachment and brand attachment and found that corporate identity influences brand attachment. Viachos (2012) studied the determinants and outcomes of brand attachment. The study revealed that brand attachment is a function of self-congruity, experiences, responsiveness, quality, reputation, and trust.

The findings of this study are consistent with the findings of Karaosmanoglu et al. (2005) who investigated the contribution of the corporate identity construct; using regression analysis to measure the influence of corporate identity, and it was found that corporate identity is a source of competitive advantage as customers are made to identify with all aspects of the company brand not only the firm's product services. Perez and Basque (2015) studied the association between corporate identity and brand attachment; Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to measure the relationship between the variables; and it was revealed that corporate identity has a significant association with brand attachment and corporate identity.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study and those of previous studies examined, it was concluded that competitive positioning impacts positively on customer satisfaction of Fast-food Firms in Rivers State. Therefore, it was recommended that Fast-food Firms in Rivers State should have in-depth knowledge of their target markets, competitors, and own businesses to enable them to design and implement strong positioning strategies. Again, they should develop and implement positioning strategies that will give their products the greatest advantage in selected target markets.

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