Determinant Of Customers’ Patronage Among Fast Food Restaurants In Nigeria: A Study Of Frenchy’s And Fries, Ozoro, Delta State

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ABSTRACT
The proliferation of fast food restaurants owing to the increasing demand and its competitiveness has changed the narrative of the industry in Nigeria. It became imperative to aggressively search for and keep existing and potential customers. This study focuses on determinant of customer patronage among fast food restaurants in Delta State with special focus on Frenchy’s and Fries, Ozoro. A sample of 400 students was drawn on the basis of convenient sampling. The research instrument used was a structured questionnaire with five point likert scale of measurement with the following ranking: Strongly agree – 5, agree – 4, undecided – 3, disagree – 2, and strongly disagree – 1. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency tables and simple percentage. Statistical package for social science (SPSS) software version 21 was used as a multiple regression analysis to measure the relationship between the independent variables against the dependent variable. The research instrument used in this study was validated through content validity and test reliability which was conducted using Cronbach’s Alpha, giving alpha a benchmark of 0.60, this is considered acceptable and good. The study concludes that fast food restaurant managers should be responsive to customers’ needs and focus on creating a positive customer experience. This is key to the survival of fast food restaurants in Nigeria. The authors recommended that managers should be more focused on distinctive customer service, high quality food, improved physical evidence and satisfaction of customer’s experience as practiced in Frenchy’s and Fries.

Keywords: Patronage, customer service, quality food, physical evidence, customer satisfaction

INTRODUCTION
The fast food industry in Nigeria has witnessed rapid growth and development since the mid – 1990s due mainly to urban expansion, increased human population, and improvement in socio – economic status of the citizenry and changes in lifestyle (Inoni, Olannye and Gladson-Nwokah, 2006). Mahajan and Gothankar (2020) pinpointed that consumption of fast foods has gradually become a common lifestyle particularly in urban zones and among youngsters. On this note, the proliferation of fast food restaurants owing to the increasing demand and its competitiveness has changed the narrative of the fast food industry in Nigeria. According to Adirika, Ebue and Nnolim, (1996), it became imperative to aggressively search for potential customers through persuasive, high pressure advertising to achieve attention, attraction, desire conviction and action. All of these strategic measures adopted and adapted to, is because the customer is the king or queen of the market. According to Kotler, Bowen and Makens (2010) this title is bestowed not because of heredity
rights but because customers have the ability to enhance or damage your career through the purchase choice they make. The decision of a customer to patronize a particular fast food outlet starts with consideration of certain crucial factors that appeal to the customer. Customers consider these factors to determine which of the restaurant outlets can meet their needs satisfactorily.

There is the need to understand that the sole purpose of the business being alive is the customer. The rationale behind business existence is to serve customers and serve them satisfactorily. The customer is the life wire of every business, Drucker cited in (Azigwe, Maryír and Manamzor, 2016). Every businessman must bear in mind that without customers he would not stay in business (Ani, 1999). Obviously, it is the customer who determines what the business is. What the customer thinks he is buying, what he considers as value, determines whether the business will prosper. What a business thinks it produces is not of primary importance to its success. Instead, what customers think they are buying – the perceived value – defines a business (Lamb, Hair and McDaniell, 2012). Whatever is the business of an organization, the customer is often the business. Therefore, the task of the organization is to determine the needs, wants and values of the target market and to adapt the organization to delivering the desired satisfaction more effectively and efficiently than its competitors (Kolter, 1980). A serious minded firm tries to create value – satisfying goods and services that the customers will want to buy, Levit cited in (Okafor, 1995).

Presently, in the bid of satisfying the customer, most fast food restaurants are shifting away from sales concept, changing over to marketing concept because of the increasing rate of competition within the Industry. According to Maulik (2016) more than any other functions of business, marketing deals with customers and managing profitable customer relationships through putting the right product in the right place, at the right price, at the right time. According to Adrika et al (1996), marketing concept means putting the customers above other things first. “Customer First” has become a distinctive and catchy phrase commonly used by most marketing firms in promoting and achieving their marketing goals. It is possible to run a business without profit for a period of time. But isn’t possible for such a business to survive for a day without a customer. Customer continued patronage is a vital factor for success, business survival, and profitability in the fast food restaurant industry (Haghighi, Dorosti, Rahnama and Hoseinpour, 2012). The increasing number of restaurants in Nigeria has made the environment impatient for stagnant restaurants that are hamstrung with age—long tradition. Intensified competition has necessitated within the industry the significance of identifying and adopting the drivers of sustainable competitive advantage.

Statement of the Problem
The consumption of fast food has progressively become a common lifestyle predominantly among young people. This has resulted in the increase of fast food restaurants in Nigeria. D-RAJ, Chicken Express and DOTNovo Farm Kitchen are the restaurants operating in Ozoro metropolis. Recently, the establishment of Frenchy’s and Fries within the same business zone, has increased the number of the functional premium restaurants in the area. Frenchy’s and Fries popularly known as F and F provides premium restaurant services to its esteemed customers with varieties of fast foods. It has put in barely 4 years of restaurant operations, yet enjoying higher customer patronage than D-RAJ and others. It seems that other restaurants are swiftly losing their customers’ patronage over time. The question is; what is the marketing practice adopted by Frenchy’s and Fries that others have not? On this ground, the study was focused on: Determinant of Customers’ Patronage among Fast Food Restaurants in Nigeria. This research was carried out to examine while Frenchy’s and Fries is gaining more customers’ patronage. However, this study had special focus on certain strategic aspects that may bring about customer patronage.

Objectives of the Study
These objectives are put forward to guide the study:

i. examine the effect of customer service on customers’ patronage in Frenchy’s and Fries
ii. ascertain the impact of quality food on customers’ patronage in Frenchy’s and Fries
iii. examine the effect of physical evidence on customers’ patronage in Frenchy’s and Fries
iv. ascertain the effect of customer satisfaction on customers’ patronage in Frenchy’s and Fries

Research Questions
The study attempts to provide strategic answers to the following research questions.

i. What is the effect of customer service on customers’ patronage in Frenchy’s and Fries?
Research Hypotheses

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between customer service and customer patronage in Frenchy’s and Fries

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between quality food and customer patronage in Frenchy’s and Fries

Ho3: There is no significant relationship between physical evidence and customer patronage in Frenchy’s and Fries

Ho4: There is no significant relationship between customer satisfaction and customer patronage in Frenchy’s and Fries

Significance of the Study

This study is of high significance, as the outcome will be of great help to fast food restaurant managers and operators, enabling them to evaluate and streamline their integrated marketing efforts toward customers’ satisfaction. It will enable them to know the strategic role of customers in the business context as a key competitive advantage. It will advantageously help to put the customer first in their operations above every other thing. The recommendations put forward based on the findings, no doubt, will avail the managers and operators of restaurants an in-depth understanding of the associated flaws and how to adopt and adapt to strategic measures in positioning restaurants for customers’ effective and efficient service. It will give an insight on how to optimally achieve customer satisfaction and patronage as a key to business survival in this contemporary times of throat cutting competition. Besides, this study will also avail consumers with some advantageous hints on fast food restaurants with regards to customer satisfaction and patronage. The study presents a review of past studies on the subject matter, and this is one of the avenues through which this study intends to contribute to the existing literature.

Scope of the Study

This study focuses on Determinant of Customers’ Patronage among Fast Food Restaurants in Nigeria. It was exclusively carried out in Ozoro in Isoko North Government Area of Delta State, Nigeria, from January to March, 2020. The study covers one premium fast food restaurant known as Frenchy’s and Fries, Ozoro.

Conceptual Review

Customer Services

To compete successfully in today’s competitive marketplace, business must constantly focus on customer service, understanding the needs, attitude and behavioural pattern of customers. Every service provider tries hard to give better customer service to retain and satisfy their customers (Singh and Khurana, 2010). Having the potential to satisfy customers’ demand is an aspect of customer service. Baker (1992) stated that customer services being fundamental to the satisfaction of customers must by necessity be an integral part of marketing thinking, tools and techniques. According to Kotler (1984) customer’s service represents one of the key competitive benefits that a firm can offer customers in order to attract their business. Customer services are intangible, they have no physical dimensions which can be seen or touched by the consumer before, during or after purchasing and consumption. So, the quality of service a firm renders give an edge of differentiation for such a firm in the marketplace.

In the midst of the stiff competition, some firms wrongly believe that the more important aspect of consumer satisfaction is a satisfactory completion of the services. But, according to Adirika et al (1996), other factors besides a competently executed service are very important for consumer satisfaction. For instance, meeting the time schedule is one such factor. This agrees with the findings of Nwaorehu cited in Oshiegbu (2002) that more customers are becoming desirous of fast and dependable delivery of services. For customers to spend unnecessary time in transaction is a clue of poor service. And the real essence of customer service is to avoid service failure and ensure that quality of service must be excellently delivered with speed and creativity. When a customer realizes that he/she is recognized as an esteemed customer, being attended to quickly without delay and among others, patronage continues. Inoni et al (2006) averred that for customers to
continue to patronize a fast food outlet, the products and services offered must meet or exceed their expectations, if not they may switch to other service providers. With the increase in numbers of fast food restaurants, consumers have been encouraged to pay more attention to the products and services they consume when patronizing a restaurant outlet.

**Quality Food**

There are many reasons why we consume food, the obvious and most important one being to obtain nutrition for a healthy and happy body (Clark, 1998). Eating quality food is key to longevity and healthy life. Ashakiran and Deepthi (2012) eat healthy and live healthy is one of the essential requirements for long life. Unfortunately, today’s world has been adapted to a system of consumption of foods which has several adverse effects on health. These foods are known as JUNK. What makes food Junk is that it contains high levels of refined sugar, white flour, trans fat and polyunsaturated fat, salt, and numerous food additives such as monosodium glutamate and tartrazine; at the same time, it is lacking in proteins, vitamins, essential minerals, fiber, among other healthy attributes (Ashakiran and Deepthi, 2012).

Evidently and indisputably, most of the contemporary fast food restaurants are associated with junk foods because of profit motive. They are cheap and easy to prepare, easy to carry, purchase and consume. They have an attractive appearance based on the added food colourants and additives which enhance flavour and texture. But one thing is sure and is sadly over-looked, is that consumers want to enjoy their purchased food, they need quality food for healthy living and longevity. They are desirous of having value for the money spent on purchased food. In recent times, consumers are becoming extremely wise and decisive. Liu and Jang (2009) food quality has the capacity to create a favourable preference for the firm’s products whereby consumers can differentiate the quality of its products from those of competitors. Presently, the ever increasing consumers’ demand for quality food has left many fast food restaurants in a dilemma. Product and service quality is the marketer’s main positioning tool. Quality is a means of creating customer value and satisfaction. Clark and Wood (1998) food quality appears to be the most ‘significant restaurant attributes. Lewis (1981) stated that quality of food is the most important attribute for the selection of fast food restaurants.

**Physical evidence**

Physical evidence is one of the additional 3P’s of the modern marketing mix strategies. Physical evidence is the environment in which the service is delivered and where the firm and customer interact, and any tangible components that facilitate performance or communication of the service (Olannye, 2016). The physical environment is the space by which you are surrounded when you consume the service. Lovelock, Wirtz, & Chatterjee (2007) as well as Klaus & Maklan (2012) all agreed that physical evidence is related to the style and exterior of the physical surroundings and experience faced by customers at service delivery sites. According to Bhasin (2018) how do you differentiate a premium restaurant from a regular restaurant? To create such differentiation physical evidence is used. Physical evidence, however, comprises the elements which are incorporated into a service to make it tangible and somewhat measurable such as the ambiance, layout and branding. At the same time, it helps in the positioning of the brand and for targeting the right kind of customers.

It is said that customers cannot assess the quality of service as it is an intangible performance. However, the service environment (servicescape) will be used by them as a key alternative for quality (Shanker, 2002). It is the customer’s expectation that the physical environment of a firm should possess the quality attributes it seems to have with a good sense of comfort and serenity. Olannye (2016) stated that service marketers must manage physical evidence effectively because potential customers use it to gauge the service quality. Physical evidence is a tangible evidence of a firm's service, it speaks volume about the firm before the customer. Sohn and Tadisina (2008), Agrawal, Tripathi, and Seth (2014) agreed that physical evidence as tangible evidence of a firm's service quality influences customer’s perception about service provider and customers’ behavioural intentions. Therefore, the strategic role of the firm is to design and implement such tangible evidence more importantly. Some businesses depend heavily upon physical evidence as a means of marketing communications.
Customer Satisfaction

Customers’ satisfaction is the perceived satisfaction by customers from the usage of a particular product or service. As the environment is becoming highly competitive, the best practice and strategy for improving sales is customers’ want satisfaction. Inoni et al (2006), a competitive environment provides customers with more alternatives to choose from. The most important thing among others for the players in the industry is to become customer centric. Nurture and keep loyal customers who will continue to patronize and contribute to the business’s long-term growth and profitability. Customer satisfaction holds the potential for increasing an organization’s customer base, profitability and reputation (Fornell, 1992).

Customer satisfaction depends on the customer’s perceived performance in delivering value relating to a buyer’s expectation. If the service or product’s performance falls short of expectation, the customer will be dissatisfied. A satisfied customer buys again and tells others about their good experience while dissatisfied customers often switch to competitors and bad mouth the service or product to others. Jamal and Nasser (2002) posited that satisfied customers are more likely to be loyal, and to make repeat purchases of the products offered. One will say, however, that the motives behind customer patronage lies within the buying reasons based on the characteristics of a specific retail outlet or product brand. Obviously, some customers patronize a particular outlet or brand because of past experience of satisfaction. Therefore, every producer or seller must strive to ensure customer satisfaction through delivering superior value – bundle of benefits – to ensure repeat purchase and customer loyalty.

Empirical Review

Inoni et al (2006), conducted a study titled: Socio-demographic factors that influence customer loyalty to fast food restaurants in Delta State, Nigeria. Primary data for this study were obtained from a survey of a cross-section of customers of FFRs in five (5) urban centers with the aid of a structured questionnaire. 200 copies of the questionnaire were administered to customers in 10 FFRs that were randomly drawn from a list of 13 major restaurants operating in the State. The findings showed a mean age of 31 years for customers; 62.3% of them were single; while the average duration of patronage is 17 months. Multiple regression results indicated that monthly income, dining frequency, customer satisfaction, perceived value, service and food quality have positive and statistically significant effects, with food quality as the dominant predictor of customer loyalty; but the influence of educational status was negative. Significant differences existed in customer loyalty among the FFRs. It was recommended that restaurateurs should improve on the quality of food and services in order to win the loyalty of their customers and remain in business.

Blesic, I., Raljic, J. P., Pivac, T and Ivkov, M. (2018) conducted a study on Factors Influencing Students’ Choice of Fast Food Restaurants. The survey was conducted using a random sample method through electronic means and social networks in the period from October to December 2016. The target group were students at the University of Novi Sad. A sample of 279 respondents was obtained. A self – administered questionnaire was used in the study, questionnaire items was ranged on a 5-point Likert scale. All statistical analyzes were conducted using SPSS software (Statistical Package for Social Sciences, version 23.0). Data was analyzed using frequency distributions, percentages, means, T-test and factor analysis. The results showed the most important choice factors as quality of food, appearance, presentation of food, menu-item variety, cleanliness of the restaurant, kitchen, service personnel and nearness and accessibility. This study recommends that fast food operators in Novi Sad should focus more on the quality of food, nearness and accessibility of University and cleanliness of restaurant, kitchen and service personnel.
Framework of the Study

![Diagram showing the relationship between Customer Service, Physical Evidence, Quality Food, Customer Satisfaction, and Customers' Patronage]

**Fig.1: Proposed conceptual framework**
Source: Researchers’ model, 2020

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**
This study is based on a descriptive research survey conducted in Ozoro, Delta State of Nigeria, from January to March, 2020. The study covers a premium fast food restaurant known as Frenchy’s and Fries, Ozoro. The population of the study comprises students in the School of Business Studies, Delta State Polytechnic, Ozoro who are customers of Frenchy’s and Fries. A sample of 400 students was drawn on the basis of convenient sampling. The research instrument used was a structured questionnaire with Five point Likert Scale of measurement with the following ranking: Strongly agree – 5, agree – 4, undecided – 3, disagree – 2, and strongly disagree – 1. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency tables and simple percentage. Statistical package for social science (SPSS) software version 20 was used as a multiple regression analysis to measure the relationship between the independent variables against the dependent variable. The research instrument used in this study was validated through content validity and test reliability which was conducted using Cronbach’s Alpha, giving alpha a benchmark of 0.60. This is considered acceptable and good (Hair, Babin and Samuel, 2003).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Reliability Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Variables</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customers’ satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customers’ patronage</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**RESULTS**
Out of the 400 set of validated questionnaires that were administered, 335 were retrieved and properly filled. The demographic information as obtained shows the gender composition, 80 of the respondents representing 24% were male while 255 respondents representing 76% were female. From the age brackets as shown, 125 respondents representing 37% falls within the age bracket of 15 – 20 years; 180 of the respondents representing 54% were within the age bracket of 21 – 25 years, 30 of the respondents representing 9% falls within the age bracket of 26 – 30 years and none of the respondents falls within 31 years and above. On marital status, none of the respondents are married. However, all the respondents are undergraduate students.
of the school of business studies, Delta State Polytechnic, Ozoro. The implication here is that the consumption of fast foods is predominantly among young people, especially females.

Table 1: Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CUSTOMER SERVICE</th>
<th>QUALITY FOOD</th>
<th>PHYSICAL EVIDENCE</th>
<th>CUSTOMER SATISFACTION</th>
<th>CUSTOMER PATRONAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.103</td>
<td>.162**</td>
<td>.136</td>
<td>.382**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.060</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>.013</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearson</td>
<td>.103</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.422**</td>
<td>.406**</td>
<td>.053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUALITY FOOD</td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.060</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.336</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearson</td>
<td>.162**</td>
<td>.422**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.448**</td>
<td>.033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYSICAL EVIDENCE</td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.545</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearson</td>
<td>.136**</td>
<td>.406**</td>
<td>.448**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.141**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CUSTOMER SATISFACTION</td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.013</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.010</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearson</td>
<td>.382**</td>
<td>.053</td>
<td>.033</td>
<td>.141**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CUSTOMER PATRONAGE</td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.336</td>
<td>.545</td>
<td>.010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>335</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The correlation analysis as shown in table 2, revealed that customer service exhibited significant positive correlation with customer patronage (r = .382**, P < 0.01). The result shows that there is positive correlation between customer service with physical evidence (r = .162**, P < 0.01). The analysis showed significant positive correlation between customer service with customer satisfaction (r = .136**, P < 0.01). It also showed that customer service exhibited significant positive correlation with quality food (r = .103, P < 0.01). The result showed that quality food has significant positive relationship with physical evidence (r = .422**, P < 0.1). Similarly, there was a positive correlation between quality food and customer satisfaction (r = .406**, P < 0.01). Also quality food maintained positive correlation with customer patronage (r = .053, P < 0.01). Physical evidence exhibited significant positive correlation with customer satisfaction (r = .448**, P < 0.01) and also with customer patronage (r = .033, p < 0.01). Customer satisfaction which is the last variable exhibited positive correlation with customer patronage (r = .141**, p < 0.01).

Table 2: Coefficients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>9.436</td>
<td>1.362</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 CUSTOMER SERVICES</td>
<td>.377</td>
<td>.051</td>
<td>.378</td>
<td>7.380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 QUALITY FOOD</td>
<td>.456</td>
<td>.065</td>
<td>.433</td>
<td>6.049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE</td>
<td>.393</td>
<td>.065</td>
<td>.385</td>
<td>5.433</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 CUSTOMER SATISFACTION</td>
<td>.135</td>
<td>.062</td>
<td>.129</td>
<td>2.203</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Std. Error of the Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>.400*</td>
<td>.160</td>
<td>.150</td>
<td>1.9743</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
* *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 3: Model Summary

a. Predictors: (Constant), CUSTOMER SATISFACTION, CUSTOMER SERVICES, QUALITY FOOD, PHYSICAL EVIDENCE
Table 4: ANOVA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>244.734</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>61.183</td>
<td>15.697</td>
<td>.000a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>1286.299</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>3.898</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1531.033</td>
<td>334</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Dependent Variable: CUSTOMER PATRONAGE  
b. Predictors: (Constant), CUSTOMER SATISFACTION, CUSTOMER SERVICES, QUALITY FOOD, PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

DISCUSSION
From the findings based on the correlation analysis, all the predictors of customer patronage exhibited positive correlation coefficient values. This simply means that all the predictors are an appropriate element of customer patronage. The results from the multiple regression have a positive effect on customer patronage. The four predictors of customer patronage are customer service ($\beta = .378$, $P < 0.01$), quality food ($\beta = .433$, $P < 0.01$), physical evidence ($\beta = .385$, $P < 0.01$) and customer satisfaction ($\beta = .062$, $P < 0.01$) all exhibited positive effect on customer patronage.

The findings indicated that customer service is found to possess a significant positive relationship with customer patronage ($\beta = .378$, $P < 0.01$). The result provided support for the $H_1$ test result ($r = 0.000 < 0.001$) which indicated that there is a significant relationship between customer service and customer patronage. This is in agreement with Inoni et al (2006) that for customers to continue to patronize a fast food outlet, the products and services offered must meet or exceed their expectations. This implies that the quality of customer service a firm gives strengthens the commitment of customers and gives the edge of differentiation for such a firm in the marketplace.

The findings indicated that quality food is found to possess a significant positive relationship with customer patronage ($\beta = .433$, $P < 0.01$). The findings provided support for the $H_2$ test result ($r = 0.001 < 0.005$) which stated that there is a significant relationship between quality food and customer patronage. This is supported by Clark and Wood (1998) assertion that food quality appears to be the most significant restaurant attribute. In line with Lewis (1981) quality of food is the most important attribute for the selection of fast food restaurants. This implies that quality food has the capacity to create a favourable preference for the firm’s products than those of competitors.

The findings revealed that physical evidence is found to hold a significant positive relationship with customer patronage ($\beta = .385$, $P < 0.01$). The findings provided support for the $H_3$ test result ($r = 0.003 < 0.005$) which stated that there is significant relationship between physical evidence and customer patronage. This is supported by Olanye (2016) that service marketers must manage physical evidence effectively because potential customers use it to gauge the service quality. Sohn and Tadisina (2008), Agrawal, Tripathi, and Seth (2014) agreed that physical evidence as tangible evidence of a firm's service quality influences customer’s perception about service providers. This implies that physical evidence has influence on customer patronage. Moreover, the result of the regression analysis revealed that customer satisfaction has a positive impact on customer patronage ($\beta = .129$, $P < 0.01$). The findings provided support for the $H_4$ test result ($r = 0.002 < 0.005$) which indicated that there is a significant relationship between customer satisfaction and customer patronage. This is in agreement with Jamal and Nasser (2002) view that satisfied customers are more likely to be loyal, and to make repeat purchases of the products offered. Customers patronize a particular outlet or brand because of past experience of satisfaction. This implies that customer satisfaction is key to patronage.

CONCLUSION
This study examines Determinant of Customer Patronage among Fast Food Restaurants in Delta State with special focus on Frenchy’s and Fries Restaurant, Ozoro. From the research results, it was observed that repeat visits by customers have proven to be very high in Frenchy’s and Fries Restaurant. Why is the patronage so high? The recipe is to consistently deliver a unique experience. The study investigated and spotted some key factors that attract customers repeat visits. These factors are attributed to the glaring success of Frenchy’s and
Fries Restaurant. They are distinctive customer service, high quality food combined with the eclectic surrounding of the restaurant and the creation of Frenchy’s and Fries customer satisfaction experience. The purpose of a business is to create and maintain satisfied, profitable customers. Customers are attracted and retained when their needs are met. Not only do they return to the restaurant, but they also talk favourable to others about their satisfaction (Kotler, Bowen and Makens, 2010). The study concludes that being responsive to customers’ holistic needs is key to the survival of fast food restaurants.

RECOMMENDATIONS
The authors wish to recommend that managers of fast food restaurants should be more focused on distinctive customer service, high quality food, improved physical evidence and satisfaction of customer’s experience. In doing this, they must ensure that quality of service is excellently delivered, promptly and consistently with creativity. They should make the customers realize that they are recognized as valued customers. They should also ensure that they provide varieties of tasty and nutritional foods with freshness. On physical evidence, attention should be placed on the structural appearance of building, landscape, interior furnishing, equipment, staff members’ uniforms, communication materials as well as cleanliness of the eclectic surrounding of the restaurants. When all of these marketing efforts and strategies are put in place, it will create customers’ satisfaction experience and customers will continue to patronize such fast food restaurants.

REFERENCES