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**BRAND EXPERIENCE AND CUSTOMERS' REPURCHASE INTENTIONS IN  
UPSCALE RESTAURANTS IN PORT HARCOURT, SOUTH-SOUTH  
NIGERIA: MEDIATING ROLE OF CUSTOMER SATISFACTION**

**Odor, B.C.<sup>1</sup>**

**\*\*Ekeke, J.N.<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Department of Hospitality Management,  
Federal Polytechnic Bida, Niger State.

<sup>2</sup>Department of Hospitality Management & Tourism,  
Faculty of Management Sciences,  
University of Port Harcourt, Choba, Nigeria.

**\*\* Corresponding author: [john.ekeke@uniport.edu.ng](mailto:john.ekeke@uniport.edu.ng)**

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**Abstract**

The study investigated the direct and indirect effect of brand experience on repurchase intention in upscale restaurants in the hospitality industry with customer satisfaction as a mediator in the garden city of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. The descriptive and quantitative survey research gathered data from 150 customers who patronize upscale restaurants in Port Harcourt. Well-structured questionnaire containing 13 items, with four demographic items was used to elicit data from the respondents. After data editing, and reliability analysis of the instrument, inferential statistics was conducted to validate the model developed for the study with the help of SPSS. The result of the inferential statistical analysis revealed that repurchase intention towards the upscale restaurants is driven by brand experience. The mediating role of customer satisfaction also exists significantly between brand experience and repurchase intention. The empirical study extends the understanding of the brand experience construct by studying its influence on repurchase intention and also by incorporating customer satisfaction as a mediating variable in the context of Nigeria. Entrepreneurs and their managers operating upscale restaurants in the hospitality industry are expected to build capabilities in the area of experiential value conceptualization and delivery based on the needs and expectations of their target market. This is because the delivery of memorable brand experience will engender customer satisfaction which is capable of promoting positive customers' behavioural outcomes such as repurchase intentions. To achieve success in this regard, restaurant managers are expected to develop capabilities in customer experience management.

**Keywords:** Brand experience, Customer Satisfaction, Repurchase Intention, Experiential value, Customer Experience Management.

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**Introduction**

The global tourism industry is characterized by intensive competition (Perdue, 2002; Ekeke & Olori, 2020) which places a demand on tourism service marketers to seek ways

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to understand the target market's needs and expectations. The aim is to develop tourism marketing strategies capable of delivering customer value and capturing value in return (Kotler & Armstrong 2010). Rather, (2018) posited that creating excellent customer experiences in the contemporary hospitality industry is the main source of differentiation strategy which accounts for competitive advantage as it generates valuable customer relationships.

The foregoing is in consonance with the fact that experience has become the product in the competitive hospitality industry, thus confirming the paradigm shift from traditional marketing to experiential marketing (Schmitt 1999; Pine & Gilmore 1999; Brakus, Schmitt, & Zarantonello 2009). This implies that owners/managers of tourism service organisations like hotels, restaurants, car rental companies, airlines, etc., are expected to develop capabilities in delivering of excellent brand experiences because of its ability to enhance customers/guests positive behavioural responses to the service brand.

In extant literature, there are empirical evidence studied in various contexts at the exclusion of Nigeria to prove that brand experience commonly called customer experience affects consumer behavioural intentions (Brakus, et al., 2009; Kassim, Igau, Harun, & Tahajuddin, 2014; Ebrahim, et al., 2013; Chinomona, 2013; Gani, Mahdzar, & Anuar, 2019; Jang & Feng 2007; Alia, Hussainb, & Ragavan, 2014; Gabioch & Gweba, 2011). This current study attempts to fill the gap in literature by investigating the effect of brand experience on customers' repurchase intention, with customer satisfaction serving as the mediating variable in the context of upscale restaurants in Port Harcourt, River State, Nigeria.

## **Conceptual Review**

### **Brand Experience**

Brakus, et al, (2009,p.52) defined brand experience as “sensations, feelings, cognitions, and behavioural responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand's design and identity, packaging, communication and environment”, while Pine and Gilmore, (1998, p. 12) described experiences as “a distinct economic offering, as distinct from services as services are from goods”, thus confirming Brakus, et al (2009) conceptualisation as sensations.

Gentile, Spiller, and Noci (2007) noted that, customer experience originates from a set of interactions between customer and product, or part of its organization, which provokes a reaction, which is strictly a personal experience with customer's involvement at different levels including rational, emotional, sensorial, physical and emotional. These experiences are memorable in nature and impacts on customers' satisfaction and

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behavioural intentions, particularly, in the tourism and hospitality industry, where customers look out for various environments that can trigger their memories and emotions and thus enhance their and overall experiential value (Xu & Chan, 2010).

As noted by Knutson, Beck, Kim, and Cha, J. (2006), experiences are internally produced at the general level and by its nature, individuals tend to create their own experience based on their respective backgrounds, values, attitudes and beliefs brought to the situation or marketplace. The implication being that, tourism and hospitality service organisations are expected to understand the needs and preferences of their target market to enable them create the required environment that is capable of creating the appropriate experiential value. Due the quest for competitive advantage through differentiation strategies in the hospitality and tourism industry, experience plays key role in the service sector where consumption of experiences remains the norm.

Several theoretical foundations have been laid for brand/customer experience by scholars, who approached the concept through different perspectives, which has resulted in diverse dimensions (Sharma, & Rather, 2015). The various dimensions postulated for the measuring of brand experience and their respective authors are as follows: fun, feelings and fantasies (Holdbrook & Hirschman, 1982); entertainment, education, aesthetic, and escapism(4Es) (Pine & Gilmore, 1998); sense, feel, think, act, and relate(Schmitt, 1999;2003); experience, entertainment, exhibitionism, evangelizing (Holbrook, 2000); sensorial, emotional, cognitive, pragmatic, lifestyle and relational component(Gentle, et al., 2007), sensory, emotional, intellectual, and behavioural (Brakus, et al., 2009). It is through interactive experiences with the brand that consumers build preferences and purchasing decisions (Holdbrook, 2007). As noted by Ebrahim, Ghoneim, Irani and Fan (2016, p.1233), “despite the existence of different types of responses that define consumers’ brand experiences there is no set of definite responses to describe consumer experiences with brands”

For this current study, sensory and emotional experiences are the dimensions of brand experience adopted. Sensory experience “appeals to the senses with the objective of creating sensory experiences, through sight, touch, taste and smell”(Schmitt, 1999, p.61). Through aesthetics or excitement, tourism service organizations could utilize sense marketing to add value to their product offering and by extension motivate their target market towards positive behavioural intentions. On the other hand, the emotional component, enables consumers to develop emotional bond with the brand with the possibility of developing positive feelings towards the brand(Schmitt, 1999).

## **Customer Satisfaction**

Atarodian (2013, p.204) described customer satisfaction as “a level of performance that meets customer expectations”. Tse and Wilton (1988, p. 204) defined the concept as “consumer’s response to the evaluation of the perceived discrepancy between prior expectation and the actual performance of the product as perceived after its consumption”. Other scholars see customer satisfactions as a judgment which is made by consumers on the basis of a specific service encounter or product purchase/consumption (Cronin & Taylor, 1992)

As rightly observed by Golder, Mitra, and Moorman, (2012), customer satisfaction is very important in the hospitality industry as well as being the most examined concept in hospitality marketing literature, even as it has engendered long term interest in several other fields (Li, Ye, & Law, 2013). It has been found to be an antecedent to customer/guest post consumption behavioural intentions towards the brand. For example, in Iran, Atarodian (2013) found that customer satisfaction has positive effect on attitudes toward the brand, loyalty and re purchase intention.

As consumers encounter brands, the various interactions with the brand which results in customer experience has been confirmed to generally affect the customer’s overall satisfaction with the services brand (Grace & O’Cass, 2004). The implication being that the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of a customer, defines or, is an essential outcome of customer experience.

## **Repurchase Intentions**

Repurchase intention is described by Ebrahim, et al (2013, p.1244) as “consumers’ decision about repeating the action of purchasing the brand”. Young, Clark, and McIntyre (2007, p.92) defined return patronage intention as “the likelihood that a current customer of a restaurant expects to return in the future for a dining experience”. The concept of repurchase intention is considered as one of the most important behavioral outcome of consumers in marketing simply because it signifies the determination to buy the same product or brand again (Pharm & Train, 2014) as well as accounting for firm profitability due to repeat purchases by several customers.

It is suggested in extant literatures that customers who return for re-patronage are satisfied customers and they tend to spend more money through purchases, spread positive word of mouth, and remain loyal instead of switching to a competitor (Mohsan, Nawaz, Khan, Shaukat, & Aslam, 2011). This makes it imperative that restaurant

managers and their owners increase the level of customer satisfaction of their customers with a view to enhancing the rate of return visit (Darley, Luethge, & Thatte, 2008).

From the foregoing, the knowledge of what makes customers to repurchase a particular brand or revisit a particular firm/destination is very crucial for hospitality and other tourism service organisations. In an online shopping experience research in Veitnam, Pham, Train, Misra, Maskeciunas and Damasevicius (2018), found that access, search, evaluation, transaction and possession/post-purchase convenience had positive effect on repurchase intention. Nasermodeli, et al (2013) found that sensory experience had positive effect on purchase intention in the context of entertainment (cinema-watching of movies). With this empirical evidence, it is safe to argue that brand experience can enhance the level of customer satisfaction which is capable of motivating customers to return to the firm re-patronage.

### Conceptual Model and Hypotheses Development

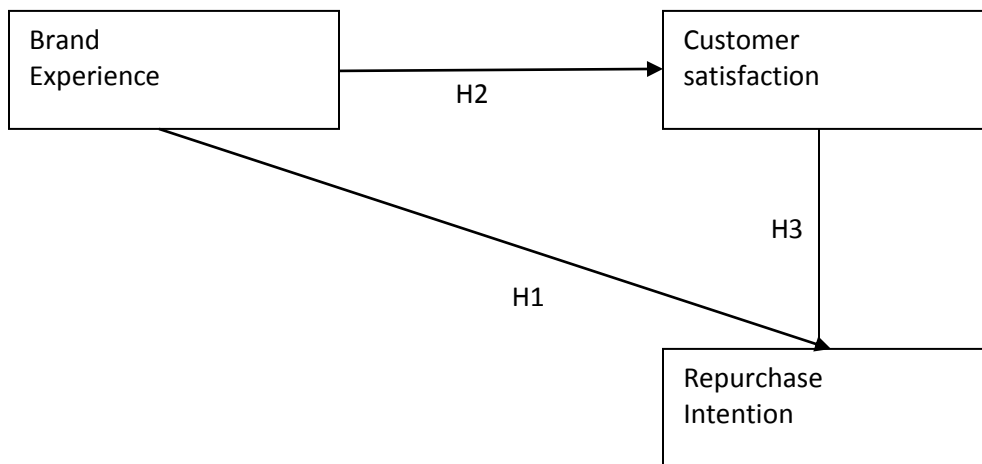


Figure 1: Brand Experience Repurchase Intention Model

The research model demonstrates that brand experience has both direct and indirect influence on repurchase intention. The indirect influence of brand experience on repurchase intention is mediated by customer satisfaction.

### Brand Experience and Repurchase Intention

In the telecommunications industry in Egypt, Ebrahim, et al, (2016) examined the role of consumer experience in the relationship between brand preference and repurchase intention. The exploratory study obtained primary data using self administered questionnaires through convenience sampling technique from mobile phone users in shopping malls at Cairo, Egypt

over a period of one month. The statistical result revealed that the five factors of brand knowledge; attribute perceptions, brand experience, price perception, and self-congruity had significant influence on brand preference. The result also showed that, the relationship between the general brand attributes and appearance and brand preference are partially mediated by brand preference.

Gani, Mahdzar, and Anuar, (2019) investigated the relationship between visitor's experiential attributes and revisit intention to Islamic tourism attractions in Malaysia. The findings of the study revealed that escapism, entertainment, and aesthetic are the experiences that affect Muslim visitors' revisit intention to the Islamic attraction sites. Education, was found to have a weak relationship with visitors' revisit intention.

Jang & Feng (2007) investigated the effects of tourists' novelty-seeking and destination satisfaction on the revisit intentions measured on short-term, mid-term, and long-term bases. The statistical results showed that satisfaction was a direct antecedent of short-term revisit intention, but not of mid-term or of long-term revisit intention. Also, novelty seeking was found to be a significant antecedent of mid-term revisit intention which was connected to long-term revisit intention.

In the Malaysian two tourist spots of Langkawi and Penang, Alia, Hussainb, & Ragavan, (2014) investigated the effect of four facets of customer experience on their memories and loyalty in the context of resort hotels. The sample was selected through a convenient sampling technique with a total of 600 questionnaires. The result of the inferential statistics showed that all four dimensions of customer experience influenced their memories and loyalty.

In the context of a virtual word, Gabioch and Gweba (2011) investigated the effect of virtual brand experience on purchase intention, with multichannel congruence mediating the relationship. The findings showed that multichannel congruence mediates the relationship between virtual brand experience and real world purchase intention. Perceived diagnosticity positively impacted on real world purchase intention.

Nasermoadeli, Ling and Maghnati (2013) examined the impact of customer experience on purchase intention in the context of entertainment (cinema– watching of movies). The sample were business students in a private university in Kaula Lumpur, Malaysia. The findings showed among others that, sensory and emotional experience had positive influence on purchase intention.

In accordance with the foregoing empirical evidence, we suggest that the relationship between brand experience and repurchase intention towards upscale restaurants will be positive and significant. This is based on the argument of Brakus, et al (2019), that because brand experience varies in strength and intensity, service brands which are capable of offering superior experiential value to their customer will expect positive behavioural outcome such as revisit intention.

We therefore posit that:

H1: The higher the brand experience a customer has, the higher the customer satisfaction level with an upscale restaurant in Port Harcourt.

#### Brand Experience and Customer Satisfaction

Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello, (2009) developed a scale for brand experience (sensory, affective, intellectual, and behavioral) measurement and tested it in six different studies. The statistical results showed that brand experience affects consumer satisfaction and loyalty directly and indirectly through brand personality associations. In telecommunication market context in Egypt, El Nagger and Benndary (2017) examined the impact of experience and brand trust on brand loyalty with brand equity mediating the relationship. The result of the statistical analysis showed that among other positive relationships, brand experience had direct and positive relationship with brand loyalty.

In Cappadocia which is an important center of cultural tourism in Turkey, Çoban, & Yetiş, (2019) examined the role of memorability as a mediator in the relationship between customers' hotel experiences and satisfaction levels in the context of cave hotels. With data analysis on responses from 439 tourists staying in cave hotels, the statistical result showed that memorability plays an indirect mediation role in the effect of hotel experience dimensions on satisfaction.

Hosany and Witham,(2010) sought to identify the underlying dimensions of cruisers' experiences (education, entertainment, esthetics and escapism) and to investigate the relationships among cruisers' experiences, satisfaction, and intention to recommend. The respondents were tourists on a two-week cruise vacation onboard the megaship Rhapsody of the Seas cruise liner, which is owned and operated by Royal Caribbean International Cruise Line. The cruise left Singapore and traveled to Hong Kong, with scheduled stops in Cambodia, Vietnam, and Thailand with many nationals represented by Americans (44%), Britons (22%), Australian (19%) and others(15%). The findings showed that the four experience dimensions were statistically related to memory, arousal, and perceived overall quality and overall

satisfaction, and the relationship were strong. However, in terms of relative importance, the esthetics dimension made the largest contribution across the three models (highest standardized beta coefficients).

In the context of Chinese resort hotels, Ali, Amin, and Cobanoglu, (2015) examined the relationships between service experience, emotions, satisfaction, and price acceptance. The findings revealed that the relationship between service experience/emotions, significantly influenced customer satisfaction. On the other hand, customer satisfaction influenced price acceptance of customers significantly.

From the foregoing, we therefore hypothesize that;

H2: Brand experience significantly affects Customer satisfaction in upscale restaurants in Port Harcourt, Nigeria

### **Customer Satisfaction and Repurchase Intention**

In three different hotels in Damascus, Syria, Al-Msallam, and Alhaddad, (2016)

investigated the effect of trust, commitment (affective and Calculative) and customer satisfaction on customer loyalty. With Partial Least Square(PLS) analysis, the findings showed that customer satisfaction, trust on hotel and affective commitment had a positive and significant correlation with customer loyalty.

Understanding what constitute experiential value by restaurant owners/managers is very important because it is critical to satisfying restaurant customers and the possibility of their returning to the same restaurant for re-patronage. Several empirical studies in different market contexts tends to confirm the fact that, sensorial, emotional, intellectual, behavioural experiences and other dimensions of brand experience have positive effect on consumer behavioural intentions such as, Hosany and Witham,(2010), Brakus, Schmitt, et al, (2009) and Çoban, & Yetiş, (2019).

H3: Customer satisfaction significantly affects customers' repurchase intention in upscale restaurants in Port Harcourt, Nigeria

### **Mediating role of Customer Satisfaction**

Iglesias, Singh, and Batista-Foguet, (2011) investigated the direct and indirect relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty, with the relationship mediated by affective commitment. The findings showed that affective commitment mediates the relationship



between brand experience and brand loyalty for all the three product categories (cars, laptops and sneakers) studied.

In the telecommunication market (mobile phones) in Malaysia, Kassim, Igau,

Harun, and Tahajuddin, (2014) investigated the mediating role of customer

satisfaction in the relationship between perceived product quality, perceived value, and brand loyalty. The statistical results showed that a significant relationship exist between perceived product quality and brand loyalty, while customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between perceived product quality, perceived value, and brand loyalty. On the other hand, relationship between perceived value and brand loyalty was not significant.

In Semarang, Central Java, Indonesia, Ngatno (2017) investigated the effect of brand communication and brand experience (entertainment) on brand satisfaction, trust and loyalty. The sample were consumers of Inul Vista Karaoke brand. The statistical results showed that brand communication and experience had positive effect on brand satisfaction and trust. On the other hand, brand satisfaction and trust showed partial mediation between brand experience and loyalty

Kassim, Igau, Harun, Tahajuddin, (2014) investigated mediating role of customer satisfaction in the relationship between perceived product quality, perceived value, and brand loyalty in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah among mobile phone users. The statistical results showed that customer satisfaction significantly mediated the relationship between perceived product quality, perceived value, and brand loyalty. In another finding, perceived product quality had significant relationship with brand loyalty. However, there was no significant relationship between perceived value and brand loyalty.

Stevens, Knutson, and Patton, (1995) noted that, though there is no guarantee that satisfied customers will revisit a restaurant after the first patronage, yet experience proved that 90 per cent of the dissatisfied customers will not revisit the restaurant. This makes it imperative for service brands to ensure that their customers are satisfied at all times through offering them memorable experiences. Customer satisfaction is of great interest in services marketing. This is occasioned by the fact that there are empirical evidence to show that customer satisfaction has links with purchase/consumption and post-purchase behaviours such as repeat purchase, attitude change, loyalty and positive word-of-mouth (Fornell, Johnson, Anderson, Cha, & Bryant, 1996; Stevens, et al, 1995); Oliver, 1994; Oliver, 1997).

From the foregoing, we can hypothesize that;

H4: Customer Satisfaction mediates the causal effect of brand experience on customers' repurchase intention significantly in upscale restaurants in Port Harcourt, Nigeria

#### Research Methodology

Research design: Descriptive research design was adopted for this empirical study because research involves collection of data that deal with attitude, preference, behaviour and perception of customers of upscale restaurants. Another reason is due to the fact that the research design allows the researcher to hypothesise several variables in measurable relationships.

Sample and data collection: data were collected from a sample of current customers of six upscale customers in the garden city of Port Harcourt who were found dining at the restaurants during the period of questionnaire administration. A sample size of 150 customers was gotten from the unknown population using Freund and William's formula for sample size determination from unknown population. A well-structured questionnaire was used to generate data from the respondents convenience sampling technique. Out of a total of 150 questionnaires distributed, 140 were retrieved, while 102 that proved useful were subjected to data analysis.

Demographic Profile of Respondents: The profile analysis of the respondents showed that 51 respondents (50%) were male while 51 respondents (50%) were female also. In terms of age brackets, 24 respondents (23.5%), were less than 20 years, 54 respondents (52.9%) were within 20–29 years, 22 respondents (21.6%) were within 30–39 years while 2 respondents (2%) were greater than 40 years. From the age bracket data, majority of the respondents were within the ages of 20 – 29 years.

Regarding the respondents' level of education, data revealed as follows; those with senior secondary school certificate (SSCE/GCE) were 23 (22.5%), Higher National Diploma and Bachelor degree (HND/B.SC) 35 (34.3%), MA/MSc/MBA (42) (41.2%) and Ph.D (2) (2%). Respondents with a second degree were of the majority.

The analysis of the number of years that the respondents patronised the upscale restaurants were as follows; below 2 years 14(13.7%), 2-4years 49(48%), 9 years and above 25(24%). This information implies that majority of the respondents patronised the upscale restaurants between 2 and 4 years.

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### Measurement Instrument and Questionnaire design

A well-structured questionnaire was the major instrument for data collection. All the measurement items were measured on a five-point Likert-type scale anchored by: Strongly Disagree [SD](1). Disagree [D](2), Agree [A](3), Agree fairly strongly(4) and Strongly Agree [SA](5) to express the degree of agreement with the items or otherwise.

All the items were adapted from extant literature. The two dimensions of brand experience; sensory and emotional experience were measured using items adapted from (Brakus, et al 2009). The three items used for customer satisfaction were adapted from Ryu , Lee and Kim, 2012 and Lim (2010), while items for repurchase intention were adapted from Jiang, Yang, and Jun (2012).

### Research Results

#### Reliability Analysis

**Table 1 Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.984	.988	13

The reliability of the 13-item research instrument was ascertained with Cronbach Alpha. The value of the Cronbach Alpha is .991 as shown in Table 1. This value is above the threshold value of .7 as suggested by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). This shows that the measuring instrument is internally consistent and therefore helpful and applicable in measuring opinions of customers of exclusive bars in the context of the determinant of the experiential value of customers and how it affects their intention to revisit the bars.

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## Discriminant Validity

**Table 2 Correlation Matrix**

	Brand Experience	Customer Satisfaction	Repurchase Intention
Brand Experience	1.000	.768	.751
Correlation Customer Satisfaction	.768	1.000	.919
Repurchase Intention	.751	.919	1.000

Discriminant validity is defined by Hair Jr, Black, Babin, and Anderson, (2010, p.126) as the “the degree to which two conceptually similar concepts are distinct”. For this study, Table 2 above shows the correlation matrix used to determine the discriminant validity of the study instrument. According to Fornell and Larcker (1981) discriminant validity occurs if the diagonal elements are higher than all the off-diagonal elements in their columns and rows. This requirement is ascertained in Table 2, thus confirming the discriminant validity.

## Sampling Adequacy

**Table 3 KMO and Bartlett's Test**

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.934
Approx. Chi-Square		2566.922
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Df	78
	Sig.	.000

The Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) performed on 13 exploratory items of brand experience, customer satisfaction and repurchase intention as specified in the conceptual model in Figure 1 for the conduct of the KMO and Bartlett’s Test is shown in Table 3.

The Bartlett's test of sphericity is significant at  $p<.000$  and KMO measure of sampling adequacy is .934 which is far greater than 0.5 which Kasser (as cited in Wong & Musa 2010, p. 3417) has been suggested as a minimum level.

### Data Analyses

To ascertain the effect of brand experience on repurchase intention and other hypothesised relationships, multiple regression analysis was conducted.

### Hypothesis 1 Brand Experience and Repurchase Intention

Table 4-6 Multiple Regression analysis showing the effect of brand experience on customers' repurchase intention.

**Table 4 Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.751 <sup>a</sup>	.564	.560	.45118

a. Predictors: (Constant), Brand Experience

**Table 5 ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	26.350	1	26.350	129.442	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	20.356	100	.204		
	Total	46.706	101			

a. Dependent Variable: Repurchase Intention

b. Predictors: (Constant), Brand Experience

**Table 6 Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	1.683	.244		6.897	.000
	Brand Experience	.716	.063	.751	11.377	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Repurchase Intention

Table 4 shows that R is .751, and represents the simple correlation which is very high. R<sup>2</sup> value (“R” Square) is .564 and adjusted R square is .560. The implication is that 56.4% of the variance in repurchase intention can be explained by the changes in independent variables of brand experience. As a general rule, this model is considered as a ‘good fit’ as the linear regression model is able to explain nearly 60% (threshold) of variance in the dependent variable: repurchase intention (Moosa & Hassan, 2015).

The *p* value .000 is <0.05 in Table 5 is an indication that the regression model statistically significantly predicts repurchase intention which is the outcome variable. This implies that the hypothesis is supported.

Table 6 provides the necessary information to predict repurchase intention in the regression equation. With  $\beta = 0.716$ ,  $p=0.000 < 0.05$ ) the degree of contribution of brand experience to repurchase intention is high and significant. This result implies that brand experience made significant unique contribution to the equation.

Therefore the model can be written as:

$$\text{Customers' Repurchase Intention} = 1.638 + 0.716 (\text{BE})$$

### Multiple Regression Analysis for dimensions of brand experience H1a and H1b

**Table 7 Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.974	.159		12.422	.000
1					
Sensory Experience	.067	.084	.078	.804	.423
Emotional Experience	.617	.073	.814	8.407	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Repurchase Intention

Table 7 provides the multiple regression analysis for the contribution of the two dimensions of brand experience used in the study and hypothesized as H1a and H1b respectively. The table shows that un-standardized beta ( $\beta$ ) of sensory experience and emotional experience are: ( $\beta = 0.067$ ), and ( $\beta = 0.617$ ) respectively. This specifies that emotional experience made the greatest contribution to the model.

The result of the regression analysis shows that only emotional experience ( $\beta = 0.617$ ,  $p=0.000 < 0.05$ ) provided by the upscale restaurants in influencing their customers' behavioural intentions made significant contribution to explaining the dependent variable, while sensory experience ( $\beta = 0.067$ ,  $p=0.423 > 0.05$ ) did not.

Therefore the model can be written as:

$$\text{Customers Revisit Intention} = 0.067(\text{SE}) + 0.617(\text{EE}) + 1.974$$

The model suggest that by associating any of the two dimensions of brand experience of an upscale restaurant brand, the empirical model can increase the level of customers' intention to revisit the restaurant for patronage when other things remain constant. Accordingly therefore, changes in emotional experience of each upscale restaurant brand can have the biggest influence on level of customers intention to revisit the restaurant for patronage as its beta co-efficient ( $\beta = 0.617$ ,  $p=0.000 < 0.05$ ) is the highest and significant.

**Hypothesis 2 Brand Experience and Customer Satisfaction**

Table 8-10 Multiple Regression analysis showing the effect of brand experience on customers' repurchase intention.

**Table 8 Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.768 <sup>a</sup>	.590	.586	.48730

a. Predictors: (Constant), Brand Experience

**Table 9 ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	34.215	1	34.215	144.084	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	23.746	100	.237		
	Total	57.961	101			

a. Dependent Variable: Customer Satisfaction

b. Predictors: (Constant), Brand Experience

**Table 10 Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.204	.264		4.569	.000
	Brand Experience	.815	.068	.768	12.004	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Customer Satisfaction



Table 8 shows that R is .768, and represents the simple correlation between brand experience and customer satisfaction is very high. R<sup>2</sup> value (“R” Square) is .598 and adjusted R square is .586. This implication is that 59.8% of the variance in customer satisfaction can be explained by the changes in independent variables of brand experience. As a general rule, this model is considered as a ‘good fit’ as this, linear regression model is able to explain exactly 60% (threshold) of variance in the dependent variable: customer satisfaction (Moosa & Hassan, 2015).

The *p* value .000 is <0.05 in Table 9 is an indication that the regression model statistically significantly predicts customer satisfaction which is the outcome variable. This implies that the hypothesis is supported.

Table 6 provides the necessary information to predict customer satisfaction in the regression equation. With  $\beta = 0.815$ ,  $p=0.000 < 0.05$ ) the degree of contribution of brand experience to customer satisfaction is high and significant. This result implies that brand experience made significant unique contribution to the equation.

Therefore the model can be written as:

$$\text{Customer Satisfaction} = 1.204 + 0.815(\text{BE})$$

### Hypothesis 3 Customer Satisfaction and Repurchase Intention

**Table 11 Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.919 <sup>a</sup>	.845	.843	.26920

a. Predictors: (Constant), Customer Satisfaction

**Table 12 ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	39.459	1	39.459	544.520	.000 <sup>b</sup>

Residual	7.247	100	.072		
Total	46.706	101			

a. Dependent Variable: Repurchase Intention

b. Predictors: (Constant), Customer Satisfaction

**Table 13 Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	.853	.155		5.506	.000
Customer Satisfaction	.825	.035	.919	23.335	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Repurchase Intention

Table 11 shows that R is .919, and represents the simple correlation between customer satisfaction and repurchase intention which is very high. R<sup>2</sup> value (“R” Square) is .845 and adjusted R square is .843. This implies that 84.5% of the variance in repurchase intention can be explained by the changes in independent variables of customer satisfaction. As a general rule, this model is considered as a ‘good fit’ as this linear regression model is able to explain more than 60% (threshold) of variance in the dependent variable: repurchase intention (Moosa & Hassan, 2015).

The *p* value .000 is <0.05 in Table 12 is an indication that the regression model statistically significantly predicts repurchase intention which is the outcome variable. This implies that the hypothesis is supported.

Table 13 provides the necessary information to predict repurchase intention in a regression equation. With  $\beta = 0.825$ ,  $p=0.000 < 0.05$ ) the degree of contribution of customer satisfaction to repurchase intention is known.

This result implies that customer satisfaction made significant unique contribution to the equation.

Therefore the model can be written as:

$$\text{Customers Repurchase Intention} = .853 + 0.825(\text{CS})$$

### Testing of hypotheses 1, 2 and 3

#### Decision Rule

If  $PV < 0.05$  = Hypothesis is supported

$PV > 0.05$  = Hypothesis is not supported

**H1:** The outcome of analysis show that brand experience had significant effect on customers' repurchase intentions to the upscale restaurants in Port Harcourt ( $\beta = 0.716$ ,  $p=0.000 < 0.05$ ).

**H1a:** The outcome of analysis show that sensory experience had no significant effect on customers' repurchase intentions to the upscale restaurants in Port Harcourt ( $\beta = 0.067$ ,  $p=0.423 < 0.05$ ).

**H1b:** The outcome of analysis show that emotional experience had significant effect on customers' repurchase intentions to the upscale restaurants in Port Harcourt ( $\beta = 0.617$ ,  $p=0.000 < 0.05$ ).

**H2:** The outcome of analysis show that brand experience had significant effect on customer satisfaction in the upscale restaurants in Port Harcourt ( $\beta = 0.815$ ,  $p=0.000 < 0.05$ ).

**H3:** The outcome of analysis show that customer satisfaction had significant effect on customers' repurchase intentions to the upscale restaurants in Port Harcourt ( $\beta = 0.825$ ,  $p=0.000 < 0.05$ ).

**Hypothesis four: Mediation Test**

**Table 14 Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	1.683	.244		6.897	.000
Brand Experience	.716	.063	.751	11.377	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Repurchase Intention

**Table 15 Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	.780	.158		4.930	.000
Brand Experience	.104	.058	.110	1.801	.075
Customer Satisfaction	.750	.055	.835	13.719	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Repurchase Intention

**Table 16 Sobel test**

Input:	Test statistic:	Std. Error:	p-value:
a 1.68	Sobel test: 6.108	0.206	0
b .75	Aroian test: 6.093	0.209	0

$s_a$	.24	Goodman test:	6.122	0.206	0
$s_b$	.06				

From Tables 14 and 15 the following values  $a$ ,  $s_a$ ,  $b$ , and  $s_b$  =.11. were extracted and used to compute the Sobel Test for mediation, the result of which is captured in Table 16. As shown in Table 16, the test statistic for the Sobel test is 6.108 with an associated  $p$ -value= 0. The fact that the  $p$ -value is  $< 0.05$  is an indication that the association between the independent variables (brand experience) and the dependent variable (repurchase intention) is reduced significantly by the inclusion of the mediating variable (customer satisfaction) in the model. This finding shows that there is a clear evidence of mediation. Accordingly, we conclude that hypothesis 4 is supported.

From the foregoing, all the hypotheses (H1, H2, H3 and H4) were all supported.

## Discussion of Results

**Hypothesis 1** showed a significant effect of brand experience on customers' repurchase intentions towards upscale restaurants in Port Harcourt ( $\beta = 0.716$ ,  $p=0.000 < 0.05$ ). Therefore, H1 is supported. This finding is consistent with the findings of Ebrahim, et al (2016), Gani, et al (2019) and Jang and Feng (2007). Further statistical analysis showed that for **H1a** sensory experience had no significant effect ( $\beta = 0.067$ ,  $p=0.423 < 0.05$ ) on repurchase intentions of upscale restaurant customers. This finding is inconsistent with Nasermodeli, et al (2013). For **H1b**, emotional experience had significant effect ( $\beta = 0.617$ ,  $p=0.000 < 0.05$ ) on customers' repurchase intentions. This finding is consistent with Nasermodeli, et al (2013).

**Hypothesis 2** posited a significant effect of brand experience on customer satisfaction at the upscale restaurant in Port Harcourt. With  $\beta = 0.815$ ,  $p=0.000 < 0.05$ , the effect is significant. This result is consistent with the prediction of H2 and is therefore supported. Thus, a higher level of brand experience provided by upscale restaurants is associated with a high propensity by customers to revisit the restaurants for patronage. This finding is consistent with the finding of Hosany and Witham (2010), Brakus, et al (2009) and Ali, et al (2015).

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**Hypothesis 3** posited a significant effect of customer satisfaction on customers' repurchase intentions to the upscale restaurants in Port Harcourt. With  $\beta = 0.825$ ,  $p=0.000 < 0.05$ , the effect is significant. This result is consistent with the prediction of H3 and is therefore supported. Thus, a higher level of customer satisfaction arising from experiential value provided by upscale restaurants is associated with a high propensity by customers to revisit the restaurants for patronage. This finding is consistent with the finding of Al-Msallam and Alhaddad (2016).

**Hypothesis 4:** The result of the Sobel test shows that the test statistic is 6.108 while the  $p$ -value is  $0.000 > .050$  which means that the association between brand experience and repurchase intention is reduced significantly because the observed  $p$ -value falls below the established alpha value of .05. The findings of this study show that customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between brand experience and customers' revisit intention to upscale restaurants indirectly through the mechanism and framework of customer satisfaction. This finding is consistent with Kassim, et al (2014).

## Conclusion

The empirical study investigated the effect of brand experience on customers' repurchase intention at upscale restaurants in the hospitality segment of the tourism market in the Garden City of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria with customer satisfaction mediating the outcome of the intervention. Data collected from current customers of six upscale restaurants who were patronising the restaurants at the time of questionnaire administration in the Garden City of Port Harcourt was used to test four hypotheses developed for the study. The empirical results supported all the research hypotheses significantly except one.

A very important finding of the study is the fact that further statistical analysis of the effect of the two dimensions of brand experience on repurchase intention showed that only emotional experience ( $\beta = 0.617$ ,  $p=0.000 < 0.05$ ) had significant effect on repurchase intention, unlike sensory experience ( $\beta = 0.067$ ,  $p=0.423 < 0.05$ ). The reason may not be far-fetched, as it could be ascribed to the fact that an average upscale restaurant is designed and equipped to offer pleasurable experiences.

It is therefore safe to conclude by stating that the outcome of the research indicates that emotional experience is an important determinant of customers' behavioural intentions such as revisiting the upscale restaurants for re-patronage. It is very important for entrepreneurs managing upscale restaurants to identify, evaluate and manage customers

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experiences. Purposeful and fruitful implications to both academicians and entrepreneurs (the practitioners) could be provided from this empirical study.

### **Implications of the Study**

When customers or consumers are satisfied with a brand by virtue of the experiential value they receive, they are likely to repurchase that brand, and as such contribute to a firm's profitability. The implication is that any firm that want to enhance the degree of customer satisfaction, the entrepreneurs and their managers ought to invest in strategies that can foster brand satisfaction through the delivery of memorable experiential value. The current study is an attempt to examine the influence of brand experience as a predictor of repurchase intention, with customer satisfaction mediating the relationship in an African context. To a large extent, the findings of the study are expected to provide fruitful implications to both practitioners and academicians.

On the academic side, this current study makes a significant contribution to the brand management literature by systematically exploring the impact of brand experience on repurchase intention with customer satisfaction mediating the relationship in Nigeria.

Overall, the current study findings therefore provide tentative support to the proposition that brand experience and customer satisfaction should be recognized as significant antecedents for gaining and sustaining repurchase intention in upscale restaurants in Nigeria.

On the practitioners' side, the important influence of brand experience and mediating role of customer satisfaction in Nigeria is highlighted. This study therefore argue that marketers can benefit from the implications of these findings. For instance, given the robust relationship between brand experience and repurchase intention (0.751), brand experience and customer satisfaction (0.768) and also between customer satisfaction and repurchase intention (0.919), marketers ought to pay attention to both brand experience and brand satisfaction in order to build customers' repurchase intention. For example, by improving the quality of restaurant environment and robust service quality capable of enhancing customers' emotions and excite the human senses service brands, customers are likely to be satisfied through the resulting experiential value. Eventually, the customers will become repurchase from a service brand that satisfies their needs. This calls for developing customer experience management capabilities.

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### Limitations and Future Research

Despite how useful this current study is as discussed above, the research has its limitations. First and most significantly, the study can be improved upon by increasing the sample size and including participants in other geographical areas like South East, South West, as well as the Northern region of Nigeria. Second, the current study was limited to Nigeria. For results comparison, subsequent researches should contemplate replicating this study in other developing countries like Ghana and Kenya. Finally, the present study did not examine such factors as brand involvement, brand attachment and brand loyalty. Future studies should focus on other antecedents and their potential effects on repurchase intentions. In the long run, however, these suggested future avenues of study stand to immensely contribute new knowledge to the existing body of brand management literature in Africa.

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