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QUALITY PACKAGING AND DISTRIBUTORS' LOYALTY OF COSMETIC MANUFACTURING FIRMS IN SOUTH-EAST, NIGERIA

UHIE, UZOAMAKA JOSEPHINE, Ph.D
Department of Marketing, Faculty of Management Sciences, Imo State University, Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria
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Abstract

This work focused on quality packaging and distributors' loyalty of cosmetic manufacturing firms in South-East, Nigeria. The work used survey method and generated primary data through questionnaire. The data collected were analyzed using Percentages and Mean while Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (through SPSS, version, 21.0) was used to test the hypotheses. It was found that there is significant relationship between quality packaging and customer referral of the firms studied, there is significant relationship between quality packaging and repeat purchase of the firms studied and there is significant relationship between quality packaging and customer retention of the firms studied. Based on the findings, the study recommended that companies should improve the quality packaging of their products as a means to achieve customer referral.

Keywords: Quality Packaging, Distributors' Loyalty, Customer Referral, Repeat Purchase, Customer Retention.

Introduction

One of the strategies for achieving loyalty in business is through product packaging (Ugwueke, 2016). If the consumer is satisfied with the product, then the packaging and quality are deemed acceptable. Put differently, when the customers see a product Packaging as a very quality one, they try as much as possible to identify with the product, patronizing the product, telling other people about the products, and involving in indirect promotion for the product (Davis, Golicic & Marquardt, 2015). Effective quality Packaging of products is likely to enhance distributors' loyalty.

In essence, distributors' loyalty has to be the target of all cosmetic companies as that is the way to reach the consumers and improve sales. When distributors are loyal to a firm and its products, the distributors will continue patronize such company and that will lead to increase sales, and organizational sustainability and growth. Here distributors have realized that when customers are loyal to their organizations brand, it provide the them (distributors) with steady form of income

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which in turn increases profit, customer repeat purchase, and customer retention (Akuezuilo, 2022). Companies that successfully develop distributors' loyalty (through product quality) also develop brand ambassadors. Here, most consumers will purchase a certain quality products and talk positively about it amongst their groups – families, friend, colleagues, and other associates. This is free word-of-mouth marketing for both the distributors and the company which goes a long way in saving the company some cost of promotion (Reichheld & Sasser, 2017). True brand loyalty exists when distributors and consumers have a high relative attitude towards a particular quality brand which can be exhibited through repurchase behaviour.

This type of loyalty can be a great asset to the firm. Ubah (2015) suggested that the challenge of marketers on how to influence loyalty is solved through product quality which enables distributors to make their profits and grow their distributive business which is a great benefit to the company. A consumer purchases a product from a retailer or distributor to fulfill his needs and has certain expectation from the brand he buys. If he is able to meet that value from the brand, he develops a trust and satisfaction towards the brand which is called "customer satisfaction" and this satisfaction leads to increase loyalty to the product (Chukwueke, 2019). Companies have begun to realize that it is easier and more cost efficient to find ways to improve distributors and customer loyalty and retain current customers instead of paying more attention to winning new customers. Creating customer quality Packaging is a strategy and the behavioural objective for customer loyalty (Ebuka, 2021). In a research by Udegbe (2021) on the extent new product development process impact on customer loyalty in Nigeria manufacturing sector, the researcher states that development of new quality products will always attract distributors to patronize the products as the consumer will always want to patronize new products they feel may solve the problem of their products needs.

Statement of the Problem

The production cost and other considerations have placed a heavy burden on product quality packaging (Udegbe, 2021). According to Udegbe (2021), some customers, especially distributors, have stated that the product(s) they used to buy have reduced quality, especially for packaging and that in most cases has continued to reduce the level of customer referral, repeat purchase and customer retention. Azuka (2023) asserts that some products packaging do not have the required design that can attract customers and encourage distributors' loyalty.

More so, related works on the subject matter did not consider both independent (product packaging)and dependent (distributors loyalty)variables, did not cover same products line (cosmetic), did not cover same location (south east Nigeria), and did not use same indices in the objectives.

To start with, Bekee (2022) wrote on impact of quality on sales volume of selected noodle products in Lagos state Nigeria. The work focused on noodle products and not cosmetic, covered only Lagos state, and did not used distributors. Madu (2019), researched on product price and customer loyalty in hospitality firms in Lagos. Product quality was not considered and it was not done in south east Nigeria. Lawal (2017) focused on strategies for improving product quality and organizational performance in production firms in Ghana. Distributor's loyalty was not use and the

work does not have Nigeria background. Useeh (2021) researched on quality content and viability of manufacturing firms in South Africa. The work was not done within Nigeria. It is based on the above gap/problem from the above studies that necessitated this work.

Objectives of the Study

The major objective of this study focused on quality packaging and distributors' loyalty of cosmetic manufacturing firms in South-East, Nigeria. The specific objectives were to:

1. investigate the relationship between quality packaging and customer referral of the firms studied.
2. examine the relationship between quality packaging and repeat purchase of the firms studied.
3. investigate the relationship between quality packaging and customer retention of the firms studied.

Research Questions

In order to achieve the objective of this study, the following research questions will be answered:

1. What is the relationship between quality packaging and customer referral of the firms studied?
2. What is the relationship between quality packaging and repeat purchase of the firms studied?
3. What is the relationship between quality packaging and customer retention of the firms studied?

Research Hypotheses

The testable hypotheses for this research work include;

Ho_1: There is no significant relationship between quality packaging and customer referral of the firms studied.

Ho_2: There is no significant relationship between quality packaging and repeat purchase of the firms studied.

Ho_3: There is no significant relationship between quality packaging and customer retention of the firms studied.

Scope of the Study

The subject scope of this study focused on quality packaging and distributors' loyalty in cosmetic manufacturing firms. Geographically, the study is delimited to Abia, Anambra, and Enugu States, South-East Nigeria. Specifically, the distributors of Starline Nigeria Ltd Aba, Abia State; PZ Cussons Onitsha, Anambra State; and Hardis and Dromedis Ltd, Enugu State were used. The distributors of the above companies were used because the firms are in the same line of business - cosmetic.

The unit scope covers the major distributors (customers) of Starline Nigeria Ltd Aba, Abia State; PZ Cussons Onitsha, Anambra State; and Hardis and Dromedis Ltd, Enugu State. The distributors were used because they are in position to give information on quality packaging and distributor's

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loyalty as they get direct information from consumers through the retailers and from/for the company.

Conceptual Review

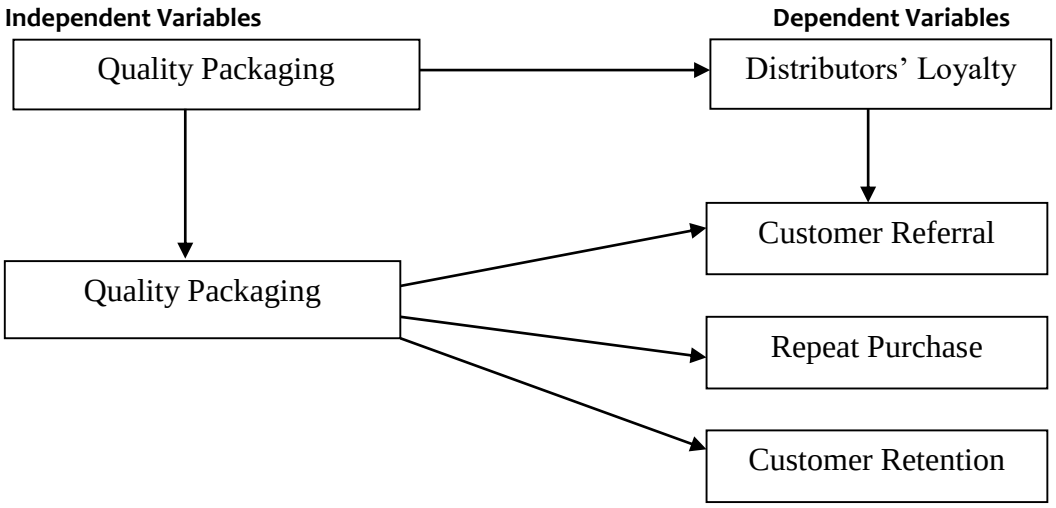


Fig. 1: Operational Framework of Variables
Source: The Researcher's Desk, 2025

Quality packaging

Quality packaging is describes as the extent of uniqueness in the packaging of the products which differentiate it from other products (Lawal, 2017). Customers first see product package before inside content. Here, quality packaging is improvement in the design and outlook of the product to ensure public attraction (Fluss, 2014). The goal of packing content is to achieve first attraction and convincing information. In this strategy, the appearance of product is changed or improved to enhance retention and acquisition of customers (Dikenna, 2021). Though, the quality of a product remains same, but its covers add many values. Here, the packing of the product may be changed or the size, form, colour etc so as to improved customer preference. This strategy is widely used by the manufacturing industry.

Distributors Loyalty

The extent to which distributors continue to patronize a particular firm/products explains their loyalty (Azuka, 2023).

It is widely considered that loyalty is one of the ways with which the distributors express their satisfaction with the performance of the product or the company brand (Ramsey, 2013). There have been a lot of reasons associated with why distributors remain loyal to a product/firm. Distributors may be drawn to a particular brand due to the way it perceive that quality, situation constraints, a lack of alternatives or simply because the customer/consumers finds it convenient. According to Ramphal (2016), distributors' loyalty means customer commitment and customer preference to what an organization offers. In this instance, loyalty can be achieved when the

organization offers the best or effective quality products. Merrilees (2015) see distributors' loyalty as the extent to which the brand becomes a central preference for a distributor notwithstanding the market situation. Loyalty is a prime component of brand equity. It describes the emotional bonding and attachment to a brand (Jensen & Torben, 2016). It is linked to repeated purchases over time and shows a commitment to continue to buy the brand and denotes patronage on which this study dwells on.

The American Marketing Association in Gunu (2017) defines distributors' loyalty as "the situation in which a distributor generally buys the same manufacturer-originated product or service repeatedly over time rather than buying from multiple suppliers within the category" or "the degree to which a distributor consistently purchases the same brand within a product class".

Strategies for Achieving Distributors Loyalty

In this study, customer referral, repeat purchase and customer retention are used for measuring distributors' loyalty.

1. **Customer referral:** Customer referral is an organizational activity which is used to provides incentives to existing customers to bring in new customers. An important requirement for such is that individual purchase histories are available so the firm can ascertain whether a referred customer is indeed a new rather than an existing or a former customer. According to Bekee (2022) activities have three distinctive characteristics. First, they are deliberately initiated, actively managed, and continuously controlled by the firm, which is impossible or very difficult with organic worlds of mount (WOM) activities such as spontaneous customer conversations. Second, the key idea is to use the social connections of existing customers with noncustomers to convert the latter. Third, to make this conversion happen, the firm offers the existing customer a reward for bringing in new customers. Customer referrals are an essential marketing and sales tool for many businesses (Nwankwo, 2021).
2. **Repeat purchase:** Repeat purchase can be measured by the number of brands purchased, percent of purchases, and future purchase intention. When a consumer is satisfied with a brand, he or she purchases that particular brand continuously notwithstanding that the brand may change in quality, may have an increase or decrease in price or even alter in its features.

   Repeat patronage is an indication of loyalty to a particular brand by consumers despite the existence of other alternative products in the market. When a customer is satisfied following the usage and consumption of a particular product such as (soft drink), it gives room for repeat patronage. Repeat purchase is the degree to which a buying unit concentrates purchases over time to a particular product. Repeat purchase refers to the extent to which a customer exhibits repurchasing behaviour, possesses a positive disposition toward the brand/product and considers using the brand/product when the need arises (Gremler & Brown, 2019).
3. **Customer retention:** Customer retention refers to the ability of a company or product to retain its customers over some specified period (Adeola, 2017). It is the activity that a

selling organization undertakes in order to reduce customer defections. High customer retention means customers of the product or business tend to return to continue to buy or in some other way not defect to another product or business, or to non-use entirely.

Customer retention starts with the first contact an organization has with the first contact an organization has with a customer and continues throughout the entire lifetime of a relationship and successful retention efforts take this entire lifecycle into account (Ajagu, 2018). A company's ability to attract and retain new customers is related not only to its product or services, but also to the way to its product or services, but also to the way it services its existing customers, the value the customers actually generate as a result of utilizing the solutions and the reputation it creates within and across the marketplace.

Theoretical framework

Product Quality Control Theory

This theory was developed by Gabriel Ben in 1967. The theory stated that there are different techniques of quality control namely: statistical method of quality control and non-statistical method of quality control. According to Ryan (2000), the use of statistical method can often make controlling products and services easier, less expensive and more effective. Some knowledge of qualified employees or outside consultant must be made available. The statistical method of quality control includes acceptance sampling, statistical process control, and control chart. They are:

1. **Acceptance sampling:** This involves taking random samples products and measuring them against predetermined standards. The size of sampling affects the discriminating power of sample plan. The smaller the sample size, the greater, the risk of either accepting a defective lot or rejecting a good lot due to sampling errors. A larger sample reduces the risk but increase the cost of inspection (Marire et al, 2014).
2. **Statistical process control:** Is a statistical approach for assisting operator, supervisors and managers to manage quality and to eliminate special causes of variability in a process (Dele, 2021). Items produced in a manufacturing process are not totally identical. Although, the variation are sometimes very small and the products may seem to be exactly alike. Careful measurement however, can detect the differences. The use of statistical process makes it possible to establish tolerance limit that allows for inherent variations due to chance. When measurements fall outside these tolerance limits, the quality controller knows that there is a problem and may be caused due to variations in raw materials, machine wear or changes in employee's work practice (Marire et al, 2014).
3. **Control chart:** This is a statistical method which has to do with graphical records of the quality of particular characteristics. It shows whether or not the process is in a stable state by adding statistically determined control limit to run chart added (Orga, 2006). Control chart graphically shows the limit for the process being controlled. Under the control chart, there is control limit which conforms whether or not a process is under or out control (Gbadeyan & Adeoti, 2020). Non-statistical method of quality control includes employee

involvement and quality circle. Employee involvement means including the employee in every step of the process from product design to final packaging. Quality circle on the other hand is a situation in which a group of between six and twelve employees' volunteers to meet regularly to solve work related problems. The members all from the same work area receive training in group planning, problem solving and statistical quality control. Quality circle's problem-solving emphasizes brainstorming, group discussions and tools such as process capacity studies, inspection, and cost analysis in order to identify aspect of their jobs that create problems. The group makes recommendations to management by identifying expected benefits, cost and implementation of the idea.

Quality in most cases served as a guiding principle for distributors in the market place. When there is product quality control, distributors' loyalty will be enhanced because such will lead to consumer preference for the product and more patronage.

Empirical Review

Chukwu and Enudu (2018) investigated the impact of product packaging on consumer buying behavior. Poor packaging can dissuade consumers from buying product. In addition, a poorly packaged product poses serious problem to salesmen, since it will require enough explanations to persuade customers to buy the product. Customers dislike shabbily packaged products. Good and attractive product packaging influence consumers buying behavior by making them to buy product and always patronize product. A survey was used for this purpose. The data collected from the questionnaire instrument were analyzed using percentages and multiple regression. The research findings show that a significant and positive relationship lies between the independent variable, attractive packaging, value and quality of packaging, impulse purchasing and the dependent variable consumer buying behavior. A negative relationship exists between the independent variable shabby packaging and the dependent variable consumer purchasing behavior.

Gusi (2018) focused on modification management and products performance in 3 manufacturing firms in Ghana. The variables used are quality modification, quantity modification, price modification, patronage, and acquisition of customers. The population covered the entire 579 senior staff and 89 distributors in the 6 companies used. In line with our problem statement and objective, five research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. Survey research design was adopted. Telephone interview served as the method of data collection. The data collected were presented in tables and analyzed using simple percentage and analysis of variance (ANOVA). The findings revealed that modification management improved products performance, through high sales, and customer recognition.

Olushegu (2018) focused on perceived product quality and organizational performance in beverage firms in Lagos. In the methodology, survey research design was used and oral interview served as the instrument of data collection. The entire executive 59 members of 2 selected breweries firm was used as the study population from were 20 staff were sampled. The data collected were presented in tables and analyzed using t-test statistics and simple percentage. Through the data analysis, it was discovered that quality enhances performance in beverage firms.

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Owunna (2018) worked on perceived product development and modification as key to achieving organizational growth in the beverage industry in Nigeria. He sampled the opinion of 260 respondents through personal interview and the use of questionnaire. The responses gathered were analyzed in distribution tables as a test of the null hypotheses was also performed. However, the researcher observed that new product development relates with organizational growth; modification of existing products has a positive relationship with sales volume.

Sideky (2018) studied the impact of product rebranding on customer loyalty of enterprises: evidence from Malaysia. Survey research design was adopted, and questionnaire was used as the instrument of data collection. The population and sample covers the entire 78 management staff in 8 beverage firms. The data collected were analyzed using simple percentage and Pearson product moment correlation coefficient. The findings revealed that product rebranding leads to customer acquisition and growth in business.

Femi, Temitope, Amamhe and Olaiya (2019) appraised the effect of product packaging on consumer patronage of Cadbury Plc Nigeria. Primary data were sourced for the study. The data were obtained through administration of a questionnaire to 154 respondent of Cadbury in Nigeria. Simple random technique was also used in selecting management staff of the organization. These respondents were in the positions to supply the type of information needed for this study. Data collected were analyzed using simple percentages, frequencies distribution, mean, standard deviation and median; and regression analyses. The results of the analysis revealed as indicated by the respondents that product packaging has s significant effect on consumer patronage.

Madu (2019) researched on product price and customer loyalty in hospitality firms in Lagos (2010-2015). The work used ex-post facto method, and secondary data were used. Regression was used for data analysis. It found that affordable price leads to increase sales.

METHODOLOGY

The survey research design was employed. The population of this study is 300 distributors (respondents) (**Source:** The Marketing Units of the Companies under Study, 2025). It covers the major distributors (customers) of Starline Nigeria Ltd Aba, Abia State (126); PZ Cussons Onitsha, Anambra State (94); and Hardis and Dromedis Ltd Enugu, Enugu State (80). The population is presented in the table below:

Table 1: Study population.

Manufacturing companies	Population
Starline Nigeria Ltd Aba, Abia State	126
PZ Cussons Onitsha, Anambra State	94
Hardis and Dromedis Ltd, Enugu State	80
Total	**300 distributors**

Source: The Marketing Unit of the Companies Under Study (2025).

To determine the sample size the formula of Taro Yamane was used. The formula is given as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

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Where

n = the sample size

N = population. An estimated population of 300 is used.

e^2 = square of maximum allowance for sampling error at 5% level of significance.

$$n = \frac{300}{1+(300)(0.05)}$$

$$n = \frac{300}{1+(300)(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{300}{1+(0.75)}$$

$$n = \frac{300}{1.75}$$

n = 171.428

The researcher therefore applies purposive sampling technique so as to select respondents who are available/accessible and who can effectively respond to the questionnaire.

A structured questionnaire was used as data collection instrument in this study.

The collected data were analyzed using simple percentage, mean statistic and Pearson product moment correlation coefficient (at 0.05% level of significance) through SPSS version 21.0.

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Item 1: What is the relationship between quality packaging and customer referral of the firms studied?

Table 1: The relationship between quality packaging and customer referral of the firms studied.

S/N	Questionnaire Item	SA	A	SD	D	N	EX	$\bar{x}$	Dec
1	There is relationship between quality packaging and customer referral	80	55	16	14	165	531	3.2	P
2	Improved product packaging is capable of attracting customers	70	95	-	-	165	565	3.4	P
3	The more a manufacturing firm consistently improves on its product's package, the more awareness it creates about the product	100	50	8	7	165	573	3.5	P
4	The packaging of a product provides easy information about the brand and the company	74	45	28	18	165	505	3.1	P
5	One of the best selling ability of a product is its packaging	63	51	26	25	165	482	2.9	P
	Grand mean							**3.2**	**P**

Source: field work, 2025

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It was discovered in table 1 that items 1 to 5 were all positive. This is because item 1 has a mean of 3.2, item 2 has a mean of 3.4, item 3 has a mean of 3.5, item 4 has a mean of 3.1 and item 5 has a mean of 2.9; hence all the items have mean scores more than 2.5 and above. It is therefore concluded that there is significant relationship between quality packaging and customer referral of the firms studied.

Item 2: What is the relationship between quality packaging and repeat purchase of the firms studied?

Table 2: The relationship between quality packaging and repeat purchase of the firms studied.

S/N	Questionnaire Item	SA	A	SD	D	N	EX	$\bar{X}$	Dec
1	There is relationship between perceived quality packaging and repeat purchase	87	63	11	4	165	563	3.4	P
2	Sales increase represents how a product is based on its packaging	59	72	19	15	165	505	3.1	P
3	Packaging enhance repeat patronage of firms	90	69	4	2	165	577	3.5	P
4	When a firm makes a large number of sales of its product, it is an indication of perceived product packaging	90	49	39	13	165	598	3.6	P
5	There is positive relationship between package and repeat purchase	60	50	38	17	165	483	2.9	P
	Grand mean							**3.3**	**P**

Source: field work, 2025

It was discovered in table 2 that items 1 to 5 were all positive. This is because item 1 has a mean of 3.4, item 2 has a mean of 3.1, item 3 has a mean of 3.5, item 4 has a mean of 3.6 and item 5 has a mean of 2.9; hence all the items have mean scores more than 2.5 and above. It is therefore concluded that there is significant relationship between quality packaging and repeat purchase of the firms studied.

Item 3: What is the relationship between quality packaging and customer retention of the firms studied?

Table 3: The relationship between quality packaging and customer retention of the firms studied.

S/N	Questionnaire Item	SA	A	SD	D	N	EX	$\bar{X}$	Dec
1	There is significance relationship between perceived quality packaging and customer retention	100	40	15	10	165	560	3.4	P
2	Manufacturing firms are likely to retain their customer once they adopt customer oriented strategies, through packaging	120	21	16	8	165	583	3.5	P
3	Packaging is used to enhance Customer retention which is an indication of organizational growth	90	70	3	2	165	578	3.5	P
4	When consumers accept the quality of a product (because of packaging)and become loyal to the brand, it could result to an increase in the organizational growth	60	81	20	4	165	527	3.2	P
5	Packaging enhances customer retention	84	75	3	3	165	570	3.5	P
	Grand mean							**3.4**	**P**

Source: field work, 2025

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It was discovered in table 3 that items 1 to 5 were all positive. This is because item 1 has a mean of 3.4, item 2 has a mean of 3.5, item 3 has a mean of 3.5, item 4 has a mean of 3.2 and item 5 has a mean of 3.5; hence all the items have mean scores more than 2.5 and above. It is therefore concluded that there is significant relationship between quality packaging and customer retention of the firms studied.

Test of Hypotheses

Ho_1: There is no significant relationship between quality packaging and customer referral of the firms studied.

Fig. 1: To test the hypothesis one, data in table 1 was used.

H_i1	There is significant relationship between quality packaging and customer referral of the firms studied	Pearson Correlation = 0.81 Sig = 0.05 N = 165 Grand mean = 3.2	**VALID**

Source: Data in table 1

The analysis has a grand mean of 3.2. The table above reveals that the Pearson product moment correlation has a result of 0.81 which means that there is significant relationship between quality packaging and customer referral of the firms studied. Hence, the null hypothesis is thus rejected.

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between quality packaging and repeat purchase of the firms studied.

Fig. 2: To test the hypothesis two, data in table 2 was used.

H_i2	There is significant relationship between quality packaging and repeat purchase of the firms studied	Pearson Correlation = 0.84 Sig = 0.05 N = 165 Grand mean = 3.3	**VALID**

Source: Data in table 2

The analysis has a grand mean of 3.3. The above table indicates that the Pearson product moment correlation is 0.84 which reveals that there is significant relationship between quality packaging and repeat purchase of the firms studied. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Ho3: There is no significant relationship between quality packaging and customer retention of the firms studied.

Fig. 3: To test the hypothesis three, data in table 3 was used.

H_i3	There is significant relationship between quality packaging and customer retention of the firms studied	Pearson Correlation = 0.89 Sig = 0.05 N = 165 Grand mean = 3.4	**VALID**

Source: Data in table 3

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The analysis has a grand mean of 3.4. The above table indicates that the Pearson product moment correlation is 0.89 which reveals that there is significant relationship between quality packaging and customer retention of the firms studied. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Discussion of Findings

From the hypothesis one, this study discovered that there is significant relationship between quality packaging and customer referral of the firms studied. It has a grand mean of 3.2. For Adeola (2017), reference activities works when a firm has attractive product that are well presented to the market.

Based on the hypothesis two, this study discovered that there is significant relationship between quality packaging and repeat purchase of the firms studied. It has a grand mean of 3.3. According to Fluss (2014), customer purchase behavior is influenced on the packaging and outlook of a products hence such is the basic strategy for improve sales.

Hypothesis three discovered that there is significant relationship between quality packaging and customer retention of the firms studied. It has a grand mean of 3.4. Here, Juran (2020) asserts that the extent of customer acquisition, increase customer base for business and customer preference depends on the quality, packaging, and design of a product.

Conclusion

This study is on quality packaging and distributors' loyalty of cosmetic manufacturing firms in South-East, Nigeria. The impact of distributors' loyalty in business cannot be neglected. For that, business organizations are expected to offer quality packaging, to enable their distributors to have high customer base for overall organizational performance.

This work conclude that quality packaging through content and packaging will have positive impact on the overall organizational good and such will enhance the growth of business for both the companies and their distributors.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made.

1. Companies should improve the quality packaging of their products as a means to achieve customer referral
2. Quality packaging, design and outlook should be the basic attribute of the manufacturing sector so as to improve repeat purchase and high patronage.
3. The physical packaging of a product should be very attractive and acceptable to customers so that customer retention will be achieved.

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