

Brand Equity and Customers' Loyalty among Passengers of Selected Mass Transit Companies in Enugu State Nigeria

Okereke Obinna (Ph.D)

Department of Marketing, Faculty of Management Sciences,
University of Benin, Edo state, Nigeria
obinna.okereke@uniben.edu

Abonyi, Ikechukwu Igwulube (Ph.D)

Department of Marketing, Faculty of Management Sciences,
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka Anambra State
Ikeaboniyi@gmail.com

Chime, Kenneth (Ph.D)

Department of Marketing, School of Business Management Technology
Federal Polytechnic Nekede Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria
chimekenneth68@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study examined the impact of brand equity on customers' loyalty for the services rendered to passengers of four selected mass transit firms in Enugu State. Population of the study composed of passengers from God is good motors, GUO, Peace Mass Transit, and Okeyson Motors. Purposive sampling was used to reach out to ninety six (96) passengers of each firm studied. This resulted to 384 respondents. A structured questionnaire was used for data collection, and 384 copies of the questionnaires were issued to passengers of the transportation outfits studied. 278 (72%) were retrieved. The analysis was performed with the multiple regression technique. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.0 was also used to analyse data. Findings indicated that brand equity predictors such as brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality and brand loyalty, affect customer's loyalty in significant ways. The study concluded that brand equity positively affects customers' loyalty and recommended that management of the firms studied in this work need to intensify more efforts in creating brand awareness as a way to increase brand equity. They should also, expand other

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related efforts aimed at improving their service quality, so as to capture all components of brand equity in order to enhance customers' loyalty.

Keywords: Brand equity, Brand awareness, Brand association, Perceived quality, Brand loyalty, Customer Loyalty, Passengers.

INTRODUCTION

Brands are more than just names, symbols and combination of both used to differentiate a company's offer from that of their competitors, they represent consumers' perceptions and feelings about a product and its performance, everything that the product or service means to the consumers (Kotler et al, 2024). He further stated that brands are created in the minds of consumers. Brand equity is the value premium that a company generates from a product with a recognizable name compared to a generic equivalent (Investopedia, 2025). When a firm embraces brand equity, it means that it has distinguished itself completely through delivering excellent goods and customer services and roll out good marketing strategy. Transportation is a component of place element of the marketing mix which is very strategic ensuring that the gap between production and consumption is bridged. It also helps people to perform their duty. People use transportation for school, work and other related activities that require them to move from one location to another (Illahi & Rojuaniah, 2025). Sequel to technological development and social transitions towards sustainable development, it is very crucial for transportation companies to position and reposition its brands in order to have competitive edge, Brand equity is frequently cited as one of the most important tactics for setting a business distinct apart from its rival ((Tijani et al, 2024).

Previous investigations were rooted in cognitive psychology, spotlighting on customer's recall ability and what influenced them (Christodoulides & De Chernatony, 2010). Therefore, this study is an added tread in this bearing, and it proposes and tests a model to better appreciate brand equity and investigate the effects of this construct on customer loyalty, using data from customers of four mass transit firms in Enugu State of Nigeria. This study also proposes causal relationships among four brand equity dimensions. The existence of a hierarchy among brand equity dimensions has been postulated in literature (Yoo & Donthu, 2001; Keller & Lehmann, 2006, 2003). Various transport outfits are struggling to have large share of the market (passengers & goods) who would prefer their vehicle for transportation. Studies have been done on the impact of brand equity on Customer loyalty in transportation companies both outside Nigeria and within the country, for instance the work of (Okereke & Nwaizugbe, 2024, Illahi & Rojuaniah, 2025). Despite the aforementioned studies, there is dearth of research on the effect of brand equity on customer loyalty in transport firms resident in Enugu State Nigeria, fewer or no studies exist in this area, this necessitated this research work. More so some of the previous studies focused on traders and their customers as population but this paper focused on passengers as the population of the study and unit of analysis. This study will be very relevant to researchers, policy makers and investors in transportation sectors of the Nigeria Economy. General objectives of the study is to examine the impact of brand equity on Customer loyal in of selected passenger of mass transit

companies in Enugu State. This paper specifically investigated how brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality and brand loyalty affected customer loyalty in four selected transport outfit in Enugu state Nigeria, namely, Peace, God is good, GUO and Okeyson motors. Research questions were formulated from the objectives and hypotheses were drawn to give direction to the study thus.

Ho1. Brand awareness does not significantly influence customer loyalty.

Ho2. Brand association does not significantly influence customer loyalty.

Ho3. Perceived quality does not significantly affect customer loyalty.

Ho4 .Brand loyalty does not significantly influence customer loyalty.

The study is organized as follows: It started with introduction, literature review, methodology ,discussions of result and findings, conclusion and recommendations, contribution to knowledge and suggestions for further study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Review

Brand equity

Brand Equity is a measure of brand's ability to capture consumers preference and loyalty (Okereke&Nwaizuigbe,2024). It is additional value bestowed upon products and services, what people think, feel, and do about a brand may just be as indicative of its value to the firm as the pricing, market Share and profits it brings (Kotler, 2007).

Keller (2003) defined brand equity as 'the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumers' response to the marketing of the brand' and brand knowledge is a major precursor of customer-based brand equity. It is in turn conceptualized as a brand model to which a multiplicity of associations has been connected. The concept of brand equity actually emerged from cognitive psychology and information economics(Rahman et al ,2018). It is an indispensable possession of a product or service which could be attained through customers buying behaviour. Brand equity indicates consumers' perception and attitudes toward it. Aaker (1991) identified different aspects of brand equity as brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality and brand loyalty. These four dimensions of brand equity stand for consumer perceptions and responses to the brand. This study used the four dimensions of brand equity in both analysis and discussion. American Marketing Association (AMAS) defined brand equity as the intangible value brands hold in the mind of the consumer representing how well a brand is recognised, perceived and trusted in the market.

From the standpoint of cognitive psychology, brand equity is confirmed when consumers embrace or commit complimentary, physically powerful, and other brand associations to memory, which in turn leads to frequent repeat purchases. Accordingly, brand equity is known to enhance value by making a high degree of difference in consumer responses that exponentially increase product or service worth. Ultimately, the value of a brand is derived in

the market through the actions of consumers. The study of its outcomes has become, therefore, an urgent and challenging task (Torres et al 2012, Vomberg et al,2014).

Brand Awareness

Kotler and Keller (2022) opined that brand awareness is the ability of a brand to be chosen by consumers within a set of product categories, enabling them to retain knowledge about the brand. It also refers to whether consumers can bring to mind or be familiar with a brand, especially at the point of purchase. It is linked to the potency of a brand's existence in consumers' minds (Aaker, 1996). Keller (2003) defined brand awareness as the customers' ability to recall and recognize the brand as reflected by their ability to identify the brand under different conditions and to link the brand name, logo, symbol, and so forth to certain associations in memory. Harcourt and Ikegwuru (2018) stated that brand awareness is a significant determinant of success for any brand. Brand awareness entails connecting the brand to similar associations in memory (Keller, 2003). Brand awareness impinges on the configuration and the power of brand associations, together with perceived quality (Pike et al. 2010, Keller & Lehmann, 2003). Brand awareness is a basic element of brand knowledge that includes at least classifying the name of the brand or structure built on a specific information (Mante et al, 2023). Their findings show that there is a significant relationship between brand awareness and firm performance.

Brand Association

Brand association consists of all brand-related thoughts, feelings, perceptions, odours, colours, images, experience, beliefs and attitudes (Keller & Keller, 2012). Cheng and Cheng (2021) defined two categories of brand association and evaluated the relationship between association parameter and brand equity, one was product association involving functional attribute association and non-functional attribute association. The other was organizational association which includes corporate ability association and corporate social responsibility association. Brand association could be taste, quality, packaging and reputation (Hafeez, 2022)

Brand association comprises of mind-set, thoughts, images, beliefs, experiences, attitudes and a whole lot more, linked with a brand (Kotler & Keller, 2006). Brand associations are the notions that have relations to the brand name in consumer memory (Keller & Lehmann, 2006). According to Aaker (1992), brand association is the most time-honoured aspect of branding. They correspond to rationale for settling on a particular brand to purchase it and also ensuring continued loyalty for the brand. Chen (2001) noted that two types of brand associations exist and they are organization association and products association. Studies by Rahayu et al (2024) show that brand association does not have a significant effect on brand equity, but brand image, brand awareness and brand loyalty have significant effects on brand equity. Perceived quality also acts as a significant mediator in the relationship between these variables and brand equity.

Perceived Quality

This is defined as the totality of features that satisfy consumers' needs (Kotler & Keller, 2021). From a broader dimension, Aaker et al (2021) observed that perceived quality is defined as the

customer's judgement of a product or services overall excellence or superiority, rather than objectivity, technical or manufacturing based quality.

Perceived quality is an added dimension is regularly used to analyse branding effects (Feldwick, 2006). Perceived quality refers to the discernment of the general quality or pre-eminence of a product or service compared to competition (Keller, 2003). Perceived quality denotes how the customer evaluates the distinction of a product or service after an objective quality examination. .Listyorini and Perdana (2024) defined perceived quality as consumer's judgement about overall excellence or superiority of a product or service compared to alternatives. Their findings show that perceived quality has significant relationship with purchase intentions. .

Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty involves active engagement and brand advocacy (Parris& Guzman ,2023). When consumers attain a more affirmative perception of a brand, loyalty emerges, and when they become more attached to a brand, they are expected to uphold nearness with the brand since the existence of the connection produces a mind-set of relief, cheerfulness, and protection (Park et al., 2010). Brand loyalty consists of Behavioural loyalty and Cognitive loyalty.

Customer Loyalty

This refers to a deep commitment to continuously purchasing a product or service in the future regardless of marketing efforts to change customer behaviour (Nosike&Egbunike,2022). When a customer shares information about a company's products with friends or family, he or she is loyal to the product.(Prayitno et al ,2021). Noor and Jabar (2025) observed that customer loyalty involves emotional bonds on product satisfaction, trust and service quality.

Empirical Review

Okereke and Nwaizugbo(2024) studied brand equity and customer satisfaction of textile producers in south East Nigeria. Objectives of their studies were to determine if there is significant positive relationship between brand loyalty and customer satisfaction, and also to determine if there is significant positive relationship on brand awareness and customer satisfaction of locally produced textile among users in the south east. The study adopted descriptive research design. Findings show that brand loyalty has no significant relationship with customers satisfaction, brand awareness has a significant positive relationship with customers' satisfaction.

Harcourt and Ikegwuru (2018) studied the relationships flanked by four dimensions of brand equity and market performance (customer acquisition) by means of data drawn through questionnaire from 54 executives of food and beverage firms in Rivers State and 236 academic staff of three tertiary institutions of learning in Rivers State. The instruments were validated by means of Cronbach alpha's test, upon which all variables exceeded the yardstick 0.7. Data was analyzed by using the Pearson's Products Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC), ANOVA and regression analysis procedures. It was found that, all the dimensions of brand equity

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studied were critical at $P < (0.05)$ (one tailed) in shaping the behaviour of customer acquisition. Particularly, brand awareness was found to have the most decisive statistical interface with market performance.

Joo-Eon (2017) examined the relationships between brand concepts and brand equity through the mediating roles of emotional attachment and customer commitment, and empirically demonstrates the important contribution of the three-brand concepts to customer commitment and to brand equity that has been envisaged by previous researchers. The chief input of the study is to exhibit the effects of the brand concepts linked to aesthetic, functional and symbolic benefits on brand equity. Hence, brand equity may be sighted as a connect in the pathway of effects that ultimately join brand concepts with market performance. Brand concept, emotional attachment and customer commitment are applicable constructs underlying brand equity, and commitment and loyalty are major intervening variables in relational interactions. Santos and Cahyadi (2014) analysed the impact of brand equity towards purchase intention in automobile industry by means of Aaker's brand equity theory, citing brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality, and brand loyalty. The population is Surabaya people who own or used to own both ABC and XYZ cars. The study used the simple random sampling technique in which 125 samples were collected and analyzed using Multiple Linear Regression Analysis and comparative analysis. The result demonstrates that brand equity concurrently has a significant influence on purchase intention while only brand association and brand loyalty independently have a significant influence towards purchase intention. From the comparative analysis, ABC has a better brand association than XYZ, but a lower brand loyalty than XYZ.

Buil et al (2013) looked at the effects of brand equity on consumers' responses using data from two European countries. The structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed. Measurement inconsistency and inflexibility of the model across the two national samples was appraised by means of multi-group confirmatory factor analysis. The results show that brand equity dimensions interconnect. Brand awareness positively influence perceived quality and brand associations. Brand loyalty is also affected by brand associations. It is safe to say that, perceived quality, brand association and brand loyalty are the foremost drivers of brand equity. Results several studies as show above, further authenticate the positive effect of brand equity on consumers' responses. However, understanding of the phenomenon of brand equity requires use of all areas of equity, these include all the dimensions of brand equity as factors affecting company's value and market value, and to gain new customers and ability to retain them.

Theoretical Underpinning

The following Theories support Brand Equity.

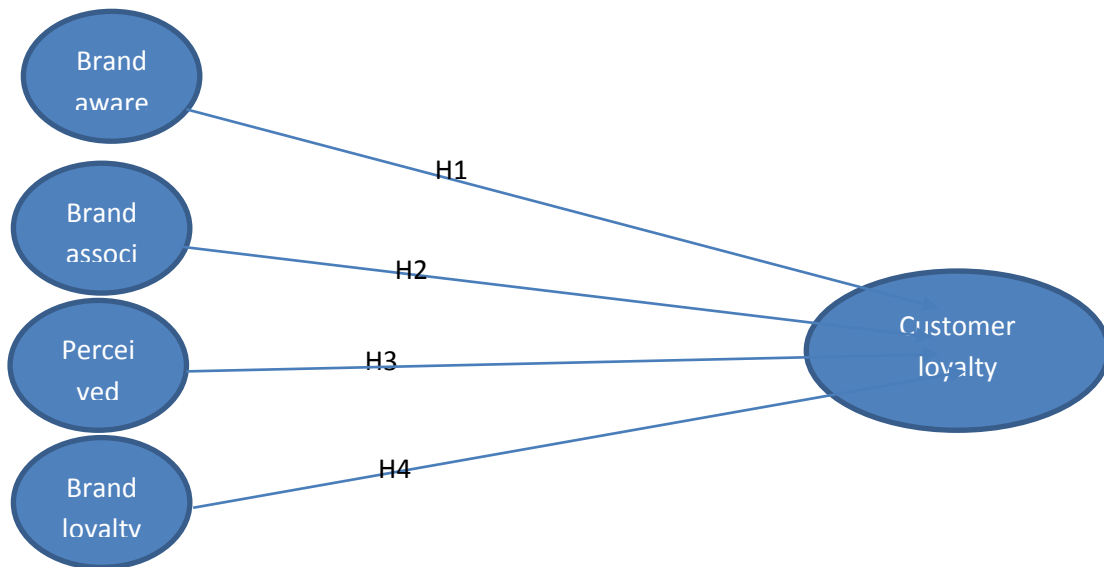
Aaker Model of Brand Equity

Aaker(1991) developed a model, he defined brand equity as a combination of key components that create value: they are perceived value, brand awareness, brand associations, brand loyalty and other proprietary assets. The combination of these variables create brand's strength., they enhance brand equity by providing value to both the consumer(interpretation/processing) and firm (efficiency of ,marketing programs).The theory is relevant to this study because the

knowledge of brand(awareness) enables the customers of Enugu transit company to patronize the transport outfit. This is achieved through promotion of the brands in social media or traditional advertising media eg radio, television etc. More so, Customers evaluation of the inherent benefits in the brand will led to patronage of the brand which makes them loyal to the brand or the product, this relates to perceived quality .Brand association involves mental connection consumers make between a brand and its attributes. These association shape brand perception and drive customer loyalty and distinguish products from others brands.

Customer- Brand Equity Model.(CBEM).

The Customer-Based brand Equity model was proposed by Kevin killer. Keller’s model asserts that brand power lies on what customers have learned, felt, seen and heard about a brand over time. It shows that brand building involves brand identity ie who you are, leading to brand meaning ie what are you, brand responses and brand relationships ie you and me. This paper was anchored on Aakers model of brand Equity and customer Brand Equity model because they established the relationship between the proxies of brand equity studied such as brand loyalty, perceived quality, brand association, brand awareness and customer loyalty by examining in-depth how these dimensions of brand equity practically influenced passengers patronage of the studied transportation companies. Hence the theories were relevant to the study.



Conceptual Framework

Source: Researchers Conceptualization (2026).

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Above diagram shows the relationship between brand equity and customer loyalty. The dimensions of brand equity are brand loyalty, brand knowledge, perceived risk and brand awareness.

METHODOLOGY

This research aims to analyse the influence of brand equity elements on customer loyalty in selected mass transit companies in Enugu State of Nigeria. The research design adopted for this study is survey method. Correlational research design is a survey method that indicates the magnitude or strength and nature or direction of linear relationship that exists between two or more variables or set of data in a single group of subjects (Kpolovie et al 2014 cited in Kayii & Okiridu, 2020) The population of the study is infinite and constitutes passengers of four major mass transit companies (Peace, God Is Good, GUO and Okeyson motors) in Enugu State. This study used purposive sampling; i.e. a non-probability sampling to select Ninety (96) passengers each from the four firms studied. This produced three hundred and eight four(384) respondents or samples among the population. The researcher distributed questionnaires to those who regularly use these firms for their journeys outside south east region. A total of 384 questionnaires were distributed to passengers of the firms studied but 278 questionnaires were retrieved. Giving a response rate of 72 %. Since the objective of this study is to analyse the effects of the influence of the elements of brand equity on customer loyalty, the multiple linear regression analysis was also used to analyse the data gathered.

sample size determination

Cochran formula was used to calculate the sample size because the population is infinite .

Mathematically the formula is stated thus.

$$n = \frac{Z^2 \times P \times q}{e^2}$$

n = is the sample size

Z = Standard normal deviation which represents desirable level of confidence at 95% or 1.96

p = Proportion of population with characteristics of interest which is always 5%

q= Proportion of population without the characteristics (1-P)

e=The margin of error or level of significance which is 5%

$$n = \frac{(1.96)^2 \times 0.5 \times 0.5}{(0.05)^2}$$

$$0.9604/0.0025 = 384.16$$

Thus the sample size is 384 passengers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Validity: Experts reviews confirm that items accurately captured the constructs being measured. A pilot study of 70 respondents (passengers) ensured clarity and relevance, thus refining any ambiguous items.

Reliability Analysis

Reliability Coefficient was generated using SPSS version 22.0 and the results are reported in table 1.0, the value of the Alpha coefficient for the composite scale and the subscales exceed the threshold ($\alpha \geq 0.70$); hence, they are all reliable. Table 1 shows the reliability assessment of our predictor variables using Cronbach’s alpha. It specifies how the items for each factor were internally related in the manner expected.

Scale	Dimensions	Items	Cronbach’s Alpha
BAW	Brand awareness	5	0.862
BAS	Brand association	5	0.848
PQ	Perceived quality	5	0.816
BL	Brand loyalty	5	0.822
Overall Reliability scale		20	0.886

SOURCE: SPSS 22.0 window output (based on 2026 field survey data)

Table1, outlines the reliability result of brand equity and customer loyalty, which also contains the individual items reliability test. Clearly, all items are reliable and were used to investigate brand equity and customer loyalty of Mass Transit firms in Enugu State, Nigeria. The extent of the relationship between consumer-based brand equity and purchase intention can be operationalized using brand awareness (0.862) with 5-items measure; brand association (0.848) with a 5-item measure; perceived quality (0.816), and brand loyalty (0.822). According to Ghozali (2013), the indicators are suitable to represent the variables when the value of Cronbach’s Alpha is higher than 0.7. which indicates that they are reliable.

Test of Hypotheses

The study used the multiple regression analysis, and paid attention on the result of Adjusted R2, F-test and t-test. Coefficient of determination or Adjusted R2 measures how well the regression model explains or turns the variation of dependent variable (Ghozali, 2013). The nearer Adjusted R2 value to 1, the better the independent variables can predict the dependent variable. The F-test chiefly illustrates whether all independent variables used in the regression model concurrently have impacts on the dependent variable (Ghozali, 2013). The study used 95% confidence level in which the significance level is 5%

Table 2: Anova table

	R2	F-test	Sig
<u>t-test</u>			
Regression	5.928	24.535	0.0000

Source: SPSS 22.0 Window output

Table 2, shows whether the independent variables have an influence on the dependent variable. From the F-test shown in table 1, it can be seen that the significance F in the Sig. line confirms value of 0.000, which implies it is lower than 0.05 significance level. Besides; the F value illustrated in table 1 is 24.535, which is higher than F table (2.6795). Accordingly, it can be implied that H0 is rejected, demonstrating that there is significant influence of the independent variables (the components of consumer-based brand equity) on the dependent variable (customer loyalty). The result of this research shows brand equity has significant, influence on customer loyalty, which supports our earlier findings as applicable (Astuti&Kurnianto, 2013, Agusli&Sondang, 2013,Okereke&Nwaizugbe, 2024).

Table 3 Multiple Regression Output Table

Predictor Variable	Coefficient (B)	Standard Error	t-Statistic	p-Value	95%Confid ence Interval
Constant	1.50	0.08	4.00	0.02	(0.90,2.10)
Brand Awareness	0.94	0.04	18.391	0.000	(0.23,0.64)
Brand Association	0.89	0.07	204.85	0.001	(0.10,0.56)
Perceived Quality	0.74	0.13	19.98	0.004	(0.06,0.42)
Brand Loyalty	0.81	0.09	19.95	0.005	(0.05,0.34)
F Statistic	14.0			0.000	

Source: SPSS 22.0 Window output (based on 2026 Field Survey)

Table 3 shows the effect of individual independent variables on the dependent variable

To test the hypotheses using multiple regression, we model customer loyalty (dependent variable) as a function of the four predictors: brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality, and brand loyalty. The output table I interpreted thus,

1 constant. The intercept is 1.50, meaning that when all predictors are Zero, customers loyalty is expected to be 1.50.

2 Brand Awareness:

Coefficient: 0.94

P-Value : 0.000

Above result indicates a significant positive relationship between Brand awareness and brand equity. For every one unit increase in brand awareness, passengers loyalty increase by 0.94

Hypothesis Validation: Supported (H1 Brand awareness positively influences customer loyalty).

2 Brand Association

Coefficient: 0.89

P-Value :0.001

A significant positive relationship suggest that as brand association increase, passengers loyalty also increases by 0.89 units for each unit increase in brand association.

Hypothesis Validation: Supported (H2 Brand awareness positively influence customer loyalty)

3 Perceived Quality

Coefficient: 0.74

P-Value : 0.004

Result Indicates a significant positive relationship. A one unit increase in perceived quality leads to 0.74 unit increase in customer loyalty

Hypothesis Validation: Supported (H3 perceived quality positively affects customer loyalty)

4 Brand Loyalty:

Coefficient : 0.81

P –value : 0.005

The result indicates a significant positive relationship. A one unit increase in brand loyalty leads to 0.81 unit increase in customer loyalty

Hypothesis Validation: Supported (H4 :Brand loyalty positively influences customer loyalty)

F-Statistic: The F-Statistic (14.00) and corresponding p-value (0.000) indicate that the overall model is statistically significant and a good fit.

Table 4: Model Summary. (Adjusted R Square)

	R	R2	Adjusted R2	Standard error of the estimate
Model 1	0.992	0.985	0.980	2.485

Source: SPSS 22.0 Window output (based on 2026 field survey data).

Table 4 illustrates the regression model explanation of the dependent variable. The higher the value of adjusted R2, the better the independent variables in explaining the dependent variable. From table 4, the value of adjusted R Square is 0.980. This indicates that 98.0% of the variance in customer loyalty of these Mass Transit firms can be explained by the variance of the components of brand equity (brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality, and brand loyalty), considering the sample size and independent variables. Moreover, this also indicates that there are 2.0% other factors that cannot be explained in this study but have significant influence on purchase intention in the firms. Findings from the analysis of data is in line with previous study like works of Astuti&Kurnian 2013, Jalivand et al 2011, Okereke &Nwazuigbe,2024).

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

Researchers issued 384 questionnaires, however, 278 questionnaires were retrieved showing a response rate of 72%. The outcome of the reliability and validity test illustrate that all predictors of brand equity are reliable and valid. The overall aim was to determine whether consumer loyalty by passengers in these firms confirms whether or not there is strong brand equity. Based on the multiple regression test, brand equity parameters (brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality, and brand loyalty) have significant influence on passengers loyalty. Moreover, brand awareness has the most critical influence on customers' loyalty. This is followed by brand association, perceived quality and brand loyalty. The study therefore, concludes that brand equity has significant influence on consumer loyalty of Mass Transit firms in Enugu State of Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, we recommend that,

- I. That management of these mass transit firms should intensify more efforts in creating more brand association, improve their service quality and devise more effective strategy to enhance brand loyalty.
- ii. They should also, incorporate more brand equity enhancement programmes to embrace all the components of consumer-based brand equity and to be more customer centric.

CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

The study contributed to knowledge by providing empirical evidence to managers and potential investors in transportation sectors of Nigerian Economy on how predictors of brand equity for instance, brand awareness, brand association etc could be used as a strategic marketing tool to attract and influence passengers to be patronizing their transport outfits thereby being loyal to their brand. It adds to scholarly conversation about what helps passengers of the studied transport firms in Enugu State Nigeria to continuously patronise these transportation firms. Within the framework of research, this study has also adopted customer brand equity model and Aaker model as theoretical foundations.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Finally, the study focused only in four mass transit firms in Enugu State Nigeria, this has limited the generalization of this study, there are many transportation companies in South eastern Nigeria and other states of Federal Republic of Nigeria to be studied in order to get more facts and reliable information and generalization could be made on the impact of brand equity and customer loyalty. More so more proxies of brand equity should be studied in future. The population of the study was limited to only passengers that reside in Enugu metropolis. It should be extended beyond in future studies etc.

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