

# Positioning Strategies and Customer Patronage of Fast-Food Firms in Port Harcourt, Nigeria

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## Abstract

Our research focus was to investigate the relationship between positioning strategies and customer patronage of fast food firms in Port Harcourt Metropolis in Nigeria. We applied a descriptive research design using cross sectional survey. A self-administered questionnaire was employed with a sample size of 123 which is conveniently extracted from fast food employees out of which 110 copies were found useable. To ensure reliability, the Cronbach's Alpha reliability measure was applied using 'SPSS' version 20.0. In analyzing the relationship between our variables of interest and to test the hypothesis, multiple regression analysis was employed with the application of SPSS 20.0 and GRETL software packages. Our findings showed an insignificant relationship between all positioning strategies and customer patronage. Although our estimated relationship of interest was not spurious but only 2.5% of the variation in Customer patronage was explained by the joint influence of customer expectation, location, service quality and assortment.

**Keywords:** Positioning strategy, Customer patronage, Customer expectation, Location, assortment, Dineserv

## INTRODUCTION

Organizations are today facing challenges on how to out-perform one another. As the business topography becomes more and more undulating, firms such as fast-food companies continue to search for the right strategic bearing to navigate. On the other hand, the customer cumbered with his own needs, desires and preferences remains the sole target of these firms. As the customer's taste is ever changing, accessing him through the right strategy becomes every firm's priority. Consequently, in an attempt to gaining sustainable differential advantage over competing firms, Porter (1985) firms evolve strategic options based on available resources, capabilities, and other distinctive competences to meet changing customer requirements. Successful and profitable operations by firms demand that such strategic blue-prints must be appealing enough to elicit customer patronage (Kuti & Harrison, 2012 as cited in John, Adiele & Nkoro, 2013). Again, in comparison with other industries, fast-food firms are sometimes faced with peculiar difficulties in positioning and promoting their products.

Globally, studies on fast-food is said to have received considerable research (Mattila, 2001) and in Nigeria, this subject matter has been examined from different angles (Adewuje, Ayinla & Bakare, 2014; Akinbola, Ogunnaike & Ojo, 2013; Akinyele, 2010; Ateke, Onwujiariri & Nnennanya, 2015; Dipeolu, Otemuyiwa & Adewusi, 2012; Konwea, 2012; Oni & Matiza, 2014; Salami & Ajobo, 2012). In Nigeria, firms in this industry are facing keen competition on how to out-rival one another. With a high rate of customer expectations and increased environmental influence (Akinyele, 2010; Dipeolu et. al., 2014) myriad of factors have been used to explore patronage of consumers in this industry but just few have tackled them from an empirical angle. Moreover, meeting these high customer expectations and increased environmental influence (Akinyele, 2010) appear to have created a gap in literature. Thus, employing more empirical probing to determining the best strategic option to adopt in the industry appears quite inevitable. The questions therefore arise: will patronage respond to all these strategies that have been proffered by extant literature? Can one strategy be said to be more potent than the other? What strategic combinations will yield higher patronage? In answering these questions and to fill the gap in literature, this particular study attempts to empirically investigate how a combination of certain positional strategies such as customer expectation, location, service quality, and assortment can be used to effect customer patronage in the fast-food industry especially in Port Harcourt metropolis in Nigeria.

## 2.0 Conceptualization

### 2.1.1 Customer Expectations

Every consumer is expectant; looking forward to some good offerings from exchange partners. These expectations may arise from his past experience, marketers' and competitors' information, personal needs etc. (Kotler, 2000). Thus, understanding and meeting these expectations and satisfying them become crucial in capturing customers, retaining them and gaining competitive advantage (Fornell & Wernerfelt, 1987; Parasuraman et al., 1988). Understanding customer's expectations mean understanding his evaluations (Lovelock and Wirtz, 2007). Such a consumer will always compare his expectations with the supplier's offerings to see if they meet or exceed his expectations they averred. That is, identifying the gaps between customers' expectations of the service and his perceptions of the actual performance (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry,

1988). Parasuramanet (1988) introduced a service quality model called SERVQUAL to measure the gap between customer expectations and his service experience. This generic model has five-dimensional structure which include; tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. Though, Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithaml (1993) have argued that the model is conceptually, theoretically and practically sound, but its universal applicability has been questioned (Yi, 2004). Thus, a model called DINESERV which is a relatively simpler and reliable means of measuring customer expectations of service quality in restaurants and fast food businesses has been advanced (Kim, Ng, & Kim, 2009 as cited in Dutta et al., 2014 & Omo-Diagi, Medina & Pereira, 2015). The authors opined that his model has increased the attributes a customer might want to expect in a fast food outlet. Such attributes include; service, value, food quality, convenience, price and environmental ambience Kim et al., (2009), low price, location, value for money, service, higher quality, food taste, location, brand image and so on (Hu, 2009; Chow et al., 2007; Quan & Wang, 2004).

### **2.1.2 Location**

Location is an important feature of food business that affects consumer patronage behaviour (Hyun, 2010). Meyer and Eagle (1982) as cited in Poornima and Ashok (2013), assert that rational location decisions are of utmost importance to a business concern. According to Eze, Ejikeme and Ufot (2015), a better location gives organizations greater chances of attracting favourable environmental opportunities, faster goal achievement, profitability, successful operations and overall growth etc. Though location is considered a vital factor by consumers in a retail outlet selection decision, distance from home is sometimes put into consideration while choosing where to shop (Brooks, Kaufmann & Lichtenstein, 2004). Certain location models have given credence to the above assertions e.g. 'Agglomeration Effect', that - locating a retail outlet near other retail stores (Fox, Postrel & McLaughlin, 2007). In support of this claim, Liu (2011) opine that close proximity of multiple stores as in a shopping mall, can lead to an increase in purchase incidence because of an agglomeration effect. Retail gravitation model posits that the tendency of a consumer patronizing a particular shopping location is directly linked to its size and conversely linked to the proximity from his location (Brown, 1993 as cited in Liu, 2011); implying that the bigger the size of the retail outlet, the greater the consumer's desire to shop there, especially when the outlet is closer to the consumer's location. According to the 'Central Place Theory' a consumer has the propensity to patronize an outlet that is both central and easily accessible (Fox, Postrel & McLaughlin, 2007) but conditional upon the handiness of his desired product; especially when it brings about a reduction in his travel cost (Christaller, 1966 as cited in Eze, Odigbo & Ufot, 2015; Hubbard, 1978). Extant literature shows how a consumer's travel time from his location to a retail outlet was used to predict his patronage and spending, and was found that Shopping and spending were highly sensitive to his travel time (Lodish, 2004). Contrasting this claim, the 'Spatial Interaction Theory' is of the opinion that the attractive physical ambience around another retail shop can counteract the incentive of a reduced transportation cost; thus, playing an important role in the choice of a retail location (Dawson, 1980; Fotheringham & O'Kelly, 1989).

### **2.1.3 Service Quality**

One way an organization can improve its image thereby maintaining and attracting new customers is through superior quality offering (Ehmayar, 2011; Raman et al., 2014). Service quality construct has enjoyed popularity in marketing literature (Cronin, & Taylor, 1992; Edvardsson, 2005; Ehmayar, 2011; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988; Zeithaml, & Bitner, 2003). Good quality service to customers is key to a firm's success (Kheng, Mahamad, Ramayah & Mosahab, 2010). It equally improves organization's image, achieve greater performance, and attracting customers (Elmayar, 2011; Raman, Munien & Mohamad, 2014). Service quality is how a consumer assesses a firm and its services generally; whether in term of its superiority or inferiority (Bitner, Booms & Mohr, 1994). How a consumer views the quality of service is a function of his expectation and the outcome of the services rendered by service personnel (Jamal et al., 2009). Customers will judge quality as low if expectation falls below performance and vice versa (Grönroos, 1982; & Suma & Garg, 2012). Previous literature has applied the 'SERVQUAL MODEL' which incorporates 'reliability, responsiveness, empathy, assurance, and tangibles' as vital aspects of service quality (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1988). This model has been variously criticized. (Yi, 2004), but Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithaml (1993) argued that the model is conceptually, theoretically and practically sound.

### **2.1.4. Assortment**

Diverse consumer interest in product selection is noted to have been resolved through large assortment (Inman, 2001). A key supposition has been that offering buyers a variety of product options is better than offering them limited choices; expressing that greater variety gives consumers maximum freedom to select products that meet their tastes and preferences (Lancaster, 1990 as cited in Berger, Draganska & Simonson, 2007). Again, extant literature posits that larger assortment can sometimes make consumers confused and even frustrated (Chernev, 2003). Therefore, retail owners must be careful to stock only those products that meet consumer needs and capable of rousing purchase attention (Asuquo & Igbongidi, 2015; Elmaraghy, et al., 2013).

A wider range of assortment could possibly lead to the satisfaction of different tastes, and an increase in brand choices will ultimately create a plethora of potentials in so many areas; including market expansion, higher

sales volume and an upward shift in company revenue (Berger et al., 2007). However, these can only be achieved if assortment is properly managed (ElMaraghy et al., 2013)

## 2.2 Customer Patronage

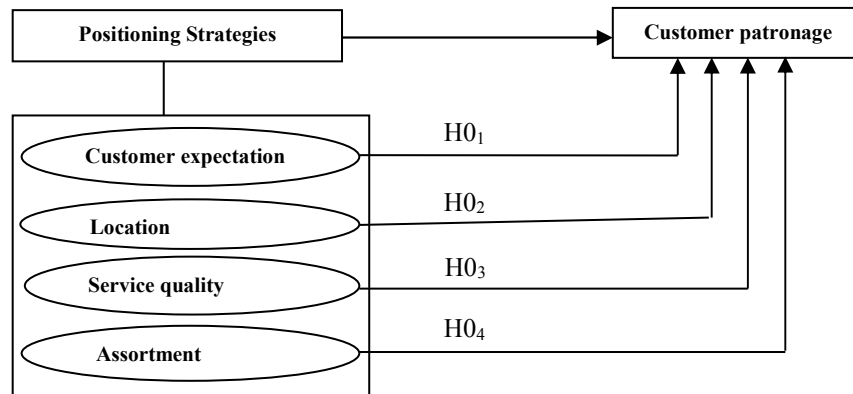
In the recent past, customer patronage has been associated with several factors. These include physical setting, business location, corporate identity and advanced inclination behaviour (Adiele&Opara, 2015; Amue, Adiele&Nkoro, 2013; Chukwu&Uzoma, 2014; Eze, Odigbo&Ufot, 2015; Jere, 2014; Nwulu&Asiegbu, 2015; Ogwo&Igwe, 2012). Literature abounds on the antecedents of customer patronage including product service, quality, service environment, store choice, shopping experience, cost and merchandise value, location, merchandise and store atmosphere, access in store atmosphere and cross category product store assessment (Ailawadi& Keller, 2004; Bitner, 1998; Baker et al., 2002; Eze, Odigbo, Ufot, 2015; Mazusky& Jacoby, 1986; Pan & Zinkhan, 2006; Zeithml et al., 1996). Jere (2014) suggests that a conceptualized notion of store patronage is anteceded by attitudinal and behavioural intentions and they offer several benefits which include; functional or utilitarian benefits, hedonic benefits and psychological benefits (Babin&Daden, 1994; Kang &lang, 1988; Kriesner & Leeth, 2010; Larsen & Buss, 2009; Pajwanet, 2010; Zhou & Pham, 2004 as cited in Nwulu&Asiegbu, 2015; Zihkhan, Frontendle&Balazs, 1996). Other factors are hinged on behavioural measures (Ajzen, 1991; McCrae, 2003 as cited in Nwulu &Asiegbu, 2015). Attitudinal measures are said to rank over behavioural measures (Olivia, Oliver & Macmilian, 1992 as cited in Igwe et al., 2012).

To better understand customer patronage behaviour researchers have made reference to several theories. Prominent among them is the "Theory of Reasoned Action" (TRA), developed by Fishbein and Ajzen (1980). This theory asserts that "people have high degree of volitional control and make reasoned choices among alternatives" (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1975). The fast- food industry is one sector where the application of this theory has been found to be of immense relevance (Sheppard, Harwick&Warshaw, 1988). The theory explains the functional relationship between attitude and subjective norm (i.e. attitude imposed by referent group) and that a person's behavioural intention is predicated on these two basic factors - his/her attitude and subjective norm to maintain relationship (Ajzen&Fishbien, 1975 as cited in Igwe et al., 2012).

Patronage behaviour can therefore be measured by myriads of factors including; patronage intention, shopping enjoyment, satisfaction, time spent, number of items bought, repeat purchase, money spent, share of wallet, patronage action and repeat purchase or re-patronage (Nwulu & Asiegbu, 2015; Paswan et al., 2010). As connoting business performance measures - sales growth, profit and sales volume (Asiegbu et al., 2011).

## Positioning Strategies and Customer Patronage

Positioning is a psychological construct just like image and reputation and it is a crucial factor in strategic decisions (Harrison-Walker, 2011). "Positioning is a deliberate, proactive, iterative process of defining, measuring, modifying and monitoring of the consumers' perceptions of a marketable object" (Arnott, 1993). It is an act organizations use to design its offering and images to occupy a distinct place in the customer's mind (Kotler, 2001). It is battling for the customer's mind (Ries&Tout, 1981). Positional strategy is contextual (Bridson, Evans, Marvondo, Minkie&Wicz, 2013) therefore it can assume different forms. Aaker and Shansby (1982) opined that positioning can be approached from six dimensions, namely; attribute, positioning by use, competitive positioning, positioning by user, price/quality and product category. Contra-wise, Wortzel (1987) as cited in Kuzmanovic et al., (2011) proposes product differentiation strategy, service and personality differentiation strategy and price leadership strategy; as three fundamental retail positioning strategies. While the first strategy focuses on offering an assortment different from those of the competitors, the latter introduces unique services and personality to differentiate a retail outlet from competing stores. Every aspect of a firm's marketing programmes and tactics can potentially affect its positioning process (Harrison, 2011). Experts suggest such positioning which aim is to enhance organizational growth must not only be credible, but meaningful to the target audience and should also show marked differentiation of a firm's offering from competing brands (Janiszewka&Insch, 2012). In this study, several factors have been positioned as drivers of customer patronage including; service quality, assortment and business location (Eze, Odigbo&Ufot, 2015; Pan & Zinkhan, 2006).



**Conceptual framework of the proposed relationship between positioning strategies on customer patronage.**  
 Source: Researcher’s Literature Review

**The Research Hypotheses**

Our discussion of related hypotheses will be based on review of the works of previous authors. In addressing pertinent issues of the relationship between positioning strategies and customer patronage, four constructs; customer expectation, location service quality and assortment were conceptualized as key positioning strategies and drivers of customer patronage, we therefore propose the following hypotheses

- $H_{01}$ : There is no significant relationship between customer expectation and customer patronage.
- $H_{02}$ : There is no significant relationship between location and customer patronage.
- $H_{03}$ : There is no significant relationship between service quality and customer patronage.
- $H_{04}$ : There is no significant relationship between assortment and customer patronage.

**METHODOLOGY**

This research empirically studies the relationship between positioning strategies and customer patronage in Port Harcourt in Nigeria. A descriptive research design was applied using cross sectional survey. 123copies of a structured questionnaire were conveniently administered on a five (5) point Likert scale and only 110 copies retrieved from the respondents were found useable. While some copies of the instruments were allowed for experts’ examination, the Cronbach’s Alpha reliability measure was applied using ‘SPSS’ version 20.0 to ensure reliability and internal consistency of the instrument. The alpha values for the different scale items were reliable and valid since they are far above 0.7 thresholds prescribed by Nunnaly (1978).To analyze the relationship between the predictor and criterion variables, multiple regression analyses was employed with the application of SPSS 20.0 and GRETLL Software packages. Both were employed to ensure ‘OLS’ conditions were met so as to achieve ‘BLUE’ in our analysis and Hypothesis testing.

**Proposed Model Specification**

$$CP = f(CE, LO, SQ, AS)$$

$$CP = \beta_0 + \beta_1CE + \beta_2LO + \beta_3SQ + \beta_4AS + \epsilon_t$$

Where:

- $CP$  = Customer patronage
- $CE$  = Customer expectation
- $LO$  = Location
- $SQ$  = Service Quality
- $AS$  = Assortment
- $\beta_0$  = Intercept
- $\beta_i$  = Regression coefficient
- $\epsilon_t$  = Classical Error Term

**Reliability coefficients for the variables are as follows**

Variable	Cronbach’s Alpha
Customer expectation	0.730
Location	0.764
Service Quality	0.935
Assortment	0.793
Customer Patronage	0.724

Source: Researcher’s data computation based on field study 2016

## 4.2 Data Presentation

### 4.2.1 Customer Expectation

Table 1 reports the opinions and perceptions of respondents on customer expectation. The respondents were asked to respond to 5 questionnaire items on various aspects of product/service performance and customer satisfaction including value, convenience, taste and need satisfaction, and good pricing. At the scale level, these items collectively measure the attitude or perception of respondents on whether their product/services meet customer's expectations. As this table indicates, 73.7% of the respondents indicate either to a great extent (57.3%) or to a very great extent (16.4%) that their products provide value to customers (mean = 3.83, standard deviation = 0.811), while 80.9% indicates either to a great extent (46.4%) or to a very great extent (34.5%) that their services provide convenience to customers (mean = 4.15, standard deviation = 4.15). Similarly, 76.4% of the respondents indicate either to a great extent (50.0%) or to a very great extent that their services satisfy customer's tastes and needs, while 70% indicates either to a great extent (40.0%) or to a very great extent (30.0%) that customers are comfortable with their prices. The variable (Grand) mean is 3.98 with low variability (standard deviation = 0.561), indicating that on balance, the respondents agree to a great extent that their product/services meet customer's expectations.

### 4.2.2 Location

The report shows the opinions and perceptions of respondents on business location. The respondents were asked to respond to 5 questionnaire items on their opinions regarding the effects of proximity of their shops and other shops on customers. At the scale level, these items collectively capture the attitude of respondents toward customer satisfaction regarding their shop location. As this table indicates, 77.3% of the respondents indicate either to a great extent (49.1%) or to a very great extent (28.2%) that they are satisfied with their business location (mean = 3.96, standard deviation = 0.923), while 56.3% indicates either to a great extent (32.7%) or to a very great extent (23.6%) that proximity to other shops increased patronage; 40.0% indicates a moderate extent (mean = 3.75, standard deviation = 0.903). For the fourth item (To what extent has the central location of your shop increased patronage?), 22.7% of the respondents indicate a very great extent, 36.4% indicates a great extent, 33.6% indicate a moderate extent and 5.5% and 1.8% indicate a low extent and to a very low extent respectively (mean = 3.73, standard deviation = 0.938). For the fifth item (To what extent does customer travel time affect their patronage?), 8.2% indicates a very great extent, 46.4% indicates a great extent, 37.3% indicate a moderate extent, and 6.4% and 1.8% indicates a low extent and to a very low extent (Mean = 3.53, standard deviation = 0.809). The location variable (Scale) mean is 3.74 with lower variability (standard deviation = 0.641), indicating that on balance, the respondents agree to a great extent that business location affects the level of customer patronage.

### 4.2.3 Service Quality

The opinions and perceptions of respondents on quality service delivery were analyzed. The respondents were asked to respond to 5 questionnaire items on their opinions regarding the quality of service their companies provide. At the scale level, these items collectively measure the attitude of employees toward quality service delivery. As this table indicates, 81% of the respondents indicate either to great extent (55.5%) or to very great extent (25.5%) that they provide reliable products/services to customers, and that their employees/colleagues become friendly to customers (mean = 4.03, standard deviation = 0.760). For the fourth item (To what extent do the employees of your outlet solve problems?), 11.8% of the respondents indicate a very great extent, 50.9% indicates a great extent, 32.7% indicates a moderate extent and 3.6% and 0.9% indicates a low extent and to a very low extent respectively (mean = 3.69, standard deviation = 0.763). For the fifth item (To what extent do you provide quality products and services to customers?), 26.4% indicates a very great extent, 59.1% indicates a great extent, 11.8% indicates a moderate extent, and 1.8% and 0.9% indicate a low extent and to a very low extent (Mean = 4.08, standard deviation = 0.731). The service variable (Scale) mean is 3.97 with lower variability (standard deviation = 0.675), indicating that on balance, the respondents agree to a great extent that they provide quality products and services to customers?

### 4.2.4 Assortment

In this report, the opinions and perceptions of respondents on product or service assortment. The respondents were asked to respond to 5 questionnaire items on their opinions about variety of the products they offer to customers. At the scale level, these items collectively measure the attitude of employees toward customers' satisfaction regarding the range of products or services they offer. As this table indicates 65.5% of the respondents indicate either to a great extent (45.5%) or to a very great extent (20.0%) that their outlets offer a wide range of products to customers (mean = 3.53, standard deviation = 1.202). 66.4% indicated either to a great extent (46.4%) or to a very great extent (20.0%) that customers get all the products they need in your outlet in one visit; 30.0% indicates a moderate extent (mean = 3.80, standard deviation = 0.865). For the fourth item (To what extent do your product combinations rouse customer's purchase intention?), 21.8% of the respondents indicate a very great extent, 47.3% indicates a great extent, 27.3% indicates a moderate extent and 2.7% and 0.9% indicates a low extent and to very low extent respectively (mean = 3.86, standard deviation = 0.818). For

the fifth item (To what degree is the distinctiveness of your product assortment?), 20.0% indicates a very great extent, 46.4% indicates a great extent, 29.1% indicates a moderate extent, and 2.7% and 1.8% indicate a low extent and to a very low extent (Mean = 3.80, standard deviation = 0.855). The Assort variable (Scale) mean is 3.75 with lower variability (standard deviation = 0.686), indicating that on balance, the respondents agree to a great extent that they offer a wide variety of product/services that meet customers' need.

#### 4.2.5 Customer Patronage

This reports the opinions and perceptions of respondents on customer patronage. The respondents were asked to respond to 5 questionnaire items on their opinions regarding the extent of customer patronage as a result of location, customer expectation, product/service quality, product assortment and repeated patronage. At the scale level, these items collectively measure the perception of employees on whether the various positioning strategies adopted by their firms have significantly impacted customer patronage. As this table indicates, more than half of the respondents (54.5%) indicate a moderate extent that their outlets record increased patronage as a result of location convenience, while 30.9% indicates a great extent (23.6%) or to a very great extent (7.3%) (mean = 3.23, standard deviation = 0.809). For the second item (To what extent do your outlet record increased patronage as a result of customer expectation?), 9.1% indicates a low extent, 42.7% indicates a moderate extent, and 35.5% and 12.7% indicate a great extent and to very great extent respectively (mean = 3.52, standard deviation = 0.832). For the third and fourth items, the mean values are 3.57 and 3.56 respectively, indicating that the respondents agree to a great extent their outlets record increased patronage as a result of product/service quality, and that their outlets record repeated patronage as a result of the variety of your products. For the fifth item (To what extent do your outlet record repeated patronage from your customers?), 57.3% indicates a great extent, 29.1% and 3.6% indicate a moderate extent and to a low extent respectively, while 10% indicates a very great extent (mean = 3.74, standard deviation = 0.686). The Patronage variable (Scale) mean is 3.52 with higher precision (standard deviation = 0.530), indicating that on balance, the respondents agree to a great extent that various positioning strategies have a significant impact on customer patronage.

### 4.3 DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS.

#### 4.3.1 MULTIPLE REGRESSION AND HYPOTHESIS TESTING

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	p-value
Constant	3.331	0.421	7.906	0.000
LOCATE	-0.010	0.097	-0.101	0.920
SERVQ	0.018	0.087	0.211	0.833
ASSORT	0.142	0.097	1.465	0.146
EXPECT	-0.095	0.112	-0.841	0.402
$R^2$ 0.025			F - statistic 0.673	
			Prob (F - statistic) 0.612	
Adjusted $R^2$ -0.012			Durbin - Watson stat 1.996	
BPG (LM) 3.218; p-value 0.522			BG (LM) 5.435; p-value 0.143	

**Table 2: Multiple regression results**

Table 2 reports the results of multiple regression of customer patronage on customer expectation, location, service quality and assortment based on the mean scale data. As the results indicate, although, our estimated relationship of interest is not spurious or nonsense as the value of  $R^2$  (0.025) is substantially lower than Durbin-Watson (DW) statistic (1.996). Granger and Newbold (1974) argue that if  $R^2 > DW$ , and then the estimated regression is spurious. The Durbin Watson value of 1.996 indicates that autocorrelation may not be present in the estimated model. Further, the serial correlation BG (LM) statistic is not significant at conventional levels, suggesting clear evidence that the estimated residuals are not serially correlated. Similarly, there is no evidence of heteroscedasticity as BPG LM statistic is not significant at conventional levels. Thus, our model is correctly specified.

For the relationships of interest, the intercept value is positive and significant; indicating that on average, customers significantly patronize fast food outlets even when there is no positioning strategy in place. Although, the partial regression coefficients have different signs, none of them is statistically significant, with the associated probability of t-statistic being substantially higher than any conventional level of significance for each coefficient. This is clear evidence that none of the positioning strategies has significant effect on customer patronage. For the goodness of fit test, the  $R^2$  of 0.025 indicates that the regression line is very poorly fitted as only 2.5% of the variation in Customer patronage is explained by the joint influence of location, assortment, expectation and service quality. The F-test indicate that the overall regression is not significant (F = 0.673, p = 0.612). Thus, we cannot reject the null hypothesis that positioning strategies (Customer expectation location, assortment and service quality) are not significantly related to customer patronage, both individually and collectively.

While a few prior studies agree with our findings it disagrees with a number of other studies. These findings seem to agree to an extent with the works of Hensley and Sulek (2007). In their studies, nine factors were tested and only one factor was found to have a significant effect on intent to return. However, our results on customer expectation contradict Omo-Diagi (2015) which results show a positive but moderate relationship on repeat patronage.

The location results show significant disparity with previous findings of Eze, Odigbo and Ufot(2015), Jere, Adere and Jere (2014) and Pan and Zinkhan (2006).

There appears to be some form of corroboration with the result of Ikeogun et al, (2013) studies of service quality in the aviation industry, but appears quite opposed to the findings of DiPietro, Parsa and Gregory (2010), Qin and Prybutok (2008) and Pan and Zinkhan (2006) who assert that in restaurant services/fast food, service quality has been found to drive repurchase.

On assortment, our findings also show no significant relationship between assortment and customer patronage contradicting Okeke (2004) as cited in (Asuquo and Igbongidi, 2015).

#### 4.3.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

1. There is no significant relationship between customer expectation and customer patronage.
2. There is no significant relationship between location and customer patronage.
3. There is no significant relationship between service quality and customer patronage.
4. There is no significant relationship between customer assortment and customer patronage

#### 5.0 CONCLUSION, IMPLIATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONAND SUGGESTION FOR FURTHER STUDIES.

From the results, the joint influence of customer expectation, location, assortment, and assortment insignificantly explain only about 2.5% of the total variation in customer patronage. The implication of these results is that although, employees believe that the various positioning strategies adopted in their companies have significantly influenced customer patronage, these strategies have however, not yielded the theoretically expected outcome. It may be the case that the perceived increase in the level of customer patronage in the fast food industry is attributable to other non-positional variables such as buyer characteristics, environmental and situational factors. Though, Kim et al. (2009) argues that proper management of customer expectations will facilitate customer satisfaction, we wish to add that a proper management and repositioning of all the explanatory variable of interest may yield some significant change in customer patronage.

We therefore recommend that fast food operators in Port Harcourt should work on the proposed variables of this study, move beyond these factors and adopt a more holistic positioning and repositioning approaches especially on some psychological factors such as herding and group thinking that may provide value and impact on customer patronage. This can provide additional insights into further studies. Furthermore, the moderating effects of some environmental factors such as insecurity issues which have made many companies and people in this region relocating to other parts of the country and also the pervading economic recession in the Nigerian economy are some areas that may need to be investigated in further studies.

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**APPENDICES**

**Table 1: CUSTOMER EXPECTATION**

Variable: Patronage No of Items = 5 Valid Response = 110 Cronbach's Alpha = 0.730		Percent of Respondents					Mean	Standard deviation	Interpretation/Decision
		VL	L	M	G	VG			
<b>CX1</b>	To what extent do your products provide value to customers?	1.8	3.6	20.9	57.3	16.4	3.83	0.811	Great Extent
<b>CX2</b>	To what degree do your services provide convenience to customers?	–	–	19.1	46.4	34.5	4.15	0.719	Great Extent
<b>CX3</b>	To what extent do you satisfy customers needs?	–	–	23.6	50.0	26.4	4.03	0.710	Great Extent
<b>CX4</b>	To what extent are our customers comfortable with your price?	–	1.8	28.2	40.0	30.0	3.98	0.8.13	Great Extent
<b>CX5</b>	To what extent does your product/service performance meet customer's expectation?	3.6	3.6	17.3	47.3	28.2	3.93	0.965	Great Extent
<b>EXPECT: Variable (Grand) Mean and Standard deviation</b>							3.98	0.561	<b>Great Extent</b>

**Table 2: BUSINESS LOCATION**

Variable: Location No of Items = 5 Valid Response = 110 Cronbach's Alpha = 0.764		Percent of Respondents					Mean	Standard deviation	Interpretation/Decision
		VL	L	M	G	VG			
<b>LOC1</b>	To what extent are you satisfied with your present location?	3.6	1.8	17.3	49.1	28.2	3.96	0.923	Great Extent
<b>LOC2</b>	To what extent has proximity to other shops increased patronage?	1.8	1.8	40.0	32.7	23.6	3.75	0.903	Great Extent
<b>LOC3</b>	To what extent has your shop proximity to customers' location affected patronage	1.8	7.3	21.8	52.7	16.4	3.75	0.882	Great Extent
<b>LOC4</b>	To what extent has the central location of your shop increased patronage?	1.8	5.5	33.6	36.4	22.7	3.73	0.938	Great Extent
<b>LOC5</b>	To what extent does customer travel time affect their patronage?	1.8	6.4	37.3	46.4	8.2	3.53	0.809	Great Extent
<b>LOCATION: Variable (Grand) Mean and Standard deviation</b>							3.74	0.641	<b>Great Extent</b>

**Table 3: SERVICE QUALITY**

Variable: Service No of Items = 5 Valid Response = 110 Cronbach's Alpha = 0.935		Percent of Respondents					Mean	Standard deviation	Interpretation/Decision
		VL	L	M	G	VG			
SQ1	To what extent do you provide reliable products/service to consumers?	0.9	1.8	16.4	55.5	25.5	4.03	0.760	Great Extent
SQ2	To what extent do the employees of this store fully service customers?	0.9	1.8	18.2	52.7	26.4	4.02	0.778	Great Extent
SQ3	To what degree do your employees become friendly to customers?	0.9	1.8	16.4	55.5	25.5	4.03	0.760	Great Extent
SQ4	To what extent do the employees of your outlet solve problems?	0.9	3.6	32.7	50.9	11.8	3.69	0.763	Great Extent
SQ5	To what extent do you provide quality products and services to customers?	0.9	1.8	11.8	59.1	26.4	4.08	0.731	Great Extent
<b>SERVICE: Variable (Grand) Mean and Standard deviation</b>							3.97	0.675	<b>Great Extent</b>

**Table 4: ASSORTMENT**

Variable: Assort No of Items = 5 Valid Response = 110 Cronbach's Alpha = 0.793		Percent of Respondents					Mean	Standard deviation	Interpretation/Decision
		VL	L	M	G	VG			
AS1	To what extent does your outlet offer a wide range of products?	6.4	20.0	8.2	45.5	20.0	3.53	1.202	Great Extent
AS2	To what degree do customers perceive your product assortment?	—	10.0	19.1	54.5	16.0	3.77	0.842	Great Extent
AS3	To what extent can a customer get all the products she needs in your outlet in one visit?	2.7	0.9	30.0	46.4	20.0	3.80	0.865	Great Extent
AS4	To what extent do your product combinations rouse customer's purchase intention?	0.9	2.7	27.3	47.3	21.8	3.86	0.818	Great Extent
AS5	To what degree is the distinctiveness of your product assortment?	1.8	2.7	29.1	46.4	20.0	3.80	0.855	Great Extent
<b>ASSORT: Variable (Grand) Mean and Standard deviation</b>							3.75	0.686	<b>Great Extent</b>

**Table 5: CUSTOMER PATRONAGE**

Variable: Customer patronage No of Items = 5 Valid Response = 110 Cronbach's Alpha = 0.724		Percent of Respondents					Mean	Standard deviation	Interpretation/Decision
		VL	L	M	G	VG			
CP1	To what extent do your outlet record increased patronage as a result of location convenience	0.9	13.6	54.5	23.6	7.3	3.23	0.809	Moderate Extent
CP2	To what extent do your outlet record increased patronage as a result of customer expectation	–	9.1	42.7	35.5	12.7	3.52	0.832	Great Extent
CP3	To what extent do your outlet record increased patronage as a result of product/service quality	–	1.8	50.9	35.5	11.8	3.57	0.723	Great Extent
CP4	To what extent do your outlet record repeated patronage as a result of the variety of your products	–	7.3	40.0	41.8	10.9	3.56	0.784	Great Extent
CP5	To what extent do your outlet record repeated patronage from your customers	–	3.6	29.1	57.3	10.0	3.74	0.686	Great Extent
<b>PATRONAGE: Variable (Grand) Mean and Standard deviation</b>							3.52	0.530	<b>Great Extent</b>