

SERVICE AMBIANCE AND CUSTOMER PATRONAGE OF SUPERMARKETS IN PORT HARCOURT

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ABSTRACT: This study examined the relationship between service ambiance and customer patronage of supermarkets in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. Specifically, the study focused on two dimensions of service ambiance; store colour and store lighting. A correlational survey research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised thirty five supermarkets operating in Port Harcourt, while one hundred and forty copies of the questionnaire were distributed in the frame four copies each to supermarket managers, out of which one hundred and eleven valid responses were used for analysis. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire, validated through content and face validity, and reliability was established using Cronbach's alpha with a coefficient of 0.98. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Spearman Rank Order Correlation at a 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed a strong and statistically significant positive relationship between store colour and customer patronage, as well as between store lighting and customer patronage. These results indicated that visual and atmospheric elements of the retail environment significantly influence customers' emotional responses, satisfaction, and

repeat patronage behaviour. The study concluded that service ambiance is a strategic marketing tool that shapes customer perceptions and loyalty beyond product and price considerations. It was therefore recommended that supermarket operators invest in well-coordinated colour schemes and appropriate lighting designs to enhance customer experience and sustain patronage in a competitive retail environment.

Keywords: *Service ambiance, Store colour, Store lighting, Customer patronage, Supermarkets.*

Introduction

In today's dynamic retail environment, the service ambiance of business establishments has become a significant determinant of customer behavior and loyalty. Across global markets, consumers are no longer influenced solely by the core products and prices offered by supermarkets, but also by the overall sensory and experiential elements that shape their in-store encounter (Baker et al., 2021). Service ambiance encompasses the total atmosphere of a retail environment created through tangible and intangible factors such as lighting, music, cleanliness, scent, layout, color, and employee behavior (Kotler, 2020). These environmental cues work collectively to stimulate emotional and cognitive responses that affect customers' perceptions, satisfaction, and eventual patronage. In advanced economies such as the United States and the United Kingdom, retail giants like Walmart and Tesco have invested heavily in creating immersive store atmospheres that foster emotional engagement and drive repeat patronage. This global emphasis highlights the growing recognition of service ambiance as a strategic marketing tool rather than a mere aesthetic consideration.

Service ambiance, often referred to as the servicescape, was conceptualized by Bitner (1992) as the physical and social setting in which service interactions occur. Contemporary scholars have expanded the construct to include ambient conditions (temperature, music, scent), spatial layout, signage, and human elements such as employee friendliness and crowd density (Nguyen et al., 2023). These factors jointly shape customers' perceptions of comfort, convenience, and satisfaction. According to

Liu and Jang (2021), the ambiance of a service environment not only influences customers' mood and attention span but also creates a psychological link between the service provider and the customer, affecting decision-making and loyalty. In supermarkets, ambiance is particularly important because consumers typically engage in unplanned purchases, and their decisions are often driven by subconscious sensory cues such as lighting, smell, and spatial arrangement.

Customer patronage, on the other hand, refers to the degree of customer engagement, loyalty, and repeated purchase behavior exhibited toward a business establishment (Zeithaml et al., 2020). It captures both behavioral and attitudinal dimensions of customer relationships, encompassing the frequency of visits, word-of-mouth referrals, and willingness to continue purchasing from the same retailer (Berman & Evans, 2021). Customer patronage reflects the extent to which shoppers repeatedly choose a particular store due to its perceived convenience, service quality, and emotional appeal. High levels of patronage are associated with greater sales volumes, sustained profitability, and competitive advantage (Kotler & Keller, 2021). As such, supermarkets that can create appealing and emotionally engaging environments tend to cultivate stronger customer loyalty and a favorable reputation within their local markets.

The relationship between service ambiance and customer patronage has been widely examined in service marketing literature. Studies across diverse contexts have consistently shown that environmental stimuli affect customers' psychological and behavioral responses. For example, Wu and Gao (2022) found that ambient music and store scent significantly influenced shoppers' dwell time and purchasing decisions in Chinese retail chains. Similarly, Owusu and Kusi (2023) reported that spatial design, cleanliness, and staff courtesy had positive effects on customer satisfaction and loyalty in Ghanaian supermarkets. In Nigeria, recent studies such as Eze and Adiele (2022) observed that store ambiance elements especially lighting, cleanliness, and air conditioning strongly predicted repeat patronage in the retail sector. These findings affirm that when supermarkets strategically manage their service ambiance, they not only attract new customers but also encourage repeat purchases and brand advocacy.

The motivation for this study arises from the increasing competition among supermarkets in Port Harcourt, where both indigenous and multinational retail outlets are striving to capture a loyal customer base. Despite significant investments in physical expansion, many supermarkets still struggle to sustain consistent patronage, suggesting that factors beyond product variety and pricing influence customer behavior. The service ambience in several outlets remains suboptimal, with issues such as poor ventilation, inadequate lighting, disorganized layouts, and unfriendly staff attitudes undermining customer experience. Given the evolving consumer expectations in an urbanized and competitive market, there is a need to empirically assess how various elements of service ambience affect customer patronage in Port Harcourt. This study therefore seeks to fill this gap by examining the relationship between service ambience and customer patronage of supermarkets.

Statement of the Problem

Supermarkets in Port Harcourt have experienced notable expansion in recent years, driven by urban growth, rising middle-class income, and changing consumer lifestyles. However, despite these favorable conditions, many supermarkets face declining customer patronage and inconsistent sales growth. Observations reveal that several retail outlets struggle to retain loyal customers, as patrons often shift between stores seeking better shopping experiences. This situation raises curiosity about what drives customer retention and purchase behavior in the city's competitive retail environment. Although products and pricing strategies remain essential, evidence suggests that the overall in-store experience, including environmental and psychological cues, plays a critical role in influencing customer behavior. The inability of many supermarkets to create appealing and comfortable service environments may be contributing to declining patronage rates.

These challenges are largely attributed to managerial and infrastructural deficiencies that compromise the service ambience. In many supermarkets, lighting is either too dim or excessively bright, temperature control is poor due to inadequate ventilation, and background music is either absent or poorly managed. Moreover, overcrowded layouts and untrained staff create an atmosphere of discomfort that diminishes customers' overall satisfaction. These conditions can be traced to a lack of awareness

about the strategic importance of environmental design in consumer psychology, as well as limited investment in store aesthetics and staff behavior management (Eze & Adiele, 2022). Consequently, customers perceive these stores as stressful and less attractive shopping environments, opting instead for outlets that provide cleaner, more pleasant, and emotionally stimulating experiences.

In response, some supermarkets have attempted to enhance their ambiance through aesthetic renovations, improved air conditioning, and music introduction to enhance customer mood. However, these efforts have been sporadic and uncoordinated, lacking a comprehensive understanding of how different elements of service ambiance collectively influence customer patronage. While a few retailers have made progress through modest upgrades, the majority continue to face customer retention challenges. Hence, this study focuses on assessing the relationship between service ambiance and customer patronage of supermarkets in Port Harcourt. The aim is to identify the specific dimensions of ambiance that significantly predict customer loyalty and purchase frequency, providing actionable insights for managers seeking to improve competitiveness and customer experience in the retail sector.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine the relationship between Store Ambiance and Customer Patronage of Supermarkets in Port Harcourt. The specific objectives of the study are as follows to:

- i. determine the extent of relationship between store colour and customer patronage of supermarkets in Port Harcourt.
- ii. examine the extent of relationship between store lightning and customer patronage of supermarkets in Port Harcourt.

Research Questions

In order to adequately address the objectives of the study, the following research questions were raised:

- i. To what extent does store colour relate with market customer patronage of supermarkets in Port Harcourt?

- ii. To what extent does store lightning relate with customer patronage of supermarkets in Port Harcourt?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Concept of Store ambiance

The concept of ambiance was introduced by Kotler in 1973, in his article “Ambiance as a Marketing Tool.” Kotler defined ambiance as, “conscious designing of space and its various dimensions to evoke certain effects in buyers” (Solomon & Rabolt, 2004). Berman and Evans (2004) refer to ambiance as “the store’s physical characteristics that project an image and draw consumers”. Berman and Evans further stated that a retailer’s image depends heavily on its ambiance. Ambiance created within a retail store, through the use of sights, sounds, smells, and other physical attributes, plays a significant role in reflecting the store’s personality to the shopper, generating a particular “view” of the store in the shopper’s mind, and thus influencing how the retailer is perceived. Store ambiance is the stimulus that causes the consumer evaluation in relation to the environment, and some behavioral responses (Turley & Milliman, 2000). Complete reformulation of ambiance is not a simple challenge, but it has the ability to significantly alter the perception of the consumer on the store (Turley & Chebat, 2002). A major reason for non-functional in store purchases corresponds to sensory stimulation. The store ambiance can enhance the quality perceived by consumers, which leads to higher levels of persuasion (Sharma & Stafford, 2000).

Store ambiance is the process of deploying significant perceptual, attitudinal, and emotional impacts on purchasing by enticing customers into the store and keeping them engaged and fascinated (Das, 2014). In the same vein, Akram et al. (2016) stated that store ambiance incorporates the elements of the physical nature of the retail outlet, elements designed to create a certain appearance for the outlet. The design and look of the outlet are created to attract and delight customers. Several physical factors incorporate store ambiance, including color, cleanliness, lighting etc. Sezgin and Kucukkoylu (2014) concur with this notion, citing that store ambiance incorporates certain look and ambiance produced by the physical features of a retail

store in order to attract customers. This “servicescape” is referred to as ‘ambiance’, namely the overall atmospheric setting of a retail outlet in which various stimulants is involved. These stimulants may be store decoration, product forms, packaging, colors, lighting, air ventilation, scents, music, and display of products in the store, among others. The appearance, attitude, and demeanor of employees, coupled with how they interact with customers, may also affect store ambiance.

Sharma and Stafford (2000) submitted that a store ambiance can have the ability to attract customers, to entice purchases and to attract customers back to the store for repeat purchases. Indeed, a store ambiance can be more influential than the product itself in the purchase decision. An appropriate store ambiance will become a competitive advantage for retailers to set them apart from the rivals. Muhammad et al (2014) clarified that positive store ambiance is capable of enhancing the value of goods and services so that customers tend to have emotional attachment and are willing to buy products. A wonderful shopping environment can affect people’s purchasing behavior. Sirgy et al. (2000) suggested that the overall ambiance of a store can create a favorable consuming context and generate positive perceptible emotions about the store among consumers. Store environmental factors can influence the subjective feelings experienced by consumers in the store and influence the shopping intention, consumption amount, perceived quality, satisfaction, and shopping value (Babin & Attaway, 2000).

Store Colour and Customer Patronage

The color scheme of a retail environment plays a subtle yet powerful role in shaping customer perceptions, emotions, and behavioral responses. Research has shown that color is one of the most immediate and impactful sensory stimuli influencing consumer moods and purchase intentions (Labrecque & Milne, 2020). Store color affects customers’ affective states, influencing how long they stay in a store and whether they make impulse purchases. According to Singh (2020), warm colors such as red, orange, and yellow tend to create excitement and energy, leading to shorter but more active shopping behaviors, while cool colors like blue and green evoke calmness and trust, encouraging customers to spend more time browsing. These associations suggest that the psychological effects of color transcend aesthetic

appeal, extending to behavioral outcomes such as loyalty and repeat patronage. Globally, retailers like Walmart and Carrefour use carefully selected color palettes to reinforce their brand image and influence customer experiences, demonstrating the strategic value of store color as a marketing tool.

Empirical studies have reinforced the argument that color significantly impacts customer patronage and satisfaction. For instance, Park and Farr (2021) conducted a study on store atmospherics and consumer loyalty in South Korean supermarkets and found that color harmony and brightness strongly influenced customers' perceptions of comfort and brand image. Their findings revealed that stores with well-coordinated color schemes reported higher customer satisfaction and repeat visits than those with dull or inconsistent palettes. Similarly, Alavi and Yasin (2022) examined color design in Malaysian hypermarkets and discovered that color congruence with product types significantly affected customer mood and purchase frequency. These findings underscore that color is not merely decorative but an essential component of the sensory environment that influences customer decision-making. Owusu and Kusi (2023) investigated store color and consumer loyalty in Ghanaian supermarkets and found a strong correlation between color brightness, store attractiveness, and customer revisit intention. They observed that color impacts perception of product freshness and store cleanliness, both of which are key drivers of consumer trust and satisfaction.

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between store colour and customer patronage of Supermarkets in Port Harcourt.

Store Lighting and Customer Patronage

Lighting is one of the most influential atmospheric variables shaping customers' in-store experiences and behavioral outcomes. Globally, lighting serves both functional and psychological purposes ensuring visibility while simultaneously influencing mood, perception, and spatial orientation (Custers et al., 2021). According to Quartier et al. (2020), lighting intensity and color temperature affect how customers perceive a store's cleanliness, quality, and warmth. Soft, well-balanced lighting tends to create a relaxing atmosphere that encourages longer shopping durations, whereas

harsh or dim lighting can cause discomfort and reduce satisfaction. Retailers such as IKEA and Marks & Spencer employ strategic lighting designs to enhance visual appeal and product perception, illustrating the critical role of lighting in shaping customer experiences.

In a study conducted by Lin and Chen (2021) on lighting design and consumer behavior in Taiwanese supermarkets, results revealed that lighting uniformity and brightness positively correlated with customer engagement and purchase intention. The authors emphasized that lighting contributes to emotional comfort and product evaluation, thereby affecting overall satisfaction. Similarly, in the United States, Custers et al. (2021) found that dynamic lighting systems that adapt to time of day enhanced consumers' perception of store ambiance and boosted revisit intentions. These findings affirm that lighting design directly influences the psychological and behavioral dimensions of consumer experience. Mbah and Eze (2022) examined lighting conditions and customer retention in Nigerian shopping malls and found a significant positive relationship between lighting quality and patronage frequency. Poor lighting was associated with negative emotions such as fatigue and discomfort, which discouraged repeat visits. Likewise, Adewale and Ojo (2023) studied ambiance elements in Lagos supermarkets and found that stores with well-illuminated environments recorded higher sales volumes and stronger customer loyalty. They concluded that lighting serves as both a visual guide and an emotional cue that enhances shopping enjoyment and purchase satisfaction.

H02: There is no significant relationship between store lighting and customer patronage of Supermarkets in Port Harcourt.

Theoretical Review

Environmental psychology model

Environmental psychology model Mehrabian and Russell (1974) proposed the S-O-R environmental psychology model, providing three dimensions that could describe the emotional states: Pleasure, arousal and dominance (PAD). The combinations of these three different emotions result in different behavioral consequences, making a person to decide whether to remain in a specific environment, that is, to decide the behavior

he adopts is approach or avoidance. Donovan and Rossiter (1982) utilized S-O-R model and took retail stores as testing objects to study the relationship between environmental stimulus and behavioral intention by two emotional dimensions-pleasure and arousal. The finding was the emotions of pleasure and arousal initiated by environment would increase customers' spending of extra time and money by 12% in average; meanwhile, their interactive intentions with on-site service personnel also increased. According to the research of Engel et al. (1986), at least half of the shopping behaviors of supermarket consumers belong to impulse buying. Welles (1986) found that 9 out of 10 consumers going shopping would have impulse buying. Ahtola's (1985) study indicated that it was estimated that about 50% consumers bought without plans, so they were easy to carry out impulse buying. By exploring the causes, he discovered that the reason was consumers increased their perceptual perceived value due to the influence of store ambiance. They also discovered that the more frequently a consumer visited a store, the more possible he would purchase. Therefore, how to make use of store ambiance to initiate perceptual consumer emotion is very important.

The theory of environmental psychology is relevant in explaining the relationship between store ambiance and customer patronage because the theory described the emotional states of consumers: Pleasure, arousal and dominance. The premise was based on the findings of Donovan and Rossiter (1982) who utilized S-O-R model and took retail stores as testing objects to study the relationship between environmental stimulus and behavioral intention by two emotional dimensions- pleasure and arousal. The finding was that the emotions of pleasure and arousal initiated by environment would increase customers' spending of extra time and money by 12% in average; meanwhile, their interactive intentions with on-site service personnel also increased.

Empirical Review

Chih-Yi, and Chien (2016) carried out a study on the relationship between store ambiance, sales promotion, customer mood and purchase intention. Taking cosmetics counters at department stores as an example, opinions of a sample of 276 female consumers was collected through questionnaire survey. The results show that store

ambiance and sales promotion are significantly related to customer mood, and customer mood is significantly related to purchase intention. In addition, customer mood is a mediator variable between store ambiance and purchase intention and also between sales promotion and purchase intention

Ji et al. (2016) carried out a study in order to explore the symbolic effect of aesthetic factors of retail ambiance in luxury, focusing on the impact of perceived luxury of interior colors in retail ambiance on perceived store luxury, consumer emotion, and preference. A total of 218 U.S. consumers participated in an online survey, employing a hypothetical store image reflecting a high or low-luxury retail ambiance (manipulated through the interior colors). The results statistically support that (a) participants exposed to the high-luxury retail ambiance condition (of high-luxury colours) report a higher level of perceived store luxury than do the participants exposed to the low luxury retail ambiance condition (of low-luxury colors), (b) perceived store luxury increases felt pleasure and arousal but not felt dominance, and (c) felt pleasure and arousal improve store preference.

Ishwar et al., (2010) carried out a study in order to examine the cognitive influences of ambiance on customer value, store image, and patronage intentions in an emerging market condition. Retail store visuals have the capacity to transcend the boundary between external worlds (Alan, 2002) and what is happening inside us. The exploratory framework of the study makes it easier to understand the emerging retailing conditions in terms of larger stores, design changes, architectural makeover and its value perception among customers. The customers in an emerging market such as India reported discrepancies between value experienced and expected value (hedonic and utilitarian) due to ambiguity in the role of factors in creating appropriate state of arousal (emotional appeal). The exploratory research technique was used to develop an understanding of the influence of environmental disposition on customers perception of value and store image. A total of 450 responses were used for the study. The study is successful in correlating customer value with retail environment. The study may be helpful for managers to create and implement customer value strategies in retail setup.

Reshma and Aswin (2019) carried out a study in order to examine the impact of three store atmospheric factors namely ambient factors, design factors, and social factors on customer buying behaviour in shopping mall of Kannur. A sample of 147 customers was selected for the purpose of the study. Exploratory factor analysis of responses indicated that ambiance have impact on the buying decision of customers.

Fatima (2012) carried out a study in order to understand the buying behaviour of Pakistani consumers, and identify the factors which are of importance in determining the purchase intention of these consumers. The study has been conducted on a sample of 393 young students belonging to different colleges and universities of Pakistan. The study has targeted the young chunk of consumers in Pakistan as they make up a major and substantial part of the customer base for different organizations. The research has investigated the impact of two factors i.e. peer pressure and store ambiance on the purchase intentions of these youngsters and concluded that there is a significant and positive relationship between the two factors and purchase intention. This empirical study is a contribution to theory and practice with an increased and detailed understanding on young Pakistani consumer behaviour and the underlying causes which are strong determinants of their purchase intentions.

Methodology

This study adopted the correlation survey research. The population of this study consists of thirty-five (35) supermarkets in Port Harcourt gotten through <https://www.finelib.com/cities/port-harcourt/shopping/supermarkets>. The population of the study was adopted as the sample size of the study since it is not too large for a study. To generate data for the study, one hundred and forty (140) copies of questionnaire were given to the 35 supermarkets in the frame of four (4) copies per firm. A total of one hundred and forty (140) respondents were used as the study subjects. The primary data was obtained through the administration of copies of the questionnaire to the respondents. The study adopted content and face validity. The reliability of the instrument was determined using the Cronbach's alpha test instrument with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23 and it stood at 0.98 higher than the benchmark of 0.7. The data that was collected through the questionnaire will be analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

Spearman Rank-Order Correlation was adopted to test the various hypotheses formulated.

Data Presentation

Here, the data collected in the questionnaire were presented in tables and interpreted. A total of one hundred and five (105) copies of the instrument were issued to the respondents of supermarkets in Port Harcourt. The questionnaire administration and the collection rate are shown in table 4.1 below:

Table 1: Questionnaire Administration and Collection

Distributed	Retrieved	Useful	Not Useful
140	120	111	9

Source: Survey Data, 2025.

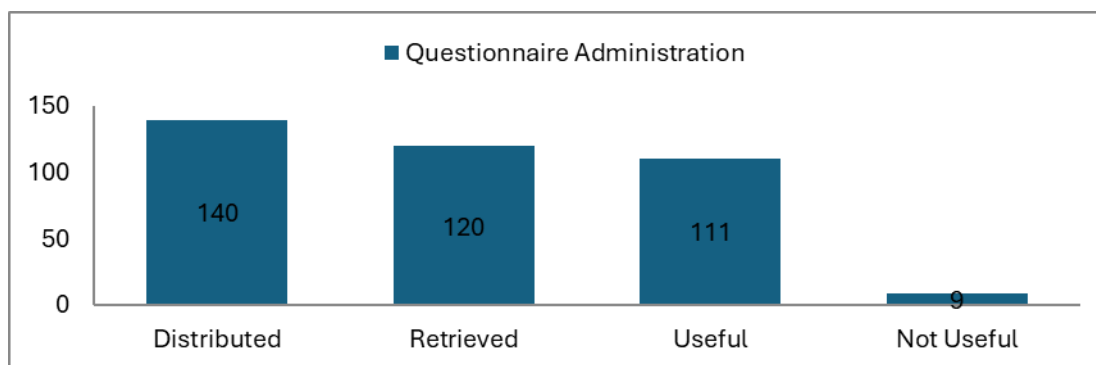


Table 4.1 and Fig.4.1 contains the number of questionnaire administered to the respondents of supermarket managers firms. Out of the 140 copies of questionnaire administered to the respondents, 120 copies were retrieved, 111 copies were useful and 9 copies were not useful.

Data Analysis and Results

The data collected from the respondents were analyzed in this section. In analyzing the data collected, the researcher focuses on the demographic, univariate, bivariate and multivariate analyses. The results of the analysis carried out were used to provide answers to the research questions and hypotheses.

Demographic Analysis

The demographic analysis covers the respondents' sex, marital status, age, length in service, managerial status and educational qualification. The demographic variables of the respondents are presented in tables and analyzed accordingly.

Table 2: Sex of the Respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	64	58%
Female	47	42%
Total	111	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

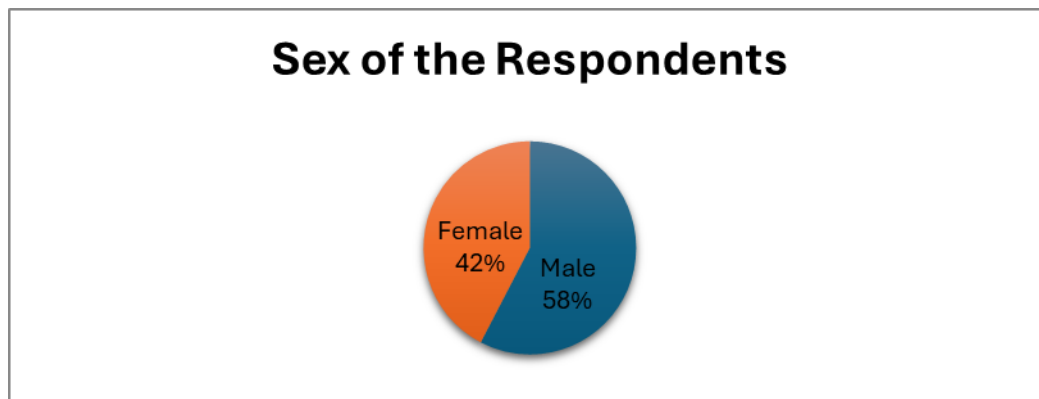


Table 4.2 and fig.4.2 shows the sex of the respondents who completed and returned the questionnaires. From the table, it is observed that out of the 111 managers who completed and returned the questionnaire, 64 of them were male representing 58% of the respondents while 47 of them were female representing 42% of the respondents.

Bivariate Analyses

Hypothesis 1

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between store colour and customer patronage of Supermarkets in Port Harcourt.

Table 3: Result of correlation analysis between Store colour and customer patronage of Supermarkets in Port Harcourt

			Store colour	Customer patronage
Spearman (rho)	Store colour	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.723**
		Sig. (2 tailed)	.	.001
		N	111	111
	Repeat Patronage	Correlation Coefficient	.723**	1.000
		Sig. (2 tailed)	.001	.
		N	111	111

**Correlation is significant at 0.01 levels (2 tailed)

*Correlation is significant at 0.05 levels (2 tailed)

Source: SPSS-generated Output

Table 3 shows the result of correlation analysis carried out between Store colour and customer patronage of Supermarkets in Port Harcourt. The result shows a strong positive correlation between Store colour and customer patronage of Supermarkets in Port Harcourt ($\rho = .723^{**}$) and this correlation is significant at 0.01 level as indicated by the symbol **. Consequently, the null hypothesis (H_{01}) is rejected and the alternate hypothesis is accepted. This implies that we then accept that there is strong positive and significant relationship between Store colour and customer patronage of Supermarkets in Port Harcourt.

Hypothesis 2

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between store lighting and customer patronage of Supermarkets in Port Harcourt.

Table 4: Result of correlation analysis between Store lighting and customer patronage of Supermarkets in Port Harcourt

			Store lighting	Customer patronage
Spearman (rho)	Store lighting	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.681**
		Sig. (2 tailed)	.	.001
		N	111	111
	Customer patronage	Correlation Coefficient	.681**	1.000
		Sig. (2 tailed)	.001	.
		N	111	111

**Correlation is significant at 0.01 levels (2 tailed)

*Correlation is significant at 0.05 levels (2 tailed)

Source: SPSS-generated Output

Table 4 depicts the result of correlation analysis carried out between Store lighting and customer patronage of Supermarkets in Port Harcourt. The result indicates that Store lighting has a strong positive correlation with customer patronage of Supermarkets in Port Harcourt ($\rho = .681^{**}$) and this correlation is significant at 0.01 level as indicated by the symbol ** . Based on this result, the null hypothesis (H_{02}) is rejected and the alternate hypothesis is accepted. This means that we then accept that there is strong positive and significant relationship between Store lighting and customer patronage of Supermarkets in Port Harcourt.

Discussion of Findings

Store Colour and Customer Patronage

The findings revealed a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship between store colour and customer patronage of supermarkets in Port Harcourt. This implies that well-coordinated colour schemes within supermarkets positively influence customers' perceptions, emotional states, and repeat visit intentions. Colour appears to shape the psychological atmosphere of the store, making it more attractive, comfortable, and trustworthy to customers. This finding supports the assertions of Bellizzi and Hite (1992), who found that environmental colour significantly influences consumer feelings and purchase likelihood. It also aligns with Babin, Hardesty, and Suter (2003), who reported that colour enhances affective responses that stimulate shopping intentions. Furthermore, Singh (2020) explained that colour influences mood and time spent in stores, thereby indirectly shaping loyalty and patronage behaviour. The result is also consistent with Park and Farr (2021) and Owusu and Kusi (2023), who found that harmonious and appealing colour schemes significantly predict customer satisfaction and revisit intention in retail settings.

Store Lighting and Customer Patronage

The study also found a strong and statistically significant relationship between store lighting and customer patronage. This suggests that adequate and well-designed lighting improves customers' visual comfort, perception of product quality, and overall shopping experience, thereby encouraging repeat visits and sustained patronage. This finding is consistent with Summers and Hebert (2001), who reported

that lighting influences shoppers' mood, attention, and purchasing behaviour. It also aligns with Quartier et al. (2020), who argued that lighting affects perceptions of warmth, cleanliness, and service quality. Lin and Chen (2021) found that lighting uniformity and brightness positively correlate with customer engagement and purchase intention, while Custers et al. (2021) showed that adaptive lighting systems enhance revisit intentions.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the study concluded that service ambiance is a strategic marketing tool that shapes customer perceptions and loyalty beyond product and price considerations. First, store colour has a strong effect on customer emotions, perceptions, and loyalty. Attractive and harmonious colour schemes enhance store image, improve mood, and increase customers' willingness to revisit and recommend supermarkets. Second, store lighting significantly influences how customers perceive comfort, cleanliness, and product quality. Well-designed lighting enhances shopping enjoyment, reduces fatigue, and strengthens emotional attachment to the store, thereby increasing customer patronage. The study confirms that service ambiance is not merely aesthetic but a strategic marketing tool that shapes consumer behaviour, loyalty, and competitive advantage in the retail sector.

Recommendations

1. Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made: Supermarket managers should invest in carefully planned colour schemes that reflect brand identity, promote calmness and trust, and enhance the overall attractiveness of the shopping environment.
2. Supermarkets should adopt proper lighting designs that balance brightness, warmth, and uniformity in order to improve customer comfort and perception of quality.
3. Retail managers should periodically assess customers' perceptions of ambiance elements and adjust environmental designs based on evolving consumer preferences.

Area for Further Study

Future studies may extend this research by examining other dimensions of service ambiance such as music, scent, cleanliness, spatial layout, and employee behaviour. Comparative studies across different cities or retail formats such as malls and convenience stores may also provide deeper insights into the generalizability of these findings. Longitudinal studies could further explore how changes in service ambiance influence customer loyalty and profitability over time.

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