

Brand Trust and Customer Retention: A Survey of Branded Automobile Dealers in Port Harcourt

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ABSTRACT

Brand trust has been recognized as an important factor that strongly influences customer loyalty. However, there has been little empirical research into brand trust and customer retention in the marketing literature. In this study we investigate the relationship between brand trust and customer retention and its impact on the automobile dealers in Port Harcourt. This research adopts convenience sampling method to carry on a questionnaire and takes customers of the auto dealers as a research sample, and send 512 questionnaires and receive 474 questionnaires, the receive rate is 92.5%. The study adopts the SPSS software package carrying on by statistical analysis, descriptive statistics factor analysis z-test for a single sample cohens-d estimated effective sample size. It is proved that there is a strong relationship between brand trust and customer retention besides, word of mouth communication was observed to strongly moderate between brand trust and customer retention.

Introduction

Ideally Nigeria as a Nation ought to have a viable automobile industry where several brands of vehicles ought to have been produced. By now Nigeria should be boasting of having one the most successful automobile sector in the continent and can at least compete among the giant in automobile manufacturing in the world.

With the latest rebasing, Nigeria's GDP has increased to 89.22 per cent in 2014. With the latest rebasing, Nigeria is now worth N80.2 trillion, or \$509.9 billion, rising from its original figure of N42.4 trillion, or \$269.5 billion. (NAN). With a population over 170 million, and an abundance of solid minerals to run the industry, It is on record that Nigerian love to buy cars and there is a huge potentials for the automobile industry to grow the market potentials are high.

But sadly though, the automobile industry in Nigeria is almost entirely import driven occasioned by the non-existence of local brands, and the desire for personally owned vehicles, due to the poor state of public transportation in the country (proshareng.com/news April 2013). There is still massive importation of vehicles into the country which has led to the sole distributorship arrangement, thus we have several automobile dealers operating in Nigeria.

In an empirical study, Johnson-George and Swap (1982) identified a general trust factor along with two components – emotional trust and trust in partner's reliability – demonstrating that trust can occur at different levels. While Lau and Lee (1999) focused on a set of general beliefs providing a measurement scale of a global nature, Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) concentrated on the performance competence of a brand, a unique aspect of brand trust. As specific goals may vary, measures of trust focused on a brand's ability to perform provide useful additional information.

In a similar manner, Delgado-Ballester *et al.* (2003) incorporated reliability and intentions in their scale, thus capturing additional facets and expanding the domain of brand trust. However none of these empirical studies exist that examined the relationship that exist between brand trust and customer retention in branded automobile dealers in Port Harcourt. In the light of this gap the study is designed to fill the gap by investigating the relationship between brand trust and customer retention among branded automobile dealers in Port Harcourt Metropolis.

Concept of Brand trust

Reast (2005) conducted a study in U.K to examine effects of brand trust and brand extension, where he measured brand trust via two dimensions "Credibility" and "Performance" his result indicated that there is a significant link between brand trust and brand extension. The product line can be extended when the product has delivered on its stated functions hence the brand is associated with credibility and trustworthiness.

Drawing from the above work, it can be argued that the relationship between brand trust and brand loyalty can be linked to customer retention, since loyalty is one of the measures of customer retention. Ebru, and Kocakalan (2012) conducted a study in turkey, which investigated the effect of factors on consumers' brand loyalty he relied on a model which proposed that brand trust and consumers' brand affect have influence on consumers' brand loyalty, their findings confirms the indirect effect of consumers' brand affect on brand trust and consumers' brand loyalty relationship. From the foregoing we observe that brand trust provides a superior lens through which we can assess and examine consumers' behavioural responses such as customer retention.

Talat, Mohammad, Rifat, and Imrah (2012) conducted a study in Pakistan. They investigated the relationship between brand trust, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in the automobile sector of Pakistan. Their result shows that the relationship between brand trust and customer loyalty is positive. They went on to establish a relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty.

In the light of the aforementioned we can observe that scholars are in consensus on the fact that brand trust does have a positive relationship with brand loyalty which is one measure of customer retention.

Hyunjong and Suyoung (2014) conducted a study in Georgia; which explored the effects of brand trust, perceived fit and consumer innovativeness on brand extension evaluation. The study showed that brand trust was a positive predictor of the overall evaluation of both vertical and horizontal extension. In the light of the above the it can be noted that once consumer have established positive brand trust toward a parent brand it can be carried over to an extension brand regardless of the extension type. This further highlights the already established nexus that exist between brand trust and customer retention.

Furthermore, Zahra, Xia, Khuran, Liu and Nazeer (2015) conducted a study in Pakistan which examine the relationship between brand trust and its link to brand loyalty their result indicated that customer trust in a brand leads to loyalty, for them a factor that leads to brand trust would include brand characteristics, company characteristics and consumer- brand characteristics, they further argued that all these factors are important in creating trust in a brand.

This researcher is in full agreement with them because, the image of the company and the past performance of the brand coupled with the perceived value placed on the brand by the consumer all help to develop the confidence the consumer has and places in the brand. Consequently, the fact that brand trust has a positive relationship with and customer retention has been shown. Ying-Kai and Nanhua (2015) conducted a study in Taiwan to determine the role of brand trust on brand loyalty and brand equity. Their result indicated that brand trust can serve as a partial mediator for brand loyalty and brand equity. In view of the above it is established that brand trust has a positive link to customer brand loyalty which is a driver for customer retention.

DIMENSIONS OF BRAND TRUST

Brand Credibility

Erdem, Swait and Louviere (2001) conducted a study in the United State of America to investigate the impact of brand credibility on consumer price sensitivity their results indicate that brand credibility decreases price sensitivity. Their results also indicate that although the direction of the impact is the same, the magnitude of brand credibility's impact on consumer choices and price sensitivity vary across product categories, as a function of product category characteristics that affect potential consumer uncertainty and consumer sensitivity to such uncertainty. From the above study it we can infer that a customer will be willing t pay for a brand that they deem to be credible i.e. judging from past experience. In this study it is proposed that the higher the credibility the higher the retention rate of customers.

Tae (2007) conducted a study in Athens Georgia to examine whether the framework of brand credibility effects is applicable to service categories and to investigate how the power of brand credibility's impact differs according to service type. The theoretical framework proposed in his research expands previous work on brand credibility effects by incorporating a new construct. Structural equation modelling was used to test the proposed model including six latent constructs: brand credibility, perceived quality, and perceived value for money, perceived risk, and information costs saved, and purchase intention. The results found that brand credibility exerts a strong effect on purchase intention by increasing perceived quality, perceived value for money, and information costs saved, and by decreasing perceived risk across service categories. Further, findings also

indicated that the magnitude of brand credibility's impact on purchase intention varies across different conditions in regard to service type.

In view of the above study we can observe that the connection between brand credibility and purchase intention has been established because the credibility of the brand a dimension of brand trust has been shown to be a driver for customer retention (Xuehua & Zhilin 2010) conducted a study in China to examine the effect of brand credibility on consumers' brand purchase intention in Emerging Economies; the findings indicated that brand credibility exerts a positive influence on consumers' brand purchase intention. In the light of this study the link between brand credibility and purchase intention has been established. Brand credibility was measured using the dimensions of trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness. Brand credibility implies that consumers believe that the brand has the ability to deliver on what has been promised.

Basgoze and Ozer (2012) conducted a study in Ankara Turkey to evaluate the gender effect on brand credibility and purchase relation. In their study in order to measure statement's explanatory power of the variables, Confirmatory Factor Analysis was applied. Similarly in order to examine the differences between brand's credibility Anova test was used. Also, for investigating linear effects linear regression and for investigating moderation effects of demographic variables, hierarchical regression was used. Their results suggest that brand credibility influence the purchase intention for high-tech products. This study also contributes to the existing body of knowledge that in consensus that there is a positive link between brand credibility and purchase intention which may lead to customer retention. Zahra, (2014) conducted a study in Iran to investigate the relationship between brand credibility and customers' behavioural intention the study found that brand credibility is positively related to satisfaction, loyalty commitment, and continuance commitment; and that brand trust will lead to higher satisfaction and commitment would lead to lower switching propensity among customers. In view of the above studies we can state that brand credibility will enable firms to enhance their relationship with their respective customer and would lead to higher satisfaction and commitment among customer and make them stay with the brand, this of course can lead to customer retention.

The concept of Customer Retention

Scholars have defined customer retention in different ways for Gerpott, Rams and Schindler (2001) customer retention is seen as the continuity of the business relations between the customer and company. For them it is paramount that the customer remains with the firms and that the firm is able to maintain and sustain that relationship. (Lin & Wu, 2011) Indicated that, retention and attraction of new customer are used as drivers for increase in market share and revenues this argument is in line with the already established position of scholars (Rust, Zohorik & Keiningham 1995). Claimed that in the retention of customer it is important for firm to know what to serve their customers, for examples post sales services are the important drivers for customer retentions (Saeed, Grover & Hwang, 2005) On their part stated that it is important for product/service provider to emphasis on the quality of product and service. This position was also collaborated by (Lin & Wu, 2011) when they stated that there is statistically significant relationship between quality commitment, trust and satisfaction and customer retention and future use of product, as retention is influenced by future use of product.

Lin & Wu 2011 indicated that that there is solid relationship between customer retention and quality of service/or products.

Evidence is available in previous literature that Emotional commitment and loyalty program that gave financial incentives have positive impacts on customer retention (Verhoef, 2003).

Terblanche and Hofmeyr (2005) conducted a study in Cape Town South Africa that compares two prominent models, of customer retention namely the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) and the Conversion Model (CM). Both these models are used globally to measure and predict customer retention. The outcomes of the two models, namely customer loyalty in the case of the ACSI and customer commitment in the CM, are the measures used for comparing the customer retention determination of the two models.

Respondents were required to respond to items from the ACSI and CM scales in relation to the fast food and motor car industries. The results produced by the ACSI model to predict customer loyalty indicate a weak relationship between customer loyalty and customer satisfaction. The authors alluded that the findings are in line with the views of various authors who state that customer satisfaction cannot be a sole predictor of customer loyalty. On the other hand the CM results differ considerably from those of the ACSI model. This they explained emanated from the operationalisation of the two models.

According to the authors the routes followed to reach a perspective on customer retention, is very different in the two models. They further went on to point out that customer satisfaction which drives customer loyalty in the ACSI model, does not appear to be a good predictor of customer loyalty. Because the items employed to measure customer loyalty also scored low on reliability.

They also highlighted the fact that different items might improve such measurement. Thus they argued that satisfaction is also important in CM, but that the importance of a brand to a customer as well as the standing of that brand in the consumer's mind, relative to all other competing brands, is a major distinguishing factor of CM. This weak relationship between customer loyalty and customer satisfaction had been raised by a prominent researcher who has applied the ACSI in many studies (Johnson, 2003).

In the light of the above study we can deduce that scholars are finding it difficult to agree on a consensus as to the best model to use when measuring customer retention, one observable fact about customer retention is that it has a degree of "ambiguity" since it embodies a theoretical construct which cannot be observed directly (Gerpott, Rams and Schindler, 2001). Consequently the ways in which, academics and practitioners define customer retention, whether conceptually or empirically, show substantial disagreement.

As we mentioned earlier customer retention has become a major area of consideration for businesses as it has been recognised as an important contributor to profitability over the long term (Anderson and Sullivan, 1993; Fornell, 1992; Iniesta and Sánchez, 2002; Heskett, Sasser and Schlesinger, 1997; Heskett, 2002; Dick and Basu, 1994; Anderson, Fornell and Lehmann, 1994). Three measures of customer retention, namely satisfaction, loyalty and commitment, have received wide coverage in academic journals in the past fifteen years (Oliver, 1999; Auh and Johnson, 2005; Wetzels, de Ruyter and van Birgelen, 1998).

Customer retention has also often been conceptualised and operationalised as a dimension of the loyalty construct (Boulding, Kolra, Staelin and Zeithaml, 1993; Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman, 1996).

Customer retention is the strategic objective of striving to maintain long term relationships with customers. For Ahmad and Buttle, (2001) customer retention is the mirror image of customer defection. They also stated that a high retention rate is equivalent to a low defection rate. According to Dawkins, and Reichheld, (1990) customer retention can be defined as the number of customers doing business with a firm at the end of a financial year expressed as percentage of those who were active customers at the beginning of the year. There is however, a debate to the appropriateness of the interval over which retention rate should be measured: is 1 year the adequate time interval? Or do we consider other factors. Some industry analyst would rather; it be measured depending on the repurchase cycle found in the industry. When, we consider customer retention in an auto dealership and an insurance broker. We observe that Insurance policies are renewed annually, unlike cars. Thus, if the normal car replacement cycle is 4 years, then retention rate is will be more meaningful if it is measured over 4 years instead of 12 months as it applies to the insurance industry.

DETERMINANTS OF CUSTOMER RETENTION

Customer satisfaction

Oliver (1991) claimed that satisfaction is traditionally considered as an overall affective response resulting from the use of a product or service. Several scholars also believed that satisfaction has a direct influence on customer loyalty (Mittal and Lassar, 1998; Oliver, 1997) and repurchase behaviours (Kumar, 2002; Mittal and Kamakura, 2001).

Bloemer and Lemmink (1992) examined the assumed positive influence of customer satisfaction on loyalty in a car sales context. Specifically, three different types of customer satisfaction (satisfaction with the car, satisfaction with the sales service, and satisfaction with the after-sales service), and two kinds of loyalty (brand loyalty and dealer loyalty) were differentiated and measured. Their results supported the hypothesis that customer satisfaction with the car is a major determinant of customer loyalty, while sales service satisfaction and after-sales service are major determinants of dealer loyalty.

However, dealer loyalty was found to be an intervening variable in the relation between satisfaction and brand loyalty. It was additionally found that the strength of the relationship between different types of satisfaction and loyalty indicators differs between various market segments. Other studies anticipate direct, linear, and positive effect of satisfaction on loyalty. Heskett et al; (1997) suggested that customer loyalty should increase rapidly after customer satisfaction passes a certain threshold. Consistent with this "threshold" argument, it has been found that "delighted" customers have a much higher probability of retention than those who are merely

“satisfied” (Oliver 1997). A series of recent studies have also found evidence of nonlinearities for the relationship between satisfaction and behavioural loyalty (Mittal et al 2001).

In the light of these studies this researcher believes that customer satisfaction is positively related to customer retention because the loyalty construct has been used in this study as one measure of customer retention. Since empirical evidence from the above studies show that positive influence of customer satisfaction on retention

Theoretical Background

Arjun and Moris (2001) in their work use the dimensions “dependable”, “safe” and “honest” to evaluate the construct as well as highlighting the importance of the brand trust concept. Delgado et al (2003) used the dimensions “credibility” and “intention” to identify the Brand trust construct, while, Davies et al (2004) in explaining the construct used the terms “warmth”, “empathy” and “integrity”.

Delgado and Munuera (2005) used the dimensions “reliability” and “intension” to examine the brand trust construct, Similarly, Reast (2005) considered two dimensions in explaining the construct they include “credibility and performance”, for Kim and Jones (2009) brand trust is determined by several brand characteristics such as “brand reputation” and “brand predictability” which they argue can better be used to evaluate the construct of brand trust.

Louis and Lombart (2010) examine the brand trust construct using the dimensions of “credibility”, “integrity” and “benevolence”. For decades the conception of brand trust has achieved appreciable implication in the field of marketing, not only for products as well as for services (Kantsperger & Kunz, 2010). Harridge-March (2006) claimed that when we have to make a choice among different products of a same category then brand trust is involves. According to them it is an essential asset of a person, product, organization, institution and skill, the buyer will go for brands that are trust worthy.

Lassar, Mittal, & Sharma (1995) claimed that trustworthiness is a feeling the customer has about the brand and this informs the confidence the customer have over the message the brand sends., the customer believes and trust the signal that comes from the brand. Therefore, the enterprise’s concern is to ensure that the signal that comes from the brand is credible. The image and quality of the brand is crucial to customer retention. Chaudhuri & Holbrook (2001) also points out that brand trust enhances the customer's confidence for brand; this will raise product leisure pursuit or growth naturally, since customer will always be buying from trusted brands. Scholars are in consensus on the critical role of brand trust such as in enhancing customer relationships as pointed out by Selnes (1998), and building customer loyalty as indicated by (Singh & Sirdeshmukh 2000; Ball *et al.* 2004), and building commitment as indicated by (Morgan & Hunt 1994) and building brand equity as indicated by (Chaudhuri & Holbrook (2001).

However, research on the construct of brand trust is limited. There is no consensus regarding the domain of the construct. Furthermore, researchers haven’t agreed upon its dimensionality or approaches to measuring this important construct. Of the few studies published, Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) define brand trust as consumers’ willingness to rely on the ability of the brand to perform its stated function Based on such a conceptualisation; they developed a one-dimensional measurement scale.

Delgado-Ballester *et al.* (2003) propose that a one-dimensional conceptualisation completely ignores the motivational aspects associated with the concept, which may limit the conceptual richness of the phenomenon. Thus, they define brand trust as the confident expectations of the brand’s reliability and intentions in situations entailing risk to the consumer. Since consumers believe that a brand’s positive intentions towards their welfare and interests is essential for it to be perceived as trustworthy, this conceptualisation represents an improvement over a single dimension conceptualisation that suppresses the construct space and reduces its conceptual richness.

Therefore, in this study we propose a definition for brand trust as the belief and confidence a consumer has that a brand will satisfy his need this is because the researcher believe that for a consumer to trust a brand there must an element of confidence and belief that the brand will deliver on its stated function, also the study adopts the dimensions of Reast (2005) “Credibility” and “Performance” though with a slight modification in this “Brand Credibility” and “Brand Performance”.

Descriptive Statistics for brand trust and its dimensions- Credibility and Performance

Does the credibility of the brand of auto mobile affects your satisfaction

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid strongly disagree	3	.6	.6	.6
Disagree	6	1.3	1.3	1.9
Indifferent	18	3.8	3.8	5.7
Agree	210	44.3	44.3	50.0
strongly agree	237	50.0	50.0	100.0
Total	474	100.0	100.0	

Source (survey questionnaire 2016)

From the table above 0.6% (3 respondents) strongly disagreed that the credibility of the brand affects their satisfaction while 1.3% (6 respondents) were also not in support that the credibility of the brand affect their satisfaction. Also 3.8% (18 respondents) were indifferent while, 44.3 % (210 respondents) agreed that that the credibility of the brand affects their satisfaction Similarly 50% (237 respondents) were strongly in support that the credibility of the brand will certainly affect their satisfaction

Does the credibility of the brand of auto mobile affects your loyalty

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid strongly disagree	12	2.5	2.5	2.5
Disagree	13	2.7	2.7	5.3
Indifferent	11	2.3	2.3	7.6
Agree	327	69.0	69.0	76.6
strongly agree	111	23.4	23.4	100.0
Total	474	100.0	100.0	

Source (survey questionnaire 2016)

From the table above 2.5% (respondents) strongly oppose the notion that the credibility of the brand of automobile can affect their loyalty to the brand while, 2.7% (13 respondents) were also not in agreement. Also 2.3% (13 respondents) were indifferent over the issue meanwhile, 69% (327 respondents) agreed that the credibility of the brand affects their loyalty to the brand also 23.4% (111 respondents) were strongly in support that the credibility of the brand affects their loyalty to the brand

Does brand performance of auto mobile affects your satisfaction

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid strongly disagree	20	4.2	4.2	4.2
Disagree	40	8.4	8.4	12.7
Indifferent	92	19.4	19.4	32.1
Agree	277	58.4	58.4	90.5
strongly agree	45	9.5	9.5	100.0
Total	474	100.0	100.0	

Source (survey questionnaire 2016)

From the table above 4.2%(20 respondents) strongly disagree that the brand performance affects their satisfaction to the brand also 8.4% (40 respondents) were also not in agreement while 19.4% (92 respondents) were indifferent while 58.4% (277 respondents) agreed that brand performance affects their satisfaction 9.5% (45 respondents) were strongly in support of that brand performance affects their satisfaction

Does brand performance of auto mobile affects your Loyalty

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid strongly disagree	25	5.3	5.3	5.3
Disagree	58	12.2	12.2	17.5
Indifferent	112	23.6	23.6	41.1
Agree	208	43.9	43.9	85.0
strongly agree	71	15.0	15.0	100.0
Total	474	100.0	100.0	

Source (survey questionnaire 2016)

From the table above 5.3% (25 respondents) disagreed with the statement that brand performance affects their loyalty to the brand while, 12.2% (58 respondents) were also not in support that brand performance affects their loyalty 23.6% (112 respondents) were indifferent however 43% (208 respondents) agreed that brand performance affects their loyalty to the brand while 15% (71 respondents) strongly agreed that brand performance affects their loyalty to the brand

Does advice from your colleagues, friends and neighbours affects your trust and continuous patronage in a brand of auto mobile

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid strongly disagree	27	5.7	5.7	5.7
Disagree	33	7.0	7.0	12.7
Indifferent	61	12.9	12.9	25.5
Agree	269	56.8	56.8	82.3
strongly agree	84	17.7	17.7	100.0
Total	474	100.0	100.0	

Source (survey questionnaire 2016)

From the table above 5.7% (27 respondents) were strongly opposed to the notion that advice from their friends, colleagues and neighbours affected their brand trust and patronage, 7.0 % (33 respondents) were also not in agreement that the advice from their friends, colleagues and neighbours can affect brand trust and patronage 12.6% (61 respondents) were indifferent also 56.8% (269 respondents) were in agreement that the advice from their friends, colleagues and neighbours affected their brand trust and patronage also 17.7%(84 respondents) were strongly of the opinion that the advice from their friends, colleagues and neighbours affected their brand trust and patronage

Test of Research Hypotheses

This section is aimed at testing the five research hypotheses stated in chapter one of this thesis. The z-test is used to run parametric analysis since the descriptive analysis showed normal distribution of the dependent and independent variables this is aimed at identifying the nature of the relationship between the dimensions of brand trust and customer retention

Relationship between brand credibility and customer satisfaction

This study hypothesized in chapter one that there is no significant relationship between brand credibility and customer satisfaction. Table 4.15, Shows the statistical evidence of the relationship between these variables with the t –test elation of the relationship between brand credibility and customer satisfaction (n=474).

Z-test: H0₁: Brand Credibility & Customer Satisfaction

z-statistic	P_Value	Cohens_d
3.17230	.00151	.14571

Reject H0 P-value < 0.05 Accept HO P-value > 0.05

Since the P-Value (.00151) is less than 0.05 we reject the null hypothesis and accept the research hypothesis. This implies that there is indeed a statistical significant relationship between brand credibility and customer satisfaction as depicted by the statistical evidence in table 4.15 we can therefore infer and argue from the result of this finding that there is a significant relationship between brand credibility and customer satisfaction.

Also the cohens –d value indicates that the sample mean is 14.57% standard deviation larger than the population mean thus the magnitude of the difference in means is considered to be small this implies that brand credibility is significantly but weakly related to customer satisfaction

Relationship between brand credibility and customer loyalty

Hypothesis two H0₂ in chapter one that there is no significant relationship between credibility of the auto mobile and customer loyalty. Table 4.16, Shows the statistical evidence of the relationship between these variables with the z –test of the relationship between brand credibility and customer loyalty (n=474).

Z-test: H0₂: Brand Credibility & Customer Loyalty

z-statistic	P-Value	Cohens_d
5.01056	.001	.23014

Reject H0 P-Value < (0.05) Accept HO P-Value > (0.05)

Since the P-Value (.001) is less than 0.05 we reject the null hypothesis and accept the research hypothesis. This implies that there is indeed a statistical significant relationship between brand credibility and customer loyalty as depicted by the statistical evidence in table 4.16 we can therefore infer and argue from the result of this finding that there is a significant relationship between brand credibility and customer loyalty

Also the cohens –d value indicates that the sample mean is 23.01% mean is standard deviation larger than the population mean thus the magnitude of the difference in means is considered to be moderate. This implies that brand trust is significantly but moderately related to customer loyalty

4.7.3 Relationship between brand performance and customer satisfaction.

In chapter one of this thesis , the researcher in the third hypothesis assumed that there is no relationship between brand performance and customer satisfaction Table 4.17 Shows the statistical evidence of this assumption these variables with the z –test of the relationship between brand performance and customer satisfaction (n=474).

z-test: H0₃: Brand Performance & Customer Satisfaction

z-statistic	P-Value	Cohens_d
6.88136	.0001	.31607

Reject H0 P-Value < (0.05) Accept HO P-Value > (0.05)

Since the P-Value (.0001) is less than P-Value (0.05) we reject the null hypothesis and accept the research hypothesis. This implies that there is indeed a statistical significant relationship between brand performance and customer satisfaction as depicted by the statistical evidence in table 4.17 we can therefore infer and argue from the result of this finding that there is a significant relationship between brand performance and customer satisfaction

Also the cohens –d value indicates that the sample mean is 31.60% standard deviation larger than the population mean thus, the magnitude of the difference in means is considered to be strong in other word the effective size of the is large this implies that brand performance is significantly and strongly related to customer satisfaction

4.7.4 Relationship between brand performance and customer loyalty.

In chapter one of this thesis the researcher in the fourth hypothesis assumed that there is no relationship between brand performance and customer loyalty Table 4.18 Shows the statistical evidence of this assumption these variables with the z–test of the relationship between brand performance and customer loyalty (n=474).

Table 4.18 z-test: H0₄: Brand Performance & Customer Loyalty

z-statistic	P-Value	Cohens_d
5.33181	.001	.24.07398

Reject H0 P-Value < (0.05) Accept HO P-Value > (0.05)

Since the P-Value (.0001) is less than -Value (0.05) this suggest that there is a statistical significant relationship ship between brand performance and customer loyalty we therefore reject the null hypothesis and accept the research hypothesis as depicted by the statistical evidence in table 4.18 we can therefore infer and argue from the result of this finding that there is a significant relationship between brand performance and customer loyalty

Also the cohens –d value indicates that the sample mean is 24.49% standard deviation larger than the population mean thus the magnitude of the difference in means is considered to be moderate. This implies that brand performance is significantly but moderately related to customer loyalty

the interaction of WOM on BT and its dimensions

Sample mean	Sm x Mm	$\frac{Sm \times Mm}{2}$	Sd	Sd x Mo Sd	$\frac{Sd \times Msd}{2}$
4.25	4.25 x 4.23	8.77	0.39	0.39 x 0.65	0.126
4.16	4.16 x 4.23	9.00	0.49	0.49 x 0.65	0.159
		17.77			0.285

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Means of means} &= \frac{17.77}{2} \\ &= 8.88 \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Standard Deviation} &= \frac{0.285}{2} \\ &= 0.142 \end{aligned}$$

We can now test our assumption in chapter one of this thesis were we stated that via the fifth (H0₅) hypothesis that word of mouth communication does not significantly moderates between brand trust and customer retention Table 4.21 Shows the statistical evidence of this assumption these variables with the z–test of the relationship between brand trust and customer retention loyalty (n=474).

Table 4.20 z-test: H0₅: WOM moderates between Brand trust & Customer Retention

z-statistic	P-Value	Cohens_d
705.735	.001	32.415

Reject H0 P-Value < (0.05) Accept HO P-Value > (0.05)

Since the P-Values (.001) which is less than P-value (0.05) this shows that word of mouth is statistically significantly moderating between brand trust and customer retention Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the research hypotheses we can therefore infer and argue from the result of this finding that word of mouth communication significantly moderates between brand trust and customer retention. Also the cohens –d value indicates that the sample mean is 32.415% standard deviation larger than the population mean. Which implies that word of mouth communication does significantly and strongly moderates between brand trust and customer retention

Discussion of Findings

Our result show the significance of brand trust (i.e. brand credibility and brand performance) positively relates with customer retention (i.e. customer satisfaction and customer loyalty) and how word of mouth communication moderates between brand trust and customer retention

Over all our results are consistent with the notion that **brand credibility** has a strong and positive significance on **customer satisfaction** (antecedent of customer retention). This result is consistent with previous research such as Lassar, Mittal, & Sharma (1995) that found that trustworthiness (antecedent of brand credibility) informs the confidence the customers have over the message the brand sends., the customer believes and trust the signal

that comes from the brand. Also Zahra, (2014) found that brand credibility is positively related to satisfaction, loyalty, commitment, and continuance commitment; and that brand trust will lead to higher satisfaction. This study has provided empirical evidence that aligns with the views of the above studies, hence we can state that brand credibility will enable firms to enhance their relationship with their respective customer and would lead to higher satisfaction and commitment among customer and make them stay with the brand, we believe that this of course can lead to customer retention.

In addition, Talat, Mohammad, Rifat, and Imrah (2012) conducted a study in Pakistan. They investigated the relationship between brand trust, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in the automobile sector of Pakistan. Their result shows that the relationship between brand trust and customer loyalty is positive. They went on to establish a relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. The findings of this study have also validated the position of these scholars.

In addition our results show that word of mouth communication significantly moderates **between brand trust and customer retention**

This is consistent with previous research such as Sweeney et al. (2007) who suggested that the word-of-mouth is a new way to achieve competitive advantage in the market place

Also supported by with the work of previous scholars such as Yang et al. (2012). Citing a 2007 Nielsen Global Survey, that found that 78% of people found “recommendations from consumers” as the form of advertising that they trust most

Our finding are the first to explain the antecedents of brand trust (brand credibility and brand performance) as it affect customer retention among auto mobile firms (dealers) in Port Harcourt metropolis this result suggest that the trust customer have on the brand they are also transferring to the dealers of those brands also, there has been a “threshold” argument; it has been found that “delighted” customers have a much higher probability of retention than those who are merely “satisfied” and would gladly recommend the brand to their friends, colleagues and neighbours. This position is further validated by our study as we observed that the recommendation from a friend or colleague has a highly significant influence on the choice of brand to buy

Conclusion

The chapter ended with a conclusion that studies and literature on brand trust and customer retention is virtually nonexistent in the developing economy like Nigeria which is why this study is relevant to shed light on that particular area so as to instigate interest of other researchers.

Based on the results of the findings in chapter four, this study concludes that brand trust is being practiced in Nigeria. However, brand credibility an antecedent of brand trust was found to be significantly and strongly related to customer satisfaction and customer loyalty (antecedents of customer retention) of the average Nigerian consumer; while Brand performance was seen to have a significant but weak relationship to customer satisfaction and customer loyalty (antecedent of customer retention).

Also word of mouth communication was seen to be strongly related to Brand trust and customer retention among branded automobile firms in Port Harcourt Metropolis

Recommendation for further research areas

Areas this study recommends researchers to investigate further are:

1. first, future research should consider the applicability of findings in other countries and cultures of developed and developing economy. Likewise, in order to see if the results can be generalized.
2. Further research should consider the extent to which the relations analyzed may occur in other products, services and brands.
3. More so, additional outcomes of brand trust might be included in the model to reach a better understanding of customer retention creation process and its consequences.
4. This study can also be replicated in other industries.
5. Furthermore, the findings are based on consumers’ perceptions, hence future studies could link these perceptual measures with behavioural outcomes or observable metrics, and
6. Finally, the construct of brand trust can be measured with firms’ market share.

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