

Customer Loyalty through Retailer Brand Equity: Perspectives from Male Alcoholic Beverage Consumers

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Abstract

The service business has risen to prominence in recent years as the primary driver of economic growth. As such, competing organizations have consistently provided higher service quality and a positive brand image to gain consumer pleasure and loyalty in the current competitive environment. The primary purpose of this study is to explore the motivational factors that enrich customer loyalty through retailer brand equity. The qualitative research method was used in the collection of data. Ten male consumers of alcoholic beverages were interviewed to solicit answers about their experiences with retail outlets during their purchases. In-depth, open-ended questions were asked during data collection. The findings reveal themes such as customer experience, brand trust, and customer satisfaction as customer motivations that enhance repurchase behaviours at the selected retail outlets. In addition, these motivational factors also show that retailer brand equity promotes customer satisfaction, which leads to customer loyalty.

Keywords: Customer loyalty, retailer brand equity, alcoholic beverages, The Expectancy Theory

1. Introduction

Most retailers' primary focus is on retaining profitable customers and increasing consumer loyalty. In the current competitive environment where switching costs are rampant and customers can compare retailers' offerings and price levels more transparently (Grewal et al., 2017), customer loyalty seems more and more challenging to accomplish (YouGov, 2018). Customer loyalty is often a successful customer relationship management tactic (Nastasoiu & Vandenbosch, 2019). In the context of retail, where customers repeatedly buy goods, comprehending customer loyalty and influencing purchase behaviour is vital to marketing. Gradually, branding has become one of the most effective and influential marketing strategies adopted by most companies and has contributed to their sustainability and growth. It is also noted to enhance consumer purchase behaviour, motivation, brand attachment, and brand loyalty. Branding has a strong capacity when it comes to consumer perception of products. It is defined by Arker (1991) as a set of assets and liabilities connected to product attributes such as name, symbol, and logo, which add value to the product or service of that organization or company. Later, in a different study, Aaker (2014) posits that the value of an organization's brand equity depends on its management of five main brand assets, such as brand awareness, association, perceived quality, brand loyalty, and proprietary assets. The most crucial aim of any branding activity is to build trust and loyalty, which may possibly lead to the charging of a higher price for a product or service (Goward, 2015). According to Londono-Roldan et al. (2017), branding plays a vital role in convincing consumers of brand quality.

To be specific, retailers are the most valuable brands in the world. For example, out of 30 of the global brands listed by Interbrand (2016), four are retail brands such as Amazon, Zara, H & M, and IKEA. Others, like Nike, Samsung, and Toyota, relate to retail through flagship stores or branded dealerships. Similarly, a pattern is also found in the BrandZ (2016) ranking, including retailers like Walmart, Alibaba Group, and Home Depot. Retail management research (RMA) has repeatedly emphasized the strategic relevance of branding for retailers (Jara & Cliquet, 2012). Just as importantly, brand equity is essential for retailers, given its impact on buying behaviour and financial performance, market share, and shareholder value (Aaker, 1991; Anselmsson & Bondesson, 2015; Swoboda et al., 2016). Due to the competitive nature of the retail

industry, a clearer and deeper understanding of retailer brand equity is crucial for retail management and performance (Londono et al., 2017).

Currently, marketing has become very competitive. Every marketing organization is determined to improve its service and brand characteristics compared to its competitors. Importantly, companies try to have special attributes in their branding process to enhance effective marketing. Successful brands' marketing depends solely on companies' strategic presentation of those brands to consumers and how consumers assess those brands. Previous studies have found a correlation between the concept of brand equity and customer loyalty, as well as the fact that it is a common variable (Dlai & Keman, 2014; Souri, 2017).

In addition, several scholars have looked into brand equity in conjunction with other constructs. Muigai (2017) investigated the impact of brand equity on consumer purchase behaviour of smartphones, while Andai (2016) studied the influence of brand equity on consumer purchase choices among pay-TV subscribers in Nairobi. Other studies focused on brand equity and the selection of marketing strategies for hybrid firms separately (Datta et al., 2017; Londono et al., 2017; Keller, 2016; Swoboda et al., 2016), brand credibility, brand loyalty, brand equity, and willingness to purchase for hybrid firms separately (Datta et al., 2017; Londono et al., 2017; Keller, 2016; Swoboda et al., 2016). However, over the past years, research that takes retailer involvement into account has been virtually neglected, despite the managerial interest in understanding how a given retailer can influence consumer purchase behaviour. Understanding consumer loyalty through retailer brand equity may provide a valuable insight into consumer behaviour towards a retailer brand. It will enable marketers to strategically plan and entice consumers to be more loyal to their brands.

The primary aim of this study is to seek an understanding of how consumers develop loyalty through their interactions and repeated purchases with retailers of alcoholic beverages. This research provides empirical evidence to marketing executives and brand managers on consumer preference and loyalty towards alcoholic beverages in Ghana. As a result, this study intends to answer two crucial questions:

1. How do consumers develop loyalty towards retail outlets?
2. What factors motivate consumers to develop loyalty towards retail outlets?

The remaining sections continue with the literature review on theoretical foundation, the beverage industry in Ghana, retailer brand equity, and customer loyalty. The following sections are the methodology, discussion, theoretical and managerial implications, limitations and future studies, and a conclusion.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical foundation

This study adopts Vroom's Expectancy Theory of Motivation (Vroom, 1964) as its theoretical foundation, which posits that individuals make decisions based on their choices that may lead to the most desirable personal outcome and enhance enjoyment. Expectancy theory focuses more on rational human behaviour. It is focused on three core concepts: expectancy, instrumentality, and valence, which together create a motivational force. The primary motive behind the expectancy theory was to explicate the motivation behind an individual's voluntary choices when other options are available to them. The three main concepts of expectancy theory deserve additional discussion. *Expectancy* has been defined as an effort-performance relation (Harris et al. 2017), or the perceived probability that one can successfully execute an attempted behaviour (Baumann & Bonner, 2017). Expectancy is the subjective belief of an outcome of an action based on an individual's effort. It is a cognitive assessment influenced by the individual's personal attributes and experiences. Vroom suggested that individual choices and external events influence specific outcomes (Vroom, 1964). Instrumentality represents the influence of a given behaviour on an outcome (Baumann & Bonner, 2017). It is explained that the expected outcome will occur if one performs well.

Further, Vroom defined *valence* as an affective orientation towards a particular outcome. Thus, it is the perceived value an individual attaches to a specific reward at a given point in time, aside from the assumed costs associated with taking a given set of actions. A positive valence occurs when the individual prefers to achieve results rather than not accomplish them. Some positive valences may include compensation, desired work, or job promotions (Baciu, 2017). A zero valence suggests a lack of interest in achieving an objective. In contrast, a negative valence exists when the individual prefers not to achieve the outcome as it does not

fulfil any need or personal aim, or a negative consequence such as disciplinary action or termination outweighs the positive effect of the reward (Baciu, 2017). According to the Expectancy Theory, to be motivated, an individual must believe that a certain level of effort may lead to performance (expectancy), and that performance may lead to a particular reward (instrumentality). The benefits received may offset the expenses of the effort (valence) (Purvis et al., 2015). Vroom explained *motivational force* as the product of the three main core factors. This factor being a multiplicative model, there will be no motivation if a factor is zero. Also, if valence were negative, the motivation would be to avoid the reward.

Other studies that adopted expectancy theory focused on work motivation (Sayeed, 1985), occupational choice (Brooks & Betz, 1990), pre-employment test performance (Sanchez et al., 2000), entrepreneurship (Renko et al., 2012), and sales coaching (Pousa & Mathieu, 2010). Studies on this theory have expanded over the past decades. They have expanded to other disciplines, including project management (Purvis et al., 2015), networking (Porter & Woo, 2015), academic settings (Geiger & Cooper, 1996; Fagbohunge, 2012), and energy-efficient home refurbishment (Baumhof et al., 2017). Others are pro-environmental behaviour (Kiatkawsin & Han, 2017) and intentions to implement social media to support knowledge exchange (Behringer & Sassenberg, 2015). The expectancy theory is affiliated with this study to unearth the various motivations that stimulate consumer loyalty towards retailer outlets.

2.2 The Ghanaian Alcoholic Beverage Industry

The alcoholic beverage industry consists of producers, wholesalers, distributors, point-of-sale operators, retailers, and the tourism and hospitality industries, such as hotels, restaurants, night clubs, and cafes that serve alcohol. The increase in the quantity of alcohol consumed in 2016 resulted in the global alcoholic beverages market being valued at \$1,439 billion in 2017 and is expected to reach \$1,684 billion by 2025, notably registering a compound annual growth rate of 2.0% from 2018 to 2025 (Allied Market Research, 2018). According to ICAP (2015), branded alcoholic beverages accounted for approximately 38% of recorded alcohol consumption worldwide. The top ten producers accounted for 66% of the global market share for beer, 59% for spirits, and 16% for wine. In Ghana, the consumption of spirits, beer, and wine usually occurs at social functions such as weddings, naming ceremonies, parties, and funerals. The Ghana Draft Policy recorded a very high average per capita annual consumption of alcohol of between 2.5 and 4.9 litres in 2014 and 2017. In recent years, consumption in Ghana has been estimated at 11.7 million litres. In the informal economy, locally manufactured beverages such as Akpeteshie, pito, and palm wine are commonly sold and patronized. Ghana's alcoholic beverage industry continues to expand, worth millions of cedis. Furthermore, the alcoholic beverage industry increases the country's gross domestic product, creates employment directly for a great number of workers across Ghana, and is an essential revenue source through taxes.

2.3 Customer loyalty through Customer satisfaction

Customer loyalty is the high commitment to continue buying a preferred product or service. In addition to its impact on consumer behaviour, it also enhances company profitability and growth. According to Sigit and Soliha (2017), customer loyalty is measured when a customer is willing to repurchase a service or product.

Customer loyalty is crucial in marketing as it positively influences consumer purchase behaviour. Consequently, many scholars posit that customer satisfaction leads to customer loyalty. According to Yoo et al. (2015), higher customer satisfaction leads to customer loyalty. Past literature has also confirmed that customer satisfaction is an essential factor in customer loyalty. Thus, if customers are well satisfied and delighted with the services of a company, they are likely to make repeat purchases (Nyadzayo & Khajehzadeh, 2016). In similar instances, Rychalski and Hudson (2017) also confirmed that customer satisfaction is directly associated with consumer loyalty. Though customer satisfaction has been confirmed to positively influence customer trust, retention, repeat purchase intention, and behaviour, satisfaction is considered the essential determinant of customer loyalty (Gustafsson et al., 2005).

Furthermore, most extant literature supports previous studies that customer satisfaction is one of the most significant determinants of customer loyalty (Akbari et al., 2019). This assertion suggests that customer loyalty is a long-term investment that indicates customer-retailer relationship management (Raza et al., 2020). In addition, marketing scholars have found that organizations with satisfied and delighted customers have high customer loyalty (Rychalski & Hudson, 2017).

Earlier studies on customer satisfaction and customer loyalty showed varying results. According to Soliha et al. (2019), Pambudi et al. (2018), Santoso & Soliha (2017), Sigit & Soliha (2017), Solechah & Soliha

(2015), Sumadi & Soliha (2015), Munisih & Soliha (2015), and Handayani & Soliha (2015), customer satisfaction has a positive and significant influence on customer loyalty. Meanwhile, contrary to the above findings Sulistiyanto and Soliha (2015) discovered that customer satisfaction had no significant effect on customer loyalty.

2.4 Retailer brand equity

Brand equity measurement is an important and challenging issue for both academics and managers (Pappu & Quester, 2017; Troiville et al., 2019). Retailer brand equity acts like a shortcut in consumers' minds that recalls the most relevant elements of satisfaction with past shopping experiences, impacting patronage intentions (Allaway et al., 2011). Customer equity refers to values that arise in customers' minds when they encounter the name of a particular retailer (Lee & Lee, 2018). Compared to single products, retailers offer specific attributes and rich store experiences that call for an adaptation of the measure of brand equity (Troiville et al., 2019). Pappu and Quester (2006, 2008) adapted the consumer-based brand equity measurement suggested by Yoo and Donthu (2001) to the measurement of retailer equity. This measurement involved rewriting or adding items to the scales (Yoo & Donthu, 2001).

Consumers' perceptions of quality, their associations with the retailer, and their loyalty to the brand are all based on awareness, which is a critical component of brand equity. (Keller, 1993). Retailer awareness refers to consumers' mere knowledge of the retailer. It captures the extent to which consumers can recall the retailer (Pappu & Quester, 2006).

Furthermore, retailer associations are described as "anything linked to the memory of the retailer" (Pappu & Quester, 2006, p. 320). Retailer associations entail the retailer's image and are further described as the attributes, features, and benefits associated with a brand or retailer (Keller, 1993). According to Pappu and Quester (2006), the quality of the retailer's image and the quality of the products or services offered by retailers are inextricably linked. Consumers' perceptions of retailer quality influence retailer selection and patronage intentions (Lee & Lee, 2018). Furthermore, "the propensity to be loyal to a central retailer as evidenced by the desire to purchase from the retailer as a primary choice" is defined as "the tendency to be loyal to a focal retailer as demonstrated by the intention to buy from the retailer as a primary choice." (Pappu & Quester, 2006, p. 320). The concept of retailer loyalty is crucial in retail and is closely related to brand building efforts (Swoboda et al., 2016).

Just as importantly, previous research confirmed relationships between retailer awareness (Aaker, 1990; Arnett et al., 2003; Hartman & Spiro, 2005), retailer associations (O'Cass & Lim, 2002) and perceived quality (Boulding et al., 1993; Zeithaml et al., 1996) with shopping intention. Some researchers have also confirmed indirect relationships between the equity dimensions and purchase intention through loyalty (Aaker, 1991; Selnes, 1993).

3. Methodology

3.1 Research method and design

This study adopts the interpretivism philosophy of research. Since the study is exploratory in nature, a qualitative research methodology is chosen as a research methodology. According to May & Mathijssen (2015), research problems that are approached using qualitative methods include addressing relevant questions beyond what works towards whom, when, how, and why. The study employs a qualitative research method consistent with the exploratory character of quality data to meet academic research requirements (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Qualitative methodology is chosen because the methods are suitable when little or nothing is known about the research problem under study (Creamer & Tendihar, 2016). According to Patton (2015), using qualitative methods allows the researcher to gather sufficient knowledge about the research problem through inductive interviews and questionnaires. The qualitative research method is employed in this study because it explores the influence of retailer brand equity on consumer loyalty.

3.2 Population and Sampling

The population in this study is all Ghanaian alcoholic beverage consumers. The researcher employed non-probability purposive sampling to choose respondents in Accra who are male alcoholic beverage consumers. Non-probability sampling has a long history in marketing research, and despite its flaws, it has been utilized in a variety of studies due to its time and cost advantages. It has been argued over the years that when a

sample frame is not available and research is exploratory, non-probability sampling is justified (Baker et al., 2013; Ortinau, 2016). This sampling design is based on the judgement of the researcher as to who will provide the best information suitable for the objectives of the study (Etikan & Bala, 2017). According to Kazadi et al. (2015), purposive sampling in a few cases facilitates the collection of valuable knowledge, which strengthens the data identified in the literature. The purposive sample is dependent on the characteristics of a population and the objective of the study (Bungay et al., 2016). According to Patton (2015), researchers use purposive sampling techniques, relying on their judgement to choose the population to answer interview questions with responses applicable to meeting data saturation.

3.3 Participant selection and description

The study took place in three different retail outlets in Accra, in the La-Nkwantanang Madina Municipality. As shown in Table 1 below, the study consists of 10 participants. All the participants are males. All the participants are over 30 years old, and their average age is 48 years. The age range of the participants is between 35 and 58 years. All ten participants are Ghanaians and reside in La-Nkwantanang, Madina. Of the ten participants, six of them are masters' holders, while four are first-degree holders. In the area of profession, 2 are accountants, 3 are businessmen, 1 mechanic, 1 is a teacher, and 3 are self-employed. Each of the three retail outlets had four participants interviewed: four in the first, three in the second, and three in the third. In terms of the beverages, 3 participants love Club beer, 1 loves Guinness, 1 participant loves local gin, one Smirnoff, 1 Johnny Walker, and 1 Hennessy. The researcher met all the participants during their visits to those retail outlets to purchase. All interviews were granted at the various retail outlets. An identity number is used in place of the participants' real names to conceal their real identity. The 10 participants were chosen to be interviewed to fulfil the criteria below:

All participants must be Ghanaians.

All participants must be males.

All participants should have been consuming alcoholic beverage.

The table below consists of participants age, gender, country, favourite alcoholic beverage, and profession.

Table 1. Interviewees' Profiles

ID	AGE	GENDER	CITIZENSHIP	PROFESSION	FAVOURITE ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE
P1	35yrs	Male	Ghanaian	Teacher	Club beer
P2	47yrs	Male	Ghanaian	Mechanic	Guinness
P3	58yrs	Male	Ghanaian	Accountant	Club beer
P4	48yrs	Male	Ghanaian	Self employed	Club beer
P5	54yrs	Male	Ghanaian	Businessman	Local gin
P6	46yrs	Male	Ghanaian	Self employed	Smirnoff
P7	50yrs	Male	Ghanaian	Businessman	Guinness
P8	38yrs	Male	Ghanaian	Self employed	Johnny Walker
P9	51yrs	Male	Ghanaian	Accountant	Hennessy
P10	53yrs	Male	Ghanaian	Businessman	Guinness

3.4 Research instrument and Data collection

In the data collection procedure for qualitative studies, interviewing is appropriate (Creswell, 2013), because interviews are best used to gain insights into an individual's subjective experiences, opinions, and motivations (Hak, 2007).

During the collection of primary data, the researcher conducted interviews at the three retail outlets on the 20th, 22nd, and 25th of October, 2021, in Accra. Data was collected through an in-depth, face-to-face interview in which the researcher asked semi-structured and open-ended questions. Semi-structured interviews are characterized by open-ended questions and the use of an interview guide in which broad areas of interest are explored, sometimes including sub-questions (Hijmans & Kuyper, 2007). The interviews lasted for 30 minutes each. Though there are many retail outlets in Accra that deal in alcoholic beverages, the three outlets were specially chosen because they are popular in the places they are and enjoy huge

patronage when it comes to their customer base. Earlier, the researcher visited the retail outlets to purchase one of their products and to observe how consumers are treated, after which the researcher sought permission from the shop owners on the day of the interview to engage their customers. On the day of the interview, the researcher approached the consumers one by one to introduce herself, explain the reasons for the research, and seek their permission for the interviews. While some participants were hesitant to grant permission to the researcher, others refused, citing the COVID-19 pandemic as justification for not answering the interview questions. The researcher decided to interview ten participants because some of them did not feel comfortable disclosing their favourite alcoholic beverages, and by the time the tenth participant responded to the interview questions, further questioning was not necessary in response to the interview questions because the answers supplied had clearly satisfied the aim and objective of the research, and thus no further questioning was required. Hence the ten participants' selection.

In the course of data collection, a face-to-face interview was used because it is more straight forward and easy to get verbal and non-verbal information such as the respondents' voice and body language through their spontaneous response to questions (Opdenakker, 2006). During the interview, some participants showed excitement when explaining the factors that attracted them to purchasing from those particular outlets. This kind of non-verbal information helps add value to understanding the respondents' attitude towards their experiences at the various retail outlets. First, the researcher gathered information on the participants' demographics, such as their name, age, gender, occupation, and country of origin. The interview questions used in soliciting answers were as follows: Do you frequently buy alcohol from this shop? When you visit the shop, how are you treated? What is your relationship with the shop owner? The other set of questions is: what brands of alcoholic beverages do you patronize? What draws you to shop at the same place every time? The responses of all ten participants were recorded by the researcher. The researcher manually transcribed all responses from the interviews after listening and paying attention to the recorded version of the interview and reading through the written ones.

3.5 Data analysis

Data analysis is the interpretation of patterns, and explanation of those patterns in research (Bernard & Ryan, 2016). In analyzing data in this study, the study proposes to use a thematic analysis technique to extract data. The thematic analysis technique is used to identify, analyze, and report themes within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.79). It is a valuable and flexible tool that gives richness to data description (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.79). The thematic analysis process decomposes the text that originated from reality into relatively small content units before describing them to make them easy to comprehend (Vaismoradi et al., 2013, p.400). The data transcribed from audio recordings was written into texts, and a coding process will be implemented. Direct quotations were used to support the interpretation for better understanding. Creswell (2003) posited that a researcher goes through the data transcribed from interviews and lists each of the relevant statements, sentences, or quotes of the research topic about the phenomenon the participants experienced. Furthermore, the researcher organized the pertinent statements, sentences, or quotes into themes and sub-themes using units of meaning (Creswell, 2013). Data mining and visualization software NVIVO 7 was used to manage data and identify main themes and sub-themes within the data. The concepts that emerged from data were sorted into themes, which were then divided into meaningful categories.

The qualitative research method chosen by the researcher was subjected to authentication for inter-rater reliability to reduce the possibility of researcher bias during the interpretation of results. Though this method is applicable mainly in qualitative research studies, it is equally useful and proven to add value to qualitative research data (Marques & McCall, 2005). The process entails sending raw data and transcripts to three other experienced researchers to peruse and give their independent assessment, insights and judgement. (Marques & McCall, 2005).

3.6 Ensuring trustworthiness

Reliability in qualitative research refers to researches that follow the same research procedures with similar results to what was received by the initial researcher (Mariotto et al., 2014). The interviews protocol was used to guide the interview process. An interview protocol is a procedural guide which directs the researcher throughout the interview processes (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). Data is reliable because it has been proven to be such. According to Amankwaa (2016), dependability shows that the results are consistent and replicable. A research study is reliable if the conclusions can be replicated by another researcher using similar

respondents under similar settings (Koch, 2006). Participants were given an explanation as to why the research was conducted. All 10 participants listened to the replay version of the interview immediately after the primary interview to ensure accuracy. Member vetting ensures that the transcripts accurately reflect the viewpoints and experiences of the participants (Grossoehme, 2014; Thomas, 2017).

Validity refers to how accurately the data represents the participant's view of their experiences (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Documentation should show how results were developed (Elo et al., 2014). Additionally, readers should follow the researcher's analysis process to the results (Elo et al., 2014). The researcher was the primary data collection instruments for this study. An audio recorder was used to record the participants' answers. After that, the audios were played back to participants. A written journal was kept for each participant for record purposes.

3. Findings

The study seeks to unearth the motivational factors that help influence customer loyalty through retailer brand equity among alcoholic beverage consumers. The main focus of the study is to understand how consumers develop loyalty and how retailer brand equity influences customers to develop loyalty. Participants in the study have reported varying factors that motivate them to build customer loyalty through their continued interaction and purchases from retail outlets in Ghana. As a result, three themes have emerged from their responses, which are reported below.

Theme 1: Customer experience

Several consumers expressed their satisfaction with the customer service at the various retail outlets during their purchases and continued interaction with the retailers. After categorization and coding, customer experience emerged as a motivational factor influencing customer loyalty through retailer brand equity. Below are some selected responses by participants during the interview at the retail outlets:

“I come here because they sell what I buy. They have varieties of both alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks. One motivation is also the fact that customer service is good when it comes to the way they serve. Their services are excellent” (Participant 3)

“I love to buy here because the people are nice. They serve on time too, because I have been to some shops and you will have to wait for a long time to be served but things are quite different here. It is nice shopping here” (Participant 4)

“These days so many people are selling especially when it comes to beverages. The city is choked with retail outlets. In the same way, consumers are also all over the place shopping so it is important I look for a convenient place to shop. I buy here often because of their customer service in relation to timely delivery and prices are good. There is also a personal relationship I have built with the sales girls”. (Participant 9)

Because customer experiences involve every point of contact when customers interact with a business, product, or service, positive customer experiences with products and services will lead to additional purchases because customers' ultimate goal is to have a pleasant experience. Creating unique customer experiences is a strategy (Andajani, 2015). Customers' loyalty, buying intent, and contentment are all affected by creating various experiences in their hearts and minds (Ieva & Ziliani, 2018). Creating various customer experiences is a marketing activity that involves the consumer's senses and focuses on the customer. The environment affects sensory stimuli-affected experiences (Bustamante & Rubio, 2017). The purpose of generating customer experiences is to provide good services that meet our customers' expectations (Gorgoglione & Panniello, 2018). According to Thomas (2017), consumer experience is influenced by a set of customer feelings arising from an interaction with a company's products, services, and business. According to Wade Clarke et al. (2012) believes that sales experience (such as in a retail store) is important because it facilitates engagement, social interaction, and communication. A corporation must leverage its relationships with customers to impact the value generation processes and customer loyalty.

Theme 2: Brand trust

Participants for this study are consumers of alcoholic beverages who have confirmed several reasons why they consume the brands they purchase. Of the various reasons given by the participants, most of them cited trust as a reason for patronizing their favourite alcoholic beverages. Brands such as club beer, Guinness, local gin, Hennessy, Johnny Walker and Smirnoff were mentioned by participants as drinks they mostly purchase. Throughout their submissions, brand trust emerged as a theme from the data. Below are some of the comments that support this theme:

“I drink anything on any special occasion but I am more addicted to club beer because the brand is solid. The taste has not changed over the years. Club beer is still club beer!” (Participant 3)

“The local gin. This drink has been there for long despite the foreign ones joining it later. It is a trustworthy beverage, one of the best I will say”. (Participant 5)

“I love to buy club beer. I drink club beer occasionally because it gives me a refreshing feeling. It a brand you can trust, very old but it still maintains that special taste and feeling. I have been drinking club beer for some years now, but the taste has not changed a bit. This is definitely a brand you can die for” (laughter!). (Participant 1)

Participants patronize certain brands of alcoholic beverages because of their long-term consumption and association with those brands. Brand trust has influenced consumer purchase of these alcoholic beverages to the extent of helping stimulate customer loyalty. Brand parameters, well-known brands, and brand trust all help in the process of developing client loyalty. The effect of brand trust on customer loyalty is crucial to consider. Consumer loyalty is a topic that both economists and practitioners are interested in (Ansah, 2020). Analyses of the elements that influence customer loyalty yield valuable data that may be utilized to influence consumer behaviour and attitudes. In this case, trust appears to play a unique role (Setyawati & Raharja, 2018).

Market success is built on trust, and a lack of that can lead to market failure. Trust influences the dimensions of the final transaction and the selection of market partners. Consumers' confidence in a product's brand plays an important role in the economy (Rudzewicz & Grzybowska Brzezinska, 2013). Positive social links between customers and businesses, based on shared and mutually recognized values and standards, help market transactions (Widyastuti et al., 2019). Consumers that have confidence in a brand are satisfied with their purchases. Thus, brand trust is responsible for developing a favourable response (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2002) and positive purchase intentions towards the brand (Mauri & Minazzi, 2013). The positive responses imply that a high level of brand trust is likely to improve the perception of a product's benefits, leading to increased purchase behaviour and the building of loyalty.

Theme 3: Customer satisfaction

Most of the participants interviewed confirmed their satisfaction with the good customer service offered by some of the retail outlets during their encounter with the sales personnel. Submissions and references were made to excellent customer service, timeliness of services, reasonable pricing, and affordability of goods. In all, the retailers offered something more that has resulted in customer satisfaction. The following comments were samples of some of the participant submissions:

“Buying here is always refreshing. Serving is one thing they do so well here. I do not like wasting when shopping, and that’s exactly what I get here. The sales girls are friendly and smart. I just like the way they serve. I am satisfied with everything here.” (Participant 7)

“I will go for two things that attract me to buy from this particular shop. The very is that, the sales persons know how to treat customers. So, I come here because of their services, I am satisfied with everything.” (Participant 1)

“There are many factors that attract me to buy from this shop. First of all, coming here all the time to buy makes me feel comfortable because I am used to their excellent services. The shop attendants are very good at what they do especially when it comes to serving customers. Commodities are also affordable”. (Participant 5)

“I come here because the shop has several drinks to choose from. This shop serves all purposes when it comes to alcoholic and other non-alcoholic drinks. Aside that, their customer service is good, prices are good, and it is always pleasant shopping here”. (Participant 7)

Customer satisfaction has been one of the essential characteristics that managers focus on because of its impact on consumer purchases. The firm's competitive advantage is that it offers better service to clients than its competitors, going above and beyond their expectations (Minta, 2018). Customer satisfaction is determined by a subjective evaluation of whether the store's chosen option fulfils or exceeds assumptions (Bloemer & de Ruyter, 1998). Customer satisfaction is an important outcome of marketing activity because it connects the various stages of purchaser purchasing behaviour (Jamal & Naser, 2002). Kotler and Keller (2016) posit that customer satisfaction is a client's perception of happiness or frustration when comparing the performance of a product or service with clients' expectations (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Customer satisfaction could be regarded as the essence of success in business. It is evident that customer satisfaction, as suggested by participants in the study, plays a critical role in their repurchase behaviour.

5. Discussion

This current research's objectives are to explore and extend understanding of factors that motivate customer loyalty through retailer brand equity, with perspectives from male alcoholic beverage consumers. The study aims to answer two research questions: how do consumers acquire loyalty to retail outlets? And what factors motivate consumers to develop loyalty towards retail outlets?

Firstly, after data analysis, three main themes have emerged from the several responses from participants. Themes such as customer experience, brand trust, and customer satisfaction were evident in participant submissions. Responses to the first research question revealed customer experience and its influence on loyalty to a particular retail outlet. The retailers' great customer service and customer care shaped these encounters. The customers' experience is a motivational factor for consumers to repeat purchases of alcoholic beverages. Nadiri and Gunay (2013) posit that the only way to remain competitive is to provide an exceptional customer experience during service delivery. Again, in another research, Sharma and Chaubey (2014, p. 18) explained customer experience as the totality of a customer's interactions with a supplier of goods or services during their relationship with that supplier. They stressed the significance of giving customers the experience they want.

The second research question confirmed brand trust and customer satisfaction as themes from participants' responses. Despite the fact that brand trust is more directly linked to products (alcoholic drinks) than retailers, the study found that customers are motivated to buy from their retailers due to the fact that brands they trust are sold to them. The importance of a brand's image in improving consumer happiness and loyalty is demonstrated by brand trust. The outcome is in line with studies done by Anwar et al. (2019), and Wu et al. (2011). Participants mentioned Club beer, Guinness, local gin, Smirnoff, Johnny Walker, and Hennessy as brands they trust. This information is helpful to marketing companies and retailers in providing products and services that consumers desire and prefer.

Furthermore, the research consequences also reveal that customer satisfaction positively influences customer loyalty through retailer brand equity. This result is in line with previous research (Anwar et al., 2019; Yap et al., 2012). The primary goal of this study is to understand how consumers develop loyalty through retail brand equity. Through various responses by participants, they were satisfied with the services they received from the retailers they interacted with, which led to customer loyalty and repurchase behaviour for alcoholic drinks.

The study adopted the expectancy theory of motivation to understand the individual's cognitive assessment of their own experiences through their relationships with retailers. The importance of the Expectancy Theory of Motivation in this study was indicated by the findings because it has revealed the individual participant choices as well as the influence of retailer brand equity as an external force on customer loyalty.

6. Theoretical and Managerial Implications

6.1 Theoretical Implications

This study prides itself on some important theoretical implications. First, the study contributes to the literature on the expectancy theory of motivation by examining the influence of retailer brand equity on customer loyalty. Second, the study extends the existing literature by confirming the influence of customer

satisfaction on customer loyalty through retailer brand equity. The study confirms the multidimensional factors that motivate customer loyalty. These themes, such as customer experience, customer satisfaction, and brand trust, will significantly contribute to the literature on consumer behaviour in general. Significantly, this research will also make a relevant contribution to relationship marketing. While, the influence of retailer brand equity on customer loyalty will offer an insightful understanding of the potential contribution of retailer brand equity to the marketing literature.

6.2 Managerial Implications

The findings from the study provide guidelines for retailer outlets on the motivational factors that increase customer loyalty. The influence of retailer brand equity on customer loyalty will equip retail shops to strategically put measures in place to provide consumers with the best customer service to stimulate repurchase behaviour and customer loyalty. Furthermore, the findings of this research indicate that retailer brand equity is an essential aspect of branding, that companies, retailers, and marketers must not ignore. Therefore, companies and retail shops must continuously train their frontline workers and sales personnel to entice consumers with the best services to encourage store attachment. Loyal customers who purchase on regular basis have been strongly linked to brand equity. Moreover, consumers' preferring one brand over the other increases company profitability. Hence, the growing number of loyal customers can substantially increase profitability and growth (Bataneh et al., 2015). The results from the study show customer experience, customer satisfaction, and brand trust as factors that motivate customer loyalty. Therefore, market practitioners and retailers must strategize and offer good customer service to entice consumers to repurchase. The result also shows the relevance of retailer brand equity in enhancing customer loyalty, so it will also help supermarket managers recognize the significance of customer experience in customer satisfaction and loyalty. The research also provides a set of principles for retailers looking forward to improve their customer service and relationships. Furthermore, the findings will aid practitioners in understanding the essentials of customer satisfaction in the relationship between customers and suppliers. As a result, managers should focus on client happiness; customer loyalty will increase when customer happiness rises.

7. Limitation And Future Study

Though this study is potentially useful both theoretically and practically, it has some limitations. First, the research methodology and design chosen make it impossible to generalize due to the small sample size. Therefore, future studies should employ the quantitative research method with a larger data sample for better generalization. Second, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the researcher was able to interview only ten participants, because most of the customers approached refused to be interviewed, citing social distancing. This development could affect the generalization of results, so future qualitative studies should conduct interviews at convenient times devoid of restrictions. It is also essential that later studies target the required thirty or more participants to enrich the data. Another limitation is connected to the use of only male participants in the study. In reality, the use of only one gender in research makes it quite monotonous. Subsequent researchers should endeavour to include all genders in similar studies.

Furthermore, this research focused on only three retail outlets in Accra, which might not be helpful in the generalization of this study. Other researchers are encouraged to conduct studies on more retail outlets while extending the study to other regions in Ghana. Again, this study concentrated only on alcoholic beverages while excluding other groups of beverages. Other similar studies can explore customer repurchase intentions of beverages considering the role of retailer brand equity.

8. Conclusion

From a marketing perspective, this research gives a firm footing for managers who want to move strategically and boost marketing and productivity, because despite situational effects and marketing efforts to encourage switching, customers remain loyal to their favourite brands. Customer loyalty refers to a strong desire to acquire or patronize a preferred product or service in the future, resulting in recurrent same-brand or same-brand set purchases. Even if other brands perform better than their competitors, loyal customers will not convert to another product. When a large percentage of a company's customers refuses to switch, it has a high level of brand loyalty, which results in long-term financial flows and a steady supply of recommendations that are paid back to the company by loyal clients. Customers can show their loyalty by

sticking with the provider, increasing the number of purchases they make, or increasing the frequency with which they buy. They can also be loyal by influencing other people's purchasing decisions. This study seeks to enhance further understanding of the contributions of retail shops/outlets to customer loyalty. The motivational factors that emerged from the study showed the multidimensionality of customer loyalty. The influence of retailer brand equity is very pronounced in this study. The main themes revealed the positive experiences the retail shops offer to consumers that motivate their repurchase behaviours. The findings mean that consumers will purchase at shops to have the best experiences through customer service, customer experience and brand trust. It also illustrates how consumer pleasure and loyalty are influenced by store brand equity. This study undoubtedly proffers shop owners and marketers guidelines to improve customer service to encourage repurchase behaviour.

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