



INFLUENCE OF HOSPITALITY SERVICE DESIGN ON FAST -FOOD BRAND LOYALTY IN WARRI CITY, DELTA STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Today, many business organizations including fast-food establishments are experiencing a decline in revenue as only a few are operating optimally, due to many external and internal factors, some of which have not been empirically validated. This, study, therefore, was an attempt to determine the effect of service design on brand loyalty in fast food organizations in Warri city, Delta State of Nigeria. The survey research design was adopted for the study whereby a sample size of 226 customers was drawn from the purposive sampling technique to generate primary data for the study through the questionnaire method. Simple percentage, mean score and standard deviations were deployed for descriptive and univariate analysis respectively while multiple regression was adopted for bivariate analysis involving hypotheses testing. The analyzed data revealed that innovativeness and technological resources had the most significant effect on repeat purchase in fast food organizations in Delta State of Nigeria, whereas context and target had positive but insignificant effect on repeat purchase. Based on the findings, it was concluded that all the dimensions of service design had varying degree of impact on brand loyalty in the fast-food organizations surveyed. Consequently, it was recommended that owners/managers of restaurants should embark on consumer research to determine target market preferences and those managers should redesign their menu to reflect customers' profiles and dynamics and should uphold continuous products/service improvement through innovativeness with a view to exceeding visitors' expectations for brand loyalty.

KEY WORDS

Hospitality Service
Design, Brand
Loyalty.

Introduction

It is generally acknowledged that customers' repurchase behavior towards a product or service brand accounts greatly to its survival and growth in the competitive business environment (Nysveen, Pedersen & Skard, 2013). Furthermore, brand loyalty has been associated with positive outcomes

such as public goodwill, advocacy, patronage, reduction in switching behavior and marketing costs (Zohaib, 2014; Faridah, 2013). This, Whandhy (2018) contends, might among things, be influenced by effective service design. This view is predicted on the argument that service design is crucial to service quality delivery. However, the role of service design in hospitality service delivery in Nigeria is largely under-researched. Meeskala (2012) opines that service design is crucial in determining how service will be delivered to customers. He explains that effective service can deliver customers satisfaction which in turn influences repeat purchase or repeat visit.

In this context, service design represents the ability of a hospitality organization to rethink its work through planning, organizing people, technology, infrastructure, communication and materials for customer satisfaction, revisit intention, repeat purchase and referrals (Ekeke, 2021). Service design addresses the functionality and form of services from the perspective of the user. It aims to ensure that service interfaces are useful, usable, and desirable from the client's point of view and effective, efficient and distinctive from the supplier's point of view, Mager (2009). Conversely, a poorly designed service setting can promote switching behavior with unpalatable outcomes for any hospitality organization.

Unarguably, fast-food business organizations are known to be important players in the hospitality sector which provides food and beverages and entertainments to guests at a profit. However, the quest for gaining sustained customer loyalty in the competitive hospitality business environment is an ever-abiding challenge for many service organizations including fast food organizations due to high incidence of service failure. Thus, customer disloyalty is common in the hospitality sector, even in Nigeria (Ekuweman, 2017).

The symptoms are often manifested in brand switching behaviour which implies that customers will move to another brand when not satisfied which in turn causes decline in loyalty. Another symptom includes the decline in revenue. When customers starts moving to other brands, it is obvious that sales will decrease and cash will not flow into the organization as it ought to.

Many research studies have linked effective service design with positive customer-related outcomes in other organizational and geographical contexts (Choa-Min, Wang, Yu-Hui . & Huang, 2012; Daugherty, Chen & Ferrin, 2011, Brakus, Schmitt, & Zarantonello, 2009). However, empirical studies on the role of service design in supporting brand loyalty in the Nigerian hospitality context are scarce. Nevertheless, illumination from the literature suggests that there might be a link between service design through innovativeness, service context, service resources, service target and customer behavioural outcomes (Muriel., Slim., Geradine & Sebastien, 2014; Kristin & Fritsche, 2010). But, this is yet to be proven and confirmed empirically in the context of fast food organizations in Warri city, Delta State , Nigeria. This current study is therefore an attempt to determine the effect of service design on brand loyalty, drawing our analysis from fast-food organizations in Warri City.

1. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Clarification

The Concept of Service Design

Service design is the activity of planning and organizing people, infrastructure, communication and material components of a service in order to improve its quality and the interaction between the service provider and its customers (Ratteen, 2013). Mager (2009) opines that service design addresses the functionality and form of services from the perspective of the ser. He avers that the aims of service

designs are to ensure that service interfaces are useful, usable, and desirable from the client's point of view and effective, efficient and distinctive from the supplier's point of view

2.1. 2 Dimensions of Service Design

In the literature, service design has been operationalized to include the following:

Innovativeness: Wang and Ahmed (2004) perceive innovativeness as “an organization's overall innovative capability of introducing new products/services to the market, or opening up new markets, through combining strategic orientation with innovative behavior and process”. In the hospitality industry context, Roches (2013) conceptualizes innovativeness as implementation of “new and often unique ideas, technology and practices within the hospitality industry to enhance guest experience and improve operational efficiency”. Roches added that this may, for example, include smart hotel rooms equipped with voice activated lightings and temperature control, mobile check –ins and check-out facilities, AI-driven personalization and eco-friendly practices. Roches (2013) opines that innovativeness in the hospitality industry is driven by technology, sustainability and personalized guest experience.

Technological Resources: Technological resources are recognized as important elements of hospitality service design. The introduction of new technologies in a firm/organization is a process in which companies use new digital technologies to understand their customers' desire. According to the National Restaurant Association (NAR), Bars and Restaurants Association (BRA) (2013) stated that, half of restaurants and bars have adopted some kind of payment technology with mobile devices, contactless payment methods, online/digital ordering, etc. Technological resources help organizations to improve their consumers' experience by delivering purchase differentials, in which it is possible to highlight speed, convenience, security and transactions' control (Collier & Kimes, 2012).

Context: In the hospitality industry, context refers to the time the services are delivered, the technological components required to carry out this service delivery, the norms of the organization as regards rendering services to customers, their standard of operation, regulations and space required to deliver the services (Foulonneau, 2014).

Target: The target here means the “customers” and why they will want to buy a particular brand of product or service (Winfred, 2013). The target also implies the goal intended to be attained and which is believed to be attainable. Organization tends towards having loyal customers and to achieve that, quality services need to be rendered; such that is different from other competing organizations around. In this regard, the organization makes the customers see reasons why they should purchase their brand repeatedly. The concept also connotes the idea prioritization of customers' needs and wants as well as interest in service delivery (Muriel 2014).

1.2 The Meaning of Brand Loyalty

Faridah (2013) perceived brand loyalty as ‘ a customer's preference to buy a particular brand in a product category all the time, most of the time. The position of Fardah suggests that brand preference induces repeat purchase based on customer's experience with the products or services.

Kandampully (2012) notes that the construct of brand loyalty contains attitudinal and behavioural dimensions. The attitudinal perspective of brand loyalty is viewed by Oliver (1999) as “a deeply held commitment to re-buy or re-patronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby reinforcing purchase and switching behaviour”. The behavioural perspective of brand loyalty views customer behavior in terms of brand retention, repeat purchase, share of category expenditure and portfolio size, which are directed towards a particular brand over time (Reinartz & Kumar, 2000).

Repeat Purchase as a Measure of Brand Loyalty

Hellier, Geurden, Carr and Rickard (2003) conceptualize repeat purchase as an individual's continued patronage of a particular brand of products or services in spite of the presence of equally appealing alternatives. This implies that loyalty of a brand by a customer can be measured by customers' patronage of a product or service arising from customer's satisfaction. Another implication of the definition is the fact that except for service failure incident, a satisfied customer is likely to reinforce his or her purchase behavior towards the brand.

2.3 Empirical Review and Hypotheses Development

The influence of service design on brand loyalty in different organizational contexts has been reported in the literature.

Innovativeness and Brand Loyalty

Daugherty, Chen and Ferrin (2011) investigated organizational structure and logistics in service innovation. The study indicated positive correlation between innovative behaviour and market response. Teixeira et al (2012) researched into customer experience modelling: from customer experience to service design. The study revealed a nexus between innovativeness and purchase behaviour. When an organization introduces new products/services, new processes, deploys new technology in production and service delivery, or develops new market and new distribution channels in a manner that meets customers' expectation, satisfaction can therefore induce loyalty to the brand. Therefore, we formulate our hypothesis in the fast-food organizations thus:

H1: Innovativeness has a positive and significant effect on repeat purchase in fast-food organizations in Warri city, Delta State, Nigeria.

Resources and Brand Loyalty

Jane and Ibrahim (2016) investigated service quality and brand loyalty: The mediation effect of brand passion, brand affection and self-brand connection. Key findings of the study revealed that quality of contact personnel, technological and technical capacity for service delivery of the organizations affected service quality delivery which in turn, affected customers' purchase behaviour. Choa-Min, Wang, Yu-Hui and Huang (2012) conducted a research on 'Understanding customer's repeat purchase intentions in B2C e-commerce: the roles of utilitarian value, hedonic value and perceived risk. Findings suggested positive influence of organizational resources on product success. The foregoing suggests that the acquisition of adequate organizational resources in human capital, technology, finance and capabilities translate into enhanced employee and organizational performance which can

have a salutary influence repeat purchase for the firms' products and services. Thus, in the context of hospitality domain, we formulate the underlying hypothesis:

H2: Acquisition and deployment of resources has a positive and significant effect on repeat purchase in fast-food organizations in Warri city, Delta State, Nigeria.

Context and Brand Loyalty

Foulonneau (2014) empirically examined the impact of hospitality service context on brand loyalty. It was found in the study that the time the services are delivered, the technological components required to carry out service, the norms of the organization as regards rendering services to customers, affected market behavior. Hellier et al (2013) investigated customer repurchase intention: a general structural equation model. Findings suggest that organizational contextual factors influence brand loyalty. In the light of the foregoing, we intend to test the proposition that:

H3: Hospitality service context has a positive and significant effect on repeat purchase in fast-food organizations in Warri city, Delta State, Nigeria.

Target and Brand Loyalty

Zohaib (2014) examined the effect of brand trust and customer satisfaction on brand loyalty in Bahawalpur. The study revealed that customer focus correlated positively with customer satisfaction, brand trust and brand loyalty. Nawaz, Usman and Faisal (2013) investigated factors influencing customer retention in fast food industry. Findings suggested that focusing on customers' needs and promoting their wellbeing significantly influenced brand loyalty. Since the customers constitute an important target of any business organization, we think that when their interests and wellbeing are captured in organizational strategies and policies as expressed in their product/service offerings, favourable purchase behavior and reinforcement can be assumed. Consequently, we formulate our hypothesis thus:

H4: Hospitality service target has a positive and significant effect on repeat purchase in fast-food organizations in Warri city, Delta State, Nigeria.

The hypothesized relationships between the variables of the study are depicted in our operational framework of the study as shown in fig. 1.

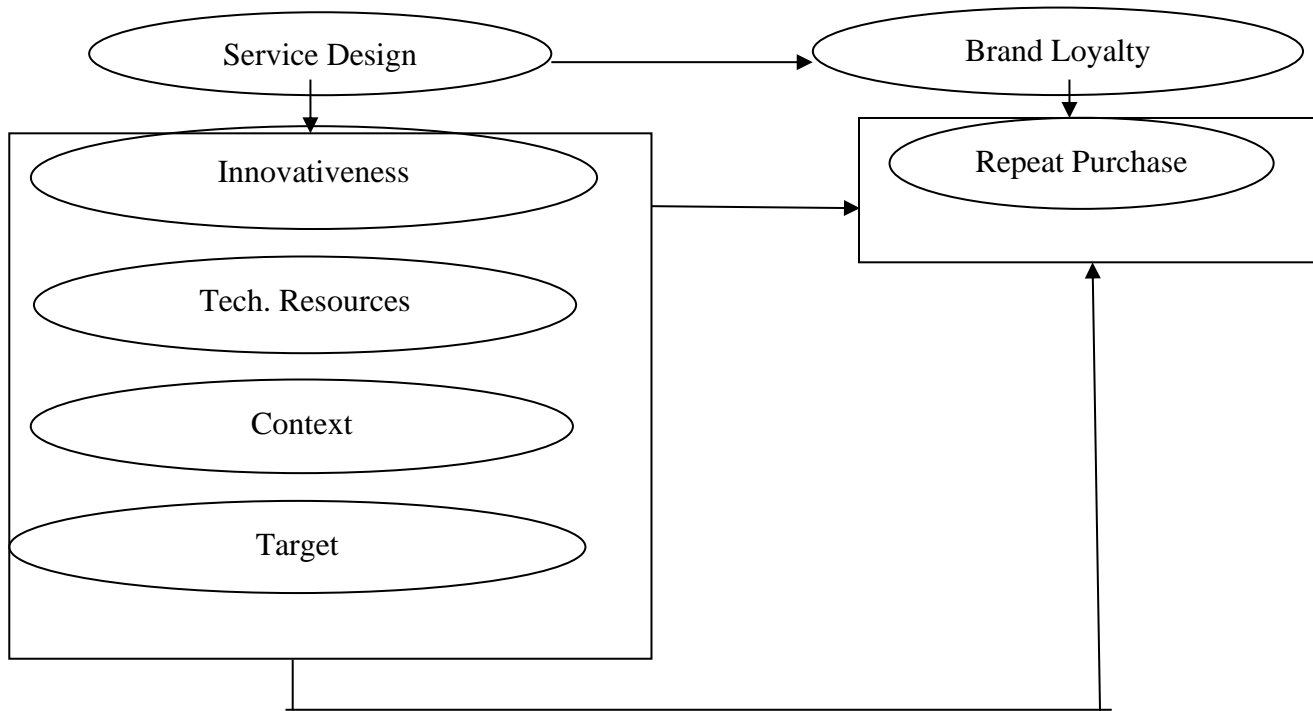


Figure 1: Operational framework showing the relationship between service design and brand loyalty. Source: Muriel., Slim, Geradine. and Sebastien (2014) and Dekimpe & Steenkamp (1995).

3: Methodology

The study is an evaluative one because it shows the effects of service design indicators on Brand Loyalty). The research design adopted for this study was the survey method of the Quasi-experimental research design. The research design is appropriate to the way it helps to provide answer to the research questions and to prove/disprove the research hypotheses (Ihejirika & Omego; 2011).

The target population for this study comprised customers of selected fast food organizations in Warri metropolis, which is large and unknown. This is because the population size could not be pre-determined since it was mobile or transient which characterize most studies in tourism and hospitality industry involving customers.

In reality, the number of fast food organizations in Warri are numerous given its oil city status. However, only 6 fast food organizations were surveyed for easy data collection and analysis and they are; Sizzlers, A.J Foods, Chicken Republic, Wakis, Genesis and Foodland Fast Food. Those establishments were selected based on their location, proximity, access, years of operation (more than five years) and visitor-drawing power. Consequently, the purposive, convenience sampling method was used to select 226 customers from the 6 fast-food organizations in Warri. The sample size was statistically determined using Krejcie and Morgan formula, and actual administration of the instrument for primary data collection was based on the number of customers available when the researcher visited the facilities and their willingness to participate in the study.

Primary data were collected using questionnaire structured in English Language. The choice of adopting the questionnaire is that, it is the best way of getting relevant written information from the

respondents of the study. The questionnaire was divided into three (3) sections A, B, C. section A requires information on the demographic data of the respondents, section B requires data on service design and it has 12 items, whereas section C requires data on brand loyalty and it has 3 items. Likert 5-point scale was adopted in structuring the questionnaire; they include strongly agree [SA] = 5, agree [A] = 4, undecided [U] = 3, disagree [D] = 2 and strongly disagree [SD] = 1. The instrument was designed using the measures adopted by Muriel, et.al (2014) and Dekimpe & Steenkamp (1995) but was modified by the researcher to suit the nature of the study.

Face validity was adopted whereby academics and practitioners in the field of hospitality and tourism management evaluated the contents to determine their suitability and appropriateness in measuring what is supposed to be measured. Their contributions enhanced the quality of the final copy by reflecting the reality of the phenomena of the study in the fast-food context.

The reliability of the research instrument was ascertained with the use of Cronbach Alpha. The values of the Cronbach Alpha were in the range of .787 to .991 for the 15 items used in the research instrument. The result showed that the data collection instrument was internally consistent.

The independent variable (service design) was operationalized along the dimensions of innovativeness, resources, context and target. The dependent variable (brand loyalty) was measured using repeat purchase. The scale adopted here was interval scale.

The data gathered through the questionnaires were presented using tables, percentages, mean score, standard deviations and multiple regression analysis aided by the application of SPSS. The multiple regression was adopted the effect of each of the service design dimensions on fast-food brand loyalty.

4. Analysis and Results

Table 1: Demographic profile of respondent

S/NO	Demographic variables	Freq.	%
1	Gender		
	Male	122	54
	Female	104	46
	Total	226	100
2	Age		
	16 - 25 years	81	36
	26 - 35 years	55	24
	35 - 45 years	49	22
	46 - 50 years	41	18
	Total	226	100
3	Highest Education Qualification		
	O' level	42	19
	B.SC	85	38
	MSC	59	26
	Ph.D	40	18
	Total	226	100
4	Marital Status		
	Single	102	45
	Married	92	40
	Divorced	20	9
	Widowed	12	6
	Total	226	100

Table 1 above shows the information on demographic profile of respondents. The table revealed that 122 respondents (54%) were male while 104 respondents (46%) were female. This implies that female respondents were of the majority.

The information on age bracket of the respondents in section 2 of Table 1 above shows that 81 respondents (36%) were within 16 – 25years, 55 respondents (24%) were within 26 – 35 years, 49 respondents (22%) were within 36 – 45 years, 41 respondents were within 46 – 50years. This information shows that majority of the respondent were within the ages of 16 - 25 years.

Section 3 of Table 1 above shows information on the respondents' level of education. They were represented as follows: O'Level = 42respondents (19%), BSC = 85 respondents (38%), M.Sc. = 59 respondents (26%), Ph.D = 40 respondents (18%). From the information it shows that respondents with B.Sc. are of the majority.

Section 4 of Table 1 shows the marital status of respondents. 102 respondents (45%) were single, 92 respondents (40%) were married, 20 respondents (9%) were divorced. 12 respondents (6%) were widowed. This information shows that the singles were in the majority.

4.2 Univariate Analyses

Table 2: Descriptive statistics on items of innovativeness

Items of Innovativeness	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Assortment of national and international menu is always available.	226	4.1765	.97911
There is fruits juice crushing section and native bar for customers.	225	4.0098	.76424
This restaurant has Children play section with modern facilities.	226	3.5784	1.20590
Valid N (listwise)	226		

Information on Table 2 above shows the result of descriptive statistics on items of innovativeness. Two of the items had a mean score that is above the threshold of 3.9. This implies that some of the restaurants had introduced some innovations in their service mix.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics on items of Technological Resources

Items of Technological resources	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
This restaurant deploys technology .in its service delivery.	226	4.0294	.97955
This restaurant has a functional website for menu display and ordering.	226	4.1176	.81197
Technology-enabled payment method is provided.	226	3.8627	1.02483
Valid N (listwise)	226		

Information on Table 3 above shows the result of descriptive statistics on items of resources. Two of the items had a mean score that is above the threshold of 3.9. This result therefore shows that most of the restaurants had deployed technologies in their service delivery.

Table 4: Descriptive statistics on items of Context

Items of context.	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
This restaurant provides services in timely and reliable manner.	226	3.7129	.95852
The environment is clean with functional air conditioning system	226	4.0490	.94793
Contact personnel are courteous and friendly.	226	3.7608	.94315
Valid N (listwise)	226		

Information on Table 4 above shows the result of descriptive statistics on items of context. Two of the items had a mean score that is less than the threshold of 3.9. This result therefore shows that most of the customers were not impressed by the context attributes of the restaurants

Table 5: Descriptive statistics on items of Target

Items of target	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
The restaurant provides and services that customers want.	226	4.0882	.82177
Their menu reflect the social and cultural diversities of customers.	226	3.8725	1.04996
This restaurant values and respect their customers.	226	4.0294	.87264
Valid N (listwise)	226		

Information on Table 5 above shows the result of descriptive statistics on items of target. Two of the items had a mean score that is above the threshold of 3.9. This result therefore shows that most of the respondents agreed that most of the restaurants were customer-focused.

Table 6: Descriptive statistics on items of Repeat Visit

Items of repeat visit	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
I visit this restaurant always to eat and have fun with family/friends.	226	4.3235	.92449
I come here always for take-outs	226	3.9314	.99762
I keep returning to this restaurant because I get value for my money.	226	4.0098	1.08541
Valid N (listwise)	226		

Two of the items had a mean score that is above the threshold of 3.9. This result therefore shows that most of the respondents agreed that they had revisited the same restaurants before.

Bivariate Analyses**Table 7: Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.936 ^a	.876	.871	.33164

a. Predictors: (Constant), Target , Context , Innovativeness , Resources

The variables were regressed to ascertain the degree of relationship existing between them in line with the hypothesized relationships.

Table 8: ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1					
Regression	75.655	4	18.914	171.964	.000 ^b
Residual	10.669	97	.110		
Total	86.324	226			

a. Dependent Variable: Repeat Purchase

b. Predictors: (Constant), Target , Context , Innovativeness , Resources

Table 9 Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.769	.173		4.456	.000
	Innovativeness	.834	.094	.883	8.845	.000
	Resources	.050	.114	.053	.438	.003
	Context	.184	.090	.191	2.050	.063
	Target	-.205	.116	-.182	-1.761	.571

a. Dependent Variable: Repeat Purchase

Generally, Table 7 shows the result of the regression analysis where 88% of the variance in brand loyalty/repeat purchase was explained by the combined dimensions of innovativeness, resources, context and target as $R^2=.876$. Table 8 shows that the F value of 171.964 ($p=.000$) is significant at the level of 0.05 for all the dimensions of service design.

Table 9 indicates the multiple regression analysis impact of each of the dimensions of service design on repeat purchase. Innovativeness had the greatest positive and significant impact on repeat purchase (Beta value) =.883; Pvalue = .000 < 0.05. This is followed by context which also had a positive impact on repeat purchase, but the impact is insignificant (Beta value = .191; Pvalue = .043 > 0.05). The third contributory factor that had a positive but insignificant effect on repeat purchase is target (Beta value = .182; Pvalue = .571 > 0.05). Resources trailed the pact as the fourth positive and significant

contributory factor to repeat purchase (Beta value = .053; Pvalue = .002 < 0.05). By these results, two null hypotheses were rejected while two alternatives accepted.

5. Discussion

For hypothesis one, the regression analysis showed a positive and significant effect of innovativeness on repeat purchase in fast food organizations in Warri city in Delta State of Nigeria (Beta value) = .883; Pvalue = .000 < 0.05. This finding is consistent with Doherty, Chen and Ferrin (2011) who found that organizational innovative behavior as expressed through new products and services had a great influence on customer loyalty and product choice. The finding is also corroborated by Teixeira et al (2012) whose findings implied that in an increasingly competitive environment, innovation is a key factor to enable companies to achieve a dominant market position and increase profitability.

For hypothesis two, the result of the multiple regression analysis shows a positive and significant effect of organizational resources on repeat purchase in fast food organizations in Warri city in Delta State of Nigeria (Beta value = .053; Pvalue = .002 < 0.05). This result is consistent with Jane and Ibrahim (2012) and Choa-Min et al (2012) whose studies linked favourable market responses to the acquisition and deployment of suitable resources in organizational processes. The implication is that the material, physical and human resources assembled by the entrepreneurs for fast food operations can bring about good service delivery for customer satisfaction, which in turn, induces repeat repurchase of their products and services.

The result of hypothesis three shows a positive effect of hospitality service context on repeat purchase in fast food organizations in Warri city in Delta State of Nigeria, but the effect is not significant (Beta value = .191; Pvalue = .063 > 0.05). The positive effect of context on repeat purchase is consistent with Faddy (2014) and Hellier et al (2013) who noted that service context in terms of the time the services are delivered, the technological components required to carry out the service delivery, the norms of the organization as regards rendering services to customers affect purchase behavior. A non-significant effect on context on repeat purchase in the fast food business in Delta State implies that brand building is not on the agenda of the entrepreneurs who established the businesses. They may be interested only in the short term profit making by concentrating on sales alone at the expense of nurturing good organizational culture.

Finally, the test result of the multiple regression analysis for hypothesis four shows a positive and statistically insignificant effect of hospitality service target on repeat purchase (Beta value = .182; Pvalue = .571 > 0.05). The finding of this study is consistent with Zohaib (2014) and Nawaz, et al (2013) who affirmed the link between focusing on customers' needs and wellbeing and favourable customers' behavior. The non-significant effect of target on repeat purchase could be argued to be as a result of several factors such as, low customer perceived value in the services being rendered by the fast food organizations. This also implies that fast food organizations are not seeking to know the characteristics of the target audience with a view to blending appropriately their marketing mix elements.

6. Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations

The study examined the effect of service design on brand loyalty in fast food organizations in Warri city, Delta State of Nigeria. The study revealed that innovativeness, context, target and resources had positive effect, but with varying degree of significance on customers' repeat purchase behavior in fast

food organizations in Delta State of Nigeria. Two out of the four service design dimensions (innovativeness and resources) had positive and significant effect on repeat purchase, while context and target had positive but insignificant effect purchase behavior. This implies that the organizations were deficient in their service context and customer service, thus necessitating improvement in those areas. Consequently, the study recommended that owners/managers of restaurants should embark on consumer research to enable them determine the exact needs and wants of the target market. They should redesign their menu to reflect the needs of potential and current customers uphold continuous improvement on innovative ways of service delivery with a view to exceeding visitors' expectations.

9. Limitation and Suggestion for further research

This study was conducted in fast food organizations in Warri city, Delta State of Nigeria in the context of service design and brand loyalty. Further research effort should explore other dimensions of service design and brand loyalty indicators in the same restaurants and other tourism/hospitality sectors/subsectors and geographic regions, as they will enhance empirical adequacy, theoretical relevance and experiential value in deepening insight and robustness.

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