STRATEGIC MARKET ORIENTATION AND BRAND PREFERENCE AMONG FAST FOOD RESTAURANTS IN ENUGU STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the effect of strategic market orientation on brand preference among fast food restaurants in Enugu State, Nigeria. The study is quantitative in nature. Data were sourced using primary and secondary sources. Questionnaires were the main instrument used for data collection. Three hypotheses were formulated and tested in line with the main objective of the study. The sample size of the study was 384 and this was randordmly selected from managers of fast food restaurants in Enugu State.Multiple regression analysis was used to test the effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable. Results showed that market orientation variables including: customers' orientation, competitors' orientation, and inter-functional coordination have significant effect on brand preference among the fast food restaurants in Enugu state.

Keywords: *Strategic Market Orientation; Customer Orientation; Competitor Orientation; Inter-functional Coordination, Brand Preference*

Introduction

Following the growing level of competition arising from globalization coupled with incessantly changing customer needs and sophistication as well as the global economic squeeze in recent times, firms all over the world are resorting to the deployment of various corporate strategies designed with the aim of improving their marketing performance. These firms have recognized the need to not only attract customers but also to forge and maintain long-term relationship with them in order to create a competitive edge and improve customer loyalty in an ever-increasing competitive marketplace, (Thomas & Payne, 2014).

The concept of market orientation has been presented as a valuable approach for firms to safeguard themselves against market fluctuations and maintain continuous superior performance. For a long time, marketing orientation and brand preference have been regarded as important capabilities of a firm. As such, it has been identified and acknowledged as a source of competitive advantage and can be an important determinant of firm performance (Njeru &Munyoki, 2014). Market orientation has proven to result in lasting customer experience which in turn can lead to marketing performance that can be measured by customer brand preference, customer patronage, satisfaction and loyalty as well as market share and profitability (Carrighan, 2015).

Jaworski and Kohli, (1993) pointed out that market orientation can be seen as the degree to which businesses are inclined to carry out the marketing concept. Market orientation is defined as an organizational level culture consisting of the values and belief about putting the customer first in their business planning (Jones, Wheeler & Dimitratos, 2011). It is also described as a form of organizational culture whereby the workers within an organization are systematically and fully dedicated to the continuous creation of superior customer value (Narver& Slater, 1990).

Evidence within extant literature has shown that various studies link market orientation and marketing performance measures such as brand preference (Gaur, Vasudevan & Gaur, 2011; Hau, Evangelista & Thuy, 2013; Kumar, Jones, Venkatesan, & Leone,

2011). For instance, a study by Kumar, Jones, Venkatesan, and Leone (2011) revealed that, firms with positive market orientation record higher marketing performance indices than firms with lower level of market orientation. Hence, firms that embrace market orientation concepts create superior customer value which results in superior performance and it manifests in improved customer brand preference and patronage, their satisfaction, andtheir loyalty as well as increased market share and profitability (Dadfar, Brege, & Semnani, 2013).

Prior studies on market orientation and brand preference lack adequate knowledge for marketing managers in the Nigerian context of how market orientation affects brand preference especially in thefast food restaurants. This is because most of such studies were conducted in the advanced economies of the Western world under different social, cultural, economic, demographic and technological perspectives. Also, there is disparity in the results of many of these studies.

Therefore, it becomes pertinent that management of fast food restaurants especially in developing countries like Nigeria and more specifically in Enugu state Nigeria should welcome the concept of market orientation and enshrine it in their lines of operations if they want to be competitive and enhance customer preference of their brand. Enshrining the concept of market orientation as part of their operations will enable fast food restaurants in Enugu state, Nigeria to understand their customers' needs and fashion out strategies that will result in brand preference, maximum customer satisfaction and loyalty as well as improved market share and profitability.

As such, to ensure that fast food restaurants in Enugu state Nigeria acquire the required competitive edge to succeed in the ravaging competition in the industry, there is the need to carry out a study on how these fast food restaurants can adopt market orientation as a strategic tool for improved brand preference. Consequently, this study is poised at investigating how fast food restaurants in Enugu state Nigeria can adopt market orientation as a strategic marketing tool for improvement in customer preference of their brand.

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development in Concept of Market Orientation

Different conceptualizations of the concept of Market Orientation have been proposed in the academic and professional literature. However, research has shown that over the years, two different widely used classifications of market orientation have emerged; these classifications are the behavioural viewpoint by Kohli and Jaworski (1990) and the cultural perspective by Narver and Slater (1990).

According to Kohli and Jaworski (1990) the term "market orientation" means the implementation of the marketing concept which is viewed retrospectively as an idealistic business philosophy short of practical value. Based on the conceptualization of Kohli and Jaworski (1990), Market orientation is an organizational wide generation of market intelligence pertaining to current and future customers' needs, dissemination of the intelligence across departments and organizational wide responsiveness to it. Therefore, for these authors, the three key elements of market orientation are: market intelligence generation, market intelligence dissemination, and responsiveness. Market intelligence generation involves monitoring factors like competition, government regulations, technology and other environmental forces. It pertains not just to customers' current needs but also to future needs as well. Market intelligence dissemination implies that responding to a market need requires the participation of virtually all departments in an organization. Responsiveness is the action taken in response to market intelligence that is generated and disseminated. Responsiveness takes the form of selecting target segments, designing the products or services that cater to current and future needs and promoting them.

On the other hand, Narver and Slater (1990) define market orientation as "the organizational culture that most effectively and efficiently creates the necessary behaviors for the creation of superior value for buyers and thus continuous superior performance for the business". These authors pointed out that market orientation comprises three cultural components (i.e. customer orientation, competitor focus and inter-functional coordination) and two decision criteria (i.e., long-term focus and profit objectives).Customer and competitor orientation include all the activities involved in acquiring information about customers and competitors in the target market and disseminating it throughout the organization. Interfunctional coordination refers to the business coordinated efforts involving other business functions than the marketing department (Narver& Slater, 1990). This paper acknowledges that both perspectives are critical to firm performance, however, this study focuses on the conceptualization by Narver and Slater (1990) because the authors model is not only more specific but also conceptually more restrictive since it is limited to two market actors: customers and competitors. Also, the cultural perspective outperforms the behavioral perspective in explaining marketing performance variance as its central focus is on providing customer value and superior marketing performance (Oczkowski& Farrell, 1998; Vieira, 2010).

In line with this, the researcher defines market orientation as the organizational effort of understanding what customers want by means of gathering ideas and utilizing such ideas to design strategies meant to create and deliver value to the customers and remain competitive. This definition is not far from the submissions of Narver and Slater (1990) on the concept of market orientation. It therefore becomes damaging for businesses to ignore market-oriented activities in their business setup (Theodosiou, Kehagias, & Katsikea, 2012).

Concept of Brand Preference

Brand preference is a confluence of two words-brand and preference. Firstly, the term "brand" is derived from the Old Norse 'brandr' meaning to burn. The use of the term evolved in Middle English to the practice of "marking permanently with a hot iron, a practice used for the marking of cattle and livestock. Brand was first used by the ancient Egyptian brick-makers, who drew symbols on bricks for identification (Farquhar, 1990).

Other examples of the use of brands were found in Greek and Roman times; at this time, due to illiteracy, shopkeepers identified their shops using symbols. Moreover, in the middle Ages, craftsmen marked their goods with stamps as a trademark by which to differentiate their skills. The next milestone of brand evolution in North America was the growth of cattle farming as a kind of legal protection, proof of ownership, and quality signal (De Chernatony & McDonald, 2003).

Market Orientation and Brand Preference

Research has shown that market orientation is very significant in the performance of firms in the market place. The positive which impact market orientation has on performance has been supported by many researchers. Narver and Slater (1990) established a positive relationship between market orientation and marketing performance. In another study the authors established the effect of market orientation on profitability where a market orientation is predominantly concerned with learning from various forms of contact with customers and competitors in the market (Slater & Narver, 2000). Liu (2009) posit that market orientation assists firms to have a clear understanding of the market place which enables them to develop suitable and proper products and service strategies to meet customer needs and requirements. A firm with market orientation is enabled to develop a customer focused strategy required for generation of market knowledge which is monitored by coordinated, inter-functional marketing efforts to achieve long-term firm success.

Quantum of studies on marketing literature has revealed positive relationship between market orientation constructs and firm performance measures such as brand preference. Market orientation implies the organizational culture that most effectively and efficiently creates the necessary behaviors for the creation of superior customer and thus continuous superior performance for the business (Narver& Slater, 1990). These authors pointed out that Market orientation comprises of three cultural components (i.e. customer orientation, competitor focus and inter-functional coordination) and two decision criteria (i.e., longterm focus and profit objectives).

Customer Orientation and Brand Preference

Narver and Slater (1990) posit that Customer orientation as an aspect of market orientation has to do with the culture of placing customers' interest first and requires a thorough understanding of client needs so as to fashion out products or services of superior value.

Customer orientation is commonly seen as an aspect of firm's strategic means of delivering desired value to clients (Zhou, Yim, &Tse, 2005). The major aim of customer orientation involves laying a solid basis of acquiring pertinent information concerning existing and potential customers for strategic actions based on sufficient information provided by customer, hence resulting in creating improved superior value to the customer base (Narver& Slater, 1990).

Day (1994) define Customer orientation as "a concept which transforms marketing into a potent competitive weapon, shifting organizational values, beliefs, assumptions, and premises towards a two-way relationship between customers and the firm". Customer orientation necessitates that sellers understand the value chain of buyers so as to create superior value for them on a continuous basis (Narver& Slater, 1990). Studies have linked customer orientation to firm performance indices such as brand preference. Asomaning and Abdulai (2015) pointed out that customer orientation has a strong positive and significant association with the market performance of small businesses in Ghana. Also, Pongwiritthon and Awirothananon (2014) also established a positive and significant relationship between customer orientation and customer preference among SME in Thailand.

In line with this review, this study hypothesized thus:

H_1: Customer Orientation has a positive and significant relationship with brand preference

Competitor Orientation and Brand Preference

Narver& Slater, (1990) stated that Competitor orientation as a part of market orientation means an organizational strategy to improve on the products they deliver to customers. Competitor orientation means that the firm has an understanding of the short-term strengths and weaknesses and long-term capabilities and strategies of both its current and future competitors (Asomaning & Abdulai, 2015). Narver and Slater (1996) in their study observed that competitor orientation has a positive influence on firm performance measures such as brand preference. Also, Asomaning and Abdulai (2015) in their study on small businesses in Ghana found a strong positive and significant relationship between competitor orientation and brand preference. In line with this review, this study hypothesized thus:

H_2 : *Competitor Orientation has a positive and significant relationship with Brand preference*

Inter-functional Coordination and Brand Preference

Inter-functional coordination as a part of market orientation shows how a business utilizes its resources to create superior value for its target customers (Narver & Slater, 1990; Asomaning &Abdulai, 2015).A firm practices inter-functional coordination when it ensures a coordinated maximization of its available resources with the primary aim of performing better in the market place. Inter-functional coordination ensures that there is a highly effective two-way communication between all the functional areas in the firm for the purpose of creating market conditions that successfully provide superior value to themarket and also serve both internal and external customers. Asomaning andAbdulai (2015) found a strong positive and significant relationship between inter-functional coordination and brand preference of small businesses in Ghana. Likewise, Lin (2007) established a positive association between inter-functional coordination and brand preference among small business in Australia. In line with this review, this study hypothesized thus:

H_{03}: *Inter-functional coordination has a positive and significant relationship with brand preference*

Theoretical Review

The study is anchored on the Resource Based View and the Market Based View

The Resource-Based View

The Resource Based View of the firm (RBV) lays emphasis on the internal environment of a firm as a key predictor for competitive advantage and the resources that firms have developed to compete with others in the business environment. The Resource Based View was conceived by Wernerfelt (1984) who saw the firm as a bundle of assets or resources which are tied semi-permanently to the firm. Barney (1991) argues that the resources of a firm are its primary source of competitive advantage. Miller and Shamise, (1996) posit that the resources of a firm can be classified into categories such as property based and knowledge-based resources. Besides the above categorization, other resources of a firm include physical capital, human capital and organizational capital resources (Barney, 1991). Later, Barney and Wright (1998) added human resource management-related resources to this list of additional resources of a firm. The resources of a firm can be tangible or intangible (Ray et al., 2004). Resources might also be tied semi-permanently to the firm (Wernerfelt, 1984). In a similar argument, Barney (1991) drew attention to all assets, capabilities, organizational processes, firm attributes, information and knowledge controlled by a firm that enables the firm to conceive and implement strategies that improve its efficiency and effectiveness. Ultimately, firms that are able to leverage resources to implement a “value creating strategy” not simultaneously being implemented by any current or potential competitor can achieve competitive advantage. Scholars subscribing to the RBV argue that only strategically important and useful resources and competencies should be viewed as sources of competitive advantage. Researchers have used terms such as core competencies (Barney, 1991; Prahalad & Hamel, 1994); distinctive competencies (Papp &Luftman, 1995) and strategic assets (Amit & Shoemaker, 1993; Mancides& Williamson, 1996) to indicate the strategically important resources and competencies which provide a firm with potential competitive advantage.

The Market-Based View

The Market Based View (MBV) includes the positioning school of theories of strategies and theories developed in the industrial organizations’ economics phase of strategic thinking (Porter, 1980). The Market-Based view (MBV) is seen as the market perspective of a firm’s strategy looking at the market requirements side (Bain, 1968). It argues that industry factors and external market orientation are the primary determinants of firm performance (Bain, 1968; Porter, 1980; 1985, 1996). In formulating strategy, firms commonly assess the external environment based on the five forces model (Porter, 1985).

According to Porter (1980), an industry’s attractiveness is determined by five forces namely; threat of new entrants, threat of substitute products, bargaining power of buyers, bargaining power of suppliers and the intensity of rivalry among the established firms in the industry. The stronger the five forces are collectively, the more the intense the competition and the lower the attractiveness of the industry. Porter (1985) argues further that a firm must strive to capture a profitable and sustainable position within the industry in order to protect itself from industry competition. However, every firm can influence each of the five forces through competitive strategy in its favour (Porter, 1996). Similarly, the strength of each of the five forces can vary across industries and change over time as the industry grows and not all of the five forces are equally important for different industries (Porter, 1998). In the Market-Based view, a firm’s sources of market power can explain its relative performance. According to Grant (1991), three sources of power are frequently highlighted as Monopoly, barriers to entry and bargaining power. When a firm enjoys a monopoly status, it has a strong market position and therefore performs better than others (Peteraff, 1993). High barriers to entry for new firms in an industry lead to reduced competition and hence better performance. Higher bargaining power within the industry relative to suppliers and customers can also lead to better performance (Grant, 1991).

However, some scholars have criticized the Porter's five forces model arguing that it offers a limited perspective to environmental analysis. Bensako et al., (2007) argues that the five forces approach ignores changes in firm's strategies and changes in consumer income and preferences. The government's influence in the industry has also not been captured by the model and Bensako et al., (2007) have argued that the government as a regulator can affect the profitability of an industry yet it is not captured by porter's model

Methodology

A good research should have a careful sampling, precise measurement, and sophisticated design and analysis in the test of hypotheses derived from tentative general laws (Beri, 2006). From the above, the study adopted descriptive research design with the aid of survey method in obtaining the needed data. The choice of the survey method is consistent with Hair, Money, and Samuel & Pages '(2007) submission that such a method is usually interested in the assessment of the characteristics of the population of study. The population of the study was customers of selected fast food restaurants in Enugu State, Nigeria. The sample size was determined using Taro Yamane (1994), and the sample size was 384customers of Fast food restaurants in Enugu State. The study employed quota sampling and the aim was to ensure that respondents from the various demographic characteristics were involved in the sample.

The research instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire. All the items were adequately assessed on a five-point balanced likert scale ranging from strongly agree represented by 5, to strongly disagree represented by 1.To validate the research instrument, content validity was employed by performing a small-scale pretest where selected respondents were interviewed about the structure and content of the questionnaire questions to avoid ambiguity and misconceptions. The questionnaire was subjected to a minor revision. Also, expert opinion was sought from few research experts and discriminant analysis to confirm the validity of the constructs was carried out using correlation.

For instrument reliability; the test-retest method was used to estimate the internal consistency. This involved repeated administration of the same type of questionnaire on the respondents. In this regard, the same questionnaire was administered twice to same respondents at interval of two weeks. The reliability was established by assessing the internal consistency of the items representing each construct, using Cronbach Alpha Index. Favourable reliable scores were obtained from all the items since all co-efficient values were above 0.7; which exceeded the minimum benchmark of (0.7) as recommended by Malhotra (2004) in a Cronbach alpha test.

Many researchers have used different variables to measure market orientation. In this study, market orientation is measured using the MKTOR Scales as used by prior studies

(Narver and Slater's, 1990; Asomaning &Abdulai, 2015; Dauda and Akingbade, 2010). MKTOR scale by Narver and Slater (1990) measured market orientation through customer orientation, competitor's orientation and inter-functional orientation. The MKTOR scale is a 15-item scale, and the three components it measures are customer orientation (6 items); competitor orientation (4 items) and inter-functional coordination (5 items). The responses were captured on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) as used in prior studies (Narver and Slater, 1990; Dauda and Akingbade, 2010).

In this study, an objective measure was adopted for measuring firm performance as used in prior studies (Keh, Nguyen & Ng (2007; Wiklund& Shepherd, 2005; Jaworski & Kohli, 1993). Firm performance was measured as a cumulative aspect of three different items (growth in profit levels, growth of market share and sales growth), where respondents were asked to assess the overall performance of their businesses relative to their competitors especially relating to brand preference, rated on a 5 point Likert-type scale ranging (1) from much poor than competitors, to (5) much better than competitors.

Descriptive Statistics was used to analyze the bio-data of the respondents and questionnaire responses. Pearson's Coefficient of Correlation and Multiple regression analyses were the statistical tools used in this study. Pearson's Coefficient of Correlation was used to test the hypothesis and establish the relationship between each market orientation construct and marketing performance. On the other hand, Multiple regression analysis was used to establish the combined effect of market orientation variables on marketing performance. The statistical analysis was facilitated by the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 20.0). Multiple regression analyses was used to ascertain whether the group of independent variables-customer orientation, competitor orientation, and inter-functional coordination together predicts marketing performance the dependent variable.

The general equation of the multiple regression model for measurement of the variables is as follows:
Y= f(Xi…)
Where Y is the dependent variable and the Xs are the explanatory variables and i =

1,2…n.

Specifically, the model took the following form:

$Y = \alpha_0 + \beta 1X1 + \beta 2\ X2 + \beta 3\ X3$

Y = Brand preference (dependent variable) α = Vertical intercept or

constant β1 – β3 = The slope coefficients of the regressors

$X_1 \ldots X_3$ = Market Orientation Constructs (independent variables)

Results and Discussion Respondents' Demographic Data

The table below shows the demographic data of the respondents.

Table 1: Respondents' Demographic Data

	Frequency	Percentage		Frequency	Percentage
Gender			**Marital Status**		
Male	200	52.1	Married	220	57.3
Female	184	47.9	Single	164	42.7
Total	384	100.0	Total	384	100.0
Age			**Education**		
< 25yrs	37	9.6	WASC/GCE	67	17.4
25 – 34yrs	99	25.7	ND/NCE	82	22.3
35 – 44yrs	82	22.3	BSc/HND	100	26.0
45 – 54yrs	96	25.0	Postgraduate	37	9.6
≥ 55yrs	67	17.4	Professionals	95	24.7
Total	384	100.0	Total	384	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Gender Distribution: Out of the 384 respondents who responded favourably in the survey, 200(52.1%) of them were males while 184(47.9%) were females. The implication of this is that, the survey was not gender biased.

Marital Status: Among the 384 respondents, 229(57.3%) of them were married while 164(42.7%) were still singles. The implication of this demographic data is to reflect that the survey was not on the excess on one part than the other – i.e. it captured adequately from both sides.

Age Distribution: In terms of the ages of the respondents, 37(9.6%) of them indicated that they are < 25years old, 99(25.7%) said they are 25 – 34years old, 82(22.3%) said they are 35 – 44years old, 96(25.0%) said they are 45 – 54years while 67(17.4%) others said they are ≥ 55years old. From this analysis, it would be noted that majority of the respondents are 25 – 34years old followed by those with the age bracket of 45 – 54years.

Education Qualification: In respect to the educational qualification of the respondents, 67(17.4%) indicated that they are WASC/GCE holders, 82(22.3%) of them indicated that they are ND/NCE holders, 100(26.0%) of them indicated that they are BSc/HND holders,

37(9.6%) indicated Postgraduate while 95(24.7%) others indicated that they are Professionals.

Reliability and Validity Analyses

To test the reliability for the items of each concept the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated for each variable. The result of the reliability test for each concept was Customer Orientation; 0.845, Competitor Orientation 0.907, and Inter-functional Coordination; 0.897; then brand preference; .765. The results of the reliability for the concepts were all above the recommended and accepted level of 0.7. The results of the reliability test are presented in the table below.

Table 2: The Reliability Statistics of the Variables

S/N	ITEM	NO OF ITEMS	CRONBACH'S ALPHA
1	Customer Orientation	5	.845
2	Competitor Orientation	5	.907
3	Inter-Functional Coordination	5	.897
4	Brand Preference	5	.753

Source: Filed Survey, 2025

After content validity, correlation analysis was used to ascertain the discriminant validity of the constructs. All correlations were significant at the 0.01 level. The table below shows all correlations and their correlation values.

Table 3: Correlations and test of discriminant validity

S/N	Variable	CUSO	COMO	IFCO	BP
1	Customer Orientation –CUSO	1	.683**	.546**	.597**
2	Competitor Orientation-COMO	.683**	1	.521**	.536**
3	Inter-Functional Coordination-IFCO	.546**	.521**	1	.483**
4	Brand Preference-BP	.597**	.546**	.483**	1

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

As shown in table 3 above, all items representing theoretical concepts had a sufficiently positive and significant level of correlation where customer orientation and competitor orientation held the highest correlation of 0.683.

Customer orientation exhibited a positive and significant correlation with marketing performance (r=0597 ** P<.01).This means that in hypothesis one, the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternate is accepted showing that customer orientation has a significant and positive relationship with brand preference.

Competitor orientation, also exhibited a positive and significant correlation with marketing performance (r = .546** P<.01). This means that in hypothesis two, the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternate is accepted showing that competitor orientation has a significant and positive relationship with brand preference.

Finally, Inter-functional coordination exhibited a positive and significant correlation with marketing performance (r = .483** P<.01). This means that in hypothesis three, the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternate is accepted showing that inter-functional orientation has a significant and positive relationship with brand preference

Multiple Regression Analysis of the constructs

To ascertain the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable, regression analysis was employed. This also assisted in establishing the combined effect of the market orientation variables on brand preference

Table 4: Multiple Regression Analysis of Market Orientation Constructs and Brand Preference

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig
		B	Std Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.327	.019		2.13	0.000
	Customer Orientation	.423	.017	.398	8.23	0.000
	Competitor Orientation	.367	.016	.323	7.26	0.000
	Inter-functional Coordination	.207	.027	.198	6.45	0.000

a.Dependent Variable: Brand preference

Table 4. above indicates that all the market orientation dimensions- customer orientation, competitor orientation and inter-functional coordination have a positive and significant relationship with brand preference The three variables of market orientation (β= .398; P< 0.01), competitor orientation (β =.323; P< 0.01), and inter-functional coordination (β =

.198; P< 0.01) exhibited statistically significant and positive effect on brand preference.

Table 5: Model Summary

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Standard Error	F Change	Change ST Df	Sig
1	0.793[a]	0.709	**0.**671	3.81462	35.874	5	0.000

a. *Dependent variable: Marketing performance*

b. *Predictors: (constant), Customer Orientation, Competitor Orientation and InterFunctional Coordination.*

Table 5. above indicates that, together, customer orientation, competitor orientation and inter-functional coordination, had a 70.1 percent effect on brand preference The R^2 for the three dimensions indicates that these variables have a strong effect on brand preference The changes in the F value (35.874) are significant, implying that the model is robust and fit.

Discussion of Findings, Conclusion, Recommendation, and Implications Discussion of Findings

The study focused on empirically investigating the concept of market orientation as a strategic marketing tool. The study adopted MKTOR scale as coined by Narver and Slater (1990) and used customer orientation, competitor orientation and inter-functional coordination as constructs for market orientation. The results of the correlation analysis involving all the three constructs of market orientation reported positive correlation coefficient values among the measures. This indicated that they are appropriate dimensions of market orientation.

The result provided support for the $H0_1$ test result which indicated that customer orientation has a significant and positive relationship with brand preference ($\beta = .398$, $P < 0.01$). This is evident in the views of Pongwiritthon and Awirothananon (2014) who established a positive and significant relationship between customer orientation and brand preference among SME in Thai.

Similarly, the findings indicated that competitor orientation has a significant and positive relationship with brand preference ($\beta = .323$, $P < 0.01$). This finding provided support for $H0_2$ which stated that competitor orientation has a significant and positive relationship with brand preference. This is in agreement with the findings of Asomaning and Abdulai (2015) in their study on small businesses in Ghana. The study found a strong positive and significant relationship between competitor orientation and brand preference.

Also, the findings indicated that there is a significant and positive relationship between inter-functional coordination and brand preference. ($\beta = .198$, $P < 0.01$). The result provided support for $H0_3$ which indicated that inter-functional coordination has a significant and positive relationship with brand preference. This is consistent with the study by Lin (2007) which established a positive association between inter-functional coordination and brand preference in Australia.

Conclusion

This study concludes that market orientation predicts firm performance including customer preference of its brands and this conclusion is consistent with conclusions of past researchers. For firms to succeed in a highly competitive environment they should be responsive to customer needs and wants and this requires them to be market oriented in terms of customer focus, competitor orientation and inter-functional co-ordination among the firm's internal departments. Therefore, the top management of a firm and the various departments should be supporting the market orientation as part of the predictor of marketing performance measure including brand preference. Overall empirical studies show that market-oriented firms record superior performance in the market while those that are not market oriented experience low performance. This study agrees with findings of previous researchers that customer orientation, competitor orientation and inter-functional co-ordination within business firms can drive customer preference of their brands.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers proffer the following recommendations:

1) The researchers recommend that management of fast food restaurants in Enugu State should aim to key into customer orientation strategies to ensure that services provided meet customers' expectations in order to achieve customer satisfaction that will result to customer retention.
2) Managers of fast food restaurants should understand competitive environment through competitor strategies to enable them match competition and positively influence consumer patronage decisions which will lead to improved business performance.
3) Managers of fast food restaurants should deliver exceptional services to customers through inter functional coordination among the different units and departments. This is important in improving customer satisfaction and attracting the patronage of customers.

Managerial Implications

The business environment is dynamic and has called for pragmatic effort on the part of business managers to adopt appropriate strategies so as to be competitive in the market place. The study found market orientation as critical determinant in enhancing marketing performance including customer brand preference, patronage and satisfaction as well as market share and profitability. Managers must therefore endeavour to find new ways of doing things in their lines of operations. This has called for strategic allocation of resources, continuous finding of the needs and wants of customers, monitoring competitor's activities, as well as integrating all the functional areas of the business for coordinated efforts.. Managers of businesses must avail themselves to training, attending seminars and workshops in order to sharpen their managerial skill

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