

## Entrepreneurial Branding and Business Success of SMES In Port Harcourt.

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### **Abstract**

*The study investigated the relationship between entrepreneurial branding and business success of SMEs in Port Harcourt. The study utilized cross-sectional survey and a population of 2596 SMEs in Port Harcourt was covered. A sample size of 310 was drawn from the population using Krejcie and Morgan table. The simple random sampling was adopted and the data were gathered using copies of questionnaire which were personally administered to respondents. The predictor variable (entrepreneurial branding) was measured using brand image and brand name. The criterion variable was operationalized using repeat patronage and customer loyalty. 5 items were used in measuring each of the variables and the item were given on a 4-point likert scale ranging from strongly disagree, disagree, agree and strongly agree. The Spearman Rank Order Correlation was used in testing the stated hypotheses. The result revealed that entrepreneurial branding showed a positive and significant relationship with business success of SMEs in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, brand image and brand name also showed a positive and significant relationship with business success of SMEs in Port Harcourt. The study concluded that entrepreneurial branding via brand image and brand name is a significant predictor of business success of SMEs in Port Harcourt. The study recommends that SMEs in Port Harcourt should adopt a brand name for their products as it would increase their business success and Also, SMEs in Port Harcourt should have a good brand image in order to have competitive advantage.*

**Keywords:** *entrepreneurial branding, brand image, brand name and business success.*

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### **Introduction**

In the face of fierce global competition and ever-changing consumer expectations, the topic of business success has risen to the forefront of modern company discourse. As a general rule, people think of a company as successful if it can develop over time, keep making money, and stay competitive in its industry. It includes things like organisational resilience, market presence, customer happiness, and financial performance (Mokaya & Njuguna, 2023). In order to guarantee not only their survival but also their continuous progress, businesses, especially SMEs, want to create a significant presence in their sector. Companies in today's dynamic global marketplace must always seek new ways to set themselves apart from the competition and strengthen their position in the market. Academics and industry professionals alike are interested in discovering what makes a company successful, and there has been a recent trend towards focussing on new and strategic methods that go beyond the usual measures of performance.

Over the past several years, entrepreneurial activities have become more powerful in determining the future of organisations and the results they achieve. Now more than ever, people look to entrepreneurs as brand architects, someone who creates a distinct identity for their business and uses it to stand out in a crowded marketplace. Entrepreneurial branding stands out among these changing behaviours as a crucial component of achieving business success. Branding with an entrepreneurial perspective is slowly changing how businesses interact with stakeholders and consumers as they try to build distinct identities in the market and build emotional relationships with them (Adeoye & Elegunde, 2022). This development highlights the growing importance of entrepreneurial branding as a tool for companies to convey their value, stand out, and get an edge in the market.

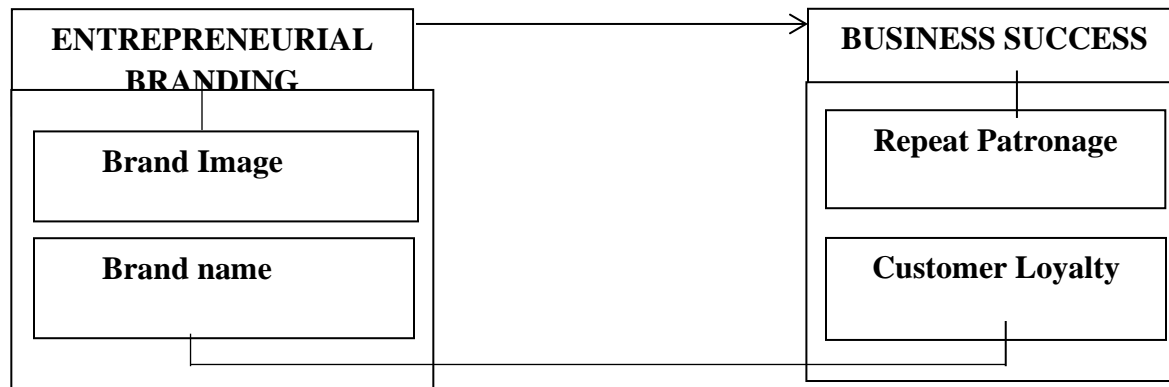
The conventional view of value creation has also been altered by the ways in which branding and entrepreneurship have come together. The traditional idea of brand creation has been rethought by entrepreneurs to represent a more nimble and individual strategy for market positioning, all because they have brought their own creativity and vision to the branding process. This has caused a change in thinking, and now even startups and companies aiming for rapid expansion recognise the importance of branding. According to Okpara and Kabongo (2023), entrepreneurial branding goes beyond being just a marketing campaign and instead represents a crucial business philosophy that is in harmony with the entrepreneur's personality, values, and goals. Therefore, in today's highly competitive and unpredictable market, a company's capacity to thrive may depend critically on the entrepreneurial brand it displays to its stakeholders and consumers. Ogundipe et al. (2023) and Adeoye & Elegunde (2022) state that entrepreneurial branding may be a crucial tool for improving organisational performance in today's fast-paced business world, where standing out from the competition and engaging with customers are crucial for long-term viability. Businesses may establish a unique position in the market, gain trust, and cultivate long-term connections with their target audience by intentionally expressing unique brand traits and consistently sharing entrepreneurial stories. A company's success or failure is typically determined by the quality of this relationship, which goes beyond the features of the product or service itself. A key component of entrepreneurial branding is the introduction of an approach that is unique, genuine, and focused on the customer's experience. This approach is designed to connect with stakeholders and make a significant impact on the overall success metrics of the organisation. Hence, in today's customer-centric and increasingly competitive business environment, the capacity of companies to incorporate entrepreneurial branding into their overall strategy is being acknowledged as a critical factor in their success in the long run. This study aims to examine the relationship between entrepreneurial branding and the success of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Portharcourt within this changing setting.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Many businesses, especially smaller and medium-sized ones, still have a hard time keeping up with the ever-changing business landscape and achieving sustainable growth and competitiveness (Mokaya & Njuguna, 2023). This is despite the growing consensus that success is a complex result impacted by factors like strategic positioning, market relevance, and customer engagement. Many companies struggle to stand out in oversaturated marketplaces because they rely on antiquated marketing tactics that fail to connect with their target customers. Many company environments either fail to utilise or have a poor understanding of entrepreneurial branding, despite its promise as a method for improving market identity and performance (Ogundipe et al., 2023). Branding is crucial for entrepreneurs to understand because it shapes perceptions, builds trust, and drives

company success. Because of this knowledge vacuum, important concerns remain regarding the impact of entrepreneurial branding on company results and the reasons why some companies are able to use it effectively while others are unable to. Adeoye and Elegunde (2022) and Okpara and Kabongo (2023) are two of the few empirical studies that have looked at the impact of entrepreneurial branding strategies on overall company success, particularly in developing markets. This is despite the fact that branding has been recognised as a performance driver in the past. Hence, research on the correlation between entrepreneurial branding and financial success is necessary to inform businesses on how to improve their market performance and long-term viability through the use of more strategic branding tactics.

### Conceptual Framework



**Fig.1.1:** Conceptual framework of entrepreneurial branding and business success.

**Sources:** Yorkston & Menon (2004), Zhang & Schmitt (2001).

### Research Hypotheses

- H0<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant relationship between brand image and repeat patronage of SMEs in Port Harcourt.
- H0<sub>2</sub>: There is no significant relationship between brand image and customer loyalty of SMEs in Port Harcourt.
- H0<sub>3</sub>: There is no significant relationship between brand name and repeat patronage of SMEs in Port Harcourt.
- H0<sub>4</sub>: There is no significant relationship between brand name and customer loyalty of SMEs in Port Harcourt.

## 2.0 Review of Related Literature

### 2.1.1 Concept of Entrepreneurial Branding

The importance of entrepreneurial branding as a tool for entrepreneurs to stand out in the market and boost company performance has been recognised more and more in recent years. Entrepreneurs create a distinct and genuine market identity by incorporating their personal beliefs, vision, creativity, and identity into their businesses' branding (Okpara & Kabongo, 2023). Entrepreneurial branding differs from conventional branding in that it is more fluid, individual, and linked to the personality and goals of the entrepreneur (Adeoye & Elegunde, 2022). Businesses, especially SMEs, may use this branding strategy to tell engaging stories that set them apart from the competition and help them connect with consumers on an emotional level. The

capacity of entrepreneurs to establish a distinct brand identity is crucial for survival in today's cutthroat business climate (Ogundipe et al., 2023). Aligning brand promises with consumer expectations and organisational capabilities is another way entrepreneurial branding drives value development. Research by Mokaya and Njuguna (2023) suggests that it provides a potent tool for entrepreneurs to involve stakeholders, earn trust, and establish a long-term equity in their brand, all of which contribute to the expansion of their businesses. To top it all off, entrepreneurial branding helps businesses stay consistent with their brand identity while responding quickly to changes in the market. Entrepreneurial branding, therefore, is more than just advertising; it's a purposeful effort that helps startups and SMBs stand out in crowded marketplaces and thrive over the long haul.

### **2.1.2 Brand Image**

The term "brand image" describes how people think and feel about a brand after they've interacted with it, made memories of it, and other similar events. Consumers' associations with a brand include its reputational qualities, emotional appeal, and symbolic meaning (Keller, 2023). When consumers have a positive impression of a brand, it influences their preferences, their buying decisions, and their loyalty to the company. According to Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2022), it is a measure of a brand's ability to convey its principles and stand out in a crowded market. According to Kotler et al. (2023), a positive perception of a brand may lead to more trust from customers, a larger proportion of the market, and sustained success for the firm. In addition, academics contend that marketing communication is just one factor in shaping a brand's image; consumer experiences and recommendations also play important roles (Kapferer, 2022). For this reason, companies that want to establish long-term connections and get an edge in the market would do well to cultivate positive public perception of their brand.

### **2.1.3 Brand Name**

An essential part of every brand's identity is the name, which consumers use to remember and associate with the product or service. Representing the linguistic aspect of a brand, it is essential in moulding how consumers perceive, remember, and associate it (Keller, 2023). A well-selected name for a brand may do wonders for its visibility, convey its values to consumers, and shape their perceptions of the company (Aakar, 2023). As per Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2022), a powerful brand name has the power to inspire good feelings, build trust, and leave a lasting impact. These factors, in turn, boost brand equity and company success. Also, a good brand name is usually easy to remember, has some significance, may be changed up as needed, and can be protected by law (Kapferer, 2022). Not only does it bolster the positioning strategy and general brand image, but it also helps with marketing communication. Thus, choosing the right brand name is a strategic move that affects consumer engagement and competitiveness in the market.

### **2.1.4 Business Success**

When a company grows, becomes profitable, stays in business for the long haul, and maintains its competitive edge, we say that we've succeeded. According to Kotler et al. (2023), this includes both monetary and non-monetary metrics, including revenue growth, market share, ROI, and customer happiness and brand reputation. It also includes staff engagement. Mokaya and Njuguna (2023) argue that success in business is multi-faceted, including not only financial results but also the capacity to endure and thrive in an ever-changing market. Adeoye and Elegunde (2022) state that in order for a company to be successful, it must continually satisfy the expectations of its

stakeholders while also keeping its strategy in line with market changes and client wants. Ogundipe et al. (2023) highlights the need of strategic branding, value creation, and innovation as key factors for corporate success, especially in markets that are extremely competitive and unpredictable. Strategic planning, innovation, and strong market positioning are thus essential components of a successful company strategy.

### **2.1.5 Repeat Patronage**

Customers show their ongoing involvement with a firm by repeat patronage, which manifests as repeated purchases or visits. It reflects a strong relationship between the company and the consumer, which is a crucial determinant of customer satisfaction and brand trust (Kotler et al., 2023). When customers have good experiences, consistent service, and develop an emotional connection to a company, they are more likely to return (Keller, 2023). Customer lifetime value is heavily influenced by repeat consumption, since it is more cost-effective to keep loyal customers than to acquire new ones (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2022). Businesses that encourage customers to buy from them again and again see an uptick in consistent income and positive word-of-mouth about their brand (Kapferer, 2022). Businesses may benefit strategically from repeat customers' patronage since, according to scholars, value-driven branding and personalised customer interactions are crucial for promoting repeat behaviour and maintaining competitive advantage (Mokaya & Njuguna, 2023).

### **2.1.6 Customer Loyalty**

Repeat business, positive word-of-mouth, and a lack of interest in exploring other options are all signs of client loyalty (Kotler et al., 2023). Loyal clients are an important sign of a successful company in the long run since they bring in more money, spend less on advertising, and spread the word about your great service (Keller, 2023). Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2022) argue that the trust and emotional connection that consumers form with a brand are just as important as the quality of the products or the pricing when it comes to driving client loyalty. According to Kapferer (2022), loyal consumers are more inclined to stick with a brand even when they have service failures sometimes. This boosts the company's resilience and equity. Consistent value delivery, personalised experiences, and strong brand connections are crucial for fostering consumer loyalty, according to Mokaya and Njuguna (2023). In the end, market sustainability and competitive positioning are both enhanced by devoted customers.

## **2.2 Theoretical Review**

### **The study anchored on Resource-Advantage Theory (R-A)**

As a result of its own history, each company within an industry is different in place and time, according to the Resource-Advantage (R-A) Theory, an evolutionary viewpoint on competitiveness (Almansour, 2012). Many intangible resources, including organisational culture, knowledge, and abilities, are seen to be replicable rather than intrinsically limited according to this approach, which takes a holistic perspective of resources (Aliyu, 2014). It is compatible with both conventional and innovative marketing strategies. According to R-A theory's competitive dynamics, marketing is vital for improving companies' capacities via the creation of new resources and the enhancement of current ones, whether that's through strategic leveraging techniques or the promotion of innovation through unique combinations of resources. The R-A theory revolves around innovation, and more specifically, sustainable innovation, with marketing playing a pivotal role in guiding and bolstering the company's innovation efforts (Aliyu, 2014). Because of this,



businesses strive to outdo their rivals who have more resources by making the most of what they already have or by seeking out new possibilities through tactics like acquisition, imitation, substitution, or maximising current resources. Because the results of the study's performance indicators are so dependent on the accessibility and efficient administration of resources, they are intrinsically linked to this theoretical viewpoint. The Resource-Based View (RBV) and the Resource-Advantage (R-A) theories are the most compatible with entrepreneurial marketing, however it is compatible with other frameworks as well (Aliyu, 2014). These theories stress the need of using internal resources to achieve sustainable competitive success.

### **2.3 Empirical Review**

Research on the "effect of branding on consumer buying behaviour of Ghana textile fabric users in Ho Municipality of Ghana" by Bansah et al. (2015) found that branding positively affects textile sales in Ghana. According to the results, people frequently boost the sales volume of their favourite textile companies by recommending them to their friends, relatives, and family. Customers are quite loyal to the brands they love, and they will keep buying them even if the price goes up a little bit, say the researchers.

The impact of branding on the promotion of pharmaceutical goods in Ghana was also investigated by Anabila and Awunyo-Vitor (2014). Within the Greater Accra Region, three pharmaceutical businesses situated in Accra were the primary focus of the investigation. Branding is a key factor in increasing pharmaceutical sales, according to their research. According to the research, consumers' opinions about a brand have a major impact on both their propensity to buy and the company's bottom line. Pharmaceutical companies also made use of branding to emphasise the benefits of their products and tell customers what made them unique.

On the other hand, a similar research within the Kumasi Metropolitan area (including Kumasi Polytechnic, Amakom, Asafo, Asawasi, and Bompata) of Ghana's telecommunications industry was conducted by Yeboah et al. (2013) with a sample size of 120 people. Their findings indicated that trademarks do not significantly affect sales of mobile networks, as there was no correlation between trademarks and customers' network preferences. Brand quality does affect sales of mobile networks, according to the survey, but it isn't the deciding factor for consumers when it comes to the telecoms market.

### **3.0 Methodology**

A total of 2,596 small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the Port Harcourt area were the subjects of this cross-sectional survey. Using the data from Krejcie and Morgan (1970), we were able to calculate that 310 respondents would make up our sample. The research used a basic random sampling method for its sample selection. Formalised questionnaires were sent out and filled out by hand to gather information from the participants. There were two main metrics used to evaluate the independent variable, entrepreneurial branding: brand image and brand name. Return business and customer loyalty were used to measure the independent variable, company performance. There were five items for each of these characteristics, and respondents were asked to rate their agreement or disagreement using a 4-point Likert scale. The data was analysed and the hypotheses were tested using the Spearman Rank Order Correlation statistical tool.

## Data Presentation and Analysis

### Hypothesis One

H0<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant relationship between brand image and repeat patronage of SMEs in Port Harcourt.

		brand image	repeat patronage
Spearman's rho	brand image	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.778**
		N	.054
			252
	repeat patronage	Correlation Coefficient	.778**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	1.000
		N	.054
			252

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

With a correlation value (rho) of 0.778, the table's Spearman's Rank Order Correlation data show that there is a substantial positive association between brand image and repeat patronage. It appears that when customers have a positive impression of a brand, they are more likely to buy from that company again. But the p-value, or significance level, is 0.054, which is just over the standard cutoff of 0.05. The result is that the connection is not significant at the 5% level, even if it is strong. So, although there is a significant correlation between positive brand perception and customer loyalty, the data does not yet give strong enough statistical proof to rule out the possibility that this correlation was coincidental. No matter how you slice it, the strong correlation coefficient shows how important brand image is for influencing consumers' propensity to buy from you again.

### Hypothesis Two

H0<sub>2</sub>: There is no significant relationship between brand image and customer loyalty of SMEs in Port Harcourt.

		brand image	customer loyalty
Spearman's rho	brand image	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.855**
		N	.054
			252
	customer loyalty	Correlation Coefficient	.855**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	1.000
		N	.054
			252

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

With a rho value of 0.855, the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation table shows that there is a very favourable association between brand image and customer loyalty. This suggests that when consumers have a positive impression of a brand, they are more likely to be loyal to that brand. Nonetheless, at 0.054, the p-value (Sig. 2-tailed) is somewhat more than the conventional 0.05

criterion of significance. This indicates that there isn't enough statistical evidence to rule out the probability that the observed association occurred by chance, even if the relationship between brand image and customer loyalty is fairly strong. Specifically, it is not statistically significant at the 5% level. Regardless, this study's significant correlation coefficient highlights the crucial role of brand image in promoting consumer loyalty.

### Hypothesis Three

H0<sub>3</sub>: There is no significant relationship between brand name and repeat patronage of SMEs in Port Harcourt.

		brand name	repeat patronage
Spearman's rho	brand name	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.823**
		N	.061
			252
	repeat patronage	Correlation Coefficient	.823**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	1.000
		N	.061
			252

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

With a rho value of 0.823, the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation result shows that there is a substantial positive link between brand name and repeat patronage. Customers that have a good impression of a brand are more inclined to buy from that brand again. At the 5% level of significance, however, the association is not statistically significant ( $p = 0.061$ ), which is somewhat higher than the customary threshold of 0.05. The statistical data is insufficient to prove that the link between brand name and customers' recurrent purchase behaviour is not due to chance, yet the correlation is fairly substantial and implies a significant association. Even Nevertheless, the robustness of the correlation coefficient continues to demonstrate the practical importance of brand name in affecting consumer loyalty.

### Hypothesis Four

H0<sub>4</sub>: There is no significant relationship between brand name and customer loyalty of SMEs in Port Harcourt.

		brand name	customer loyalty
Spearman's rho	brand name	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.922**
		N	.039
			252
	customer loyalty	Correlation Coefficient	.922**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	1.000
		N	.039
			252

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



A 0.922 correlation coefficient ( $\rho$ ) between brand name and customer loyalty is seen in the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation table, indicating a very strong positive association. This proves that a more reputable brand name is closely linked to more devoted consumers. With a p-value of 0.039, which is lower than the commonly accepted 0.05 criterion, the connection is considered statistically significant at the 5% level. That is to say, the robust association between brand name and consumer loyalty is not attributable to random chance alone, as shown by ample statistical data. The significance of branding strategies in retaining customers and achieving long-term economic success is underscored by this conclusion, which suggests that a strong and positively regarded brand name is crucial in building customer loyalty.

#### **4.1 Discussion of Findings**

##### **Reputation and Customer Loyalty of Port Harcourt's Small and Medium Enterprises**

Research conducted in Port Harcourt looked at the relationship between small and medium businesses' (SMEs) brand image and their customers' loyalty and repeat business. The purpose of this study was to test the hypothesis that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Port Harcourt do not have a correlation between positive brand perception and customer loyalty (H01). The results of the analysis showed that there is a positive correlation between brand image and repeat business, however it was not significant at the 5% level. Although the data was not statistically robust enough to completely eliminate the probability of this link occurring by chance, it does show that customers who have a favourable view of a brand are more likely to participate in repeat purchases. Despite the continued importance of brand image in influencing customers' propensity to repurchase, this research suggests that SMEs should use other customer retention measures in addition to brand image initiatives to strengthen this behavioural outcome.

Consistent with this result is research by Bansah et al. (2015), which indicated that consumers are loyal to the textile brands they buy from and often promote those brands to others, suggesting that consumers' impressions of brands are important in influencing their purchasing decisions. Nevertheless, this goes against what Yeboah et al. (2013) found in the Ghanaian telecom industry, where they found that trademarks (which are an element of brand image) do not significantly impact repeat patronage.

##### **Public Perception of Local Businesses and Their Customers in Port Harcourt**

The study's secondary aim was to look at how small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Port Harcourt rated their brand and how loyal their customers were to that brand. The second hypothesis of the study was that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Port Harcourt would not see a correlation between their brand's reputation and the loyalty of their customers. The data showed that there is a positive and robust relationship between consumers' perceptions of a brand and their loyalty to that brand. Still, using the standard cutoff, we found no statistically significant correlation. There isn't enough data to definitively verify this correlation, but this research does imply that consumers who have a favourable impression of a brand are more likely to become devoted to that company. In light of this, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) would do well to supplement their brand image campaigns with tactics that encourage more profound emotional connections and steady consumer interaction in order to transform positive first impressions into lasting loyalty.

Anabila and Awunyo-Vitor (2014) found that brand perception greatly affects consumer purchasing decisions and adds to brand loyalty in the pharmaceutical industry; our results are in line with theirs. Bansah et al. (2015) highlighted consumer loyalty towards branded textile items

in Ghana, and this finding somewhat agrees with them. In contrast, Yeboah et al. (2013) discovered that trademarks and other brand components did not significantly impact consumer loyalty in the telecoms industry.

### **Reputation and Customer Loyalty of Port Harcourt's SMEs**

Finding out how SMEs in Port Harcourt's brand names relate to customers' propensity to buy from them again was the third goal. Regarding this, the study's third hypothesis was that: H03: Customers in Port Harcourt do not associate a certain brand with continued business. Data analysis showed a favourable association between brand name and repeat business, however the connection was not statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). This result suggests that there may be other variables at play when it comes to consumers' propensity to make repeat purchases, even though a well-known brand name can increase this probability. In order to consolidate client retention efforts, SMEs should not depend just on brand naming but should instead make sure that the quality of their goods, customer service, and post-sale experiences match the expectations set by their brand name.

Bansah et al. (2015) found that consumers are more likely to make repeat purchases when they are familiar with the brand name, which is consistent with our results. Branding, particularly brand name, improves product marketing and purchase behaviour, according to Anabila and Awunyo-Vitor (2014), who also back this up. This contradicts the results of Yeboah et al. (2013), who found no evidence that trademarks and other brand characteristics influenced telecom consumers' preferences.

### **Reputation and Retention of Port Harcourt's Small and Medium Enterprises**

Lastly, the study set out to examine how small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Port Harcourt's brand names relate to consumer loyalty. This research set out to test the following hypothesis: H04: Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Port Harcourt do not experience a correlation between brand loyalty and sales. The results of the analysis showed a robust and statistically significant correlation between brand name and consumer loyalty, disproving this theory. This suggests that consumers are more inclined to show loyalty to companies whose brands are well-known, trustworthy, and easily identifiable. The implication of this finding is that brand naming is not merely a marketing identity but a strategic asset that drives customer retention and long-term business sustainability. SMEs, therefore, need to invest in developing distinctive, credible, and positively perceived brand names as a means of fostering enduring customer relationships and achieving competitive advantage.

This finding strongly aligns with the study by Anabila and Awunyo-Vitor (2014), who emphasized the role of brand identity in shaping customer decisions and enhancing brand loyalty. It also corroborates Bansah et al. (2015), who found that consumers are highly loyal to brands they love, even in the face of price increases. This study, however, diverges from the findings of Yeboah et al. (2013), where branding elements like trademarks were not statistically relevant to consumer loyalty in the telecommunications sector

## **4.2 Conclusion**

The purpose of this research was to look at how SMEs in Port Harcourt felt about their brand's reputation and name affected consumer loyalty and repeat business. All four of these variables—brand name, customer loyalty, brand image, and repeat patronage—were positively correlated with one another in the study. There was a statistically significant correlation between brand name and

consumer loyalty, but that was all. This indicates that, although brand image and name are significant factors influencing consumer behaviour, the statistical evidence points to a more tangible function for a well-known and respected brand name in encouraging customer loyalty. Implications highlight branding's strategic worth in boosting consumer engagement, RTB, and loyalty. Hence, while not all interactions were found to be statistically significant, the strength of the correlations confirms that brand-related elements do have a practical impact on customer decisions in the SME sector.

### **5.1 Recommendations**

In line with the conclusion and findings of the study, the study recommends that:

- i. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Port Harcourt are encouraged to create unique product brands since doing so can boost their overall company success.
- ii. Port Harcourt's SMEs looking to stand out is to work on building a positive reputation for their brand.

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