



# Visual Marketing Strategies and Customers Engagement in Restaurant Businesses in Port Harcourt

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**Abstract:** *The saying that what the eyes sees greatly influences man's behavior and attitude towards his or her surroundings has proven to be true in various scenarios and situations. It has been discovered that mostly what attracts consumers to engage with a particular brand or business such as a restaurant is their emotions and feelings they develop through the five senses which majorly includes the eyes. Given to the fact that most restaurants businesses in Port Harcourt have closed down due to poor customer patronage caused by several factors which includes poor interior decor, poor neat atmosphere, store design and poor product arrangement. This study empirically examined the extent of relationship between visual marketing strategy and customers' engagement of restaurant business in Port Harcourt. The study adopted the quantitative research method which utilized a cross-sectional survey research design. The target population comprised of all the customers of 369 registered restaurants in Rivers State as listed in Rivers State Yellow Page Directory, and this population is an infinite population; hence we deployed the Godden (2004) infinite sampling technique which gave us a sample size of 384. Three hundred and seventy seven (377) copies of questionnaire out of the distributed 384 were valid and used for the study. The data collection instruments were validated through expert checking while Cronbach Alpha Test was used to check for its reliability. The study found that visual marketing strategy has significant positive relationships with the measures of customer engagement (customer patronage, repeat purchase, and referral). Hence the study concluded that visual marketing strategies significantly influence customers' engagement in restaurants business. Therefore, this study recommends that management of restaurants businesses should apply visual marketing strategy cues such as ensuring their business environment is neat with good ambience, practicing good product arrangement, adopting beautiful painting and designs, and lastly utilize beautiful signage to catch the attention of the customers.*

**Keywords:** *Customer Engagement, Visual Marketing Strategy. Customer Patronage, Repeat Purchase, Rreferral*

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## 1.1 Introduction

What the eyes sees greatly influences man's behavior and attitude towards his or her surroundings. The eye is a door way to the soul and without the sight man will leave in perpetual darkness all his/her life. The sight (vision) have been influencing man from time immemorial, when man will sort after the beautiful things of life, and admire whatever that is pleasing to his or her sight. Even in ancient traditional marketing process, buyers evaluate what they buy judging from the sense of sight mostly and place value on such items based on their perceived appearance.

Hence vision is crucial in business practices, and the ambience - atmosphere the customer perceives around a business premises mostly via the sense of sight greatly influence their engagement with that very business or brand.

Restaurants business in Port Harcourt comes in various forms which include bukkas, local mama put (mobile food vendors), restaurants and bars. These eateries can be found in every nuke and crannies of Port Harcourt and provides readily made food for the public which serves as alternative to cooking at home. Most of these restaurants have closed down due to poor customer patronage caused by several factors which includes poor interior decor, poor neat atmosphere, store design and poor product arrangement. Majority of the small restaurants within Port Harcourt do not consider the visual cues surrounding their businesses as a strategy to appeal to customers' emotion which is of concern to this study. Some of the restaurants look shabby and the environment not looking attractive, forgetting that most customers would assume the meal being served to be unhygienic if the environment is not neat and attractive.

It has been discovered that mostly what attracts consumers to engage with a particular brand or business such as a restaurant is their emotions and feelings through the five senses. Haghighi et al. (2010) states that feeling affects various aspects such as the time spent in the store, priority and selection of retail marketing, shopping satisfaction, pleasure seeking, satisfaction with a product or service, consumption-oriented shopping, interest rates of the consumer, consumer decision-making styles and their desires. One way to appeal to customers' feelings and emotions so as to get them engaged with a particular business is through sensory marketing practices such as visual marketing strategy.

Hendricks (2019) defined visual marketing as being about connecting marketing messages to images, whether they are photos, graphics, infographics, videos, logos, signs, and more. Park et al. (2014) argues that the proper use of visual marketing strategies make the retail brand differentiate itself from competing brands, establishes brand preference among consumers. The eye being an important part of humans to generate information and make key decision about which business to patronize is essential to be studied and understood most especially within the context of small restaurant businesses in Port Harcourt. Hence this study tries to investigate visual marketing strategies and customers engagement in restaurant businesses in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria.

## **1.2 Aim of The Study**

The aim of the study was to empirically investigate the extent of relationship between visual marketing strategies and customers engagement in restaurants businesses in Port Harcourt, Rivers state.

## **1.3 Research Question**

Based on the aim of the study, the following research question was formulated:

1. To what extent does visual marketing strategy relates to customers engagement in restaurant businesses in Port Harcourt, Rivers state?

#### **1.4 Research Hypotheses**

Ho<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant relationship between visual marketing strategy and customer patronage of restaurant businesses in Port Harcourt.

Ho<sub>2</sub>: There is no significant relationship between visual marketing strategy and repeat purchase in restaurant businesses in Port Harcourt.

Ho<sub>3</sub>: There is no significant relationship between visual marketing strategy and referral of restaurant businesses in Port Harcourt.

## **2 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

### **2.1 Theoretical Review**

The theoretical underpinning to this study is the Hierarchy of effect model by Lavidge and Steiner (1961) which proposed a path way customer pass through after being exposed to advertising, and this model measures the effectiveness of advertising using a six stage framework starting from the generation of awareness to ultimate purchase (Awareness-Knowledge-Liking-Preference-Conviction-Purchase). The beginning point of this theory is the awareness stage which begins with visual perception where the customer sees the advert and becomes aware of it, then move over to knowledge which entails knowing the product or services being advertised. The next stage is the feeling stage of liking or disliking the product or services. If the product is liked by the potential customer, he or she will move to the next stage of preferring to buy and convincing him or herself about the purchase and actually buying the product or services. The importance of this theory to our study variable which is visual marketing strategies is that the visual cues are what the customers get to see first and get attracted to the product which eventually leads to their purchasing the product. Hence visual marketing which appeals to the sight of the customers are key in effective advertising campaign to acquire customers' engagement and patronage of a brand's product offer, hence this study is underpinned to Hierarchy of effect model.

### **2.2 Conceptual Review**

In order to carry out the research on visual marketing strategies and customers engagement in restaurants business in Port Harcourt, a review of the concepts and constructs of the study which includes: visual marketing strategies, customers engagement construct and its measures (customer patronage, repeat purchase and referral) helps in understanding what they are all about, what is being studied about them and the view and definitions of other scholars in regard to these concepts.

#### **2.2.1 Visual Marketing Strategy**

What a man sees with his eyes greatly influences his feelings, emotions and actions. Longley (2019) states that people have been choosing their possessions based on how they looked long

before the advertising industry even existed and with the eyes containing two-thirds of all the sensory cells in a sighted person's body, hence sight is considered the most prominent of all human senses. Valenti and Riviere (2008) argues that sight is the most used sense in marketing, as it is the most stimulated by the environment, and the choice of colors and forms in the conception of a product, the layout of a point of sale, the realization of promotion campaign are key factors of success (or failure), well understood by marketers. Even within the domain of Port Harcourt in Rivers State, most businesses especially fast food restaurants uses visual cues such as what the customers can see to appeal to them. These includes the physical outlay of a shop, neatness, product arrangement, good design, its lightning, painting, and everything that catches the eyes of the customers are used as a strategy by the marketers to lure or appeal to the customers' emotion. Normal local restaurants in Port Harcourt could adopt this strategy as well to be competitive since most customers are choosy about the look of the place they eat.

Johnson (2019) defined visual marketing as the process of using photos, graphics, videos, and other visual content to market a product or service. It focuses on using unique and relevant images with specific design element to pull consumers in (Phillips, 2019). Hendricks (2019) defined visual marketing as being about connecting marketing messages to images, whether they are photos, graphics, infographics, videos, logos, signs, and more.

Visual marketing entails every marketing strategy used to appeal to the sense of sight which includes visual merchandising, visual branding and any other marketing strategies that uses what the consumer sees to attract their attention and motivate them to patronize a retail outlet such as fast food restaurants. The way products are arranged and displayed in retail shops greatly catches customers' attention. Displaying merchandise in windows was the first sign of visual marketing displays, thus it was born to increase sales by first attracting shoppers through the power of window displays and then through in-store visual mechanizing displays (Hefer & Cant, 2013). Hence when customers sight the way the products are strategically positioned to catch their attention, will be motivated in most cases to make impulse buying. That is why Chandon et al. (2009) explained that visual merchandising is one those in store marketing tools that actually triggers unplanned buying among the consumers. In order to achieve customers buying at an impulse when sighting the products, Soomro et al. (2017) put forward that marketers visually enhances their outlet by creating an aesthetic atmosphere, appropriate shelf arrangement, attractive window display, cleanliness etc. Talking about good design, Ogbuji et al. (2016) states that facility design could be seen as the coordination of the decorative components of the arrangement space, which includes furnishings, color schemes, architectural design and fittings. Customers' gets attracted to good furnishing and other beautiful designs found in stores and marketers could use this as a cue to luring customers to patronize their businesses.

Hence, any strategy from the marketers that catches the eyes and attention of the customers such as the store design, window display, painting, neatness, displays, lighting and decorations

are all part of visual marketing techniques which is a dimension of sensory marketing. Visual merchandising is part of visual marketing strategy and according to Matilla and Witz (2008) could be seen as a marketing technique in which the retailers enhance both the exterior and interior of their store in order to attract their target customers. Soomro et al. (2017) argues that visual merchandising has two major areas which include the store exterior and interior and other variety of factors like color combination, lighting scheme, product placement, store layout and design, mannequin placement and props selection, furniture and fixtures. Rasel (2015) saw interior design of a store as the feel and look of the internal design of the store which can be as physical as the color of the wall and floor, furniture of the stores, showpieces of the stores, lighting of the stores and the product arrangement of the stores. But certain researchers such as Finrow (2014) had a different perception regarding the in store environment and they argued that the interior design not only comprised of the physical properties of the store rather the mental acceptance and declination is also linked with it.

Hence, the arrangement of a retail store such as a fast food restaurant in terms of its lighting, painting, design, sit arrangement, neatness etcetera all plays a significant role in appealing to the customers' emotions and feelings so as to get them to patronize. No wonder Law et al. (2012) asserts that all these factors play an important role in creating a favorable shopping atmosphere. Visual marketing technique such as visual merchandising can also be used as a strategy to differentiate one business offerings from that of competitors. That is why Park et al. (2014) in their study discussed that the proper use of visual merchandising makes the retail brand differentiate to competing brands, establishes brand preference among consumers. The next dimension to be considered below is the auditory marketing technique which has to do with the use of sound to appeal to customers.

### **2.2.2 Customers Engagement**

The word engagement simply means customers interacting with a product brand either by checking out the product, pricing it or actual purchase of it. Nwachukwu and Origbo (2020) assert that engagement and interactions are key human attributes who as a social animal engages and interact with one another in order to survive. Hatzithomas et al. (2016) argues that the human cohabits survives by actively engaging with other people, things and the world as a whole; and to be human is to be engaged with other beings in the world. This vital role which engagement has played in human consciousness and life has attracted the interest of academic scholars from diverse disciplines (Hollebeek, 2011 cited in Ikechi et al., 2021).

According to McEachern (2019) customers' engagement is the interactions between a customer and a given brand. While Hussain (2019) saw it as the ongoing interactions between a business and customer, offered by the business, chosen by the customer. Peterson (2016) explained customer engagement as an estimation of the length and depth of visiting customer's interaction against a clearly defined set of goals. Passikoff and Shea (2010) on their study

defined customer engagement as a prospects interaction with a marketing communication in a way that can be proven to be predictive of sales effect. Lero (n.d.) asserts that engaged customers are important because they have interest in your brand, whether to find out more about what your company is offering, to seek assistance with a problem they have or to sing praise about how great your company's service and / or products are. Nwachukwu and Origbo (2022) argues that key thing about customer engagement is the "interaction" that happens between the business and the customer. Hence, in this study we align with the definition given by Nwachukwu and Origbo (2022) and define customer engagement as the interaction of a customer with a particular business such as the restaurants.

### **2.2.3 Measures of Customers Engagement**

Most empirical studies have used different measures for customer engagement. In the work of Nwachukwu and Origbo (2022) and Ikechi et al. (2021), they measured customer engagement using customer patronage, repeat purchase and referral. While Venkatesan and Bowers (2018) used word of mouth referral, reviews and referrals as the measures of customer engagement. For Solomon (2015), customer engagement measures include customer patronage, customer loyalty, customer based profit and customer ambassadorship for your brand. Barbier (2019) measured customer engagement using involvement with services, sum of a customer's product usage, feelings towards brand, and repeat purchase. In this study, we adopted the measures used by both Nwachukwu and Origbo (2022) and Ikechi et al. (2021) which includes customer patronage, repeat purchase and referral as our measures for customer engagement due to their relevance to our study variable in measuring restaurant business success based on customers' engagement.

#### **2.2.3.1 Customer Patronage**

Several studies have been conducted on consumer behaviors within and outside marketing discipline. In discussing consumer behavior, Nwachukwu et al (2022) argues that one of the major attribute of consumer behavior is the customers' patronage of goods and services. Simons (2016) saw customer patronage as the support or approval made available by customers with regards to a specific brand. Customer patronage can as well mean the material aid and motivation offered by a patron; in this case the patron could be seen to be a customer in an exchange transaction (Raji et al., 2020). Adiele et al. (2015), opines that the word customer patronage means an individual or thing that utilizes something or someone who buys goods and services for personal use.

#### **2.2.3.2 Repeat Purchase**

Repeat purchase simply means buying from a given business more than once. It can be as purchases that customers make to replace the same items or services that they had bought and consumed previously (Tardi, 2019). According to Leonard (2019), repeat purchase is the purchase made by a consumer of a same-brand product as bought on a previous occasion. It is a scenario where the buyer regularly purchases a brand (Hfonfe, 2012). On the case of

ActiveDemand (2014), it identifies repeat purchase to be the purchase by a consumer of a same-brand product as bought on a previous occasion.

### **2.2.3.3 Referral**

We refer a brand of product or services to friends and relatives when it meets or exceeds our expectation. Nwchukwu et al. (2022) asserts that word of mouth referral or viva voce is the passing of information from person to person by oral communication, which could be as simple as telling someone the time of day. Dictionary.cambridge.org sees referral as the act of directing a person to a different place or different individual for information. Helm (2003) defined referral to include one form of favorable word of mouth which is passed on by a particular customer about a certain product or service. While Wirtz et al. (2013) sees referral as an oral, individual to individual communication between a perceived non-commercial communication and a receiver concerning a brand, a product or a service, offered for sale. According to Otite and Eбенуwa (2022) customers that are loyal and delighted knowingly shows off loyalty behavior through the repeat buying of products whereby maintaining relationships with the business and willingly referring others about the offerings of the business.

## **2.3 Empirical Review on Visual Marketing Strategy and Customer Engagement**

Talking about visual marketing, we are looking at businesses such as fast food restaurants using the physical environment of the business that customers could see with their eyes to appeal to their emotions and according to Krishna (2011) influence their behavior. As part of visual marketing strategy, physical environment in this study is measured based on the neatness of the business premises, product arrangement, interior design and lighting which are all visual cues that the customers could see and appreciate. Several empirical studies on visual marketing strategies which utilize the physical environmental cues to influence customers' behavior have been conducted.

For instant, Jalah (2016) conducted an empirical study to investigate how physical environment serves as a vital factor for success in developing customers' patronage in restaurant industry. A total of two hundred and ninety three (293) customers where sampled for the study. Structural model equation approach was used to analyze the data collected from the respondents. The study found out that, elements of physical environment of the restaurants have a positive significance impact on customers' patronage.

Also, Githiri (2017) investigated the impact of physical environment on customers' patronage and satisfaction in rated restaurants in Kenya. Survey research design was used in the study. Three hundred and forty five (345) customers constituted the sample size for the study, while. Pearson moment correlation was the statistical tool used in analyzing the data generated for the study. The study found that physical environment has a positive significant impact on customers' patronage and satisfaction. Hence the study recommends that management of



restaurant should look for new ways of improving on their restaurants external appearance, since this will go a long way in helping to increase the customers' patronage in the future.

These findings suggests that fast food restaurant physical environmental cues such as their deco, product arrangement, store design, the lighting they used in the premises, all positively influences customers patronage of that very fast food restaurant. Most researchers specifically investigated the impact store lighting has on customers behavior such as Basera et al. (2013).

Basera et al. (2013) investigated the impact ambient factors have on customers' patronage in fast food outlets in Zimbabwe using descriptive research design. 150 customers constituted the sample size for the study. While multiple regression technique was used to analyze retrieved data from data base. From the analysis, the study found out that ambient variable such as lighting significantly affects customers' patronage in fast food retail outlets.

Lighting wasn't the only visual marketing cue empirically investigated, but also the cleanliness of the fast food restaurant was empirically evaluated by authors such as Yu et al. (2018). He conducted an empirical study on the influence quality attributes has on visiting customers' patronage intentions of green restaurant in China. From the population of the study, a sample of 280 undergraduates in China where selected and copies of questionnaire administered out of which valid response of 261 copies of questionnaire were used for the analysis. Using exploratory factor analysis and the statistics software Smart PLS 2.0 M3 in testing the research mode, the study found out that cleanliness, décor and design positively impacts the expectation confirmation of ambiance quality and in turn influences their patronage intentions regarding green restaurants.

Also, Carpenter and Moore (2006) carried out an empirical study which tried to provide a general understanding of grocery consumers' retail format choice in the US marketplace. A total sample of four hundred and fifty four (454) were surveyed via self-administered questionnaire Using regression analysis and ANOVA, the study found out that both frequent and occasional shoppers across all retail formats indicated cleanliness as the single most important store attribute that attracts customers patronage and re-patronage. Hence the finding of this study by Carpenter and Moore (2006) is in line with the findings of Yu et al. (2018) on cleanliness.

Discussing the construct of cleanliness and lighting together in an empirical study, Janice et al. (2017) carried out a study on factors that drive consumer purchase decision of product at hypermart Manado Indonesia. The study population includes consumers of Hypermart Manado out of which 100 respondents were selected as the sample size using convenient sampling technique. Using Confirmatory factor analysis which was processed through SPSS discovered that store cleanliness and lighting have a medium significance influence on costumer purchase decision.



Randhawa and Saluja (2017) conducted an empirical study on visual merchandising and its effect on consumer impulse buying behavior in Punjab. A multi stage sampling technique was used where the state of Punjab was split into three regions – Malwa, Doaba and Majha and a sample of 450 was gotten. The study used convenient sampling technique to select the sample from the population. Using multiple regressions, the study found out that visual merchandising significantly influences consumers' impulse buying behavior by providing information or serving as a reminder of unfulfilled needs as well as providing positive feelings.

Gajanayake et al. (2011) conducted an empirical study to identify the influence of visual merchandising on patronage intentions in Sri Lanka. The population of the study within Colombo 1 to Colombo 15 was stated to be 695,885 as per the 2006 estimates. A sample size of 384 was generated from the population supermarket shoppers from five different supermarkets cited in Colombo City limits. And this sample was selected from the population using simple random sampling technique. Using regression analysis and ANOVA, the study found out that there is a significant relationship between visual components (such as color, product display, lighting, cleanliness) and patronage intentions in supermarkets.

**Table 2.1 Summary of Empirical Studies on Visual Marketing Strategy**

Author(s)/ Year	Area of Study	Analytical tool used	Findings
Yu et al. (2018)	The influence quality attributes has on visiting customers' patronage intentions of green restaurant in China.	Exploratory factor analysis.	Cleanliness, décor and design positively impacts the expectation confirmation of ambiance quality and in turn influences their patronage intentions regarding green restaurants.
Githiri (2017)	The impact of physical environment on customers' patronage and satisfaction in rated restaurants in Kenya	Pearson moment correlation	Physical environment has a positive significant impact on customers' patronage and satisfaction.
Janice et al. (2017)	Factors that drive consumer purchase decision of product at hypermart Manado Indonesia.	Confirmatory factor analysis	store cleanliness and lighting have a Medium significance influence on costumer purchase decision.
Randhawa & Saluja (2017)	Visual merchandising and its effect on consumer impulse buying behavior in Punjab.	Multiple regressions.	Visual merchandising significantly influences consumers' impulse buying behavior by providing information or serving as a reminder of unfulfilled needs as well as providing positive feelings.
Jalah (2016)	Investigated how physical environment serves as a vital factor for success in developing customers' patronage in restaurant industry	Structural equation model	Elements of physical environment of the restaurants have a positive significance impact on customers' patronage
Rasel (2015)	The effect store interior design has on consumer purchasing decision.	Pearson moment correlation.	Decoration & lighting significantly influences customers buying behavior.
Basera et al. (2013)	The impact ambient factors have on customers' patronage in fast food outlets in Zimbabwe	Multiple regression technique	Ambient variable such as lighting significantly affects customers' patronage in fast food retail outlets
Gajanayake et al. (2011)	Study to identify the influence of visual merchandising on patronage intentions in Sri Lanka	Regression analysis and ANOVA	There is a significant relationship between visual components (such as color, product display, lighting, cleanliness) and patronage intentions in supermarkets.
Carpenter & Moore (2006)	Providing a general understanding of grocery consumers' retail format choice in the US marketplace.	Regression analysis & ANOVA	Both frequent and occasional shoppers across all retail formats indicated cleanliness as the single most important store attribute that attracts customers patronage and re-patronage.

**Source: Researchers Desktop from Literature Review**

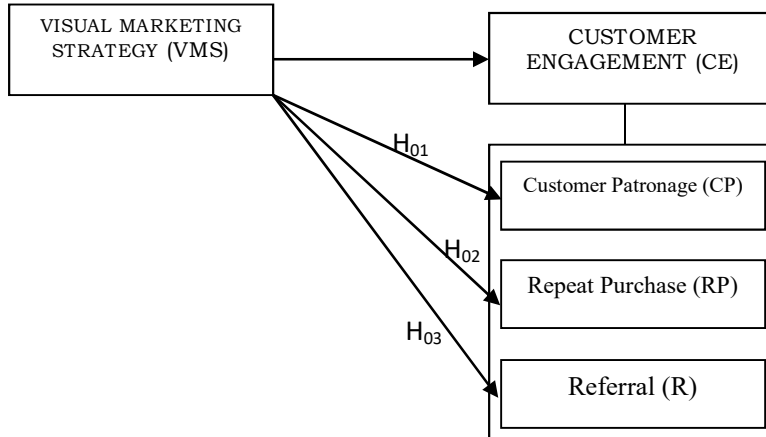
Based on these assertions, we formulate our hypotheses:

Ho<sub>1</sub> There is no significant relationship between visual marketing strategy and customer patronage in restaurants businesses in Port Harcourt.

Ho<sub>2</sub> There is no significant relationship between visual marketing strategy and customer repeat purchase in restaurants businesses in Port Harcourt.

Ho<sub>3</sub> There is no significant relationship between visual marketing strategy and customer referral in restaurants businesses in Port Harcourt.

## 2.4 Operational Conceptual Framework



*Figure 2.1: Operational Framework of the Relationship between Visual Marketing Strategy and Customer Engagement*

## 3 Research Methodology

The quantitative research method was adopted in this study which utilized a cross-sectional survey research design. The target population comprised of all the customers of 369 registered restaurants in Rivers State as listed in Rivers State Yellow Page Directory, and this population is an infinite population; hence we deployed the Godden (2004) infinite sampling technique which gave us a sample size of 384. Using convenient sampling technique, the study distributed 384 copies of questionnaire out of which 377 was valid and was used in conducting the study's analysis. The primary data collection method was used in the study, and the main research instrument which is the copies of questionnaire was validated via an expert checking. And Cronbach's Alpha technique was employed for checking for the reliability of the instrument. The reliability coefficients of our constructs were above 0.70 benchmark recommended by Nunnally (1978).

**Table 3.1 Reliability Statistics**

S/N	Construct	No of items	Cronbach's Alpha
1.	Visual Marketing Strategy	3	0.903
2.	Customer Patronage	3	0.801
3.	Repeat Purchase	3	0.836
4.	Referral	3	0.843

Source: SPSS Result

#### 4 Analyses of Data Results

The study distributed 384 copies of the questionnaire among purposefully selected customers of identified registered functional restaurants in Port Harcourt. Due to mistakes and incomplete responses, 5 copies were dropped, while 2 copies were lost in transit. Hence, the total response rate that formed the basis of our analysis was 377 representing 98%. Pearson moment correlation coefficient was adopted through SPSS version 25 to analyze the relationships between the study variables. Tables 4.1-4.3 below explain the tests of the hypotheses. The Decision Rule for the test states that the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) should be rejected while the alternative ( $H_a$ ) accepted if  $p\text{-value} < 0.05$  for 2 – tailed test and conclude that significant relationship exists.

##### Test of Hypothesis 1

$H_{01}$ : There is no significant relationship between visual marketing strategy and customer patronage of restaurants businesses in Port Harcourt.

$H_{a1}$ : There is a significant relationship between visual marketing strategy and customer patronage of restaurants businesses in Port Harcourt.

**Table 4.1: Correlations Analysis of Visual Marketing Strategy and Customer Patronage**

Correlations			
		Visual Marketing Strategy (VMS)	Customer Patronage (CP)
Visual Marketing Strategy (VMS)	Pearson Correlation	1	.869**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	377	377
Customer Patronage (CP)	Pearson Correlation	.869**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	377	377

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

b. Listwise N = 377

**Source: SPSS Output (based on 2022 Field Survey Data)**

In the table 4.1 above, it shows the outcome of the correlation analysis using the SPSS version 25.0. The Pearson correlation coefficient was estimated to be 0.869\*\*. This proves that a significant positive relationship exists between visual marketing strategy and customer patronage. Since the  $p\text{-value}$  (0.000)  $< 0.05$ , we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that a significant relationship exists between the two variables.

##### Test of Hypothesis 2

$H_{02}$ : There is no significant relationship between visual marketing strategy and repeat purchase in restaurant business in Port Harcourt.

Ha<sub>2</sub>: There is a significant relationship between visual marketing strategy and repeat purchase in restaurant business in Port Harcourt.

**Table 4.2: Correlations Analysis of Visual Marketing Strategy and Repeat Purchase.**

Correlations			
		Visual Marketing Strategy (VMS)	Repeat Purchase (RP)
Visual Marketing Strategy (VMS)	Pearson Correlation	1	.876**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	377	377
Repeat Purchase (RP)	Pearson Correlation	.876**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	377	377

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

b. Listwise N = 377

**Source: SPSS Output (based on 2022 Field Survey Data)**

Table 4.2 above indicates that the correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) is 0.876. This implies that a very strong relationship exists between visual marketing strategy and repeat purchase. Also, the sign of ( $r$ ) value is positive, indicating a direct link between the variables. Since the probability value ( $p$ -value) = 0.000 < 0.05, we conclude that a significant positive relationship exists between visual marketing strategy and repeat purchase.

### Test of Hypothesis 3

Ho<sub>3</sub>: There is no significant relationship between visual marketing strategy and customers' referral of restaurant business in Port Harcourt.

Ha<sub>3</sub>: There is a significant relationship between visual marketing strategy and customers' referral of restaurant business in Port Harcourt.

**Table 4.3: Correlations Analysis of Visual Marketing Strategy and Referral**

Correlations			
		Visual Marketing Strategy (VMS)	Referral (R)
Visual Marketing Strategy (VMS)	Pearson Correlation	1	.894**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	377	377
Referral (R)	Pearson Correlation	.894**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	377	377

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

b. Listwise N = 377

Source: SPSS Output (based on 2022 Field Survey Data)

The correlation analysis above was conducted to examine whether visual marketing strategy is associated with Referral. The results revealed a significant and positive association ( $r = 0.894$ ,  $N = 377$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.00$ ). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected while its alternative was accepted. The correlation was very strong in strength. Higher levels of visual marketing strategies were associated with higher levels of customer referrals.

**Table 4.4 Summary of Test Hypotheses**

S/N	HYPOTHESES	( r )	P – VALUE	DIRECTION	Magnitude	DECISION	CONCLUSION
H <sub>01</sub> :	There is no significant relationship between visual marketing strategy and customer patronage	0.869**	0.00	+VE	Very high	Reject	Significant
H <sub>02</sub> :	There is no significant relationship between visual marketing strategy and repeat purchase	0.876**	0.00	+VE	Very high	Reject	Significant
H <sub>03</sub> :	There is no significant relationship between visual marketing strategy and customers' referral	0.894**	0.00	+VE	Very high	Reject	Significant

Source: Research Findings Based on SPSS Output

### Discussion of Findings

The objective of this study was to ascertain the extent to which visual marketing strategy relates to customers' engagement. Visual marketing strategy was discovered to have a significant positive relationship with the measures of customers' engagement (customer patronage, repeat purchase and referral). This finding was generated from the outcome of the statistical test of hypotheses H<sub>01</sub>, H<sub>02</sub> and H<sub>03</sub> respectively. The test of H<sub>01</sub> shows that visual marketing strategy attracts a significant positive correlation coefficient ( $r = 0.869$ ,  $p\text{-value} < 0.05$ ). That is, the more restaurants utilizes visual marketing strategies such as neat atmosphere, good product arrangement, good design, beautiful signage, painting etcetera, the more they will achieve increased customer engagement in the form of customer patronage.

Test of H<sub>02</sub> reveals that visual marketing strategy results in a significant positive correlation coefficient ( $r = 0.876$ ,  $p\text{-value} < 0.05$ ). Thus, increase in visual marketing will bring about an increase in repeat purchase.

Again, the test of H<sub>03</sub>, shows that visual marketing strategy commands a significant positive correlation coefficient ( $r = 0.894$ ,  $p\text{-value} < 0.05$ ). Thus, the restaurant that increases their visual marketing strategies of beautifying its store outlay, neat environment, good lighting, nice product arrangement and beautiful signage will experience an increase in customers' referral.

The foregoing findings as seen from the results of hypotheses 1, 2 and 3 are believed to be premised on the fact that visual marketing strategies such as good lighting, design, color, painting, neatness, store layout, etcetera influences customers' engagement behaviors. This is in line with the submissions of Park and Farr (2008) whom discovered that visual marketing components such as lighting, painting and good store layout can affect the emotional responses that influence consumer shopping behavior and encourages them towards initiating the purchase. Also, Bashar and Ahmed (2012) in their empirical research discovered that window display and floor merchandising have positive correlation with impulse buying behavior and overall visual merchandising has a significant impact on the consumer buying behavior. Lastly, Kaur (2018) in his research found out that visual merchandising practice such as in-store form/mannequin display, promotional signage and window display certainly influence customers' buying behavior. From this discussion we conclude that visual marketing strategies positively influence customers' engagement.

### **Conclusion, Recommendations and Contribution to knowledge**

Based on the data analyses results and findings, the study conclude that visual marketing strategy has significant positive impact on customers' engagement in restaurants business in Port Harcourt. The findings as seen from the results of the hypotheses are believed to be premised on the fact that visual marketing strategies such as neat atmosphere, good product arrangement, good design, beautiful signage, and good painting influences customers' engagement behaviors. This study hence recommends that management of restaurants businesses should apply visual marketing strategy cues such as ensuring their business environment is neat with good ambience, practicing good product arrangement, adopting beautiful painting and designs, and lastly utilize beautiful signage to catch the attention of the customers.

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