

BRAND AMBASSADOR AND CONSUMER PURCHASE DECISION IN RIVERS STATE**GODSWILL CHINEDU CHUKWU PhD**

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Abstract: *The study investigates brand ambassador on consumer purchase decision of soft drinks in Rivers State. The study adopted the descriptive research design. A sample size of 376 soft drinks consumers were randomly selected using the questionnaire for data collection. Six research questions were posed and six hypotheses tested. Data analysis was done using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation while inferential statistics of Pearson product moment correlation coefficient (PPMC) was used to test the stated hypothesis on SPSS version 25. Findings revealed that there is a significant positive strong relationship in adopting brand celebrity to influence repeat purchase and customer loyalty, there is a significant relationship in promoting brands using marketing professionals to stimulate repeat purchase and customer loyalty, there is also significant relationship in the use of brand enthusiasts to stimulate repeat purchase and customer loyalty of soft drink in Rivers State. The study therefore concludes that there is a significant relationship in adopting brand ambassador and consumer purchase decision of soft drinks industry in Rivers State. The study therefore recommends that: popular celebrities should be considered as part of strategies for creating brand awareness in the soft drink industry in order to stimulate customer loyalty and boost sales in the long run. Marketing professionals should be adopted by soft drinks firms with low sales performance to beat competition, again business managers can equally engage the services of brand enthusiast in promoting sales in their organization.*

Keywords: *Brand ambassador, Brand awareness, customer loyalty, Brand celebrity.*

Introduction

The 21st century opens with the formulation and implementation of marketing strategies in retaining and attracting new customers. Competition is deepening in the business economy and marketing strategies are exhausted in achieving going concern. To achieve profitability, marketers adopt marketing tools and techniques superior to their competitors, (Soniya & Santhosh, 2018). Creating very different strategy by using marketing mix is one the major challenges for the present scenario. Using brand ambassadors has become a popular marketing practice, over the past decade, (Andersson & Ekman, 2009). This implied that in the modern market, without brand ambassadors it's somewhat difficult to achieve sales. Soniya and Santhosh, (2018) discussed that for brand recall, marketers select right person for right product at right place so that the brand can maintain the stability in the competitive world which explain the concept of brand ambassador. A brand ambassador is seen as an effective way to provide a credible testimony of the organisation and through the word-of-mouth effect can influence others through their networks and relationships, (Fachri, 2018). Consumers often become attached to brands which enable them to create or represent their desired self-concepts, often as portrayed by brand ambassadors who walk-the-walk and talk-the-talk, (Kemp et al, 2012). Self-brand connections are therefore made by consumers as they discover the fit between self-concepts and brand images. Brand superiority perception of consumers in brand ambassador is defined by connectivity established

between brands and personality. Hence various personality concepts had emerged in brand ambassador such as celebrity, marketing professionals and notable brand enthusiast/advocates. The adoption of these personalities in representing brands is aimed at brand promotion. Celebrities are popular and followed by many people so it makes sense that marketers benefit from using them in order to get their message across. A celebrity can capture consumers' attention, link the brand with their own personal image, and associate their positive attributes with those of the product concerned, (Staff, 2013). Using celebrities as brand ambassadors is not a new concept. Sports icons like Michael Jordan and Tiger Woods elevated the practice, often scoring more in endorsement and licensing dollars than from their actual sports earnings, (Creswell, 2008). Marketing professionals identify the strategies and techniques used to attract customers to a business. They determine pricing based on product demand and supply, help maximize a firm's profits, and grow market share for a business. They also aid in new product development and critique market trends. It is observed by Iona (2020) that brand enthusiast are more than just loyal customers. They identify with the values of their favorite brands and consider their buying choices part of their identities. They actively promote the brands they love and make a huge impact on the buying choices of their social circle.

Customers perceive brand as having superior quality when it is endorsed by their favorite personality in the categories mentioned above. Increasing sales is a concern to firms hence various strategies are employed to achieving this purpose including brand ambassador. Adopting brand ambassador however influence customer purchase decision in some particular ways which is the focus of this work. Purchase decision is the thought process that leads a consumer from identifying a need, generating options, and choosing a specific product and brand. While some purchase decisions are minor, like buying toothpaste others are major, like buying a house. The more major the purchase decision, the more effort is typically put into the process. Whether minor or major, they are influenced by brand factors including the personalities that identifies with such products. Adopting brand ambassador affects consumer purchase decisions in repeat purchase and customer loyalty. A repeat purchase is the purchase by a consumer of a same-brand product as bought on a previous occasion, (Lambert, 2005) while customer loyalty is the emotionally-charged decision of a consumer for purchasing a particular brand again and again.

The present economic stage characterizes high competition among brands forcing marketers into inventing strategies and approaches fit for survival leading to the adoption of brand ambassador. Adopting brand ambassador in sales promotion however does not automatically guarantee sales as many researches had expressed mixed feelings over the subject. This study is therefore conducted to determine the extent to which brand ambassador influences consumer purchase decision.

Statement of the Problem

Brand ambassador as a viable marketing competitive tool in gaining consumer purchase has been proven successful in theory and practice. This action of attaching renowned personalities to brands is to establish a positive relationship between fame and sales. Brand ambassador approach to sales promotion is commonly concludes on viability and positivity among researchers. Maguwu (2014) accepts that good character and integrity of a brand ambassador is of great importance to the brand as celebrities of poor character have the potential to badly damage the brand. However, when brand ambassadors face personal crisis, not only does it affect their personality but also present brands they represent in a bad spot by creating negative perception around the brand. Such crises are bad enough to affect brand sales. Grundy and Moxon (2013) observed that as brands are built on certain values which the ambassador reflects and personifies, possible crises on personality will question such values. Since the brand ambassador is the face of the brand any bridge of expectation will pass wrong judgment on product they represent. Hence it is misleading to conclude that brand ambassador always increases brand sales.

Personality crises in recent times among celebrities had been a call for concern to marketers. While brand ambassador may affect the consumption of some specific commodities like products of the telecommunication industries it does not achieve same on all other commodities. It is obvious that while some consumers careless about personality adoption in brand promotion by given maximum concern to

brand satisfaction others trace fame to purchase decision making. Though much attention has been dedicated to brand advocacy research (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001; McAlexander et al., 2003; Muniz & Schau, 2005; Kim et al., 2008; Di Maria & Finotto, 2008) and others focusing on the value of brand ambassadors and how it can improve the brand value of an organisation (Andersson & Ekman, 2009:41; Boyd & Sutherland, 2005:9; Tylee, 2010:19). This research investigates the influence of brand ambassador (popular celebrity, marketing professionals and brand enthusiast) on consumer purchase decision.

Conceptual Framework

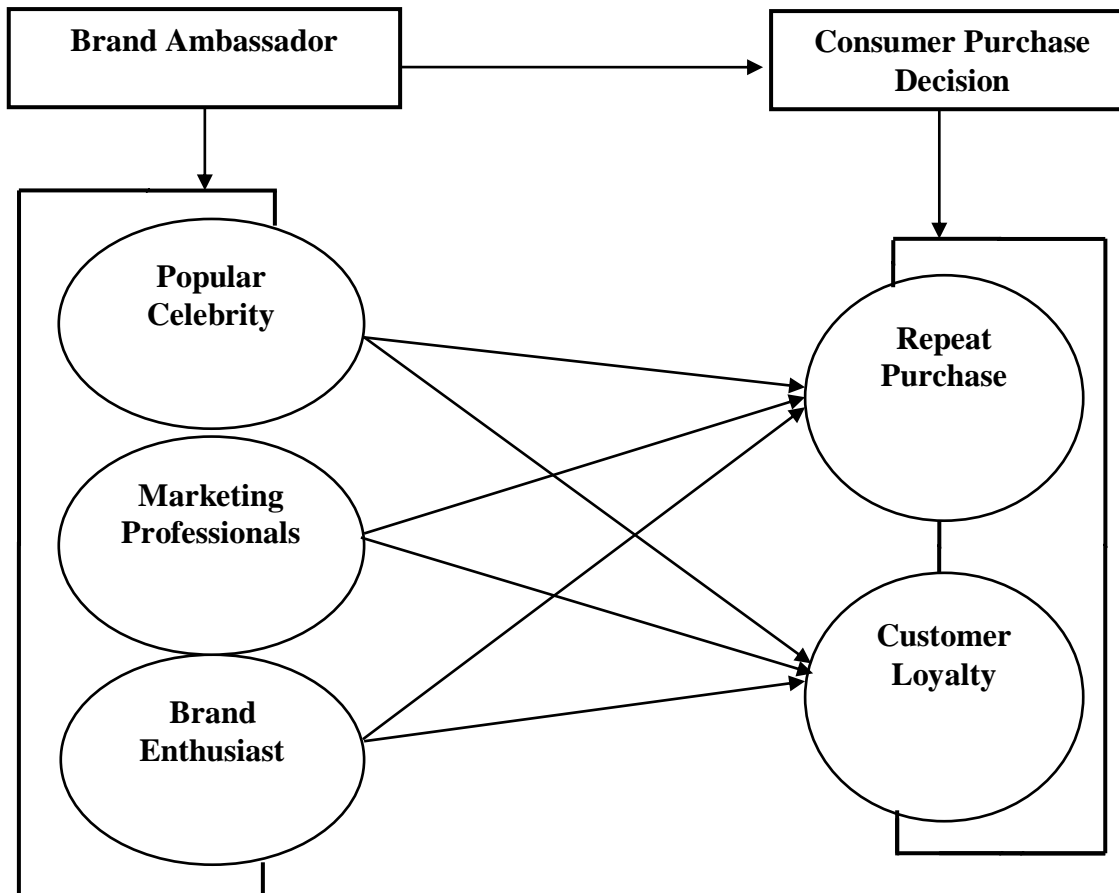


Fig.1.1: Conceptual Framework Construct

Source: Yoo, J. w. & Jin, Y. J. (2013), Ilona, K. (2012) and Soniya, K. & Santhosh, R. R. (2018)

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of brand ambassador on consumer purchase decision. The study is guided by the following specific objectives:

1. Determine the extent to which brand celebrity influence repeat purchase of soft drinks in Rivers State.
2. Investigate the extent to which brand celebrity influence customer loyalty of soft drinks in Rivers State.
3. Ascertain the extent to which marketing professionals influence repeat purchase of soft drinks in Rivers State.
4. Determine the extent to which marketing professionals influence customer loyalty of soft drinks in Rivers State.

5. Ascertain the extent to which brand enthusiast influence repeat purchase of soft drinks in Rivers State.
6. Investigate the extent to which brand enthusiast influence customer loyalty of soft drinks in Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions are developed to guide this study:

1. To what extent does brand celebrity influence repeat purchase of soft drinks in Rivers State?
2. To what extent does brand celebrity influence customer loyalty of soft drinks in Rivers State?
3. To what extent does marketing professionals influence repeat purchase of soft drinks in Rivers State?
4. To what extent does marketing professionals influence customer loyalty of soft drinks in Rivers State?
5. To what extent does brand enthusiast influence repeat purchase of soft drinks in Rivers State?
6. To what extent does brand enthusiast influence customer loyalty of soft drinks in Rivers State?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are formulated and tested in this research.

H₀₁: there is no significant relationship on the influence of brand celebrity and repeat purchase of soft drinks in Rivers State.

H₀₂: there is no significant relationship on the influence of brand celebrity and customer loyalty of soft drinks in Rivers State.

H₀₃: there is no significant relationship on the impact of marketing professionals and repeat purchase of soft drinks in Rivers State.

H₀₄: there is no significant relationship on the impact of marketing professionals and customer loyalty of soft drinks in Rivers State.

H₀₅: there is no relationship on the influence of brand enthusiast and repeat purchase of soft drinks in Rivers State.

H₀₆: there is no significant relationship on the influence of brand enthusiast and customer loyalty of soft drinks in Rivers State.

Review of Related Literature

Concept of Brand Ambassador

Brand ambassador is an instrument used by companies to communicate and connect with the community, about how they can increase sales, (Lea-Greenwood, 2012). As for according Balmer dan Gray (2003) brand ambassadors play a role in communicating corporate brands to outside audiences. MacInnis and Rao (2002) believe that product sales are increasing with the sale of ad media lines, and most of the ad content focuses on the spokesperson on those ads. Based on the existing theory, the brand ambassador can be used as a reference for consumer ratings and perceptions of a brand as a whole. The process of marketing a new product or a new brand requires consumer awareness that the brand exists. Here, the task of a brand ambassador is to grow and increase consumer awareness of a brand he/she promotes. There are many product categories and many brands are flooding the market, so that attributes such as quality and value of goods cannot be automatically calculated. There must be effective media to make products reach customers. A brand ambassador is someone who is well connected with a product or a celebrity or public figure who is used to promote and advertise a product. Brand ambassadors in the standard sense are users who are satisfied with the product and then give a positive impression and even recommendations to others to use the product. The presence of brand ambassadors can overcome the information gap between companies and target consumers, so that consumers get sufficient information about the product. In addition, brand ambassadors can strengthen consumer bonds with the product itself (consumer engagement). In marketing activities, brand ambassadors have the

obligations to answer questions, involve viewers, and increase brand awareness. Brand ambassadors are very instrumental in helping smooth marketing activities both locally and globally (Greenwood, 2012).

Dimensions of Brand Ambassador

Brand Celebrities

Celebrities, as defined in Adeyanju (2013), are people who enjoy public recognition possessing such attributes as attractiveness and trustworthiness. The use of celebrities as brand ambassadors is a popular formula in promotion, (Mukherjee, 2009). A product that is supported by famous celebrities will get its brand awareness and positive impression. Therefore, in many ways, companies may take advantage of celebrity support. That's the reason why companies pay millions to promote their products with the help of celebrities, (Goutam, 2013). The popularity of a celebrity or public figure who is a brand ambassador is expected to boost brand awareness and brand image of a product, and capture or maintain market share. Moreover, according to Yoo (2013) celebrity activity on behalf of the organization is similar to support that positively affects the company's image, which is related to the relationship between the goals of the brand ambassador and the organization represented by it.

Marketing Professionals

Marketing professionals identify the strategies and techniques used to attract customers to a business. They determine pricing based on product demand and supply, help maximize a firm's profits, and grow market share for a business. They also aid in new product development and critique market trends. Marketing professionals often interact with clients from a variety of industries, so a pleasing personality, patience, and organizational skills are important. They should rank high in reading comprehension and be active and engaging listeners with good deductive reasoning skills. The marketing professional must be language proficient and a skilled communicator across a variety of platforms. Business and industry knowledge is a plus, and customer service skills are mandatory. Understanding media production methods, including visual, oral, written and other methods are also important.

Brand Enthusiast

Brand enthusiasts are more than just loyal customers. They identify with the values of their favorite brands and consider their buying choices part of their identities (Alexandra, 2020). They actively promote the brands they love and make a huge impact on the buying choices of their social circle. Consumers are increasingly more eager to let other people affect on their purchasing decisions. People behind the change of opinion are usually brand advocates, who are devoted ambassadors of a certain brand. Brand advocacy builds up, when the right brand and the right people meet. People start speaking about their positive experiences and that way start to spread the brand advocating message. Usually the message is spread first to the closest people, friends, relatives and co-workers, and later on at the highest stage of brand advocacy people distribute the brand information to everyone, e.g. via internet discussion boards, (Commander 2007).

Concept of Consumer Purchase Decision

The buying decision process of consumer intervenes between the marketing strategy and the outcomes. That is, the outcomes of the organization's marketing strategy are determined by its interaction with the consumer decision process. The organization can succeed only if consumers see a need that its product can solve, become aware of the product and its capabilities, decide that it is the best available solution, proceed to buy it, and become satisfied with the result of the buying. Kotler (2001) thought that consumer buying behavior is how individuals, groups and organizations to select, purchase, use and disposal of products, services, ideas or experience to meet the consumers' demand. Buying behavior is the decision processes and acts people involved in buying and using products which includes social and mental process.

Measures of Consumer Purchase Decision

Repeat Purchase

A repeat purchase is the purchase by a consumer of a same-brand product as bought on a previous occasion. For most service organizations, economic success depends on an ability to maintain long-term relationships with customers who purchase their offerings repeatedly, (Reinartz et al. 2005; Rust et al.2004). Understanding the reasons customers repeatedly purchase from a service firm therefore represents an issue of essential importance. A repeat purchase is an indicator of a degree of customer loyalty to a brand. It is also an opportunity for marketers to establish long-term customer relationships. A high number of repeat purchases indicate a satisfied and “well-retained” customer, which reduces new-customer acquisition costs and increases overall profitability. The business’ repeat purchase rate may be increased using web and social media promotions, digital loyalty programs, and exceptional customer service, (Lambert, 2005).

Customer Loyalty

Blomqvist et al, (2000) defined customer loyalty as a customer which over time engage one company to satisfy entirely, or a significant part, of her needs by using the company’s products or services. Customer loyalty means that the customer is loyal to the company and only turns to a competitor in exceptional cases. Prus and Randall (1995) described customer loyalty which results to customer patronage as driven by customer satisfaction, intention to buy again and/or buy additional products or services from same company, willingness to recommend the company to others; referrals, repeat purchasing more and different products or services from the same company. Customer loyalty is the emotionally-charged decision of a consumer for purchasing a particular brand again and again. The consumer has the perception that the particular brand has the qualities that will meet their expectations and identifies with the consumer at a personal level. Loyalty is a pattern of consumer behavior through which consumers tend to get committed to a specific business outlet or product and make repeat purchases over time.

Theoretical Framework

Impulse Buying Theory

Proposed by Hawkins Stern 1962 the impulse buying theory offered a fresh perspective on consumers’ buying behavior in decision making as most of the contemporary consumer behaviour theories like Maslow’s Need Hierarchy Theory of Motivation (1943) and Engel, Kollat and Blackwell (1968) believed that consumers always make rational and well-planned buying decisions (Dutta and Mandal, 2018). While these theories of consumer behavior focus on rational action, Hawkins Stern believed heavily in the idea of impulse behavior. Stern argued that sudden buying impulses fit alongside rational purchasing decisions to paint a complete picture of the average consumer. Impulse purchases are driven largely by external stimuli and have almost no relationship to traditional decision-making. Impulse buying theories present an ocean of opportunities for marketers in attracting consumers’ attention to products by attaching renowned personalities. Every aspect of a product, from the way the packaging catches the eye to the way the product is displayed in the store, has an impact on a consumer’s impulse control, (Dutta & Mandal, 2018). Marketers who can capture the impulsive thought and close the sale will have the most success. Using brand ambassador as an impulse to the consumers is one of the best approaches in sales promotion. Both celebrities, marketing professionals and notable brand enthusiast can serve as impulse elements in capturing consumers attention towards sales.

Empirical Review

The review of related empirical studies showed that no research study is directly related to the present study. However, some were found relevant.

Fachri (2018) investigated the influence of brand ambassador usage toward brand image of oppo in

Indonesia. The purpose of the study is to identify whether there is an influence of brand ambassador's use on Oppo brand image. The study adopted the descriptive research design. The questionnaires was used to collect data from 384 respondents. Data analysis was performed using multiple regression analysis and ANOVA using SPSS version 22. The study revealed that consumer perception of the brand ambassador has a significant effect on brand image. With two of the four indicators: attractiveness and power are not significantly influential.

Goutam (2013) carried out a research on the influence of brand ambassadors on buying behavior of soft drinks: with reference to Belgaum City, India. The research adopted the descriptive research design. The researcher selected 100 respondents for the study. Data have been collected was done with the questionnaire while Z test was used for data analysis. Findings revealed that brand ambassador was significant to brand popularity also that majority of the respondents could associate with soft drink brands endorsed by ambassadors/celebrities. This shows that there has been a very good reach of the advertisements featuring with celebrities.

Gap in Literature

Winning consumers' patronage is one of the strenuous tasks ever sought to be achieved by marketers globally leading to the adoption of various marketing approaches, brand ambassador inclusive. This approach had received significant academic attention globally because its relevancy to marketing development. However, there is still dearth of this study in Rivers State, Nigeria as no formal study had been carried out on the influence of brand ambassador on consumer purchase decision of soft drinks in the state using brand celebrity, marketing professionals and brand enthusiast as variables which constitutes knowledge gap sought to be filled by this research. This research therefore studied the influence of brand ambassador and purchase decision of soft drinks in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Methodology

This study adopted the descriptive survey design. According to Gall cited in Ojera, (2016) opined that the purpose of the descriptive survey research design was to obtain pertinent and precise information concerning the current status of phenomenon and whenever possible to draw valid general conclusions from facts discovered. The population of this study are the consumers of soft drinks in Rivers State. A sample size of 384 persons were randomly selected and served with questionnaires while a total of 367 questionnaires were successfully retrieved representing 96% returned rate and used for the analyses. The sample size was determined using Morgan Krejcie table. Data was collected by use of questionnaire which was developed in line with the purpose of the study and was validated by experts in educational measurement and evaluation and two lecturers in marketing department in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. Reliability was measured using Cronbah's Alpha for its measure of consistency and stability of the instrument and a reliability coefficient of 0.82 was established which shows an acceptable level of reliability. The questionnaires were administered with the aid of two research assistance. Data analysis was done with mean and standard deviation on a four (4) point Likert-type scale (of Strongly Agree = 4, Agree = 3, Disagree = 2 and Strongly Disagree = 1) while hypotheses were tested with Pearson Product Moment Correlation using SPSS version 25.

Result of Findings

4.1 Research Question 1

To what extent does brand celebrity influence repeat purchase of soft drinks in Rivers State?

Table 4.1: Computation of consumer's responses on brand celebrity and repeat purchase of soft drinks in Rivers State (N=367).

| GENDER | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|--------|---|------|----------------|-----------------|
|--------|---|------|----------------|-----------------|

| | | | | | |
|--|--------|-----|--------|--------|--------|
| BRAND CELEBRITY AMBASSADOR AND REPEAT PURCHASE | Male | 192 | 3.9063 | .22229 | .01604 |
| | Female | 175 | 3.8057 | .30104 | .02276 |
| I prefer buying products that are advertised by celebrities | Male | 192 | 3.91 | .357 | .026 |
| | Female | 175 | 3.81 | .507 | .038 |
| Famous celebrities used in product adverts drive product sales | Male | 192 | 3.96 | .237 | .017 |
| | Female | 175 | 3.74 | .574 | .043 |
| I repeatedly buy products promoted by my favorite celebrities | Male | 192 | 3.87 | .468 | .034 |
| | Female | 175 | 3.87 | .442 | .033 |
| Celebrities are used in marketing campaigns to drive up sales | Male | 192 | 3.89 | .319 | .023 |
| | Female | 175 | 3.80 | .401 | .030 |

Source: SPSS Output Base on Questionnaires' Data (2020)

Analysis in table 1 revealed influence of brand celebrity on repeat purchase of soft drinks in Rivers State. Finding shows that influence of brand celebrity on repeat purchase is to a high extent. The weighted mean of 3.90 & 3.80 for male and female respondents respectively is greater than the criterion mean of 2.5. With the grand mean of 3.85 the respondents agree to a high extent that brand celebrity influences repeat purchase of soft drinks in Rivers State.

4.2 Research Question 2

To what extent does brand celebrity influence customer loyalty of soft drinks in Rivers State?

Table 4.2: Computation of consumer's responses on brand celebrity and customer loyalty of soft drinks in Rivers State (N=367).

| | AGE | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---|------------------|-----|--------|----------------|--------------------|
| BRAND CELEBRITY AMBASSADOR AND CUSTOMER LOYALTY | 15-45yrs | 216 | 3.8900 | .20687 | .01408 |
| | 46yrs & Above | 151 | 3.7699 | .26382 | .02147 |
| Using celebrity in advertisement enhance commitment to do business with a particular organization | 15-45yrs | 216 | 3.88 | .407 | .028 |
| | 46yrs & Above | 151 | 3.81 | .495 | .040 |
| Brand celebrity ambassador advertisement is one of the key factors of a company's success | 15-45yrs | 216 | 3.80 | .512 | .035 |
| | 46yrs & Above | 151 | 3.72 | .546 | .044 |
| Consumers deeply held | 15-45yrs | 216 | 3.88 | .432 | .029 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---------------|-----|------|------|------|
| commitment to brands, despite situational influences and marketing efforts when promoted by celebrities | 46yrs & Above | 151 | 3.66 | .566 | .046 |
| Perceived value of brands are gained when renowned celebrities advertise products | 15-45yrs | 216 | 4.00 | .000 | .000 |
| | 46yrs & Above | 151 | 3.89 | .309 | .025 |

Source: SPSS output (Base on questionnaires' data 2020)

Analysis in table 2 revealed influence of brand celebrity ambassador on customer loyalty of soft drinks in Rivers State. Finding shows that influence of brand celebrity on customer loyalty is to a high extent. The weighted mean of 3.89 & 3.76 for respondent age 15-55yrs & 46yrs and above respectively is greater than the criterion mean of 2.5. With the grand mean of 3.82 the respondents agree to a high extent that brand celebrity influences customer loyalty of soft drinks in Rivers State.

Research Question 3

To what extent does marketing professionals influence repeat purchase of soft drinks in Rivers State?

Table 4.3: Computation of consumer's responses on marketing professionals and repeat purchase of soft drinks in Rivers State (N=367).

| | GENDER | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---|--------|-----|--------|----------------|-----------------|
| MARKETING PROFESSIONALS AND REPEAT PURCHASE | Male | 192 | 3.6458 | .23071 | .01665 |
| | Female | 175 | 3.7671 | .31553 | .02385 |
| Engaging marketing professionals in brand promotions appeals physical and emotional commitment of customers. | Male | 192 | 3.01 | .102 | .007 |
| | Female | 175 | 3.66 | .544 | .041 |
| The highest valuable result of marketing efforts is gainfully achieved when professionals stage marketing process | Male | 192 | 3.82 | .505 | .036 |
| | Female | 175 | 3.74 | .574 | .043 |
| The development that incorporates marketing professionals into marketing has become an important focus on marketing strategy. | Male | 192 | 3.87 | .468 | .034 |
| | Female | 175 | 3.87 | .442 | .033 |
| One of the benefits of | Male | 192 | 3.89 | .319 | .023 |

| | | | | | |
|---|--------|-----|------|------|------|
| adopting marketing professionals in brand promotion is to provide inclusive lower customer price sensitivity, | Female | 175 | 3.80 | .401 | .030 |
|---|--------|-----|------|------|------|

Source: SPSS output (Base on questionnaires' data 2020)

Analysis in table 3 revealed influence of marketing professionals on repeat purchase of soft drinks in Rivers State. Finding shows that influence of marketing professionals on repeat purchase is to a high extent. The weighted mean of 3.64 & 3.76 for male and female respondents respectively is greater than the criterion mean of 2.5. With the grand mean of 3.70 the respondents agree to a high extent that marketing professionals influences repeat purchase of soft drinks in Rivers State.

Research Question 4

To what extent does marketing professionals influence customer loyalty of soft drinks in Rivers State?

Table 4.4: Computation of consumer's responses on marketing professionals and customer loyalty of soft drinks in Rivers State (N=367).

| | AGE | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|--|---------------|-----|--------|----------------|-----------------|
| MARKETING PROFESSIONALS AND CUSTOMER LOYALTY | 15-45yrs | 216 | 3.8380 | .21918 | .01491 |
| | 46yrs & Above | 151 | 3.7334 | .25441 | .02070 |
| There is always positive belief in the value that a company provides, leading to increased purchases over time when adverts sales are driven by professionals. | 15-45yrs | 216 | 3.88 | .398 | .027 |
| | 46yrs & Above | 151 | 3.81 | .495 | .040 |
| Using marketing professionals in achieving brand loyalty is to emphasize that loyalty is a feature of people, rather than something inherent in brands | 15-45yrs | 216 | 3.75 | .541 | .037 |
| | 46yrs & Above | 151 | 3.57 | .595 | .048 |
| Brand loyalty is primarily an attitude that leads to a relationship with brand as expressed by marketing professionals | 15-45yrs | 216 | 3.88 | .450 | .031 |
| | 46yrs & Above | 151 | 3.66 | .566 | .046 |
| Though loyalty is built | 15-45yrs | 216 | 3.85 | .361 | .025 |

| | | | | | |
|--|---------------|-----|------|------|------|
| on satisfaction, with the interface of marketing professionals organizations can have loyalty even without brand satisfaction. | 46yrs & Above | 151 | 3.89 | .309 | .025 |
|--|---------------|-----|------|------|------|

Source: SPSS output (Base on questionnaires' data 2020)

Analysis in table 4 revealed influence of marketing professionals on customer loyalty of soft drinks in Rivers State. Finding shows that influence of marketing professionals on customer loyalty is to a high extent. The weighted mean of 3.83 & 3.73 for respondent age 15-55yrs & 46yrs and above respectively is greater than the criterion mean of 2.5. With the grand mean of 3.78 the respondents agree to a high extent that marketing professionals influences customer loyalty of soft drinks in Rivers State.

Research Question 5

To what extent does notable brand advocate influence repeat purchase of soft drinks in Rivers State?

Table 4.5: Computation of consumer's responses on notable brand advocate and repeat purchase of soft drinks in Rivers State (N=367).

| | GENDER | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---|--------|-----|--------|-------------------|-----------------|
| NOTABLE BRAND ADVOCATE AND REPEAT PURCHASE | Male | 192 | 3.8984 | .20169 | .01456 |
| | Female | 175 | 3.8314 | .22934 | .01734 |
| With efficient brand advocating companies reduced expenditure on attracting new customers | Male | 192 | 3.91 | .357 | .026 |
| | Female | 175 | 3.81 | .507 | .038 |
| Brand advocates encourage people to keeps buying out of inertia, indifference or exit barriers | Male | 192 | 3.82 | .505 | .036 |
| | Female | 175 | 3.65 | .607 | .046 |
| Customer repeat purchase through brand advocate has evidence not only as behavior but also as attitude. | Male | 192 | 3.87 | .468 | .034 |
| | Female | 175 | 3.87 | .442 | .033 |
| Repeat purchase based on the attitude enhanced by brand advocate is more faithful than normal behavior | Male | 192 | 4.00 | .000 ^a | .000 |
| | Female | 175 | 4.00 | .000 ^a | .000 |

Source: SPSS output (Base on questionnaires' data 2020)

Analysis in table 5 revealed influence of notable brand advocate on repeat purchase of soft drinks in Rivers State. Finding shows that influence of notable brand advocate on repeat purchase is to a high extent. The weighted mean of 3.89 & 3.83 for male and female respondents respectively is greater than the criterion mean of 2.5. With the grand mean of 3.86 the respondents agree to a high extent that

notable brand advocate influences repeat purchase of soft drinks in Rivers State.

Research Question 6

To what extent does notable brand advocate influence customer loyalty of soft drinks in Rivers State?

Table 4.6: Computation of consumer's responses on notable brand advocate and customer loyalty of soft drinks in Rivers State (N=367).

| | | AGE | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---|--|---------------|-----|--------|----------------|-----------------|
| NOTABLE BRAND ADVOCATE AND CUSTOMER LOYALTY | | 15-45yrs | 216 | 3.8762 | .22099 | .01504 |
| | | 46yrs & Above | 151 | 3.8444 | .25453 | .02071 |
| Loyalty built around brand advocacy can result to a constant and positive attitude towards brands | | 15-45yrs | 216 | 3.84 | .413 | .028 |
| | | 46yrs & Above | 151 | 3.85 | .438 | .036 |
| Brand loyalty facilitated by brand advocacy establishes positive perception towards the company | | 15-45yrs | 216 | 3.78 | .507 | .035 |
| | | 46yrs & Above | 151 | 3.75 | .516 | .042 |
| Brand advocates give recommendations to consumers and keeping the consumption of the product continuously | | 15-45yrs | 216 | 3.88 | .443 | .030 |
| | | 46yrs & Above | 151 | 3.84 | .433 | .035 |
| Customer loyalty achieved through brand advocacy is a manifest and the follow up of customer satisfaction | | 15-45yrs | 216 | 4.00 | .000 | .000 |
| | | 46yrs & Above | 151 | 3.93 | .261 | .021 |

Source: SPSS output (Base on questionnaires' data 2020)

Analysis in table 6 revealed influence of notable brand advocate on customer loyalty of soft drinks in Rivers State. Finding shows that influence of notable brand advocate on customer loyalty is to a high extent. The weighted mean of 3.87 & 3.84 for respondent age 15-55yrs & 46yrs and above respectively is greater than the criterion mean of 2.5. With the grand mean of 3.85 the respondents agree to a high extent that notable brand advocate influences customer loyalty of soft drinks in Rivers State.

Hypothesis 1:

There is no significant relationship between brand celebrity and repeat purchase of soft drinks in Rivers State.

Table 4.7: Computation of relationship between brand celebrity and repeat purchase of soft drinks in Rivers State.

| | | BRAND CELEBRITY | REPEAT PURCHASE |
|-----------------|---------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| BRAND CELEBRITY | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .954** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .000 |
| | N | 367 | 367 |
| REPEAT PURCHASE | Pearson Correlation | .954** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | |
| | N | 367 | 367 |

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS-generated Output

Table 7 shows a correlated result of an analysis on brand celebrity and repeat purchase of soft drinks in Rivers State. The result indicates that brand celebrity has a strong positive correlation with repeat purchase ($r = .954$) which is significant at 0.05 level. Based on this result, the null hypothesis (H_{01}) of no significant relationship between brand celebrity and repeat purchase of soft drinks in Rivers State is rejected. Hence, there is a strong positive relationship between brand celebrity and repeat purchase of soft drinks in Rivers State. This implies that repeat purchase will most likely increase as often as we adopt popular celebrity to promote our soft drink brand.

Hypothesis 2:

There is no significant relationship brand celebrity and customer loyalty of soft drinks in Rivers State.

Table 4.8: Computation of relationship between brand celebrity and customer loyalty of soft drinks in Rivers State.

| | | CUSTOMER LOYALTY | BRAND CELEBRITY |
|------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| CUSTOMER LOYALTY | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .892** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .000 |
| | N | 367 | 367 |
| BRAND CELEBRITY | Pearson Correlation | .892** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | |
| | N | 367 | 367 |

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS-generated Output

Table 8 shows a correlated result of an analysis on brand celebrity and customer loyalty of soft drinks in Rivers State. The result indicates that brand celebrity has a strong positive correlation with customer loyalty ($r = .892$) which is significant at 0.05 level. Based on this result, the null hypothesis (H_{02}) of no significant relationship between brand celebrity and customer loyalty of soft drinks in Rivers State is rejected. Hence, there is a strong positive relationship between brand celebrity and customer loyalty of soft drinks in Rivers State. This is an indication that customer loyalty will increase whenever popular brand celebrity is adopted in the promotion of soft drinks in Rivers State.

Hypothesis 3:

There is no significant relationship between marketing professionals and repeat purchase of soft drinks in Rivers State.

Table 4.9: Computation of relationship between marketing professionals and repeat purchase of soft drinks in Rivers State.

| | | REPEAT PURCHASE | MARKETING PROFESSIONALS |
|-------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| REPEAT PURCHASE | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .887** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .000 |
| | N | 367 | 367 |
| MARKETING PROFESSIONALS | Pearson Correlation | .887** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | |
| | N | 367 | 367 |

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS-generated Output

Table 9 shows a correlated result of an analysis on marketing professionals and repeat purchase of soft drinks in Rivers State. The result indicates that marketing professionals has a strong positive correlation with repeat purchase ($r = .887$) which is significant at 0.05 level. Based on this result, the null hypothesis (H_{03}) of no significant relationship between marketing professionals and repeat purchase of soft drinks in Rivers State is rejected. Hence, there is a strong positive relationship between marketing professionals and repeat purchase of soft drinks in Rivers State. This means repeat purchase increases when marketing professional are adopted to promote soft drinks in Rivers State.

Hypothesis 4:

There is no significant relationship between marketing professionals and customer loyalty of soft drinks in Rivers State.

Table 4.10: Computation of relationship between marketing professionals and customer loyalty of soft drinks in Rivers State.

| | | CUSTOMER LOYALTY | MARKETING PROFESSIONALS |
|----------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| CUSTOMER LOYALTY | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .936** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .000 |
| | N | 367 | 367 |
| MARKETING PROFESSIONALS | Pearson Correlation | .936** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | |
| | N | 367 | 367 |

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS-generated Output

Table 10 shows a correlated result of an analysis on marketing professionals and customer loyalty of soft drinks in Rivers State. The result indicates that brand celebrity has a strong positive correlation with customer loyalty ($r = .936$) which is significant at 0.05 level. Based on this result, the null hypothesis (H_{04}) of no significant relationship between marketing professionals and customer loyalty of soft drinks in Rivers State is rejected. Hence, there is a strong positive relationship between marketing professionals and customer loyalty of soft drinks in Rivers State. This therefore indicates that customer loyalty increases when marketing professional are engaged to promote soft drinks in Rivers State.

Hypothesis 5:

There is no relationship between notable brand advocate and repeat purchase of soft drinks in Rivers State.

Table 4.11: Computation of relationship between notable brand advocate and repeat purchase of soft drinks in Rivers State.

| | | REPEAT PURCHASE | BRAND ENTHUSIAST |
|------------------|---------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| REPEAT PURCHASE | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .943** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .000 |
| | N | 367 | 367 |
| BRAND ENTHUSIAST | Pearson Correlation | .943** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | |
| | N | 367 | 367 |

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS-generated Output

Table 11 shows a correlated result of an analysis on notable brand advocate and repeat purchase of soft drinks in Rivers State. The result indicates that notable brand advocate has a strong positive correlation with repeat purchase ($r = .943$) which is significant at 0.05 level. Based on this result, the null hypothesis (H_{05}) of no significant relationship between notable brand advocate and repeat purchase of soft drinks in Rivers State is rejected. Hence, there is a strong positive relationship between notable brand advocate and repeat purchase of soft drinks in Rivers State. This implies that an increase in the activities of brand enthusiast will result to corresponding increase in customers repeat purchase of soft drinks in Rivers State.

Hypothesis 6:

There is no significant relationship between notable brand advocate and customer loyalty of soft drinks in Rivers State.

Table 4.12: Computation of relationship between notable brand and customer loyalty of soft drinks in Rivers State

| | | CUSTOMER LOYALTY | BRAND ENTHUSIAST |
|----------|---------------------|------------------|------------------|
| CUSTOMER | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .645** |

| | | | |
|------------------|---------------------|--------|------|
| LOYALTY | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .000 |
| | N | 367 | 367 |
| BRAND ENTHUSIAST | Pearson Correlation | .645** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | |
| | N | 367 | 367 |

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS-generated Output

Table 12 shows a correlated result of an analysis on notable brand advocate and customer loyalty of soft drinks in Rivers State. The result indicates that notable brand advocate has a moderate positive correlation with customer loyalty ($r = .645$) which is significant at 0.05 level. Based on this result, the null hypothesis (H_{06}) of no significant relationship between notable brand advocate and customer loyalty of soft drinks in Rivers State is rejected. Hence, there is a strong positive relationship between notable brand advocate and customer loyalty of soft drinks in Rivers State. This implies that an increase in the activities of brand enthusiast will result to corresponding increase in customers customer loyalty of soft drinks in Rivers State.

Discussion of Findings

Findings in Table 1 show the mean, weighted and grand mean ratings of brand celebrity on repeat purchase of soft drinks in Rivers State. Responses under research question 1 indicate high extent because the grand mean of 3.85 is above the criterion mean of 2.50. Result also indicates a very strong positive relationship between brand celebrity and repeat purchase of soft drinks in Rivers State. This finding agreed with the work of Goutam (2013) that brand ambassador was significant to brand popularity as consumers could associate with brands endorsed by celebrities. Similarly, Mukherjee, (2009) asserts that products supported by famous celebrities will get its brand awareness and positive impression.

Findings in Table 4 show the mean, weighted and grand mean ratings of marketing professionals on customer loyalty of soft drinks in Rivers State. Responses under research question 4 indicate high extent because the grand mean of 3.78 is above the criterion mean of 2.50. Result also indicates a very strong positive relationship between marketing professionals on customer loyalty of soft drinks in Rivers State. This finding is in congruence with MacInnis and Rao (2002) who posit that product sales are increasing with the sale of ad media lines, and most of the ad content focuses on the spokespersons basically marketing professionals. This was upheld by Balmer and Gray (2003) brand ambassadors play a role in communicating corporate brands to outside audiences, which is an instrument used by companies to communicate and connect with the community, about how they can increase sales, (Lea-Greenwood, 2012).

Findings in Table 5 show the mean, weighted and grand mean ratings of notable brand enthusiast on repeat purchase of soft drinks in Rivers State. Responses under research question 5 indicate high extent because the grand mean of 3.86 is above the criterion mean of 2.50. Result also indicates a very strong positive relationship between notable brand advocate on repeat purchase of soft drinks in Rivers State. This finding is in consonant with Commander (2007) assertion that brand information through advocates spread first to the closest people, friends, relatives and co-workers, and later on at the highest stage of brand advocacy where people distribute the brand information to everyone and as such leads to purchase. It was also revealed by Alexandra (2020) that sales promotion, brand advocates are more than just loyal customers as they identify with the values of their favorite brands and consider their buying choices part of their identities.

Conclusion

Based on analysis of data, the study concludes that there is significant relationship between brand celebrity and repeat purchase of soft drink in Rivers State, that there is significant relationship between brand celebrity and customer loyalty of soft drink in Rivers State, that there is significant relationship between marketing professionals and repeat purchase of soft drink in Rivers State, that there is significant relationship between marketing professionals and customer loyalty of soft drink in Rivers State, that there is significant relationship between brand enthusiast and repeat purchase of soft drink in Rivers State and that there is significant relationship between notable brand advocate and customer loyalty of soft drink in Rivers State. The study therefore concludes that there is a significant relationship between brand ambassador and consumer purchase decision of soft drinks in Rivers State.

Recommendation

The study offers the following recommendations in line with the objectives to the soft drinks marketers in Rivers State.

- Popular celebrities should be considered as part of strategies for creating brand awareness in the soft drink industry in order to stimulate customer loyalty and boost sales in the long run.
- Marketing professionals should be engaged by soft drinks firms with low sales performance to stimulate customers repeat purchase behavior and boost their sales.
- Business managers can equally engage the services of brand enthusiast in promoting sales in their organization.

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