GLOBAL RESEARCH NETWORK
ONLINE RESEARCH HUB

ISSN: 2576-5973
Vol. 5, No. 3, 2022

Brand Delivery Speed Positioning Strategy and Sales Performance of Food and Beverage Manufacturing Entrepreneurs in Small and Medium Enterprises Sector in Rivers State, Nigeria

Dr Lawrence Amadi
Department of Marketing,
Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumeni,
Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria.
Dr. Godswill Chinedu Chukwu
Department of Marketing,
Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumeni,
Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria.
Author for Correspondence: amalaw2004@yahoo.com

Abstract: The study investigated the relationship between brand delivery speed positioning strategy and sales performance of food and beverage manufacturing entrepreneurs in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) sector in Rivers State, Nigeria. The descriptive and quantitative survey research gathered data from 490 entrepreneurs who operate food and beverage SMEs and their customers in Rivers State. A well-structured questionnaire containing 8 items, with five demographic items was used to elicit data from the respondents. After data editing, and reliability analysis of the instrument, inferential statistics was conducted to determine the relationship between brand delivery speed positioning strategy and sales performance with the help of SPSS. The result of the inferential statistical analysis revealed a moderate and positive relationship between brand delivery speed positioning strategy and sales performance. The empirical study concluded that brand delivery speed positioning strategy has a significant predictive capability on sales performance in the context of sales growth. The study therefore recommended that manufacturing entrepreneurs should adopt flexible delivery policy in line with changing demand pattern of their customers, because customer will consider such companies to be reliable and will wish to continue doing business with the firm thereby reducing the possibility of customer defection to competitors.

Keywords: Brand Positioning Strategy**.** Brand Delivery Speed. Sales Growth. Entrepreneurs

INTRODUCTION

The food and beverage industry is one of the most attractive industries in Nigeria. The industry is attractive to small business investors because it requires small capital to start. Due to the small capital requirement, many individuals have decided to establish their own food and beverage companies on a small or medium scale to earn a living. As more and more individuals enter the industry, the level of competition intensifies. As competition intensifies, it becomes more challenging for food and beverage manufacturers to improve their sales performance. However, in order for manufacturing entrepreneurs to improve their sales performance and survive in the midst of intense competition, they need to position their brands in the minds of the consumers in a way that will give them competitive advantage.

Brand positioning refers to the place that a brand occupies in the mind of the customer and how it is distinguished from competitors' brands (Kotler, 2006). It is the process of creating a desired image for a company and its products in the minds of a target group of consumers in order to gain competitive advantage (Kotler, 2006). The aim of adopting brand positioning strategies is to make a brand occupy a distinct position in the mind of the customer in relation to competing brands (Tesfom & Lutz, 2006). In order to position brands in the market, companies must pay adequate attention on the distinguishing features of their brand such as quality, benefits, packaging, price, delivery etc and try to create a positive image in this direction. When a company is able to position its brand in the minds of consumers, it will likely boost sales and increase the market share of the company's brand.

Brand positioning is one of the powerful tools that can be adopted to achieve improvement in sales due to the fact that positioning is something that happens in the minds of the customers and forms the basis for customer patronage. Brand positioning is, therefore, the process of distinguishing a brand from others to make it more attractive to a particular target market (Hawks, 2015). It is a business strategy whereby the business operator modifies a brand in order to make it more attractive to the customer (Chelumbrun, 2014). Businesses do this to gain an edge in industries such as food and beverage where multiple competitors produce similar products (Hawks, 2015).

Nigerian food and beverage manufacturing entrepreneurs, particularly those whose sales level are on steady decline may adopt brand positioning strategies to increase their sales performance. When a company adopts a positioning strategy, it may go a long way in building trust for the firm's brand (Reibstein, 2010). However, for a brand to occupy a strong position in the minds of the consumers, such brand must be perceived by the consumers as being unique in terms of its quality, benefit, reliability, delivery, or price. Once the product has occupied a strong and distinct position in the minds of the consumers, they (consumers) will remain committed to buying the brand as long as the company will continue to deliver the same quality each and every time. Any attempt to deviate from the usual expectation, the brand will quickly be erased from the customers' minds and customers will switch to other competing brands that give them better satisfaction. This development will likely have negative impact on the company's sales performance.

It is an established fact that many SMEs finds it difficult to develop and implement brand positioning strategies which accounts for their inability to graduate into large scale organisations (Word Bank, 2014) especially in developing economies. Many also fail within short period of time after opening due to several challenges. It is based on the foregoing that this current study attempts to investigate the predictive capability of brand delivery

Published by "Global Research Network LLC"
https://www.globalresearchnetwork.us

positioning strategy on sales performance of food and beverages manufacturing entrepreneurs in SMEs sector in Rivers State

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of this study was to examine the predictive capability of brand positioning strategies on the sales performance of food and beverage manufacturing entrepreneurs in SMEs sector in Rivers State. The specific objective was to determine

the predictive capability of brand delivery speed on the sales performance of food and beverage manufacturing entrepreneurs in SMEs sector in Rivers State; and

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The review of literature is divided into three sections: conceptual, empirical and theoretical reviews.

Conceptual Review

Here effort was made to discuss the concepts that formed the independent variable (brand delivery positioning strategies) and the dependent variable (sales performance).

For this study the sub variable of interest in terms of sales performance is sales growth.

Brand Positioning Strategies

Positioning is related with creating the perception of a brand in the customer's mind and of achieving differentiation that it stands apart from competitors' brands/offerings and that it meets the consumer's needs/expectations. Brand positioning major objective should be to create the desired perception in the target consumer's mind. A brand position is part of the brand identity and value proposition that is to be actively communicated to the target audience and that demonstrates an advantage over competing brands (Aaker, 1996). A well-positioned brand has a competitively attractive position supported by strong associations (Aaker, 1991). A brand's position is the relative competitive comparison the brand occupies in a given market as perceived by the target market. It is the aggregate perception the market has of a particular company, product service in relation to their perceptions of the competitors in the same category. A brand's position can also be described as the set of perceptions, impressions, ideas and feelings that consumers have for a brand compared with competing brands. Business operators plan positions that give their products the greatest advantage in selected target markets, and they- design appropriate marketing mixes to create these planned positions.

The core of effective positioning is a unique position that the brand occupies in the mind of the consumer. Most new brands fail because they are perceived as "me too" offerings that do not offer potential consumers any advantages or unique benefits over competitive products. Manufacturers of brands in the same category can effectively differentiate their offerings only if they stress the benefits that their brands provide rather than their physical products features (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2007). The benefits featured in a brand's positioning must reflect attributes that are important to and congruent with the perceptions of the targeted consumer segment. Sherrington (2003) posited that by strategically positioning its offerings in the minds of the target audience, a company can build a strong identity or personality for the brand.

Brand preference is the outcome of the emotional needs the customers have. Emotional associations can strongly distinguish the brand in customers' mind in comparison to competitors' offerings. For this current study, brand delivery speed positioning strategy of food and beverage manufacturing companies and its relationship with sales performance (sales growth) is the focus of investigation.

Brand Delivery Speed Positioning Strategy: According to Kotler (1999), speed of delivery is a competitive advantage tool used by many firms to attain better position in the market. A firm is expected to deliver its products/services to customers at the right time (Vakilifard & Khozein, 2012). Customers usually value on-time delivery and use it as a symbol of efficient organization. If a firm is able to deliver its products according to customer due date, the customer will consider the firm to be reliable and will wish to continuing doing business with the firm. This will bring about customer loyalty which will lead to better sales performance for the firm (Thomas & Alex, 2011). Consistency in superior service delivery is what builds customers' trust and confidence (McIntire, 2014). Consistent delivery is what every customer desires. Customers will patronize a firm that delivers products the way customers expect it, that is on time and without alteration to specification. If not, customers will go to someone else who will deliver what they want at the right time (Vakilifard & Khozein, 2012).
A number of companies attempt to position their brands in the market on the basis of delivery speed (Kotler, 2006; Yednap, 2013). By designing faster delivery speed, companies try to attract consumers to their brands. Kamau, and Wafula (2015) noted that consumers usually pay attention to brand's delivery speed when making purchase decision. They evaluate the delivery speed of brands in the market and factor it into their decision on which brand to buy. The brand whose delivery speed meets the customer's satisfaction is often preferred and eventually purchased. Considering the fact that most consumers attach importance to brand's while making purchase decision, some companies have responded accordingly by positioning their brand on the basis of their delivery speed.

Sales Performance

Sales performance has to do with the outcome of sales activities of firms (Servais & Jensen, 2012). This outcome manifests in the firm's sales growth, market share and profits (Okpara & Kumbiadis, 2009). Sales performance can as well be considered as a measure of contributions of a company's sales activities to its objectives. A sale is the act of selling a product or service in return for money or other compensations (Kotler & Armstrong, 2004). Sales may also be seen as the process of transferring ownership of goods to consumers in exchange for money (Servais & Jensen, 2012).Sales performance in a nut shell is the measurement of the number of sales in monetary terms that a firm makes in a given period of time. This implies that sales performance involves the evaluation of the amount of goods sold in a given period of time as compared to the expected or budgeted figure set out by a firm. Increasing sales performance can at the same time improve firm growth in terms of revenue generation. Every firm sets its sales target for a specific period of time such as monthly, quarterly or yearly. For this current study, the measure of sales performance that is subject of examination is sales growth.

Sales Growth

Sales growth can be defined as an increase in the amount of goods sold by a company over a specific period of time (Bertuzzi, 2015). Nelson (2015) stated that sales growth can be determined by comparing the sales of a company on a monthly, quarterly or yearly basis. If the sales for the present month are greater than the sales of the previous month, it then means that the company has experienced a monthly sales growth. Also, if a company made sales which amounted to N20 million in 2017 and recorded a sales of N25million in 2018, the N5million increase in sales is regarded as the annual sales growth. Roberge (2014) stated that sales growth is usually calculated and expressed in percentage. The percentage increase in sales is described as the sales growth rate (Roberge, 2014). Food and beverage manufacturing SMEs make adequate efforts to achieve sales growth because it is the only way to increase profit. Sara (2017) argued that sales growth helps to increase the profit margin of a company. Reibstein (2010) noted that an increase in sales means a corresponding increase in revenue for the company and this will lead to increase in shareholders' wealth. By selling more food and beverage products from month to month or year to year, manufacturing entrepreneurs in SMEs sector may increase their profit margin and expand their business operations (McKinsey, Baungartner & Hatami, 2016).

Besides, sales growth equals increase in the quantity of items a business sells during a given period such as a year or fiscal quarter (Codjia, 2015).The Cambridge English Dictionary defines sales growth as the increase in the quantity or number of products sold or services provided by a company in a particular period of time. It is the additional amount or number of units that are sold of a particular product. Typically, when using or analyzing a unit of sales figure, it should be based on a physical product, such as the number of tons of an item sold, rather than on the number of services rendered. Sales are the driving force of business growth (Stefan, 2016). A firm's sales growth changes from time to time. The variation in sales growth is known as sales growth variance which is the measure of change in profit or contribution as a result of the difference between actual and budgeted sales quantity. It quantifies the effect of change in the level of sales on the profit or contribution over the period. Increasing sales growth is a key way to grow business; it is also a challenging thing to do. A high sales volume generally indicates a profitable venture.

Theoretical Review

Having considered the conceptual review as shown above, this section considers the theoretical framework for the study. Specifically, theoretical framework showcases theories that underpin a particular work. To this end, this study is underpinned by Dynamic Capability Theory and the theory is discussed briefly below.

Dynamic Capabilities Theory

Ambrosini and Bowman (2009) submitted that Teece (1997) working paper is most likely the first work that propounded the thought on dynamic capability. They contended that it is fundamental for business managers to consider the changing nature of its business environment, particularly the outside environment and develop techniques to adjust, coordinate and evolve strategies to adapt, integrate and reconfigure the entire organizational skills, resources etc toward the changing environment, keeping in mind the set goals and to attain better competitive position. Teece et al (1997, 2007) argued that attaining competitive advantage in turbulent business situations depends on developing unique capabilities. Dynamic abilities of firms may represent the development of distinction in the way firms undertake their operations within an industry (Zollo & Winter, 2002). Dynamic capability is about focus on survival.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Brand delivery speed is a standard criterion in supply chains which is used to measure the fulfilment of a customer's demand to the wish date. A firm is expected to deliver product/service in accordance to specification and also at the right time. The study by Thomas and Alex, (2011) revealed that customers usually value on time delivery as a symbol of efficient organization. This implies that if a firm is able to deliver products according to customer due date and specifications, the customer will consider the firm to be reliable and will wish to continue doing business with the firm. This position is in tandem with the views of Michael and Mc Cathie (2005) who added that this will bring about customer loyalty which will lead to better sales performance for the firm.

Some research scholars believe that delivery speed could be considered in terms of on- time delivery, delivery reliability, faster delivery times, etc(Liu et al.,2005; Mc Cathie, 2005) Brand delivery speed can be looked at in relation to how the products and services offered by an organization meet customer expectations. It provides an indication of the effectiveness of entrepreneurs in providing products and services to the customer on time and according to specification.

Kamau and Wafula (2015) examined the effects of strategic positioning of service delivery on customer satisfaction. The study employed qualitative and quantitative approaches to analyze the variables of the study. The researchers adopted a descriptive research design where questionnaire was used to elicit data from 67 customers and staff of Fina Bank in Mombosa, Kenya. The data collected by the researchers were analyzed using descriptive statistical tools as well as the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation which was computed using the SPSS version 21.0. The result revealed that all the positioning strategies (such as technological advancement, product classification, customer segmentation and brand benefits) have a positive impact on customer satisfaction. This study undertook a combination of qualitative and quantitative approach and adopted a descriptive research design. But the current study adopted quantitative approach and employed descriptive research design.

Gonzalez-Benito, Martos-Partal and de Salamanca (2013) examined the role of positioning and product category on the relationship between store brand consumption and store loyalty. The researchers studied ten (10) retail store chains in Spain. The researchers employed descriptive research design and gathered data through the use of questionnaire. Spearman Rank Correlation was used to analyze the data gathered. The study revealed that there is positive relationship between private-label consumption and store loyalty. The study also found significant differences across product categories in the relationship between in-store private- label consumption and store loyalty. The study therefore concluded that there is significant relationship between store brand share and store loyalty. The researchers in this study chose retail outlets and investigated the role of positioning and product category on store brand consumption and store loyalty. But the current study considered the food and beverage sector and it adopted descriptive research design which was the same research design adopted by the previous study.

Baek and Kim (2010) carried out an empirical study on the roles of brand positioning in consumer brand choice. The researchers adopted a quantitative approach where data were collected from 143 customers visiting selected supermarkets in China. The multiple regression analysis was used to analyze the data collected and the result showed that a significant positive relationship exist between brand positioning and consumer brand choice. The study also found a significant positive relationship between brand prestige and consumer brand choice. This study was similar to our current study given that both studies adopted quantitative approach and employed the use of questionnaire for data collection.

Wang and Yang (2010) empirically investigated the effect of brand positioning on consumers' brand purchase intention. The researchers used trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness to measure brand positioning and relate each of them to brand purchase intention. The study also used brand awareness and brand image to moderate the relationship between brand positioning and brand purchase intention. After analyzing the data collected from 135 customers in China, the researchers reported that brand trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness were positively and significantly related to brand purchase intention. The study also reported that brand positioning awareness and brand image significantly moderated the relationship between brand and brand purchase intention. This study had dissimilarities with the current study in terms of the inclusion of moderating variables and the fact that it was carried out in China while the current study was conducted in Nigeria.

Iyiola and Bidunni (2014) investigated product positioning as a strategy that enhances the survival of the small and medium enterprises in Nigeria, using Prodco Foods Nigeria Limited as a case study. Among the objectives set out were to determine the relationship between product positioning strategy and the survival of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), to ascertain changes in tastes and preference of consumers necessitating product positioning, and to determine whether product positioning increases sales volume of SMEs. They surveyed one hundred and forty respondents using questionnaire approach. The formulated three hypotheses were tested at 0.05 significant levels using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The findings revealed that there is a significant relationship between product positioning and the survival of SMEs, also, that changes in tastes and preference of consumers necessitate product positioning, and that product positioning increases sales volume of SMEs.

Gyabaah, Oppong and Baidoo (2014) assessed the impact of customer care in product positioning, a case study of Ghana Commercial Bank Ltd Kumasi. The study sample included 10 staff members and 40 customers who were selected by randomized stratified sampling method. In order to collect the required data, a self-completion questionnaire was used. The questionnaire forms were collected and analyzed. The results of the analysis showed that products can be positioned by treating each customer as unique. Again the bank can position its products by addressing customer complaints effectively. The also revealed that there is the tendency that customers may switch to other banks if not well catered for.

The study therefore concluded that, customer care should be given a favourable consideration in the bank. The research also provided the bank with some suggestions on how to improve customer care and therefore, meet the demand of the customers.

It can thus be hypothesized that;

H1: Brand delivery speed has significant predictive capability on the sales performance of food and beverage manufacturing SMEs in Rivers State.

Research Methodology

The research design adopted for this study was the descriptive survey research design, because of its ability to survey the opinion of the study subjects. The geographical area coverage for the research effort was Rivers State, South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The target population comprised of food and beverages manufacturing entrepreneurs in SMEs sector in Rivers State, registered with Rivers State Ministry of Commerce and Industry as at the time of the study, as well as the customers of these SMEs. The available records at the Ministry showed that as of March, 2019, there were 125 registered food and beverages manufacturing entrepreneurs in SMEs sector: Small Scale operators (80) and Medium Scale Operators (45) respectively in Rivers State. Since the population was successfully determined (known)**,** the sample size was determined based on the application of Krejice and Morgan's (1970) table for determining the sample size of a given population as adopted by Sekaran (2003). The result was 66 for small scale operators and 40 for medium scale operators, making a total sample size of 106 for the SMEs. For the customers, the application of Krejice and Morgan's table which holds that for a population that is estimated to be up to 1,000,000 and above, the appropriate sample size is 384 was adopted. A purposive sampling technique was adopted to draw the sample for the study.

The questionnaire was the major instrument for data collection. It was divided into two: questionnaire for owners/managers) and questionnaire for customers). Section A made provision for demographics of the respondents with five-items, while section B dealt with the study variables. The questions in section B were structured in a closed-ended format using five-point rating scale which were rated 1 to 5 respectively. Section B contained a total of 4 items which addressed the predictor variable(brand delivery), while Section B2a total of 4-items which addressed sales growth which is the criterion variable.

The validity of the research instrument was confirmed by the experts chosen from Entrepreneurship, Marketing and Statistics, from three universities:- Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike; University of Port Harcourt and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rivers State respectively. The instrument was modified to suit the study based on their recommendations. Cronbach's Alpha test was conducted after a test-retest on the measurement items to determine the reliability of the study instrument with a value 0f 0.84. This was considered appropriate based on the threshold value of .7 as suggested by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). Descriptive and inferential statistical tools were deployed

Published by "Global Research Network LLC"
https://www.globalresearchnetwork.us

for data presentation and analysis. Statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) was employed to facilitate the analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data Presentation and Analysis

In this section, efforts were made to present and analyse data used for the study.

Questionnaire Administration and Responses

A total of 490 copies of questionnaire were distributed to the respondents, with a response rate of 476. All the copies of the returned questionnaire were useful for statistical analysis. This represented 97.14% rate of return. The copies of questionnaire returned by the various study subjects were: 66 copies from small scale operators, 40 copies from medium scale operators and 370 copies from customers.

UNIVARIATE DATA ANALYSIS

Analysis of Responses to brand delivery speed items

Here, analysis was carried out regarding responses on the items addressing research question which bothered on the predictive capability of brand delivery speed on sales performance using frequency tables, mean scores and standard deviation values as illustrated below.

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses on Brand Delivery Speed Items

Descriptive Statistics

S/No	Item Description	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	This firm adopts flexible delivery policy in line with changing demand pattern of its customers.	476	1.00	5.00	3.5284	1.14853
2	The shipments of the firm's products usually arrive their destinations within agreed-upon time.	476	1.00	5.00	3.8741	1.03715
3	This firm's delivery conforms to specifications and ensures damage free delivery.	476	1.00	5.00	3.9778	1.02542

4	We engage experienced channel partners to facilitate our delivery speed.	476	1.00	5.00	3.7813	1.04561
	Overall Mean Score				**3.7904**	

Brand delivery speed was measured using four questionnaire items which were developed on a five point Likert scale. The item labels are shown above. The mean responses on the four items were calculated and used to obtain the overall mean response on the brand delivery speed construct. The overall mean response on the items (3.79) shows that the delivery speed the customers receive from the food and beverage manufacturing SMEs is fairly good which revealed that brand delivery speed has a predictive capability on sales.

BIVARIATE DATA ANALYSIS

Testing of Hypothesis 1

H1: Brand delivery speed has significant predictive capability on the sales performance of food and beverages manufacturing entrepreneurs in SMEs sector in Rivers State.

Table 2: PPMC Correlation between brand delivery speed and sales performance of food and beverages manufacturing entrepreneurs in SMEs sector in Rivers State

Correlations

		Brand Delivery Speed	Sales Performance
Brand Delivery Speed	Pearson Correlation	1	.526**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	476	476
Sales Performance	Pearson Correlation	.526**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	476 $r^2 = 0.277$ (27.7%)	476

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

From Table 2, the correlation coefficient (r = 0.526) between brand delivery speed and sales performance of food and beverages manufacturing entrepreneurs in SMEs sector is positive. The coefficient of determination (r^2 = 0.277) indicates that 27.7% change in sales performance (sales growth) of food and beverages manufacturing entrepreneurs in SMEs sector can be explained by brand delivery speed. The significant value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$) reveals a significant relationship. Based on that, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, brand delivery speed has a significant predictive capability on the sales performance (sales growth) of food and beverages manufacturing entrepreneurs in SMEs sector in Rivers State.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The findings in respect of the test of hypothesis one ($r = 0.526$; $r^2 = 0.277$; 0.000 $p < 0.05$) revealed that brand delivery speed has a significant predictive capability on the sales performance in the context of sales growth of food and beverages manufacturing entrepreneurs in SMEs sector in Rivers State.Hence the respondents agreed that the firm they patronize adopt flexible delivery policy in line with changing demand pattern of their customers, their shipments usually arrive their destinations within agreed-upon time, their delivery conforms to specifications and they ensure damage free delivery, inventory cycle is based on the level of turnover/demand by their customers and they engage experienced channel partners to facilitate their delivery speed. Akekue-Alex and Kalu (2016) examined the relationship between positioning strategies and customer patronage of fast food firms in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. Their findings revealed that there was a significant relationship between positioning strategies (customer expectation, location, service quality and assortment) adopted by fast food firms in Port Harcourt and customer patronage. Customer expectation in this context can be referred to brand delivery time. This completely agrees with the present study. Also, the study by Thomas and Alex (2011) revealed that customers usually value on time delivery as a symbol of efficient organization. This implies that if a firm is able to deliver products according to customer due date and specifications, the customer will consider the firm to be reliable and will wish to continue doing business with the firm.

This finding is also in line with the research conducted by Anderson and Narus (2004) as they found a significant positive relationship between brand delivery speed and sales performance. The researchers explained that prompt delivery will catapult sales to a high level. This implies that when a firm fails to deliver products as at when needed or in accordance to specification, it will discourage customers from maintaining loyalty to the firm and this will adversely affect sales performance. The submission of Harmsen and Jensen (2012) also supported our finding when they stated that delivery speed influences sales volume. Our finding here is also consistent with the outcome of the research conducted by McLellan (2013) which concluded that good delivery speed affects sales of firms positively. The implication of this is that when a firm has a policy of delivering the right products at the right quantity and at the right time, customers will develop confidence on the firm and sustain their business relationship with the firm. This will in turn have a positive effect on sales and the company bottom-line (profit).

Conclusion and Recommendation

From the Findings of the study, the study concludes that brand delivery speed has a significant predictive capability on the sales performance of food and beverages manufacturing entrepreneurs in SMEs sector in Rivers State. This implies that customers usually value on-time delivery and use it as a measure of efficient organization. The study therefore recommended that manufacturing entrepreneurs should adopt flexible delivery policy in line with changing demand pattern of their customers, because customer will consider such companies to be reliable and will wish to continue doing business with the firm thereby reducing the possibility of customer defection to competitors.

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Studies

Here, the issue of the generalization of our findings comes into play, given that it may not automatically apply to every setting (locale) and facets of firms or industries. It should be kept in mind that the findings of this study are limited to food and beverage manufacturing entrepreneurs operating in the SMEs sector in Rivers State. Therefore, further research should be conducted in other states and regions as well as sectors in order to confirm or contradict our findings.

REFERENCES

1. Aaker, A. Kumar, V. & Day, G. (1998). *Marketing Research*. New York: John Wiley
2. Akekue-Alex, N. & Kalu, S. E. (2016). Positioning Strategies and Customer Patronage of Fast- Food Firms in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. *European Journal of Business and Management, 8(36),* 63-74.
3. Asika, N. (2000).*Research Methodology in Behavioural Sciences*. Lagos: Longman Nigeria Plc.
4. Baridam, D. M. (2001). *Research Methods in Administrative Sciences*. Port Harcourt: Sharebrooke Associates.
5. Bertuzzi, T. (2015). *The Sales Development Playbook: Build Repeatable Pipeline and Accelerate Growth with Inside Sales*. London: Prentice Hall.
6. Chelumbrun, J. (2014). The Concept of Product Differentiation in Marketing. Retrieved from https://www.linkedin.com/in/jag-chelumbrun(Assessed 23/8/2018).
7. Codjia, M. (2015). Difference between the sales/sales volume. *Small Business Chron*, Available at: www.smallbusiness.chron.com
8. Hawks, D. (2015).Product Positioning in Marketing: Examples, Strategies & Definition.Chapter15/Lesson15Transcript.(Accessed 20/7/2018).
9. Heide, M. (2017). A Brand Positioning Strategy Recommendation for an Asian Company. Retrieved from: www.studenttheses.cb.dk(Assessed 22/7/2018).
10. Hickey, C. (2017). *Marketing Strategies*. London: Cambridge University Press.
11. Ibeh, K. (2004). "Further Export Participation in Less Performing Developing Countries". *International Journal of Social Economics*, 31, (1/2), 94 – 110.
12. Janiszewska, K., & Insch, A. (2012). The Strategic Importance of Brand Positioning in the Place Brand Concept: Elements, Structure and Application Capabilities. *Journal of International Studies*, 5(1), 213-221.
13. Kamau, A. N. & Wafula, M. K. (2015). Effects of Strategic Positioning of Service Delivery on Customer Satisfaction - A Case Study of FINA Rank. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications, 5 (1),* 1-15.

14. Kamau, A. N. & Wafula, M. K. (2015). Effects of Strategic Positioning of Service Delivery on Customer Satisfaction - A Case Study of FINA Bank. *International Journal of*
15. Kelchner, L. (2014). The advantages of a product differentiation strategy. *Small Business.* http://smallbusiness.chron.com/advantages-product-differentiation-strategy-17691.html
16. Kennan, M. (2015). How to calculate sales turnover. *Small Business*, Chron. Available at: www.smallbusiness.chron.com
17. Khan, N. and Kongar, E. (2014) Innovation and Development of New Product for Customer Satisfaction, Applying on Smart Phone's Security ASEE 2014 Zone I Conference, April 3-5, 2014, University of Bridgeport, Bridgpeort, CT, USA.
18. Komaromi, K. (2016). Brand Positioning and Organizational Competitiveness. *International Journal of Marketin*g, 56 (3), 245-256.
19. Kongalla, R. (2013*). Online Marketing - Differentiation and Positioning*. India: India Institute of Tourism and Travel Management.
20. Kotler, P. & Armstrong, G. (2004): *Principles of Marketing*, Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Education.
21. Kotler, P. (2006). *Marketing Management: Planning, Analysis and Implementation(9th ed.)*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall Publications.
22. Kotler, P. (2006). *Marketing Management: Planning, Analysis and Implementation (9th Eds.)*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall Publications.
23. Kropp, F.; Lindsay, N. J. & Shoham, A. (2006). Entrepreneurial, Market and Learning Orientations and International Entrepreneurial Business Venture Performance in South African Firms. *International Marketing Review*, 23(5), 504 – 523.
24. KwabenaAdjei, R.D. (2014). Determinants of Customer Loyalty among Mobile Telecom Subscribers in the Brong Ahafo Region of Ghana. *International Journal of Business and Social Research, 4 (1)*, 82-95.
25. Lauga, D. O. (2011). Product Positioning in a Two-Dimensional Vertical Differentiation Model: The Role of Quality Costs. *Marketing Science*, 30(5), 903 - 923.
26. Levi, K. (2007). “Differentiate or Diminish: The Art and Necessity of Business Positioning.” *Business Management Review*, *32 (4)*, 9-1Z
27. Macky, R. (2007). Poor sales performance kills your revenue. Weblink – Retrieved from: http://assess-systems.com.au/blog/2007/poor-sales-performers-kill-your-revenue/
28. Mazhar M, Daud S, & Mubin M (2015). Impact of Product Packaging on Consumer Buying Behaviour: Evidence from Karachi. Journal of Marketing and Consumer Research, 16, 35-42.
29. McKinsey, C., Baungartner, T. & Hatami, H. (2016). Sales Growth: Five Proven Strategies from the World’s Sales Leaders Hardcover.*The Amazon Book Review*.
30. McLellan, J. (2013). Sales Performance Definition. http//www.eHow.com. (Assessed 29/4/2016).

31. Mulei, A. (2005).Evaluation of Effectiveness of Positioning Strategies on Customer Choice: The Case of Laundry Detergents. *MBA Thesis*, University of Nairobi.\
32. Musau, S.K (2012). Effectiveness of Positioning Strategies on Consumer Loyalty. *International Journal of Business and Social Research, 6 (2),* 42-65.
33. Nazmul, A. K., Islam, M. S., Hossain, F. & Chowdhury, M. T. (2012). Product Positioning: A Study of Soap Industry in Dhaka City. *European Journal of Business and Management*, 4(12), 83-95.
34. Ndinda, P. (2005). Positioning Strategies used by HMOs in Kenya. MBA Thesis, University of Nairobi.
35. Nelson, B. (2015). 12 Sure-Fire Steps to Improve Retail Sales. Business Know-how. Retried from: www.businessknowhow.com (Assessed 23/7/2018).
36. Nunnally, J. C., & Bernstein, I. H. (1994).*Psychometric theory*. 3rd ed. Sydney,Australia McGraw Hill.
37. Nwankwo, O. (2013). *A Practical Guide to Research Writing for Students of Research Enterprise*. (Revised 5th ed). Port Harcourt: University of Port Harcourt Press Ltd.
38. Thomas, S. & Alex, D. (2011). Impact of product quality, service quality and contextual experience on customer perceived value and buying intentions. *European Journal of Business and Management*, 3(3), 276-286.
39. Oghojafor, B. E. A., Ladipo, K. A. P., Ighomereho, 0. S. & Odunewu, A. V. (2014). Determinants of customer satisfaction and loyalty in the Nigerian Telecommunications Industry. *British Journal of Marketing Studies, 2 (5),* 67-83.
40. Okpara, J.O & Kumbiadis, N (2009). SMEs Export Orientation and Performance: Evidence from a Developing *Economy International Review of Business Research Papers*, 5, 109-119.
41. Reibstein, D. (2010). *Product Positioning*. New York: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.
42. Roberge, M. (2014). *The Sales Acceleration Formula: Using Data, Technology, and Inbound Selling to go from $0 to $100*. New York: Macmillan Publications.
43. Sajuyigbe, A. S., Ayanleke, S.O. & Ola, O.S. (2013). Impact of Packaging on Organizational Sales Turnover: A Case Study of Patterzon Zoconist Cussons (PZ) Plc, Nigeria. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Contemporary Research in Business*, 4 (11), 479-508.
44. Sara, S. (2017). How to Increase Sales in Retail: The Ultimate Guide. Shopkeep. www.shopkeep.com (Assessed 21/7/2018).
45. Stefan, T. (2016). Turnover sales definition. *Small Business*, Chron. Available at: www. smallBusiness>Running a Business>Sales-turnover-definition.
46. Stuyck, J. (2003). Product differentiation in terms of packaging presentation, advertising, trademarks, etc. Retrieved from springer.com/gp/book/9789065440846.
47. Sullivan, U. Y., Peterson, R. M. & Krishnan, V. (2012). Value Creation and Firm Sales Performance: The Mediating Roles of Strategic Account Management and Relationship Perception. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 41, 166–173.
48. Tesfom, G., & Lutz, C. (2006). A Classification Of Export Marketing Problems Of Small And Medium Sized Manufacturing Firms In Developing Countries.

Published by "Global Research Network LLC"
https://www.globalresearchnetwork.us

International Journal of Emerging Markets, 1(3), 262-281.
49. Trochin, W. (2006). *The Research Methods Knowledge*. Cincinnati: Atomic Dog Pub.
50. Udegbe, S. E., Idris, A. A. & Olumoko, T. A. (2010). Relationship Marketing and CustomerLoyalty: A Customer Service Approach in Nigerian Companies. *Information Management*, 2 (4), 167-176.
51. Vakilifard, H. & Khozein, A. (2012). Prevention, Appraisal, Internal Failure, External Failure Cost and Quality Optimization. *International Journal of Mathematics and Computer Sciences*, 10, 539-551.
52. Walsh, P. P., & Whelen, C. (2002). Product Differentiation and Firm Size Distribution: An Application to Carbonated Soft Drinks. A Paper Presented at the Network of UK Industrial Economists in Royal Holloway College, the Industry Group in STICERD, London School of Economics and Political Science.