Effect Of Brand Equity On Customer Patronage Of Selected Alcoholic Beverages In Abia State

1Maduka, Chinedu Okechukwu; 1Dr. Peace Eze & 3Asiagwu, Catherine Ekene

1Department of Marketing, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Anambra State, Nigeria

2Department of Marketing, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Anambra State, Nigeria

3Delta State of Marine Technology, Burutu, Delta State, Nigeria

ABSTRACT
This study investigated the effect of brand equity on customer patronage of selected alcoholic beverages in Abia State. The specific objectives of the study include: to determine the extent to which brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality and brand loyalty affects customer patronage of alcoholic beverages. Relevant theoretical, conceptual and empirical literatures were reviewed. Signalling theory and brand equity theory served as the theoretical basis of the study. The study adopted survey research design and primary data were used. The population of study is made up of consumers of alcoholic drinks in Abia State. Cochran’s formula was employed in determining the sample size of 384. Questionnaire was employed as the instrument of data collection. Frequency table, percentage and regression analysis were employed in analyzing the data. The study found that brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality and brand loyalty have significant positive effect on customer patronage of alcoholic beverages in Abia State at 0.05 level of significance. The study recommends amongst others that producers of alcoholic beverages should invest more in creating brand awareness in order to enhance customer patronage since brand equity was found to have significant positive effect on patronage of alcoholic beverages.

Keywords Brand Equity, brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality, brand loyalty, Customer Patronage

INTRODUCTION
The fast changing business environment has provided many inputs (in terms of both the alcoholic drinks packaging and emotional images built into them) that influences buyers' behavior and keeps consumer preferences in a constant state of flux. The information revolution and intensifying competition places a large amount of solicited information at the consumer's disposal before buying a product (Ousanee, Sujan & Shrawan, 2018). The informational inputs, advocating the merits of each branded goods influence the buyer's decision to a great extent. Based on the foregoing, companies use different factors to make an image in the mind of the consumer that can be a name, symbol design or mixture of these three so that customers can identify a specific brand or product. To be in competition, brand equity is an important tool to get attention of people that may lead to buying decision (Bansah, 2015).

Brand Equity is the base on which the consumer take decision he/she prefers the brands. Brand equity is defined as customers’ perspective towards brands’ reputation. When a certain brand has a good reputation, it means that particular brand has potential to have high brand equity (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2013). Kotler and Keller (2012) perceive brand equity as the customer’s thought about a certain brand and its economic value that can give value added to the products or services offered by the
said certain brand. A powerful brand enjoys a high level of customer brand awareness and loyalty. The importance of brand equity lies in its strategic and major role in promoting managerial decisions and attaining competitive advantages for organizations and customers (Alipour, Feizi & Heidari, 2016). Brand equity enables organizations to ask for a higher price in exchange for their brand and helps them retain their market share (Aker, 2005). A powerful brand can enjoy more profits and attain competitive advantage, depending on the customers' behaviors and decisions.

It seems that brand equity from the perspective of consumer is an appropriate starts to assess product equity which contains a lot of interrelated dimensions such as brand awareness, brand quality, brand association and brand loyalty (Jing et al., 2015). This relationship includes mutual exchanges between the brand and consumers by a duplicate set of actions that has many advantages for both sides (Huang & Kandampully, 2012). The goal of any brand is to attract and retain customers to ensure the success of the brand and the product and it is observed that consumers are looking for brands that have specific features (Londono, Elms & Davies, 2016).

Customer patronage is achieved when the anticipations of customers are fulfilled. Effective brand equity does not only make customers patronize the products, but they also spread positive word-of-mouth to other people, which is an avenue for effective brand building and management. Kotler and Armstrong (2012) note that brand equity is driven by consumer knowledge about the brand, is a measure of the brand’s ability to capture consumer preference and loyalty, as well as goodwill associated with brand name, which adds tangible value to the company through resulting higher patronage. Brand equity is a powerful tool to improve customer patronage and evaluating brand equity is an effective way to measure customer patronage and brand performance by marketing managers (So & King, 2010; Sung, Bang & Leec, 2015). Based on the foregoing, this study investigated effect of brand equity on customer patronage of selected alcoholic beverages in Abia State.

**Objectives of the Study**
The broad objective of the study is to examine the effect of brand equity on customer patronage of selected alcoholic beverages. Specifically, the study intends to:

1. Determine the extent to which brand awareness affects customer patronage of alcoholic beverages in Abia state.
2. Evaluate the degree to which brand association affects customer patronage of alcoholic beverages in Abia state.
3. Investigate the extent to which perceived quality affects customer patronage of alcoholic beverages in Abia state.
4. Determine the degree to which brand loyalty affects customer patronage of alcoholic beverages in Abia state.

**Research Questions**
The following research questions guided this study.

1. To what extent does brand awareness affect customer patronage of alcoholic beverages in Abia state?
2. To what degree does brand association affect customer patronage of alcoholic beverages in Abia state?
3. To what extent does perceived quality affect customer patronage of alcoholic beverages in Abia state?
4. To what degree does brand loyalty affect customer patronage of alcoholic beverages in Abia state?

**Hypotheses**
The following tentative statements formulated in null form guided this study.

1. Brand awareness has no significant effect on customer patronage of alcoholic beverages in Abia state.
2. Brand association has no significant effect on customer patronage of alcoholic beverages in Abia state.
3. Perceived quality has no significant effect on customer patronage of alcoholic beverages in Abia state.
4. Brand loyalty has no significant effect on customer patronage of alcoholic beverages in Abia state.
Scope of the Study
The scope of this study comprised the subject, variable, geographical, and unit of analysis. The subject scope covers the effect of brand equity on customer patronage of alcoholic drinks. Under the variable scope, brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality and brand loyalty were used in this study as the independent variables while customer patronage was employed as the dependent variable.

The area of coverage of this study was Abia State, South East geo-political zone of Nigeria. The major alcoholic drinks covered in this study were Lager beer namely Hero Lager Beer, Heineken Lager Beer, Star Lager Beer, Life Lager Beer and Guinness Stout while the unit of the study was the consumers of alcoholic drinks in Abia state.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE
Brand Equity
Brand equity is defined as a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm’s customers (Asuma, 2015). Moolla (2010) states that brand equity refers to the marketing effects or outcomes that accrue to a product with its brand name compared to those that would accrue if the same product did not have the brand name. Yoo and Donthu (2001) describe brand equity as having many definitions and forms, such as favourable impressions, attitudinal dispositions, and behavioural predilections; brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, and other proprietary brand; brand knowledge such as brand awareness and brand associations; loyalty and image; the added value endowed by the brand name; incremental utility; the difference between overall brand preference and multi-attributed preference based on objectively measured attribute levels; and overall quality and choice intention.

Brand equity is a multidimensional concept that comprises various individual dimensions (Jooste, Strydom, Berndt & Du Plessis, 2012). Loken, Ahluwalia and Houston (2010) maintained that the importance of understanding these dimensions relate to brand equity in order to make decisions or changes that will enhance brand equity (Veloutsou &McAlona 2012). A rigorous understanding of consumer knowledge structures regarding consumers’ feelings and actions towards the brand is essential in attaining guidelines towards formulating marketing strategies and for effective brand building and management (Keller 2013). Various brand equity models exist to represent, explain and measure the sources of brand equity (Kotler & Keller 2011). The consensus from authors is that brand equity is driven by consumer knowledge about the brand, is a measure of the brand’s ability to capture consumer preference and loyalty, as well as goodwill associated with brand name, which adds tangible value to the company through resulting higher sales and profits (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012).

Yoo and Donthu (2001) adopted four dimensions to measure brand equity, viz., brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, and brand associations. Atilgan, Serkan, Safak and Erdener (2009) considered perceived quality, brand loyalty, brand associations, brand awareness and brand trust as five basic customer related dimensions of brand equity. For the purpose of this study, we adopted the four dimensions to measure brand equity, viz., brand awareness, brand association, perceived service quality and brand loyalty.

Customer Patronage
Customer patronage is the degree to which a buying unit concentrates purchases over time to a particular bar within a service category; customer patronage develops through positive reinforcement and repetition of buying behavior (Burnett, 1996). Consumer patronage is the approval or support provided by customers with respect to a particular brand. Patronage delivers the foundation for an established and growing market share. Kottler (2007) maintains that consumers have unpredictable degree of patronage to particular services, products, stores and other entities. Consumer patronage is the degree to which a buying unit concentrates purchases over time to a particular product; consumer patronage develops through positive reinforcement and repetition of buying behavior (Oliver, 1997). Customer Patronage provides the basis for a stable and growing market share. Business week magazine (April 2001) indicates that consumers can avoid risks by remaining patrons to a product with which they are satisfied, instead of
purchasing products. High-risk avoiders are more likely to patronize familiar products and less likely to purchase unfamiliar products. That is to say, consumers’ patronage can be explained in a number of ways: habit, maximization value over price, perceived risk of alternatives are high, past satisfaction with the product, the frequency of usage, influence of media and the awareness of alternatives. Customer patronage is a combination of psychological factors that influence purchase behaviour; and these factors are considered important by consumers and used as yardsticks in determining which firm to patronize (Ogbuji, Onuoha & Abdul, 2016). New Webster Dictionary (1994), patronage can be said to mean “the material help and encouragement given by a patron. In this instance, the patron is seen to be a customer in an exchange transaction. It could also mean “the act of being a regular customer to a shop. In a highly competitive industry, such as banking, satisfying the customers should be the primary focus of firms that wish to sustain patronage.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
This study is anchored on signalling theory. The signalling theory was developed by Erdem and Swait in 1998 and is used in situations when two parties have access to different information. Signalling theory derived from the information economics literature under the condition that the market is characterized by imperfect and asymmetric information. Asymmetric information exists when firms know more about their product than consumers. Imperfect information refers to consumers having incomplete information when evaluating product attributes. Signalling theory explicitly considers imperfect and asymmetric information in real markets. When consumers are uncertain about product attributes, firms may use brands to inform consumers of their product positions. Erdem and Swait (1998) maintain that the clarity and credibility of brands as signals of product positions increase perceived quality, decrease consumer perceived risk and information costs, and hence increase consumer expected utility.

Based on this theory, the signaler has a choice of how and when to communicate information using signals, while the receiver has a choice of how to interpret these signals. Brand equity is the value of a brand as a credible signal of a product’s positioning. The content, clarity, and credibility of the brand signal creates intangible benefits, enhances perceived quality, and decreases consumer-perceived risk and information costs, and hence increases consumer utility, which underlies the added value associated with a brand (Erdem & Swait 2004). This view is similarly shared by Farquhar (1995) who articulates that brand equity is the added value endowed by the brand to the product.

Signalling theory is used in this study to understand the way consumers interpret brand signals through brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality and brand loyalty. The general assumption of signalling is that signalers focus on the deliberate communication of positive information to signal receivers (Connelly 2011). Signalers do not intend to send negative signals but occasionally negative signals can be an unintended consequence of the signaler’s actions (Connelly 2011). Thus, the signalling theory should investigate which type of signals can reveal the true nature of alcoholic drink manufacturer. Thus, a significant contribution of this study is the consideration of negative signals in addition to positive ones. Conclusively, a brand signal is composed of a firm’s past and present marketing mix strategies and activities associated with that brand. In other words, a brand becomes a signal which can affect customer patronage.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW
Asuma (2015) investigated the influence of brand equity on the choice of marketing strategies by manufacturers of carbonated drinks in Kenya. Five manufacturers of carbonated drinks in Kenya, which are Coca-Cola, Keroche Breweries, EABL, Highlands and Pepsi manufacturing companies were sampled for the study. The data generated were analyzed using descriptive statistics and regression analysis. The study found that brand loyalty influences the choice of marketing strategies by manufacturers of carbonated drinks in Kenya. The study showed that brand awareness influences the choice of marketing strategies by manufacturers of carbonated drinks in Kenya. The study also established that promotions, specifically advertising play a critical role in creating brand awareness. The study also found that perceived quality influence the choice of marketing strategies by manufacturers of carbonated drinks in Kenya.

110
Fouzia and Salma (2015) investigated the impact of brand equity on brand loyalty, taking into consideration the mediating role of customer satisfaction in the restaurant sector of Lahore, Pakistan. A total of 400 respondents were sampled for the study. Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis and structural equation modeling were employed in analyzing the data. The study found that the effect of physical quality, staff behavior, ideal self-congruence, brand identification and trust on brand loyalty has been fully mediated by customer satisfaction in case of Lahore. The study also found that the effect of life style-congruence and environment has not been fully mediated by customer satisfaction and has proved insignificant.

Hamed, Hossein and Mohammad (2015) evaluated the effect of brand equity on consumer satisfaction and brand loyalty in large retail outlets of the Mazandaran Province. 300 customers of big retail outlets were sampled for the study. Structural equation model was employed in analyzing the data. The results showed that the ideal internal consistency, brand identity, and consistent of lifestyle have a significant and direct impact on customer satisfaction. The study also found that physical quality and staff behavior have no statistically significant relationship with customer satisfaction.

Mudanganyi (2017) investigated the influence of consumer based brand equity on customer satisfaction and brand loyalty in mobile cellular services. A total of 240 respondents were sampled for the study. Descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis were employed in analyzing the data. The results confirmed a significant relationship between the dimensions of brand equity and customer satisfaction; and also between customer satisfaction and brand loyalty.

Zamri and Rahmat (2011) investigated customer’s brand equity and customer loyalty in the hospitality sector. Confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling were employed in analyzing the data. The study found that satisfaction mediates the relationship between customer-based brand equity constructs and customer loyalty.

Poranki (2017) carried out a study on the impact of brand awareness on customer satisfaction at Godfrey Phillips India Limited, India. Descriptive statistics was employed in analyzing the data. This study was conducted in Visakhapatnam a city of India with a sample of 200 respondents. The research results show that there is an impact of brand awareness on customer satisfaction with respect to product quality, price and size of the cigarettes etc.

Ongkowidjoyo (2015) carried out a study on the impact of brand equity towards customer loyalty of Starbucks taking into cognizance the mediating role of customer satisfaction. A total of 288 respondents were sampled for the study. The data generated were analyzed using One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test. The analysis that provides evidence that brand equity has a positive impact towards customer loyalty and customer satisfaction is proven to have a mediating impact.

Ousanee, Sujan and Shrawan (2018) carried out a study on the impact of brand on consumer decision making with particular reference to beer brands in Nepal. The data sourced through questionnaire were analyzed using correlation and regression analysis. The study found a positive significant relationship between the independent variables: brand awareness, perceived quality and brand association, and the dependent variable consumer purchase decision whereas, brand loyalty had a positive but not significant causal relation with consumer purchase decision for any particular beer brands.

Amegbe (2016) assessed the influence of customer based brand equity on consumer responses-the newly opened West Hills Mall in Ghana. Structural equation model was employed in analyzing the data. The study found that customer based brand equity is significantly related to brand preference and purchase intension. The study further found that customer based brand equity is not significantly related to consumers’ willingness to pay price premiums.

Asaad and Serdar (2015) carried out a study on improving brand awareness and its impact on consumer behavior via media in Fast Food Restaurants in North Cyprus. Descriptive statistics and regression analysis were employed in analyzing the data. The study found that brand loyalty, brand image, consumer behavior and media had significant impact on brand awareness. The study also found that among the three dimensions, brand loyalty seems to have the minimum brand equity rating by consumers than alternate dimensions.
Shadi, Mahnaz and Karim (2016) studied the relationship between brand equity and consumer behavior. Structural equations and descriptive and inferential statistics were employed in analyzing the data. The result revealed that there is a relationship between brand equity and consumer behavior including paying extra cost, brand preference and purchase intention.

Aries and Eirene (2015) investigated the effect of the brand equity on the Customer satisfaction and the brand loyalty of Starbucks and Excelso coffee shops customers. A total of two hundred and seventy respondents were sampled for the study. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) were employed in analyzing data. The results of this study showed that the physical quality, the ideal self-congruence, and the lifestyle congruence have a positive and significant impact on the customer satisfaction on Excelso and Starbucks. Staff behaviour only have a positive and significant impact on the customer satisfaction in the Excelso; whereas, brand identification only have a positive and significant impact on the customer satisfaction in the Starbucks.

The existing empirical evidence revealed that most of the existing studies on brand equity were examined in relation to choice of marketing strategies (Asuma, 2015), brand loyalty (Fouzia & Salma, 2015; Hamed, Hossein & Mohammad, 2015; Mudanganyi, 2017), customer loyalty (Ongkowidjoyo, 2015; Zamri & Rahmat, 2011), customer satisfaction (Hamed et al, 2015; Poranki, 2017; Aries & Eirene, 2015; Soheir & Abdolkarim, 2016; Mula, Muhammad, Fahad, Zain-Ul-Aabdeen & Moazzam, 2016), customer purchase decision (Ousance, Sujan & Shrawan, 2018; Amegbe 2016), brand preference (Amegbe, 2016), consumer behavior (Asaad & Serdar, 2015; Shadi, Mahnaz & Karim, 2016), but its effect on customer patronage has not been given due empirical investigation, thereby revealing a knowledge gap. Also, it is easier to notice that most of the studies discussed above relates to research conducted outside Nigeria and for products other than alcoholic beverages. It is important to note that different products may differ from each other as they each have unique characteristics of brand equity attributes which cannot be generalized to other products categories. Therefore, the determinants of brand equity need to be further validated in other product categories like the alcoholic drinks.

METHODOLOGY
This study adopted survey research design. This study was carried out in Abia State, South East Nigeria. The capital is Umuahia and the major commercial city is Aba, Abia State, which occupies about 6,320 square kilometres, is bounded on the north and northeast by the states of Anambra, Enugu, and Ebonyi. To the west of Abia is Imo State, to the east and southeast are Cross River State and Akwa Ibom State respectively and to the south is Rivers State. Abia State has seventeen (17) Local government areas and was carved out of the former Imo State in 1991.

The population of study is made up of consumers of alcoholic drinks in Abia State. Cochran’s formula was employed to determine a sample size of 384 because the actual population is unknown. The study made use of primary sources of data. Questionnaire was the major instrument of data collection. The questionnaire contained close-ended questions which guide the respondents where specified answers are needed to make analysis straightforward. Ordinary Least Square (OLS) regression technique was used to assess the relationship that exists among the variables of the study. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 21 was used to carry out the entire data analysis.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS
Ordinary Least Square (OLS) regression technique was employed to test the effect of independent or explanatory variables on the dependent variables. The result is presented in the tables below.

Table 1 Summary of the Regression Result

<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>
<th>Change Statistics</th>
<th>Durbin-Watson</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2944</td>
<td>.686</td>
<td>.572</td>
<td>3.185</td>
<td>.086</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Predictors: (Constant), Brand Awareness, Brand Association, Perceived Quality, Brand Loyalty
b. Dependent Variable: Customer Patronage
Source: SPSS 21.0
Table 1 shows that $R^2$ which measures the strength of the effect of independent variable on the dependent variable have the value of 0.686. This implies that 69% of the variation in customer patronage of alcoholic beverages in Abia State is explained by variations in brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality and brand loyalty. This was supported by adjusted $R^2$ of 0.572. In order to check for autocorrelation in the model, Durbin-Watson statistics was employed. Durbin-Watson statistics of 1.875 in table 1 shows that the variables in the model are not autocorrelated and that the model is reliable for predictions.

**Table 2 Analysis of Variance**

<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>312.052</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>62.410</td>
<td>6.151</td>
<td>.000^a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>3307.502</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>10.146</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3619.554</td>
<td>331</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Dependent Variable: Customer Patronage  
b. Predictors: (Constant), Brand Awareness, Brand Association, Perceived Quality, Brand Loyalty  
Source: SPSS 21.0  
The f-statistics value of 6.151 in table 2 with f-statistics probability of 0.000 shows that the independent variables has significant effect on dependent. This shows that brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality and brand loyalty can collectively explain the variations in customer patronage of alcoholic beverages in Abia State.

**Test of Hypotheses**  
Here, the four hypotheses formulated in this study were tested using t-statistics and significance value of the individual variables in the regression result. The essence of this is to ascertain how significant are the effect of individual independent or explanatory variables on the dependent variables. The t-test was conducted at 0.05 or 5% level of significance. Decision rule: Reject $H_0$ if $t_{cal} > t_{a/2}$, (n-k). Otherwise, we accept. The summary of the result is presented in the table below.

**Table 3 T-Statistics and Probability Value from the Regression Result**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>18.916</td>
<td>1.918</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand Awareness</td>
<td>.123</td>
<td>.043</td>
<td>.158</td>
<td>2.870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Brand Association</td>
<td>.085</td>
<td>.044</td>
<td>.202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Quality</td>
<td>.076</td>
<td>.049</td>
<td>.185</td>
<td>2.562</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand Loyalty</td>
<td>.028</td>
<td>.044</td>
<td>.204</td>
<td>3.632</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Dependent Variable: Customer Patronage  
Source: SPSS 21.0  
**Test of Hypothesis One**  
$H_0$: Brand awareness has no significant effect on customer patronage of alcoholic beverages in Abia State.  
$H_1$: Brand awareness has a significant effect on customer patronage of alcoholic beverages in Abia State.  
In testing this hypothesis, the t-statistics and probability value in table 3 is used. Brand awareness has a t-statistics of 2.870 and a probability value of 0.004 which is statistically significant. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypotheses which state that brand awareness has a significant effect on customer patronage of alcoholic beverages in Abia State.
Test of Hypothesis Two
Ho: Brand association has no significant effect on customer patronage of alcoholic beverages in Abia State.
Hi: Brand association has a significant effect on customer patronage of alcoholic beverages in Abia State.
Brand association has a t-statistics of 2.923 and a probability value of 0.005 which is statistically significant. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypotheses which state that brand association has a significant effect on customer patronage of alcoholic beverages in Abia State.

Test of Hypothesis Three
Ho: Perceived quality has no significant effect on customer patronage of alcoholic beverages in Abia State.
Hi: Perceived quality has a significant effect on customer patronage of alcoholic beverages in Abia State.
Perceived quality has a t-statistics of 2.562 and a probability value of 0.09 which is statistically significant. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypotheses and conclude that perceived quality has a significant effect on customer patronage of alcoholic beverages in Abia State.

Test of Hypothesis Four
Ho: Brand loyalty has no significant effect on customer patronage of alcoholic beverages in Abia State.
Hi: Brand loyalty has a significant effect on customer patronage of alcoholic beverages in Abia State.
Brand loyalty has a t-statistics of 3.632 and a probability value of 0.000 which is statistically significant. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypotheses which state that brand loyalty has a significant effect on customer patronage of alcoholic beverages in Abia State.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS
The study found that brand awareness has a significant positive effect on customer patronage of alcoholic beverages in Abia State. This implies that potential buyer’s ability to recognize or recall a particular alcoholic brand can influence customer patronage of alcoholic drinks. It agrees with the position of Rickardsson, Stark and Stierna (2005) that well-known brands enable the customer to feel safer using the product and increasing the possibility of the brand to be accepted and chosen. This agrees with the findings of Ousanee, Sujan and Shrawan (2018) that brand awareness has significant positive relationship with consumer purchase decision for any particular beer brands. Brand awareness reflects the customers’ knowledge and capacity to recognize a brand. The level of brand awareness is heavily affected by the synergy of the brand name itself and the attached symbols, imagery and brand slogan within the given condition.

The result also indicates that brand association has a significant positive effect on customer patronage of alcoholic beverages in Abia State. This shows that the mental link a consumer has with a particular alcoholic brand can influence customer patronage of alcoholic drinks. This agrees with the position of Keller (2008) that favourable, strong and unique brand associations in consumers’ memory will prompt consumer-based brand equity, leading to different consumer responses towards brands. Associations about the brand can help to create or improve the value of the brand to the same level as loyal customers. Consumers, when faced with many brands, can forget one brand over another, but associations derived from their memories can help while they make purchasing decisions. Also, the customer having associations about the certain brand can distinguish from other ones and chose the brand which brought most positive or pleasant memories of purchasing experiences.

The study further indicates that perceived quality has a significant positive effect on customer patronage of alcoholic beverages in Abia State. This indicates that the alcoholic brand ability to create a vision of a better product in customers’ minds (that is customer’s subjective evaluation of the product) can influence its patronage. This agrees with the position of Balaji (2011) that a brand possessing a high quality perception elicits favourable customer preferences and purchase intentions. This concurs to Kirmani and Zeithaml (1993), while building brand equity managers attempt to influence customers’ perception about quality. By doing this managers develop a positive brand image.

The study also indicates that brand loyalty has a significant positive effect on customer patronage of alcoholic beverages in Abia State. This implies that favorable attitude towards a particular alcoholic brand
can influence customer patronage of alcoholic drinks. This agrees with the findings of Ousanee, Sujan and Shrawan (2018) that brand loyalty had a positive causal relation with consumer purchase decision for any particular beer brands.

CONCLUSION
This study investigated the effect of brand equity on customer patronage of selected alcoholic beverages in Abia State. Data were sourced from the consumers of alcoholic beverages in Abia State. The study found that brand awareness has a significant positive effect on customer patronage of alcoholic beverages in Abia State. The study further found that brand association has a significant positive effect on customer patronage of alcoholic beverages in Abia State. The study also found that perceived quality has a significant positive effect on customer patronage of alcoholic beverages in Abia State. Finally, the study found that brand loyalty has a significant positive effect on customer patronage of alcoholic beverages in Abia State. Based on the foregoing, the study concludes that brand equity has significant positive effect on customer patronage of selected alcoholic beverages in Abia State. The study recommends that since brand awareness has significant effect on customer patronage of alcoholic beverages, management of alcoholic manufacturers should invest more in creating brand awareness. Therefore, to keep the consumer aware of their brand and to sustain their customer a company will have to keep triggering its brand and advertise more and more to let the large number of people know about their brand. The management of companies manufacturing alcoholic beverages in Nigeria should manufacture quality products that meet customer needs. Consumer’s perceived brand quality improves financial gains for a company as it increases customer’s satisfaction and loyalty. Therefore, improving the quality of alcoholic beverages will lead to more financial gains to the company through improved patronage by the customers. Finally, the producers of alcoholic drinks in Nigeria should incorporate proper brand associations because brand associations are vital in creating value for the company since the host of different brand associations provides value to in different ways.

REFERENCES


Mudanganyi, M. (2017). The influence of consumer based brand equity on customer satisfaction and brand loyalty in mobile cellular services. *Masters Dissertation*, Department of Marketing and Sport Management, Faculty of Management Sciences, Vaal University of Technology


