

# Brand Image of Mobile Phones and Customer Patronage in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

The researcher set out to examine the level of association that exists between brand image proxies like brand experience, brand recognition and brand awareness of mobile phones and customer patronage in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. The survey research design approach was adopted in the study, and primary data were collected with the use of a questionnaire. Related literature aimed at enriching the conceptual framework was reviewed. A sample of 400 respondents, who were customers met at mobile phone stores and outlets in Uyo, made up the sample frame for this study. The collected data were further analysed using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Analysis at a 0.05 level of significance. Findings showed that the three independent variables were significantly associated with customers' patronage of mobile phones. It was recommended, among others, that brand influencers should emphasise the quality features of mobile phones when promoting the brand, as customers will easily recognise the benefits attributed to the product when patronising the brand.

**Keywords:** Brand, Experience, Patronage, Mobile Phones, Recognition, Awareness, Brand Image

## INTRODUCTION

In today's fast-paced world, it is more important than ever to develop, maintain, and promote a company's brand image, which is the identity of not only the company but also the product. The image of a product over time has been seen to hinge on consumers' general perceptions and feelings about a brand, and it is an offshoot of consumer patronage. This may be related to the case of mobile phone manufacturers. After experiencing mobile telephony for the first time in 2001, mobile phones have become one of the necessities for communication in Nigeria today. Owning a mobile phone with basic functions was a luxury only a few could afford at the time. After two decades, Nigeria's mobile market has grown at an exponential rate (Oyelola, 2022).

According to Danbatta (2016), there are about 722 million mobile phones in Africa, with 127 million smartphones among them. Currently, common mobile phones, popularly called cellphones or handsets have about 94% penetration Nigeria (Adepetun, 2016). The popular brands in Nigeria range from iPhones (with 24 models),

Xiaomi (with 34 models), Vivo (with 36 models), Infinix (with 83 models), Tecno (with 358 models), Nokia (with 311 models), Samsung (with 191 models), Oppo (with 38 models), Itel (107 models), ZTE (with 46 models), Gionee (with 42 models) and Huawei (with 139 models) as of the time of this study (Akintaro, 2022).

Due to the abundance of brands that consumers are exposed to, competition between brands has intensified. Consumers do not purchase just the products but also the image associated with them. Brands that can satisfy the main elements such as visibility, quality, price, association, brand identity, loyalty, and relationships create value for the consumer (Iorait, 2018). Brand image serves as the foundation for better strategic marketing decisions regarding market segment targeting and product positioning. A strong brand image enables businesses to gain a competitive advantage in the market (Roy & Banerjee, 2007).

However, different researchers have defined and applied the phrase "brand image" in various ways. The differences in definition can be perplexing when it

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comes to measuring brand image and assessing brand equity and brand positioning (Lee, James & Kim, 2014). Most literature emphasises that brand image represents the emotional aspects that identify a company's or its products' brand, and that it has a significant impact on consumer purchasing behaviour (Arora & Stoner, 2009). Consumers choose a product not only for its utility, but also for the image associated with it and for brand identification with other users (Provalis Research, 2019).

Thus, brand image has a direct effect on the consumer's mind and tends to position the product in the market (Rahul, 2021). Consumers form various associations with the brand as an overall impression in their minds. They form brand images based on these associations. Brand associations, in particular, can take three forms: attributes, benefits and attitudes. Consumers are likely to react differently to a brand based on its favourability, uniqueness and strength of brand associations (Yoo & Kim, 2011). From the perspective of end-users, a strong brand image may have a positive effect on consumers' perceptions of the brand, which may result in them being more likely to choose or patronise the brand over competitors, making the brand more competitive overall (Keller, 1993).

According to studies, consumer patronage is closely related to brand image (Asiegbu, Awa, Akpotu & Ogbonna, 2011). The decision to patronise a store usually starts with a set of attributes that customers consider important (Joseph, Okonofua & Udoh, 2018). A review of several studies reveals that consumer choice to patronise a brand is fueled by a web of factors, some direct, some indirect, some conscious, and some unconscious (Bayero, 2019). Among all of these variables, Davies (2005) identified brand image proxies such as brand experience, brand recognition, product brand awareness, brand association, brand communication, and positioning as major customer choice influencers.

Consumer spending is an important factor in an organisation's earnings and profit (Njelita & Anyasor, 2020). Customer loyalty, repeat purchase and customer retention levels can all be rated by businesses based on their sales volume, market share, brand visibility, profit margin, customer loyalty, repeat purchase and customer retention levels (Akpan 2009; Ben, 2003; Asiegbu, 2009). Because of the existence of competition, businesses have

been encouraged to strive to maintain high customer patronage and preference by developing a strong brand image in order to remain relevant and ensure brand survival (Mohebbi, 2014). In view of the above, there is a need to study those brand image variables or factors that are associated with patronage among consumers of the different brands of mobile phones in Uyo.

Marketing literature has shown numerous studies done on brand image that sought to evaluate those brand image attributes that consumers perceive as important when making their patronage decision. There is evidence of studies done in the service industry, specifically tourism and hospitality, banking services and others. However, most of these studies were not directed at ascertaining how consumers made their decision to patronise any of the different brands of mobile phones in the market. It is on this basis that the present study is carried out to ascertain whether brand recognition, awareness, experience and brand association variables are proxies of brand image associated with the patronage of mobile phones among consumers in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State.

## Objective of the Study

The main aim of this study is to determine the association between the brand image of mobile phones and consumer patronage in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. The specific objectives are:

- Examine the level of association between brand experience and consumer patronage of mobile phones in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State.
- Ascertain the degree of association between brand recognition and consumer patronage of mobile phones in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State.
- Determine the level of association between brand awareness and consumer patronage of mobile phones in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State.

## Hypotheses of the Study

The following hypotheses will guide the conduct of this study:

H<sub>01</sub>: Brand experience does not significantly correlate with consumer patronage of mobile phones in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State.

H<sub>02</sub>: Brand recognition does not significantly correlates with consumer patronage of mobile phones in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State.

H<sub>03</sub>: Brand awareness does not significantly correlates with consumer patronage of mobile phones in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State.

This study will be of significant use to researchers and persons in the sales profession, as it will serve as reference material on the role of brand image in commodity sales. The study will also make a meaningful contribution to the pool of already existing literature on brand image and its proxies, as it will help understand how customers behave towards brands.

While the scope of this study will be centered contextually on three brand image variables: brand experience, brand recognition and brand awareness, as they are associated with customer patronage. The unit of analysis will be limited to walk-in customers and shoppers of the different brands of mobile phones that will be met at mobile phone stores as well as major sales outlets within the study area.

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### An Overview of Brand Image

Gardner and Levy (1955) are credited with popularising the concept in the 1950s by describing its social and psychological implications. Because the construct has its roots in the discipline of psychology, it has found a place in consumer behaviour studies. It is founded on various psychological variants that describe consumer behaviour (Gardner & Levy, 1955). Brand image is the perception of the customer regarding the product. In the minds of targeted customers, it can be defined as an exclusive package. The overall impact in the minds of customers that is developed through various sources is referred to as brand image (Nazir, Ali & Jamil, 2016). Arslan and Altuna (2010) defined brand image as the positive and negative feelings about a brand that arise unexpectedly or when customers recall their memories. According to Hossain (2020), brand image enables customers to identify relevant needs and understand the effective mechanism for achieving fulfilment through the brand (Hossain, 2020). As a result, brand image is critical to the development of a brand (Mao, 2010). Brand image can

be defined as the sum of a consumer's perceptions and beliefs about a brand (Campbell, 1993).

In scientific literature, the characteristics of brand image are described in various ways. Some literature describes image as part of the business process; others believe image is associated with emotions; and still others emphasise image as the information disseminated by the organisation (Iorait, 2018). Keller (2001) defined image as a person's set of beliefs, ideas, and impressions about an object. Zhang (2015) defines brand image as a key driver of brand equity, referring to a consumer's overall perception and feeling about a brand and having an impact on consumer behaviour. Bivainien and Liburyt (2008) agree that brand image is related to consumer benefit, distinguishing emotions, idiosyncrasies, and associations. The brand image is concerned with how a specific group perceives a commodity, brand, policy, company, or country. We form associations as we: directly experience brands; indirectly receive information about them indirectly, and draw conclusions based on our prior brand knowledge (Keller, 1993).

Customers' behaviour associated with market purchases of products can be said to be largely based on elements of their value framework (Oh, 2000). For consumers in the market, the value framework consists of items such as brand image, class association, price, and overall market awareness relative to others. Work carried out by (Farris et al., 2010). The brand image and its awareness among the target market have a significant influence on the purchase decisions made by consumers on a cognitive level. According to research, brands with a higher level of associated brand image and awareness among consumers are more likely to be purchased again and again (Hoyer & Brown, 1990). According to Yulianti and Tung (2013) there are three main elements of brand image:

- Logos are used to indicate the origin, ownership, and affiliation of products or services. There are many different types of logos, such as corporate names or trademarks written in a unique style.
- Slogans are short sentences that convey information about the brand. Slogans are effective branding tools because they help build brand equity.
- Image identifiers are other devices used to communicate a brand, such as brochures, advertising media, business cards, truck signage, websites, and

every other piece of communication with customers and prospects.

The indicators of brand image, according to Saxena and Dhar (2021), are recognition, reputation, affinity, and loyalty. Jia-Wen et al. (2017) discovered that brand is the most important factor in judging product quality and deciding whether to buy. In the service industry, brand image and service quality will influence and increase customer satisfaction. This will increase consumers' willingness to purchase. According to Chen-Lung et al. (2011), word of mouth (WOM) is also very important in promoting brand image from the consumer's perspective. As a result, it is critical to comprehend how brand images are formed in the minds of customers and prospective customers.

## Brand Experience

Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello (2008) were the first researchers to develop a comprehensive conceptualisation of the term "brand experience" as well as a valid and reliable scale for measuring it. They defined brand experience as "the subjective, internal consumer responses (sensations, feelings, cognitive and behavioural responses) elicited by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand's design and identity, packaging, communications and environments. These brand-related stimuli are part of a brand's identity and design (for instance, name, signage and logo), packaging and marketing communications (e.g., advertisements, brochures, social media handles), or the environments where the brand is commercialised or distributed (example, stores, events and so on), and are the main source of subjective internal consumer responses or brand experiences (Brakus et al., 2009).

Notably, brand experience has received considerable attention in marketing practise. Marketers have realised that understanding how consumers perceive brands is critical for developing marketing strategies for goods and services (Brakus et al., 2009). Brakus et al. (2009) defined brand experience as a consumer's individual internal reactions to branding stimuli in the form of sensations, emotions, cognition, and behaviours. According to Ahmed and Mahmud (2021), brand experience is a tool that helps to develop customer awareness and build brand loyalty among consumers.

Brand experience is a type of experiential marketing that includes a comprehensive set of conditions developed by a company to influence a customer's perception of a company's name or product. According to Alloza (2008), brand experience can be defined as the consumers' perception of the brand at every point of contact, whether it is in the brand images projected in advertising, during the first personal contact, or the level of quality regarding the personal treatment they receive. Customers create brand experiences when they use the brand, talk about it with others, look for brand information, promotions, and events and so on (Ambler et al., 2002).

According to Aaker (1997), brand experience occurs not only during and after consumption but also whenever there is a direct or indirect interaction with a brand. Interaction between the brand and the consumer creates an experience that influences the consumer's thoughts and behaviours (Başer, Cintamür & Arslan, 2016). According to Sahin, Zehir and Kitapci (2011), brand experience can be defined as the appreciation that people interested in the brand have for it, whether through advertisement, personal relationships or the level of quality appropriate to the particular treatment they receive. Customers gain experience when they use the brand, interact with other users of the brand, or inquire about it (Luzuriaga & Barrera, 2018).

Thus, brand experience causes customers to talk about it and tell others about their experiences with the brand, and how the brand distributes can also be defined as the quality of customer experiences towards purchasing the product (Dai & Lee, 2018; Gu et al., 2019). According to Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello (2008), brand experience has four dimensions: sensory, affective, intellectual and behavioural. According to Luzuriaga and Barrera (2018) the brand experience can be both positive and negative, short- or long-term. It is determined by the level of reflection attained. Long-term experiences, whether positive or negative, are more memorable. According to Budi, Hidayat and Mani (2021), if a brand experience evokes genuine, positive emotions in people, those emotions are more likely to be associated with the brand, resulting in more effective communication than simply showing them television advertisements or the web.

## Brand Recognition

Keller (2008) defines brand recognition as the ability of consumers to authenticate earlier revelations about the brand when given the brand as an indication, the needs satisfied by the category, or a purchase or habit situation as a reminder of the brand. In an earlier definition by Keller (1993), brand recognition is defined as how quickly a consumer recognises and discriminates against the brand when any of its elements are displayed, such as the logo, slogan, or other physical attribute of the product. The identity mix is built around the name and logo (Lencastre et al., 2007). This allows a brand to be identified as well as differentiated from its competitors.

Hamid, Rasool, Kiyani and Ali (2012) assert that brand recognition is the amount to which a brand is recognised for acknowledged brand attributes or communications among consumers. Brand recognition will help consumers lean towards our product when given the choice between it and one they have never heard of. One of the primary means of distinguishing a company's product from that of its competitors is through brand recognition (Hamid, Rasool, Kiyani & Ali, 2012). Thus, brand recognition implies that people have heard or seen the brand and will remember it if it is mentioned or encountered again.

## Brand Awareness

According to early research, brand awareness can be defined as the level of consumer familiarity with a brand. According to Aaker and Keller (1993), brand awareness is an important component of brand value. According to Rossiter and Percy (1987), brand awareness is the ability of consumers to recognise one brand among many. Keller (1993) conceptualised brand awareness as involving brand review and brand acknowledgement. According to Kotler and Pfertch (2007), brand awareness is related to the buyer's ability to recall previous interactions with the brand.

Thus, brand awareness can be further defined as a primitive level of brand knowledge, involving at least the identification of a brand's name or a structure based on detailed information. The ability of a consumer to recognise and recall a brand in various situations is the fundamental and foremost limitation in any brand-

related search (Shahid, Hussain & Zafar, 2017). It is an important indicator of consumers' brand knowledge, the strength of a brand's mental presence, and how easily that knowledge can be retrieved from memory (O'Guinn et al., 2009). According to Mowen and Minor (2011), brand awareness is the likelihood that consumers will recognise the existence and availability of a company's product. The greater the positive brand awareness, the greater the consumers' purchase intention towards the brand (Wang & Yang, 2010).

According to Shahid, Hussain and Zafar (2017) there are different factors that may influence consumers' brand awareness:

- *Brand Name*: The first thing that draws a consumer to a brand is its name. Customers will be encouraged to purchase a product if the company has an appealing brand name.
- *Adverts*: An effective advertisement will also assist the organisation in raising brand awareness. Advertisements has always been said to have a large influence. This is because an appealing television commercial, targeted at the right audience at the right time, will bring more customers, and one satisfied customer will advertise and advocate the brand to other prospects through WOM.
- *Character-Brand Projection*: The celebrity endorsing the brand is also an important part of the product promotion. Companies hire famous people to be brand ambassadors, and people are drawn to the brand. A character who represents what the brand stands for and how the company wants the brand to be perceived is an important strategy for positioning the brand in the minds of customers.
- *Sales Promotion and Point of Sale Activities*: Sales promotion and point of sale activities at designated shops and market places have the potential to raise brand awareness. Companies use various tools to promote their brand, such as free gifts, premiums, free sampling, and giving their product as a gift along with another well-known product of their own brand or in collaboration with another company.
- *First Mover Advantage*: If a company introduces a product for the first time in the market, customers will remember it for a long time. People will always remember that this specific product was introduced

by that specific company, and they will compare the first brand to others.

### Consumer Patronage of Mobile Phones

According to past experience, defining and measuring patronage is a difficult task (Okeke, 2020). According to Okeke (2020), customer patronage has been measured using attitudes towards a brand and actual usage patronages. The author specifically stated that a favourable attitude and repeat purchases were required to define patronage. Consumer patronage is the degree to which a purchasing unit devotes its purchases over time to a specific product, and product patronage can be developed through positive reinforcement and repetition of purchasing behaviour (Oliver, 1997). Behavioural scientists believe that customer patronage results from an initial product that is reinforced through satisfaction, leading to repeat purchases, according to Benjamin, Ajisafe, Adare and Ayodele (2019). Cognitive researchers emphasise the importance of mental processes in increasing consumer loyalty. They believe that consumers engage in extensive problem-solving behaviour involving services and attributing compassion, which results in strong customer preferences and repeat purchases. Marketers are interested not only in how customer patronage develops but also when it develops. According to research, a significant amount of customer patronage develops very early in the context of brand advocacy and customer decision-making (Benjamin et al., 2019).

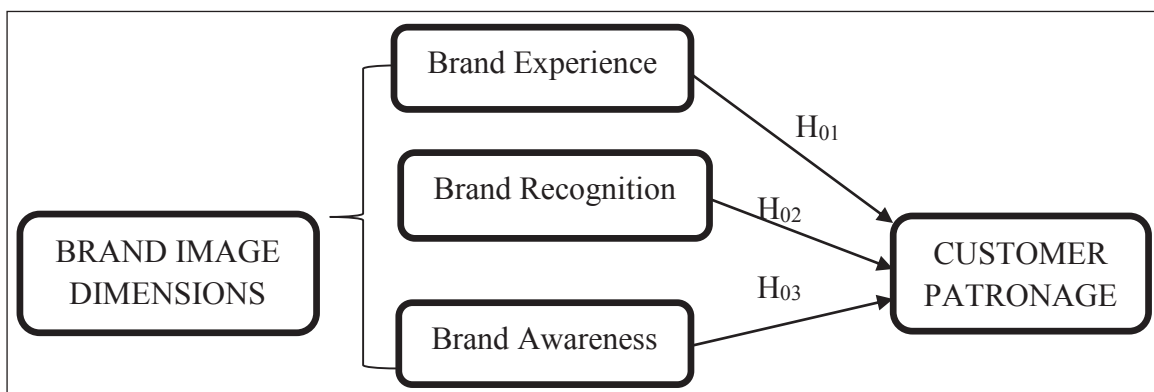
According to Grewal and Levy (2010), customer decision-making is a five-stage process that people go through

when deciding which products to buy or which brand to patronise. Traditionally, practitioners have described customer decision-making as a series of five progressive stages: need recognition, information search, alternative evaluation, purchase decision, and post-purchase processes. Okeke (2020) emphasises that when foods are considered, the determinants of customer patronage include food quality, food variety, the price of the various ranges of goods, and cultural influence. Kotler et al. (2005) identified four major factors that may influence consumer purchase decisions and, as a result, patronage, including:

- Those associated with the buyer.
- Those associated with the product.
- Those associated with the seller and
- Situational factors.

Kotler et al. (2005) identified additional buyer-related factors as personal, social, cultural, and psychological influences. Product attributes would include marketer-dominated variables such as product features, benefits, styling, quality, and price, as well as product augmentations. The seller's characteristics would include his reputation (image), dependability, and services. Some of the situational variables that may influence choice include the consumer's time pressure to make a decision, the current economic outlook, and the opinion of friends (Egbeh & Anyasor, 2020).

The Conceptual model designed for this study is thus presented in Fig. 1:



Source: The Researcher's Construct (2023).

**Fig. 1: Conceptual Framework of Brand Image and Customer Patronage**

## Theoretical Framework

### The Lovemark's Theory (Roberts, 2004)

This study is anchored on the Lovemark's theory, developed by Kelvin Roberts in 2004 in his publication titled "the lovemark's effect: Winning in the consumer revolution". In Roberts's view, a lovemark is defined as a combination of high brand love and respect. According to him, "lovemark brands" perform well on two lovemark dimensions, "love" and "respect," which strengthen consumer-brand relationships and, as a result, positively affect brand loyalty. This is referred to as a lovemark experience (Cho et al., 2015). The theory emphasises that consumer perception or brand image can be influenced directly or indirectly by love and respect for the brand. A lovemark, according to Roberts, is a combination of strong brand love and respect. Roberts (2004, 2006) emphasised that customers discriminated between brands, products and fads, based on the level of love and respect experienced by the customer. A brand must provide three elements of experience to the consumer in order to create a lovemark: mystery, sensuality, and intimacy (Roberts, 2004, 2006). All three elements of experience are thought of as antecedents of a lovemark (Roberts, 2004) and are explained thus:

- *Mysteries*: Told through compelling stories about the brand's past, present, and future. It draws inspiration from ancient times, dreams, myths, dreams and icons.
- *Sensuality*: The ability to recognise the brand's sound, sight, smell, touch, and taste in order to create a complete experience through the union of the five senses.
- *Intimacy*: This is the result of a close relationship provided by the customer's commitment, empathy and passion for the brand.

Past studies have adopted the Lovemark theory over time with the aim of establishing how consumer-brand relationships are formed, based on the emotional connection of customers with brands. Some of such studies have utilised the theory in explaining brand image as the driving force of brand asset and brand performance; few studies have elaborated on the relationship between brand image and brand equity and consumer behaviour, the

impact of brand image on consumers from the perspective of customer equity, and so on (Maxian, Bradley, Wise & Toulouse, 2013; Zhang, 2015; Zarantonello, Formisano & Grappi, 2016; Shuv-Ami, 2017; Shuv-Ami, Vrontis, & Thrassou, 2017; Sreejesh & Roy, 2015; Hegner, Fenko & Teravest, 2017; Albert & Merunka, 2013; Bairrada, Coelho & Coelho, 2018; Batra, Ahuvia & Bagozzi, 2012).

Previous applications of the theory in marketing research have provided an avenue for current research and highlighted trends for future study. The current study represents the lovemark experience that a consumer exhibits by being in a loving and respectful relationship with a brand's image and how this influences their preference and patronage of specific mobile phone brands. The theory of Lovemarks explains why customers prefer one brand of mobile phone over another. The study aligns the theory with how brand images evolve among customers, which is about creating and strengthening emotional bonds through brand experience (mystery), brand recognition (intimacy), brand awareness and brand association (sensuality). Which directly drives customer reaction to often patronise the brand, and further spread positive WOM information to other customers, an indication of love and respect for the chosen brand.

### Empirical Framework

Yoo and Kim (2011) carried out a study in the United States of America on the 'Effect of Brand Image Inconsistency on Patronage intent in U.S. Multi-channel Retailing.' The primary goal of the study was to investigate the impact of brand image consistency, particularly through the website, on consumer attitudes and purchasing intentions. For the study, a survey research design approach was used. Regression analysis was used to analyse the collected data. The results of the regression analyses revealed that psychological discomfort caused by inconsistency in brand image affected negative attitude change and decreased patronage intention with an online store.

Bayero (2019) investigated the impact of brand association on consumer patronage of GSM service providers in Kano Metropolis. The study's main goal was to fill a knowledge gap and provide answers to the question of whether or not brand association influences customer patronage of GSM service providers in Kano, Nigeria. The survey

research design approach was used in the study, and data was treated using linear regression analysis. According to the study's findings, perceived quality of service has a significant influence on consumer patronage of service providers. The study's findings also revealed that GSM operators' use of celebrities for promotional activities has no effect on consumer patronage of service providers.

Onuoha, Nwokedi and Emmanuel (2018) carried out a study on the influence of Indomie Noodles advertisements on the purchasing habits of consumers in two selected local government areas in Enugu State. The survey research design approach was utilised in the study. It was suggested that advertisers consider product quality when advertising, engage in promotional advertisements that connect friends and family, and reach rural areas by effectively using radio in advertising. Finally, advertisers should not overlook quality in product packaging, as this is an important factor in consumer choice.

Harcourt (2021) carried out a study on brand appeal and customers' patronage of Fast Food Firms in Port Harcourt. The results of the study illustrate that emotional brand appeal has a strong, positive and significant influence on patronage intention and a very strong, positive and significant influence on patronage action. The study also found that rational brand appeal has a strong, positive and significant influence on patronage intention and patronage action. The study, therefore, concludes that brand appeal significantly influences customer patronage of fast food firms in Rivers State. The study recommends, amongst others, that fast food managers should focus particularly on emotional brand appeal to ensure that their companies adequately address, patronage intentions and patronage action.

Onigbinde and Odunlami (2015) carried out a study on the influence of brand image and promotional mix on consumer buying decisions, among beverage consumers in Lagos State, Nigeria. The main objective of the study was to evaluate the influence of brand image and promotional mix on consumer buying decisions. A descriptive survey research design was adopted as the study guide. Pearson Product Moment correlation was used to analyse the data generated from the respondents. The findings revealed that brand image, advertising, sales promotion and personal selling have significant influence on consumer buying decisions. The study concluded that

the way a product is promoted, coupled with the brand integrity of such a product, encourages consumers to purchase it and make repeat purchases of it, as well as enhances the referral of such a product to other prospects. The study therefore recommended that organisations, especially those that engage in the marketing of fast-moving consumer goods, focus on a distinct promotional mix, as the study empirically proved that perception of brand image is capable of influencing consumer buying decisions on a sustainable basis. It is also recommended that each marketing company adopt a combination of promotional mixes that can bring about distinct outcomes in terms of turnover, improved market share, customer retention, profitability and productivity among others.

Nazir, Ali and Jamil (2016) carried out a study with the main aim of examining the mediating relationship between customer satisfaction and brand image and customer retention. The authors considered brand image variables like brand awareness, brand experience and brand loyalty as related to customer retention. The study used a survey research design approach, and the collected data was further analysed using regression analyses and Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) analysis. According to the study's findings, brand awareness, brand experience, and brand loyalty all play an important role in brand selection and positively building its image with satisfaction points. The study also found that brand image plays an important role in increasing customer satisfaction with brand attitudes. The findings also revealed that brand awareness, brand experience and brand loyalty influence fashion wear purchasing behaviour.

Setyadi, Ali and Imaroh (2017) carried out a study on building brand image through an analysis of service quality and customer satisfaction. The authors utilised the survey research design approach. The results of the study showed that service quality and customer satisfaction have a positive and significant impact on brand image of Giant Citra Raya Tangerang. Findings revealed that brand image is measured by access to service, service offered, personal contact, security and reputation which are significantly related to customer satisfaction. It was recommended that to enhance the brand image, employees of Giant Citra Raya must maintain an approach with their customers emphasising more on the terms of access to service, service offered, personal contact, and security in order to maintain good relationships built between the two parties.

Murad and Ali (2015) carried out an empirical study with the main aim of investigating the willingness or unwillingness of customers to pay a premium price for packaged food brands and helping the companies use more convincing marketing tools to charge a premium price in Pakistan. The authors considered brand awareness, quality, uniqueness, corporate social responsibility, social image and origin as brand image dimensions. The survey research design approach was considered in the study. Data were analysed using PPMC analysis and the regression analysis. Findings showed that of the five proxies, only origin of the brand showed a significant relationship with customers' willingness to pay a premium for packaged food brands.

Riaz (2015) carried out a study with the main purpose of determining the impact of brand image on consumer buying behaviour in clothing sector and to distinguish which cities' consumers have more clear concepts about brands and their usage of brands. Two independent variables (brand image & consumer awareness), one mediating variable (consumer perception) and one dependent variable (consumer buying behaviour) were selected for the study. The survey research design approach was utilised in the study. The collected data were analysed using the PPMC analysis and the multiple regression analysis. Findings showed that they males were more brand conscious than females. The results of the correlation analysis showed that all the variables were correlated with each other. It was concluded from the result that while changes occurred in consumer perception due to brand image and consumer awareness, consumer perception actually played a role of mediating variable. Similarly, changes in consumer buying behaviour occurred due to brand image and consumer awareness. The author recommended that marketers should work to build strong perception among consumers about their brands by using multiple methods like advertisement, quality, availability and so on.

Widjaja (2019) carried out a study with the main aim of determining the significant effect both simultaneously and partially among brand equity variables represented by brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality, and brand loyalty on the purchasing decision of products being sold at ACE Hardware Indonesia. The survey research approach was utilised in the study. Data analysed were using the multiple regression analysis. Findings showed that brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality, and brand loyalty simultaneously had

a significant effect on the purchasing decision of the products contained in ACE Hardware. But partially, the results vary. It turns out that brand awareness and brand association have no significant effect, while perceived quality and brand loyalty partially have a significant effect on the purchasing decision of products sold in ACE Hardware stores in Indonesia.

## METHODOLOGY

*Research Design:* The study utilised the survey research design approach. This design is chosen to aid the researcher in getting information directly from a sample of a larger population and is helpful in describing and exploring variables and constructs of interest. The choice of this design also became necessary because the anonymity of surveys allows respondents to give more candid and valid answers to the research inquiry.

*Study Area:* The study will be carried out within Uyo metropolis, the capital city of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The choice of Uyo in Akwa Ibom State was due to convenience, accessibility and cost reduction.

*Population of the Study:* The population of residents living in Uyo, the state capital of Akwa Ibom State is adopted as the population for this study. This is because it is assumed that all residents within the state capital are conversant with mobile phone brands. The National Population Commission (NPC, 2021) puts the estimated number of people living in Uyo at 1,264,636. Hence, the population of the study is said to be a known population.

*Sample Size Determination:* Since the population for the study is known, the sample size for the study was determined using the Slovin's Formula at a 5% level of tolerable error (see Appendix I). From the computation, four hundred customers (400), made up of users and on-site customers at phone stores/outlets within the state capital was arrived at as the ample size for this study.

*Sampling Technique:* The simple random sampling technique is employed in the administration of research instrument for this study. This method gives each member of the population an equal chance of being picked and allows for generalisation of the study's findings.

*Source of Data:* The main data used for the study were from primary sources. Published articles, online sources

and text books were also used to enrich the study's conceptual literature. The copies of questionnaire were allotted to 400 respondents across the state capital.

*Research Instrument:* The research instrument used in collecting data for this study is a five-point Likert scale questionnaire titled; Brand image and customer patronage, structured with questions to address the variables adopted in the study. Section "A" will capture the demographic information of respondents and characteristics of their choice of mobile phone brands. While section "B" will be made up of four sub-sections to cover each of the three (3) hypotheses that make up the independent variables (brand experience, brand recognition and brand awareness) and the dependent variable (consumer patronage).

*Validity and Reliability Test of Instruments:* The face validity and content validity of the research instrument were determined after thorough evaluation by the supervisor of this seminar and other research assistants. Their suggestions and recommendations for improvement were used to review and improve the research instrument; by so doing, the validity of the instrument was assured.

*Reliability of Research Instrument:* The internal consistency of the items in the research instrument was tested using the Cronbach's Alpha statistical tool. The reliability estimates obtained fell above 0.5 as shown in Table 1:

**Table 1: Reliability Statistics**

<i>Cronbach's Alpha</i>	<i>Number of Items</i>
.635	13

*Data Analysis Technique:* Descriptive statistics were used in this study to capture the percentage and frequency distribution results of respondent's demographic characteristics. To determine the impact of brand image proxies ( $X_1, X_2, X_3$ ) which are the independent variables (brand experience, brand recognition and brand awareness) on customer patronage of mobile phones (Y) the dependent variable, the PPMC analysis 'R' was used. The aim is to ascertain the degree of association that the brand image proxies adopted in this study have on customer patronage. All hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

*Decision Rule:* The decision rule that is used in this study is stated thus; reject the null hypothesis if the probability

value (p-value) is less than 0.05 ( $p < 0.05$ ). Alternatively, accept the null hypothesis if the probability value (p-value) is greater than 0.05 ( $p > 0.05$ ). The tests were conducted at a 95% level of confidence which is 0.05 level of significance.

## Data Analysis, Results and Discussion

A total of 340 copies of questionnaire were distributed to users and customers who bought mobile telephones and 364 copies were retrieved and found usable, giving a response rate of 91%. The responses were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 25.0). The analysis of demographic variables is shown on Table 2:

**Table 2: Demographic Data of the Respondents**

<i>Variables</i>	<i>No. of Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
Age		
18-24 years	101	27.7
25-34 years	112	30.8
35-44 years	70	19.2
45-54 years	48	13.2
55 years and above	33	9.1
Total	364	100.0
Gender of respondent		
Male	176	48.4
Female	188	51.6
Total	364	100.0
Respondents who have used more than one Phone Brand		
Yes	187	51.4
No	177	48.6
Total	364	100.0
Years of using Current phone		
Less than 1 year	95	26.1
2 years	92	25.3
3 years	83	22.8
Over 3years	94	25.8
Total	364	100.0

Source: Compiled from Field Survey, 2022.

Table 2 shows that customers within the age range of 25–34 years (30.8%) made up a larger proportion of the respondents, followed by those within the age range of

18–24 years (27.7%), as well as those within the ages of 35–44 years (19.2%) and the least were those within the ages of 45–54 years (13.2%) and 55 years above (9.1%). The table also indicates that 188 females (51.6%) and 176 males (48.4%) participated in this study. This result shows that the survey was not just open to a fair number of both genders, but also that data were collected in consideration of all respondents within the adult age range.

It is evident from the table summary that while 187 respondents (51.4%) who participated in this study had used more than one brand of mobile phones, 177 respondents (48.6%) had used just one brand of mobile phone. Also, it was gathered from the data analysed from the target respondents that 95 respondents (26.1%) had used their current mobile phones for less than one year and 94 respondents (25.8%) had used theirs for over

three years. On the other hand, 92 respondents (25.3%) had used their current phones for two years, and 83 respondents (22.8%) had used theirs for three years. The implication of this result is that they had a fair knowledge of phone brands and had impressions about the brands they were exposed to. Thus, they were able to give the required responses to the subject under study.

### Test of Hypotheses

The hypotheses were tested using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). The hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance. The null hypotheses are rejected if the probability value (p-value) is less than 0.05 ( $p < 0.05$ ).

**Table 3: Correlations**

		<i>Brand Experience</i>	<i>Brand Recognition</i>	<i>Brand Association</i>	<i>Customer Patronage</i>
Brand Experience	Pearson Correlation	1	.680**	.656**	.628**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	364	364	364	364
Brand Recognition	Pearson Correlation	.680**	1	.734**	.870**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	364	364	364	364
Brand Association	Pearson Correlation	.656**	.734**	1	.640**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	364	364	364	364
Customer Patronage	Pearson Correlation	.628**	.870**	.640**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	364	364	364	364

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

Source: Field Survey Data (2022).

*Test of Hypothesis Two ( $H_{01}$ ):* Brand experience does not significantly correlate with consumer patronage of mobile phones in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. From the analysis, the correlation coefficient (R) for the first hypothesis ( $H_{01}$ ) was  $R_{x_1} = 0.628$ , suggesting a strong positive correlation between effective brand experience and customer patronage. The result was statistically significant ( $R_{x_1} = 0.628$ ;  $n = 364$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ). Based on this, it is safe to assume that brand experience significantly correlates with customer patronage. Since the p-value is less than 0.05 ( $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ), the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Therefore,

brand experience significantly associates with consumer patronage of mobile phones in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State.

*Test of Hypothesis Two ( $H_{02}$ ):* Brand recognition does not significantly correlates with consumer patronage of mobile phones in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. From the analysis, the correlation coefficient (R) for the second hypothesis ( $H_{02}$ ) was  $R_{x_2} = 0.870$ , suggesting a strong positive correlation between brand recognition and customer patronage. The result was statistically significant ( $R_{x_2} = 0.870$ ;  $n = 364$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ). Based on this, it is safe to assert that brand recognition significantly associates with consumer patronage of mobile phone. Since the p-value is less than

0.05 ( $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ), the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, brand recognition significantly associates with consumer patronage of mobile phones in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State.

*Test of Hypothesis Three ( $H_{03}$ ):* Brand awareness does not significantly associates with consumer patronage of mobile phones in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. From the analysis, the correlation coefficient (R) for the third hypothesis ( $H_{03}$ ) was  $R_{x_3} = 0.640$ , suggesting a strong positive correlation between brand awareness and customer patronage. The result was statistically significant ( $R_{x_3} = 0.640$ ;  $n = 364$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ). Based on this, it is safe to state that brand awareness significantly associates with consumer patronage of mobile phones. Since the p-value is less than 0.05 ( $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ), the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, brand awareness significantly associates with consumer patronage of mobile phones in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State.

## DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

Results of the study showed a significant positive association between each of independent variables (brand experience, brand recognition and brand awareness) and customer patronage of mobile phones. The result of first hypothesis tested shows that brand experience significantly associates with consumer patronage of mobile phones with a correlation coefficient of  $R_{x_1} = 0.628$ . This finding is in agreement with the work of Nazir, Ali and Jamil (2016) whose study revealed that brand image acts as an essential role to increasing the customer satisfaction towards brand conservatory attitude. In tandem to their findings, Yoo and Kim (2011) emphasise that people who experienced psychological discomfort developed more negative attitudes toward the original brand than the attitudes they held before they sought for the brand.

The result of the second hypothesis demonstrates that Brand recognition significantly correlates with consumer patronage of mobile phones with a correlation coefficient of  $R_{x_2} = 0.870$ . The result is in agreement with previous studies done by Harcourt (2021) whose findings illustrate that emotional brand appeal has a strong, positive and significant influence on patronage intention, and a very strong positive and significant influence on patronage action. The study also found that rational brand appeal has a strong, positive and significant influence on patronage intention and patronage action.

The result of the third hypothesis posits that brand awareness significantly associates with consumer patronage of mobile phones with a correlation coefficient of  $R_{x_3} = 0.640$ . This is an indication of a positive association of brand awareness on customer patronage. The finding is in line with the study of Nazir, Ali and Jamil (2016) who showed that brand awareness, brand experience and brand loyalty play a significant role in selection of brand and positively build its image with satisfaction point. The study also revealed that brand image acts as an essential role to increasing the customer satisfaction towards brand conservatory attitude.

## Implication of the Study

This study has been able to establish that brand image significantly correlates with customer patronage of Mobile Phones in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. The implication of this study is that the results have been able to reveal that a significant association exists between brand image of mobile phones and customers decisions to patronise their choice brand. There is a need to understand that customers choice of particular phone brands is a reflection of the customer's encounter with brands hence their ability to recognise their qualities, having experienced the brands, which has created a level of awareness towards the brand, which is a great determinant of their patronage.

## CONCLUSION

The main aim of this study was to determine the association between brand image of mobile phones and consumer patronage in Uyo Akwa Ibom State. The study analysed whether three brand image proxies; brand experience, brand recognition and brand awareness significantly associated with customer patronage of mobile phones in Uyo the Akwa Ibom State. Customers who were patronising phones stores in Uyo were taken as the unit of analysis for the study. The questionnaire was used as the main instrument for primary data collection, the data collected were further analysed using the PPMC analysis and discussed. Findings showed a positive significant association with the independent variables.

Discussions based on the findings of the study show that brand recognition was strongly correlated with customers patronage of mobile phones among other variables measured.

Findings also showed that customers indicated that the strongly and positively patronised mobile phone brands based on their level of association with the brand. The findings also indicated that brand experience had a strong positive association with customers patronage of mobile phone brands.

Results of the descriptive analysis also showed that most respondents had experienced the use of more than one brand of mobile phone and were able to establish the features of the different brands in the market. The findings also showed they were conversant with mobile phone brand features and could lend their opinion on the subject, as a greater proportion had used their current mobile phone brands for two years and above.

## Recommendation

On the basis of the study's findings, the following recommendations were made:

- Brand influencers should emphasise the quality features of mobile phones when promoting the brand, as this will register as a recognisable benefit to patronising the brand.
- Mobile phone stores and outlets should create experience centers for customers to have and register a better story about the brand, with the belief that the customers will eventually become brand advocates, extending their positive experience to influence the choices of prospective customers.
- Brand awareness should become a strategy to watch out for when designing logos, remodelling the mobile phones and positioning the brand in the market. The essence is that customers are captivated by these features in familiarising themselves with the brand.

## Appendices

### Appendix I

#### Sample Size Determination

The formula is given as:

$$n = N/(1 + N(e)^2) \quad \text{Equation 1}$$

Where;

N = population

n = sample size

e = error term

From the formula above, the sample size is given as:

$$n = 1,264,636/ 1+ 1,264,636 (0.05)^2$$

$$n = 1,264,636/ 1+ 1,264,636 (0.0025)$$

$$n = 1,264,636/ 1+ 3,161.59$$

$$n = 1,264,636/ 3,162.59 = 399.8$$

n = 399.8 taken at approximately 400

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