

Influencing Customer Perception in a Restaurant Business through Auditory/Music Marketing Strategies

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Abstract

The feelings that accompany the use of a product often determines people's continual usage of a particular brand or otherwise. Thus, this study examined the influence of customer perception in a fast-food Restaurant business through auditory/music marketing strategy. The study area covers all the Crunches fast-food Restaurants in South East, Nigeria. The study was further restricted to the ones in Imo State. The population of the study is made up of all the customers of Crunches fast-food Restaurant in Owerri, Imo State. Sample size of 105 derived through convenience sampling technique was used for the study. Data were collected from a sample size of 105 customers comprising of 80 customers in the restaurant and 10 staff members of the restaurant. Interview was conducted on 15 customers on the basis of availability. The study employed simple frequency statistics, and t-test to test the hypotheses formulated. Content analysis was used for the interview data. The findings of the study show among other things that; music has influence on majority of the customers who found music in the restaurant to be exciting, enjoying and relaxing; this according to the results of the study makes the customers to also spend more time in the restaurants as well as maintain regular consumption or patronage of the restaurant for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Keywords: Customer, Perception, Restaurant, Business, Sensory Marketing Strategies

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1. Background of the Study

The feelings that accompany the use of a product often determines people's continual usage of a particular brand or otherwise. Thus, marketers worldwide have established marketing patterns that are focused on human emotions (Adiele, Grend & Chinedu, 2015). One of the main considerations is the time spent in outlets such as Restaurant, Customer Attention and Customer Consumption (Aroloye, 2017). Also, research works have been conducted on different senses of customer behaviour and this according to Krishna and Schwarz (2014) have resulted in the "Sensory Marketing" idea. Sensory marketing is believed to influence the consumer's meaning, thinking, judgment and behaviour. Thus, sensory marketing for Aroloye (2017), aims mostly to give the consumer's brain a clear message, generating an attraction and enticing the customer to buy the particular product, which creates a connection between the customer and the product. But this marketing pattern has driven buyers in comparison to history to become more disturbed, irritated, tired and pessimistic. As the five senses play a significant part in the creation of highly important labels, they are as well vital to the constantly growing consumer brands.

Sensory brands also support a strong sensory interaction with the customer by resolving many advertising issues in the current environment. In other words, sensory marketing is an important consumer engagement mechanism. Consequently, the more meaningful a label is, the more consumers get engaged to the brand (Barham, 2016). Sensory marketing is communication through vision, sound, scent, taste, and senses with customers. (Tek & Engin, 2018). The way customers are addressed and offered an experience is one of the ways a customer gets engaged with a brand. In fact, this is why Elangovan and Padma (2017) submit that marketing-produced stimulants are initially received through the sensory organs and experience is obtained through their interpretation. With this mechanism of interpretation, one is either pleased or unhappy.

In its own view, the American Marketing Association regards sensory marketing as "marketing tactics that entice the user by the use of senses to affect the emotions of the customer". In this way, incentive agents targeting the whole vision, sound, scent, taste and contact senses are trying to affect client emotional and behavioral trends (Elangovan and Padma, 2017). Of course, lightness, loudness of sound, clothing softness, detergent scent or samples flavours are believed to have an effect on consumers' emotions and behaviours. Even if vision is the common sense used in marketing from past to present, the four other senses have now become important marketing instruments. In the 1950s, the significance of sight on colours, product styles and advertising was first discovered. Later on, other advertisement strategies that border on other senses such as sound were adopted to affect the emotions and/or feelings of product users. This no doubt is a strong pointer to the fact that consumers emotional state could play a significant role in his or her use of a product or service. Music is believed to be gaining prominence as a very effective marketing advertising strategy in the recent times. Krishna and Schwarz (2014), explains that there is a need to understand and highlight the fact that products are of sensual nature, where the customers need to be affected through their senses – sight, taste, touch, sound and smell. Particularly, Sound which

is the main focus of this work. This aspect of the sensory marketing (Sound) creates customer Attention, increase Consumption and time spent.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Nowadays, restaurants and more generally, the food industry has to cope with the obligation of attracting more and more customers, developing loyalty and at the same time keeping their brand image for the customer. The marketing tools used in order to do those obligations are wide-ranging into the general Marketing Mix. Although traditional restaurants do not have the same budget to develop their marketing strategy, they have to find new tools beyond the ones they commonly use such as low-prices strategy or timesaving. There are lots of other common marketing tools used in the food industry such as advertisements and sales promotions. Nevertheless, marketing tools innovations are overriding today, due to the evolution and the characteristics of the food industry. Restaurants have constantly added new tools in their marketing strategy in order to get a real competitive advantage on the market. In the bid to remain competitive and retain customers, the restaurant industry employed the use of sensory marketing specifically sound. Thus, this study was embarked upon with the main objective of ascertaining ways sensory marketing strategy with focus on sound influences costumer's perception in a restaurant business.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

Specifically, this study's objectives are to evaluate the;

1. How customers feel when music is played in a fast-food Restaurant
2. What role music plays in time spent in the restaurant by consumers
3. How music impacts customer's consumption

1.3 Research Questions

In line with specific objectives of this study, the following research questions are posed.

1. How does customers feel when music is played in a fast-food Restaurant?
2. What role does music play in time spent in the restaurant by consumers?
3. How does music impact Customer's Consumption?

2. Review of Literature

Under this section, various relevant literature will be reviewed to provide insight regarding the various concepts of the study. Such concepts to be reviewed are Customer, Perception, Restaurants among others.

2.1 Concept of Costumer

In the marketing arena, customer is a salient word. This is perhaps due to the central role of the customer to any business venture. According to Simons (2016), a customer is an individual or business that purchases another company's goods or services. Customers are important because they drive revenues; without them, businesses cannot continue to exist. All businesses compete with other companies to attract customers, either by aggressively advertising their products, by lowering prices to expand their customer bases or developing unique products and experiences that customers love. All that firms do in today's business world is centered on or around the customers. As a result, the perception of the customer especially with regards to a company's goods and services is considered very important. Also, a lot of activities are engaged in or carried out by the company to predetermine or influence to their favour, the perceptions of the customer to ensure continued patronage.

2.2 Concept of Perception

Perception especially with regards to customers is an important aspect of business. Perception in this regard, is the ability of a customer to see, hear, or become aware of something through the senses. Perception is the organization, identification, and interpretation of sensory information in order to represent and understand the presented information or environment (Schacter, 2011). For the author, every perception involves signals that go through the nervous system, which in turn result from physical or chemical stimulation of the sensory system. For example, vision involves light striking the retina of the eye; smell is mediated by odor molecules; and hearing involves pressure waves. Thus, a certain type of perception (positive or negative) of a business venture like the restaurant by customer is usually triggered.

Perception is an attempt to perceive the environment in five senses. Sense organs can be characterized as instruments for gathering information in our environment. Indeed, customers want a commodity before they finally buy the product to be used, touched, heard, smelled or tasted. The root cause of this mechanism is the need to reduce the amount of risk expected by customers and to find the best way to meet needs (Lee & Schwarz, 2015). Because of this feeling, an individual begins to perceive the desires, experiences and motivations in parallel. The stimulants are images, noises, tastes, smells and contact with five senses, as well as human incentives such as perceptions, motivations and previous experiences. The stimulating elements are products, labels, packets,

commercials and designs. Consumers are introduced to these stimulants as they come into physical contact with stimulants. Sense organs are the basic factors that mediate the mechanism of being subjected to inputs from the environment (Latasha, Tooraiven, Monishen & Randhir, 2016). The perceptions involved produce sensations, emotions and customer awareness, and thereby show a consumer's mood. (Skandrani, Mouelhi & Malek, 2015) Loudness, rhythm, style and music pattern played in a shop attract listening and interpretation of influence. Faster beats of music make consumers more enthusiastic, which is why shops who expect consumers to circulate faster tend to play this music (Sharma & Stafford, 2015). Sounds are indicative of how to organize experience. Rich sound as you close a car door, and the sound you hear when you touch porcelain with a bar provide external hints to a product's consistency (Barham, 2016).

2.3 Concept of Restaurant

A restaurant is a place where people pay to sit and eat meals that are cooked and served on the premises. Situated within the commercial hospitality industry, the restaurant sector provides food and beverages to customers (Ninemeier, 2010). Restaurants are generally defined in the literature as organizations providing food, beverages and services at a specific location in return for monetary gain (Ottenbacher, Robert, & Harrington, 2007). Similarly, Schmidgall, Hayes & Ninemejer (2002) define a restaurant as a 'for-profit foodservice operation whose primary business involves the sale of food/beverage products to individuals and small groups of guests. In other words, a restaurant or more informally an eatery, is a business that prepares and serves food and drinks to customers. Notably, meals are generally served and eaten on the premises of the restaurant. But many restaurants also offer take-out and food delivery services. Restaurants vary greatly in appearance and offerings, including a wide variety of cuisines and service models ranging from inexpensive fast-food restaurants and cafeterias, to mid-priced family restaurants, to high-priced luxury establishments (Brakus, Schmitt & Zarantonello, 2016).





2.4 Concept of Business

Business as a concept is perceived to mean various things. Firstly, the concept "business" refers to organized efforts and activities of individuals to produce and sell goods and services for profit (Brakus, *et al.*, 2016). In other words, business means an organization or enterprising entity engaged in commercial, industrial, or professional activities. Businesses can be for-profit entities or they can be non-profit organizations that operate to fulfill a charitable mission or further a social cause. Businesses range in scale from a sole proprietorship to an international corporation. A lot of things or activities are employed to promote a business such as marketing, ensuring conducive environment by way of entertainment either through music or other televisions programmes.

2.5 Concept of Music

The concept of "Music" is regarded as one of the most difficult terms to define. This is partly as a result of the various beliefs about music which have changed intensely over time in many cultures (Krishna & Schwarz, 2014). When music is looked at in different parts of the world, more variations and ideas about what music is are found. Definitions range from practical and theoretical to quite philosophical. Music according to Bakan (2011) is an intentionally organized art form whose medium is sound and silence, with core elements of pitch (melody and harmony), rhythm (meter, tempo, and articulation), dynamics, and the qualities of timbre and texture. In the same vein, music is seen as any event intentionally produced or organized to be heard, and to have some basic musical features, such as pitch or rhythm, or to be listened to for such features (Kotler, Setiawa & Kartajaya, 2015). From the definitions above, it is deducible that music is not just any sound but sound made intentionally with rhythm, melody and harmony to entertain an audience. Sound is believed to generate atmosphere, creates thoughts, emotions and consumer knowledge. Thus, the use of sound i.e., music in restaurants is an atmosphere that affects the experience and behaviour of customers (Mehrnaz, Houshang & Kambi, 2014).

For a person's different purchasing experience and consuming processes, the five human senses are very important area to be given great attention. By using the senses, people become aware of companies, products and brands and experience them. The senses experience all sorts of sensory stimulation and so the vision process happens (Alpert, Alpert & Maltz, 2015). These stimuli influence the forms, quantity and manner in which they are perceived. The senses are really the starting point for insight, and the retailers have realized how important the shop experience is to use these sensations to influence consumers' interpretation (Batema, 2014). In past studies, the key effects of certain sensations including music, smell, environment, tactile and taste have been investigated. Krishna and Schwarz (2014), demonstrated in an environmental psychology analysis that environmental factors contribute to an emotional reaction that generates an emotional response to the actions of the customer. This is actually the reaction paradigm of the stimuli – organism. By the way, both cognitive responses lead to two separate approaches or avoidance behaviours. In a study of Turley and Milliman (2000), 60 experiments that manipulated portions of a store's complex atmosphere are reviewed and, in each study, they found some statistically significant relationship between atmospherics and shopping behaviour. The musical effects are believed to also differ depending on the shopper's age, the tempo, the quality of music and the music preferences (Lecomte, 2015).

2.6 Music, Time Duration and Customer Attention

Many scientific experiments have shown that the structural components of different kinds of background music, including sonic level, tempo, style/gender, and sophistication influence a restaurant's time for consumers. Nwulu and Asiegbu (2015) find that the longer the time appears to extend as consumers love playing the song. In addition, Sanjeev and Kanika (2015) showed that time appeared longer for the respondents when they heard familiar rather than unfamiliar music in a department store and supermarket respectively as regards the tempo of music which affected their expectations of time.

The results of scholars' conflict with each other when it comes to the impact that music has on the customer's interest show that while some see it that the greater the excitement, the stronger the focus, others see it that the extremely exciting music is will interfere with knowledge management (Simons, 2016). Indeed, the writers found that cognitive activity is generated through soothing music and this seems to be the best level of excitement, thus capable of attracting attention, music's cognitive effects. Music is also therefore necessary to match in with the world and the goods available because non-congruence will adversely influence consumers (Jayakrishnan, 2014). The assessment of music can, however, vary greatly from one community to another, because music has an evocative ability.

2.7 Auditory Factors (Hearing/Music)

Hearing also plays a vital part in our everyday lives out of the five senses. We can diagnose our ears at least 16 to 2800 cycles per second (Barham, 2016). Sound is often used as a strategy to boost the identity of the brand in branding and promotion. Sound can build a distinctive brand name when implemented properly (Rossing, Moore & Wheeler, 2014). Sound can affect our decisions and our comments on goods and services; (Laimona & Jeremy, 2017) sound can influence our buying behaviour. Sound also influences our buying habits. Music naturally lifts our spirits. Likewise, sound helps us to improve our mood, and in marketing it is considered as important for consumer behavior as well. (Karla, 2016). It has been revealed by Adiele et al, (2015) through their studies that Consumers have different kind of needs, and in marketing, sound has been used very effectively to communicate with the unconscious needs of the consumer.

Sound use is known in publicity; it's a good way to make the consumer remember that you associate music with a message. However, for sensory marketers, music is also important because research has shown, for instance, the impact of music on behaviour. The efficiency of a sales community depends on the capacity of the potential customer to manage the subjectivity (Karla, 2016). Music is in every selling or restaurant and is an integral part of the atmosphere, lightning and design also play a role in customer perceptions, regardless of their place of use (discrete speakers or video clips on big flats). Background music is the cheapest and easiest atmosphere to manage, but definitely not the least powerful (one button and it is off or one track is missed, another and it sounds louder). The power of music can contextualize the various articles and promote emotional conditions and positions (Karla, 2016). The aim of music is to place the customer in a state of mind that corresponds to the articles that are sold: to play rock music in a guitar shop.

Music can then be a way of acting on the purchasing behavior of the client when connected to the product. The high-volume music in a bar is also shown to increase customer consumption (North & Hargreaves, 1996). Studies have been carried out to find the best song for various sites: For example, the quality of classical music in the cellar or the tea house increases (Laimona & Jeremy, 2017). But music can also influence "crowd administration" by influencing the customers' time. For instance, a quick-tempo music will push the customer to leave early (Karla, 2016)

In contrast, low-volume music increases the amount of time and money spent on it. The same studies also show that customers eat faster and eat less with high volume and fast pace music. Another study by (Rossing, Moore & Wheeler, 2014) has revealed that customers adopt their traveling speed at a point of sale based on the tempo of the music. Music offers marketers a wide range of possibilities to influence the behavior of customers and to complete a coherent selling environment.

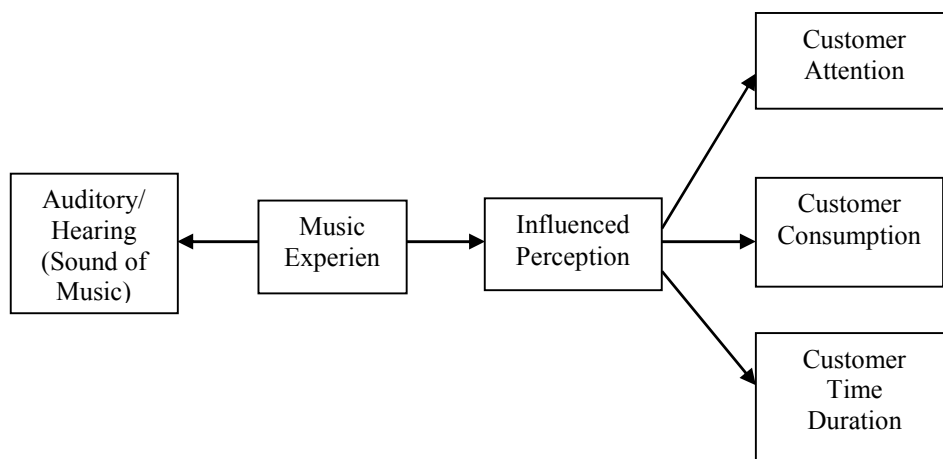


Fig 1: Research Conceptual Framework

3. Methodology

This study was carried out in June, 2021 and the study area covered was Crunches Fast Food Restaurants in South-East, Nigeria. Crunches is a fast-food restaurant currently spread across the South-South and South-East Cities of Nigeria, with over thirteen years of existence. Crunches fast food have carved a niche of excellence in the fast-food delivery market with a service per excellence acquired from our daily interaction from valued Customers. The study was further restricted to Crunches located in Imo State. This is because Crunches restaurants in Imo State are among the best hands when it comes to intercontinental dishes in Imo State who also put to consideration international standards (A home away from Home). Crunches Restaurant provides both indoor service and also sells in take-away. The population of the study is made up of selected customers of Crunches Fast Food Restaurant in Owerri, Imo State that visited the Restaurant for a period of five days. Sample size of 105 comprising of 95 customers and 10 staff members of the restaurant derived through convenience sampling method was used for the study. The sample size is in accordance with the views of Hill, Brierley and MacDougall (2003) who reported that a sample size of 100 and above is sufficient to represent good research. Data was collected using researcher developed questionnaire. The study employed simple frequency statistics. Data gotten was analyzed using content analysis.

All constructs in the model were measured with multiple-item scales. Each of these variables was measured by a simple frequency table and most of the items were derived from the literature. The questionnaire is said to be reliable if the Cronbach's Alpha score is above 60 % and the pilot study revealed the Cronbach Alpha coefficient of .929 i.e., 92.9 % which indicates a high level of internal consistency and implies that the questionnaires is reliable. The simple frequency and the Structural Equation modeling (SEM) were employed. SEM is a multivariate statistical technique that combines the methods of factor analysis and multiple regressions to simultaneously estimate a series of interrelated causal relationships, such as those in the proposed structural equation model (Hair, Anderson, Tatham & Black, 1995).

The measurement model describes the relationship between the measured variables or indicators (i.e., specific items) and latent variables (i.e., dimension or sub-dimensions). The results of the measurement model test determine how well the indicators capture their specified constructs. In this study, a measurement was developed and tested for the primary dimension namely: sensory experience SE (i.e., Sound Sensory) and the three outcome variables (i.e., Customer Attention, Customer Consumption and Customer Time Duration) to examine the full model. A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was applied in the format of Structural Equation Modeling by letting all the constructs correlate freely and applying the same goodness of fit indices used in SEM to determine the model fit. The model fit was determined by examining goodness of fit indices. The main focus of this stage testing the proposed hypotheses to investigate the causal relationship among Sensory experiences. The main issue of the structural model analysis in this stage focused on whether the restaurant customer perceptions about their multiple sensory experience will have an impact on Customer Attention, Customer Consumption and Customer Time Duration which will in turn affect the perception of the consumers.

4. Analysis and Findings

4.1 Table 1: How does a customer feel when music is played in a fast-food Restaurant?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Excited	35	31.5	33.3	33.3
	Enjoying	25	22.5	23.8	57.1
	Relaxing	40	36.0	38.1	95.2
	Nothing	5	4.5	4.8	100.0
	Total	105	94.6	100.0	
Missing	System	6	5.4		
Total		111	100.0		

From Table 1, it can be deduced that 33.3% found the music in the restaurant to be exciting, 23.8% found it to be enjoying, 38.1 found it to be relaxing while 4.8% said that it has no impact on them. The outcome of the study indicates that music triggers various feelings in customers. As the result of the study shows, the feeling of excitement, enjoyment and relaxation is seen to be triggered in the majority of customers who visits the restaurant as a result of the music played. In other words, a customer actual has a special kind of feeling as a result of the music played in a given restaurant. This again shows that just as Batema (2014) posits, music is an important tool for influencing customer behaviour, retaining and building customer base of any business venture.

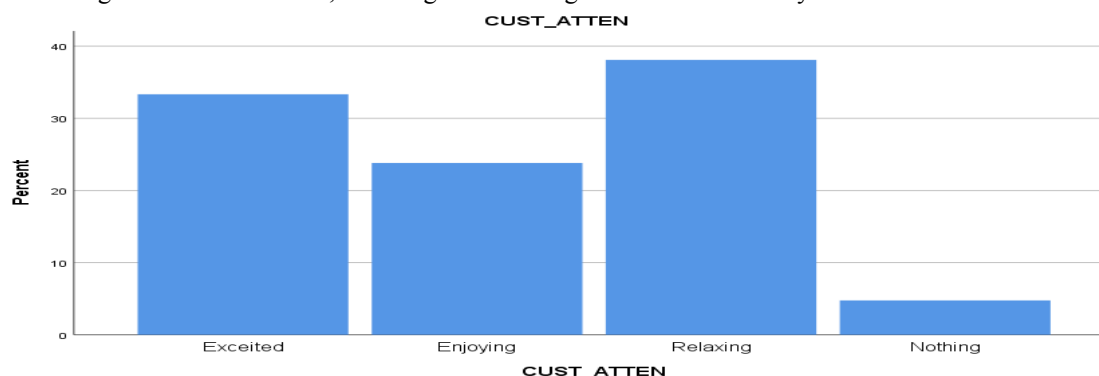


Fig. 1: Graphical Representation of Table 1.

4.2 Table 2: What role does music play in time spent in the restaurant by consumers?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	30min	45	42.9	42.9	42.9
	1HR	25	23.8	23.8	66.7
	1HR 30 MIN	25	23.8	23.8	90.5
	2 HRS	5	4.8	4.8	95.2
	MORE THAN 2HRS	5	4.8	4.8	100.0
	Total	105	100.0	100.0	

From Table 2, it can be deduced that 42.9% found that they spend 30 mins in the restaurant, 23.8 spend one hour, 23.8% spent one hour thirty mins, 4.8% spent two hours and over two hours respectively. Also, figure 2 below shows that most of the participants spend 30 minutes in the restaurant. The outcome of the study here shows music played in the restaurants plays persuasive role of ensuring that customers spend an amount of time in the restaurant. This outcome is in line with the submission of Mehrnaz, Houshang & Kambi (2014) that the use of sound i.e., music in restaurants acts as a persuading signal is an atmosphere which then affects the experience and behaviour of customers. As shown by the outcome of the study, when costumers enjoy the background music, they feel they have spent less time relative to the actual amount of time they have spent in the restaurant; if they dislike it, despite the short amount of time they have actually spent in the restaurant, they claim to have been there for much longer.

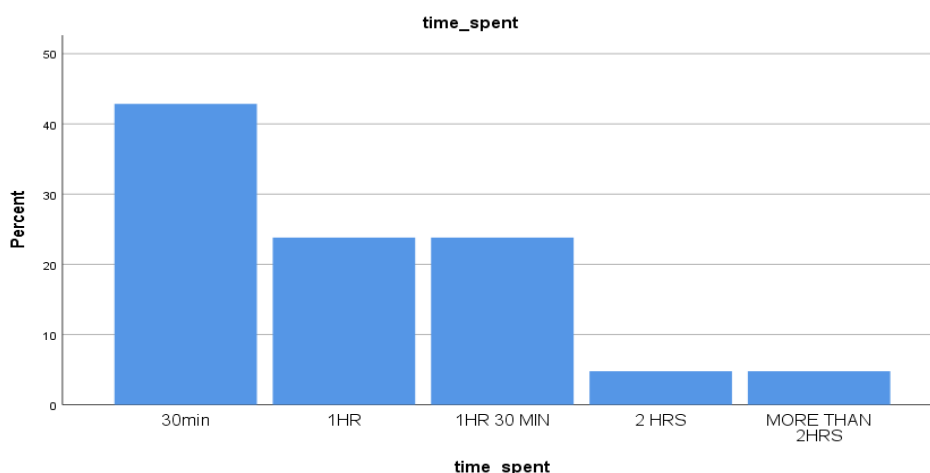


Fig. 2: Graphical Representation of Table 2.

4.3 Table 3: How does music impact Customer’s Consumption?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Breakfast	10	9.0	9.5	9.5
	Lunch	30	27.0	28.6	38.1
	Breakfast and Dinner	15	13.5	14.3	52.4
	Lunch and Dinner	40	36.0	38.1	90.5
	Dinner Alone	10	9.0	9.5	100.0
	Total	105	94.6	100.0	
Missing	System	6	5.4		
Total		111	100.0		

From Table 3, it can be deduced that with music played in the restaurant 28.6% consumes only lunch, 14.3% consumes breakfast and dinner, 38.1% consumes lunch and dinner while 9.5% each consumes either dinner or breakfast respectively. The findings of the study indicate that the type of music played in a restaurant impacts customer consumption. As indicated by the result of the study, when consumers enjoy the background music, they feel they have spent less time relative to the actual amount of time they have spent in the restaurant. Also, when they dislike the music played, they feel to have spent much time despite the short amount of time they have actually spent in the restaurant. With this, music depending on the preferences of the customers could either negatively or positively impact customers’ consumption of meals at restaurants.

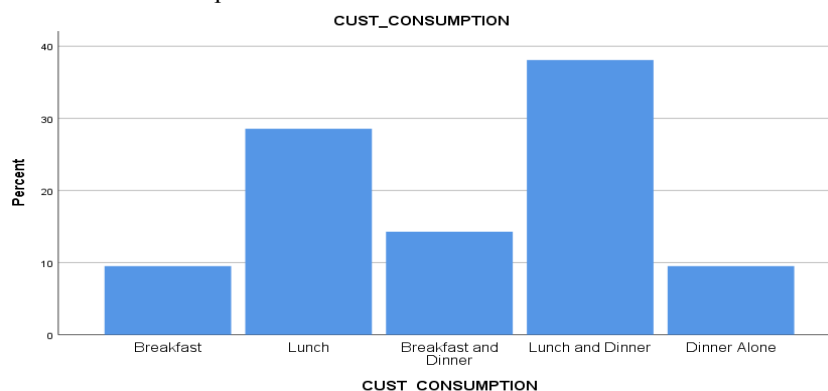


Fig. 3. Graphical Representation of table 3.

5. Conclusions

Auditory/Music marketing is a strategy that is believed to give a new route for embracing how human sense create an individual’s experience. Likewise, it recommends tactics on how a business identifies and develops its own identity and distinct products and branding via the involvement of the human sense of sound. Unlike normal marketing studies, Auditory/ music marketing strategy is at the front and center, highlighting the necessity of appealing such sensation while marketing to clients. From the study, it was discovered that customer’s attention,

consumption and time spent in a restaurant is influenced or affected through the auditory/music marketing. This presupposes that restaurants could take advantage of auditory/music marketing approach in their quest to remain competitive in business.

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