



## Brand Evangelism Attributes and Lecturers Loyalty of Automobiles in Rivers State.

Sunny R. Igwe (Ph.D) & Charity C. Nwamou

Marketing Department, University of Port Harcourt  
Corresponding: chikordi@yahoo.com

**Abstract:** Brand Evangelism is gathering greater momentum in the literature of marketing although its empirical efficacy on strategy development and consumer decision behavior is yet to be fully tapped. This proposes and tests empirically brand evangelism strategy on customer loyalty. This study adopts explanatory design approach, and surveys 304 lecturers from Rivers state analyses with Spearman rank correlation. The study unveiled among other things that brand identification and brand salience as attributes of brand evangelism have a very strong positive, statistical relationship with customer loyalty. Brand evangelism affects customer loyalty. Consequent upon this, the study recommends that automobile firms whose objective is to improve customer loyalty should ensure that their brands distinctively are positioned, promoted to be top in the minds of their customers and provide unique meaning in different customers.

**Key Words:** Brand Evangelism, Brand Identification, Brand Salience, Customer Loyalty, Repeat Purchase, and Referrals, Automobile

### Introduction

Man's adventure and business market expansion are possibly made easy in movement through the help of automobile. Automobile has significantly contributed to the world economy by providing 3% -5% of our

global gross domestic product (GDP) making movement less cost effective and convenience as well as providing employment and income(OECD 2011). In Nigeria, its contributes about 4.5% to our GDP (Carmudi.com.ng-<http://www.vanguardngr.com/2015/12/>

-4-5-of-2016-), through its import duties and local manufacturing and assembly. The auto sector is key potential area of investment that the government and entrepreneurs are yet to fully tap. Nigeria's vehicular import worth over \$4 billion of automobiles, two thirds of which were used or 'Tokombo' vehicles (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2016). Automobile industry is a vital aspect of Nigeria's economic growth, it has created mobility in a large scale, and convenience and radically changed city life style in moving people and material to suburbs for formed industrialization. It is also a tool for class status, and exhibition of wealth and identities, and majorly a catalyst for globalization through the advanced technology, though is without its negative effect. As more local manufacturing and assembling plants for cars, bikes and trucks began production, and jostle fiercely with imported brands as well as more Nigerians own their cars, it become imperative to understand policy implications of Nigerian canvassing for their love brands, what in automobile brand (fuel economy, country of origin, design, style, durability and reliability, image and awareness, and price, availability of component parts and after service, that drive consumer choice and influence their particular evangelism behaviors and loyalty are really issues to decipher here.

Brands are consumed in communities where a vast whole of network of consumers are influenced by what they talk and hear from others about the effect of brands (Whyte, 1954). Brand evangelism as an integral and extension of word of mouth (WOM), is

positive communication freely shared to other members about the performance of a brand which help shape and influence their loyalty (Doss, 2014). When brand perform and satisfy, consumers have no choice than communicate and share their experience, as such they become advocates, apostles, zealots and evangelists for the brand. The brand evangelism attributes that can trigger behaviors are: salience, identification, satisfaction, trust, of the brand and occupy opinion leadership position (Doss, 2014). Of these measures, brand salience and identification are foremost in literature, this also forms our concentration too. Salience represents the top mind level of awareness of the brand and is considered foremost attribute of evangelist, and is measured on number time a brand is, mentioned, recalled, remembered and recognized over category brands and during purchase time, specific knowledge of the brand (Romaniuk and Sharp, 2003). Consume brand identification as consumers who identify, associate and see the brand as part of, mirror image of their self-identity (Bhattacharya and Sen 2003). Only when consumers have sufficient salience, perceive brand as supporting their self-identities then they would like to freely evangelize and communicate to others so to make them loyal customers.

When independent customers share freely positive effect about a brand, it has a persuasive power to influence loyalty behavior. Customers loyalty is a basic goal to be desired among key marketing performances (KMP) as it creates cost saving, strengthen more relationship, sustain and plan sales, referral and act as barriers

against competitors (Reichheld, 1996; Aaker 1996). Customer loyalty is using now and futuristically sustaining the use and purchase of a brand and positively recommending your choice brand against all competitors' offering. (Baumann et al., 2001). Its measures are behavioral and attitudinal constructs (Gramer and Brown, 1996). We adopt referral and repeat purchase loyalty measures as they cover both psychological and behavioral constructs. In recent times due to brands proliferation and fierce competition, customers are daily shifting their loyalty (Baumann et al; 2001, Gremler and Brown, 1996). This poses a burden to marketers. A careful observation in most homes in Nigeria reveals that hardly any home have their entire automobiles in one type of brand this call for worrisome. Lecturers see themselves as a strong cohesive profession that are influenced by their group formation, as it is observed in their automobile purchase behavior. It is challenging and imperative to know how a certain group member communicates and influences other members toward becoming committed users of a particular brand. Though, word of mouth has been proven to achieve induce adoption and customer loyalty (Whyte and William, 1954). Up till now little research is done to fully predict how brand evangelism attributes (brand salience and identification) affect customer loyalty (referral and repeat purchase) among lecturers. This challenge has necessitated the need to study how brand evangelism strategies relate with customer loyalty.

### **2.1 Brand Evangelism Strategy**

Brand evangelism synonymously represents word of mouth, customer

apostle, and advocate. Though, brand evangelism has a deeper connotation as a voluntary and zealous preaching of a brand so as to convert customers to be loyal users of the brand. The essence of evangelizing a brand is to passionately pass on positive ideas and feelings that will influence consumption pattern over time and bring people into closer to identity. Especially having known that the brand one consumes, how and where also help define his social class (Igwe, 2015). When a customer is satisfied with a brand he consciously or subconsciously, in a direct or indirect manner tell, evangelize, and communicate word of mouth to other about the brand (De Matos and Rossi, 2008). Word of mouth or brand evangelism as an external marketing communication outside the control of the firm that is directed toward making people share, transmit and talk to a network of people about products brands in order to persuade them buy or further talk to more people (WOMMA, 2005).

“Brand evangelist as an individual who communicates positive information, ideas and feelings concerning a specific brand freely and often times fervently to others in order to influence consumption behavior and also an evangelist act as an unpaid spokesperson on behalf of the brand” (Doss, 2014).

Brand evangelism is not paid for, is reliable and believable communication for the firm, even perceived as a strong persuasive tool (Kats and Lazarsfeld 1955). It involves face-to-face and peer-to-peer and defined group communication. Brand evangelists, are those who go out of their way, to share positive testimonies regarding a brand; and may be those who have used up the product,

employee and involuntary consumers (non-users) and those who are in love “sync” for the product image. They ‘preach and spread’ word of the brand. Brand evangelists are active, even act as salient sales man, defender, opinion former, persuaders and are passionate about their brand and feel the need to share emotion with others (Marzter et al; (2007). Brand evangelism entails high involvement consumer who continue and may bring and extend the product life span. Evangelism word spread in a nonlinear way and has multiplier effect on patronage loyalty (Mahajan, Muller and Bass, 1995). It is our hope that brand evangelism would lead to further referral and repeat purchase. Generally (Doss 2014) propose that element and strategies for brand evangelism include; brand satisfaction, brand salience, consumer brand identification, brand trust and opinion leadership. We zeroed down on only two (brand salience and consumer brand identification) because of their initiating power efficacy and most appearances in literature

### **2.1.2 Brand Identification**

Naturally consumer has oneness, self, unique lifestyle and images and would always want to defend their identities by using and associating with brands that augments their personality image. Consumer brand identification entails consumers who buy and associate with brand which help give meaning and self-identities (Belk, 1988). A consumer may regard the brand as an extension of the self (Belk 1988). Consumer brand identification is the coherence that exists within a brand among consumers (Bhattacharya & Sen 2003). Brand identification concept borrows from social identity theory

which help define individual/ group entity in the midst of modernity, collectivism, environment dynamism and brand proliferation of brand (E.g. Arnett et al, 2003; Ashforth and Mael, 1989). Consumer draws in perceptual meaning of oneness within a group of persons from the consumption of certain brand that is the essence of identity (Ashforth and Mael, 1989). The type of brand one consumes or associates fulfills his self-identities, self-definition and help other give meaning to his social identity (Ahearne et al. 2005; Del Rio, et al. (2001)

According to the self-expansion theory of, the higher quality incorporated brand the more likely that consumers will increase financial emphasis on such brand to maintain ongoing relationship that support their self being (Algesheimer et al., 2004). Aaker (1996) and Belk (1988) assert that consumer use and match with the brand that tend to confirm and compliment their self-concepts (actual self, ideal self and social self) and consumer tends to seek better product that match their self-concept. Customers form relational congruence, formation and even use brands that have attribute image and potential of meeting their self-definitional needs (Bhattacharya and Sen 2003). Mixed findings attest to the nexus between consumer brand identification and customer loyalty. The work of Arnett et al., (2003) and Algesheimer et al. (2004) found a significant link between brand identification and customer loyalty in non-profit organization and product. Similarly, Kuenzel and Halliday (2008) study on automobile car brand found that customer brand identification will results to word of mouth

communication and customer re-purchase and loyalty. In contrast to study cellular brand by (Fung et al., 2013) uncovered that customer brand identification does not results to customer brand loyalty. It our contention therefore to hypothesize;

**H01:** customer brand identification as brand attribute of evangelism has no significant relationship with repeat purchase

**H02:** customer brand identification as attribute of brand evangelism has no significant relationship with referral

### 2.1.2 Brand Salience

In marketing, brand salience may not be research more compared with concepts like brand attitude, image and equity. It follows that not all brands a customer see and hear stand out (Guido, 1998). Only and if first when consumer hear, is aware and have knowledge of a brand, then can he think of purchase, use and even spread it others. For brand salience to be effective it must be simple to pronounce, remembered, recall, have recognition and have evoke power over brand category. The psychology of memory, storage, retrieval and remembrance are crucial ingredient for consumers to show that brand evangelism. Recognition, memory and recall are necessary first order and even sufficient force that help awareness of advertisement of brand to be evangelized. Also marketing promotion, advertising, sales publicity are major tool convey salience first to the evangelist. Brand salience is a function of the frequency of a sub-conscious awareness and ability to memorize and mention a brand in a different purchase, use situation (Romaniuk & Sharp, 2003). It concerns unaided "top of mind awareness" that

an individual possesses in reference to product category (Miller & Berry 1998). It represents ability to 'stand out' 'top most of mind' among alternatives from its environment or background, during discussion, purchase time (Doss 2014; Alba and Chattopadhyay, 1986). In conceptualization, it is probability of a brand to think, mention, retrieve, evoke during buying situation or when needed. Brand salience is the extent to which customer easily know, think, recall the awareness level of advert and knowledge about a brand in a given situation (Jenni and Sharp 2004) especially over competitive brands. When a consumer easily mention a brand all the times; he has high propensity to spread, preach and evangelize that can induce further loyalty in terms of repeat purchase and referral (Alba and Chattopadhyay, 1986). A measure of a good brand equity is brand salience. It was found that brand salience positively, significantly and statistically strengthen brand evangelism (Doss, 2014). Holden and Lutz (1992), conceptualization means revealed that there are complex and multiple cues in the environment that influence the decision of a buyer in a buying situation. The salience factor aids recall and patronage which leads to loyalty. The following set of hypotheses is then put forward:

**Ho3;** customer brand salience as attribute of brand evangelism has no relationship with repeat purchase

Ho4; customer brand salience as attribute of brand evangelism has no significant relationship with referral

### 2.2 Customer Loyalty

customer loyalty is very vital measure of marketing key performance

indicator which cut across several service and manufacturing industries and research by most (Carunna 2002, Keaveney, 1995); .

“Loyalty is a deeply held commitment to rebuy or re patronize a preferred product or service consistently in the future despite any situational influences and competitors marketing efforts that might cause switching behavior (Walsh et al, 2008)”.

Ladhari et al (2011) conceptualized loyalty as a customer continued patronage of a particular brand suggesting that “customer loyalty is a psychological character formed by sustained satisfaction of the customer coupled with emotional attachment formed with the service provider that leads to a state of willingly and consistently being in the relationship with preference, patronage and premium”.

Loyalty measure cover both qualitative and quantitative dimension and more conceptualized loyalty in three dimensions which is cognitive, attitudinal and behavioral (Jones & Taylor, 2007). It specifically entails repeat buy/purchase, use, referral, intention to use, continuous use of one, dissuading people from bad mouthing the product and partnering with brand (Griffin 2002). Customer loyalty contributes to profitability and organization success through; customer consistency and life time revenue streams, cost saving in keeping customer compared to recruiting new ones, readily recommend/ referral which has no cost of communication (Olarinnwo et.al., 2006). Achieving loyalty is transcending destination journey that creates loyalty ladder (Duffy, 1998). Aaker (1996) and Dowling and Uncles (1997) asserts

that consumers are limited by alternatives as such try to make rational choice with the evoked brand category that will satisfy their need (Wirtz & Maltiw, 2003). According to Fornell (1992) loyalty and satisfaction does not have a direct linear relationship, as at one time a satisfied person may assume to be loyal but loyalty does not implied satisfaction. When a customer is attached to a product brand, say an automobile car, due to, the car performance, reliability, fuel economy, durability, image, the personality/identity congruence, the brand will most likely be chosen over and over again above other competing brand and be evangelized.

### 2.2.1 Repeat Purchase

Repeat purchase reflect the behavioral dimension of customer loyalty and it considers the propensity to buy a brand again and again, and the proportion of brand a buys each time purchase is made (Dick and Basu, 1994; Peterson and King (2009). Repeat purchase can be measured base on the average rate of buying per buyer over a particular brand, the moment a person buys any particular product say automobile car for more than once within a relatively period the notion of repeat purchase becomes particularly relevant (Dick and Basu, 1994). Intention to buy and use a brand in the future is adapted as item of repeat purchase. It entails customer plan, intention, emotional attachment to his brand and willingness to go extra mile to buy the his preferred brand in the future which all means the behavioral-psychology outcome (Reichheld, 1996).

### 2.2.2 Referrals

Positive word of mouth has a tremendous influence on behavior than

other marketing communication source (Headley and Millier 1993) and referral creates bond, believability and has no cost attachment, trusted source of consumer information, most likely to be acted upon. In the view of Gelb and Johnson (1995) word of mouth helps in creating awareness of innovations, induce quick product trial, smoothen and reduce risk associated in customer choice decision . When customer evangelize a brand, they also create a burden for other customer converts to further do their own part of recommending the brand. As such the brand goes viral by a strong compelling force of brand evangelizing ( Dean & Lang, 2008). In a huge capital lay out and high involvement goods like automobile, customers rely on the advices and suggestions from others who have experienced the services/ product in order to conform to group identity or self-images. It supports Ng et al., (2011) view that consumers often trust each other more than communication or information coming from firms. This also agrees with importance of word of mouth as,

“Positive word of mouth is seven times more effective in reaching consumers than magazine and newspaper advertising, four times

more effective than personal selling and two times more effective as radio advertising in influencing consumers to switch brands” (Kats and Lazersfeld 1955).

**3.0 Methodology**

Lecturers who own and use car for the last three months or have driven car other persons cars within last three months were only requirement to respond to the questionnaire. Automobile falls within product consumers are passionate to do evangelism. In 2016, total of 304 lecturers from three government owned unversities in Rivers State (University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State University of Science and Technology, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education) were surveyed. The multi-item scales was adopted on brand salience( recall, recognition, popular memory, knowledge); customer brand identification(self image, respect, meaning of me , and uniqueness). Generally the Likert-type scales of 5 point “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” continuum was used. We used descriptive characteristics, Cronbach alphas, and correlations tools ,

**4.1 Demographic Analysis Frequencies on Item of Brand Identification**

Gender	Number	Percentage (%)
Male	256	84.2
Female	48	15.8
	304	100
Marital Status		
Married	252	82.9
Single	23	7.6
Divorced	19	6.3
Widow	10	3.2
Total	304	100
qualification	Frequency	Percentage %

B.Sc	33	10.9
M.Sc	89	29.3
Ph.D	145	47.7
Prof.	37	12.1
Total	304	100
Age Group (years)	Number	Percentage (%)
20-30	10	3.3
31-40	77	25.3
41-50	132	43.4
51-60	61	20.1
61-70	21	6.9
71 and above	3	1
Total	304	100
Type of Automobile own		Percentage (%)
Toyota	82	27
Kia	34	11.2
Nissan	55	18.1
Honda	61	20.1
Benz/GM	45	14.8
Peugeot	27	8.8
Total	304	100
Preferred Automobile	frequency	Percentage (%)
Toyota	105	34.5
Kia	26	8.6
Nissan	52	17.1
Honda	67	22
Benz/GM	31	10.2
Peugeot	23	7.6
Total	304	100
Reason for Choice of Brand	frequency	Percentage (%)
Durability	87	28.6
Salvage value/easy maintenance	34	11.2
Less expensive in purchase	64	21.1
Design evolution	47	15.5
Brand image/name	72	23.6
Total	304	100
Period of automobile usage	frequency	Percentage (%)
0-1yr	74	24.3
1-2yrs	79	26
3-6yrs	82	27
6-9yrs	69	22.7
Total	304	100

Source: researcher's field survey, 2016

**On gender**, males were 84.2% representing 15.8% respondents. It respondent and females (48) showed that there were more male

customers that participated and patronize automobile in the exercise.

**On marital status**, married were 82.9%, single 23(7.6%) respondents, 19 were divorced representing 6.3% while widows were 10 representing 3.2% of the total respondents. It means that married lecturers participated more than others in Port Harcourt.

**On qualification**, B.Sc holders were 33(10.9%) respondents, M.Sc holders were 89 (29.3%), Ph.D holders 145 (47.7%) while 37 respondents representing 12.1% were Professors.

**On age distribution**, of 20-30 age group had 10(3.3%), 77(25.3%) fell at age group of 31-40 years, for 41-50 years age bracket had 132 (43.4% respondent), 51-60 years age bracket were 61(20.1%) respondents, 61-70 age bracket were 21(6.9%) respondents while only 3(1%) were at the age of 71 and above years.

**On ownership and use**, 82 (27%) respondents own and used Toyota, 34 (11.2%) own Kia automobile, 55 (18.1%) used Nissan car, 61(20.1%) used Honda, 45 (14.5%) own and used Benz/GM while 27 of the respondents representing 8.8% uses Peugeot car. It means lecturers own and drive more of Toyota cars

**On preferred automobile**, 105 respondents representing 34.5% preferred Toyota, 26 representing 8.6%

of the respondents preferred Kia automobile, 52 of the respondents representing 17.1% preferred Nissan car, 67 respondents representing 22% preferred Honda, 31 representing 10.2% of the respondents preferred Benz/GM while 23 of the respondents representing 7.6% preferred Peugeot car.

**On reason for automobile brand choice**, 87 respondents representing 28.6% preferred their brand because of durability, 34 representing 11.2% of the respondents preferred their automobile because of salvage value/easy maintenance, 64 of the respondents representing 21.1% preferred brand because of it is less expensive, 47 respondents representing 15.5% preferred their brand all because of design evolution, while 72 representing 23.6% of the respondents preferred their brand because of brand image/name.

**On year of brand usage** 74 respondents representing 24.3% had been using their for about less than a yr, 79 representing 26% of the total respondents had also used their brand for about 1 year to less than 3 years, 82 respondents representing 27% had as well been using their brand for about 3 years to less than 6 years while 69 respondents representing 22.7% had been using their automobile for about 6 years to less than 9 years.

Table 4.10: Frequencies on Item of Brand Identification

S/ N	Items	SA (5)	A (4)	U (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	Mean	Remark
1	My automobile is important part me	112 36.8 %	156 51.3 %	25 8.2 %	7 2.3 %	4 1.4 %	304 100 %	4.2	Agree
2	When i drive my choice brand cars, it makes to know how well i am respected.	134 44.1 %	150 49.3 %	12 3.9 %	3 0.9 %	5 1.8 %	304 100 %	4.3	Agree
3	I drive and use automobile that means more than just a car hat compliment my image OR give me unique meaning among my peers.	144 47.4 %	151 49.7 %	7 2.3 %	2 0.6 %	0 0% 0	304 100 %	4.4	Agree
4	I identify with car brands that reflect my group or clique images and identities.	98 32.2 %	122 40.1 %	34 11.2 %	26 8.6 %	24 7.9 %	304 100 %	3.8	Agree
	Total	488	579	78	38	33	1216	4.0	Agree
		2240	2316	234	76	33	4899		

Source: Researcher’s Field Survey, 2016 Table 4.12: Frequencies on Item of Brand Salience Responses.

Table 4.10 shows that the respondents agreed on each of the four items of brand identification (mean scores greater than 3). The grand mean is

equally greater than 3; indicating that brand identification has a positive effect on customer loyalty.

Table 4.12 Frequencies on Item of Brand Salience Responses

S / N	Items	SA (5)	A (4)	U (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	Mean	Remark
1	When an issue of automobile comes up, my prefer brand easily comes to my mind.	123 40.5 %	116 38.2% 464	43 14.1 %	18 5.9 %	4 1.3 %	304 (100 % 1248	4.1	Agree
2	I recall information about my brand easily.	154 50.7 %	145 47.7% 580	5 1.6 %	0 0% 0	0 0% 0	304 (100 % 1365	4.4	Agree
3	My prefer brand is a popular one and a household name.	101 33.2 %	123 40.5% 492	67 22% 201	8 2.6 %	5 1.6 %	304 (100 % 1219	4.0	Agree
4	I have recognizable cues and memory about brand automobiles.	138 45.4 %	147 48.3% 588	10 3.3 %	6 2% 12	3 0.9 %	304 (100 % 1323	4.4	Agree
	Total	516	531	125	32	12	1216	4.2	Agree
		2580	2124	375	64	12	5155		

Source: Researcher’s Field Survey, 2016

Table 4.12 shows that the respondents agreed on each of the four items of brand salience (mean scores greater than 3). The grand mean is equally greater than 3; indicating that brand salience has a positive effect on customer loyalty.

#### 4.1.1 Test of Hypothesis One

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant relation between brand identification and repeat purchase of among University Lecturers in Rivers State.

Table 4.0 Correlation Analysis showing the Relationship between Brand Identification and Repeat Purchase.

##### Correlations

			Brand Identification	Repeat Purchase
Spearman's rho	Brand Identification	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.687**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.001
		N	304	304
	Repeat Purchase	Correlation Coefficient	.687**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.
		N	304	304

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: Field Survey Data, 2016, SPSS 21 Output

**Decision:** Table 4.0 above reveals a spearman rank correlation coefficient of 0.687 and probability value of 0.001. By squaring (correlation coefficient of 0.687), the Consumer brand identification only contributes 47% of effect size on repeat purchase. Our result did not support our hypothesis H<sub>01</sub>. we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis, because the PV (0.001) <0.05 level of

significance. Thus the result indicates positive, significant and statistical relationship between brand identification and repeat purchase

#### 4.1.2 Test of Hypothesis Two

**Ho<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant relation between brand identification and referrals in among University Lecturers in Rivers State.

Table 4.1 Correlation Analysis showing the Relationship between Brand Identification and Referrals.

##### Correlations

			Brand Identification	Referrals
Spearman's rho	Brand Identification	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.926**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	304	304
	Referrals	Correlation Coefficient	.926**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	304	304

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: Field Survey Data, 2016, SPSS 21 Output

**Decision:** Table 4.2 above reveals a spearman rank correlation coefficient of 0.926 and probability value of 0.000.

This does not support Ho<sub>1</sub> as alternate was accepted. It showed a positive, significant and statistical relationship

between brand identification and referrals at PV (0.000) <0.05 level of significance.

**Ho<sub>3</sub>:** There is no significant relation between brand salience and repeat purchase in among University Lecturers in Rivers State.

Table 4.2 Correlation Analysis showing the Relationship between Brand Salience and Repeat purchase.

**Correlations**

		Brand Salience	Repeat Purchase	
Spearman's rho	Brand Salience	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.855**	
		N	.000	
	Repeat Purchase	Correlation Coefficient	.855**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	304	304

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: Field Survey Data, 2016, SPSS 21 Output

**Decision:** Table 4.2 above reveals a spearman rank correlation coefficient of 0.855 and probability value of 0.000. This result indicates that there is a strong positive, significant statistical relationship between brand salience and repeat purchase in among University Lecturers in Rivers State. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis

and accept the alternate hypothesis, because the PV (0.000) <0.05 level of significance.

**4.1.4 Test of Hypothesis Four**

**Ho<sub>4</sub>:** There is no significant relation between brand salience and referrals in among University Lecturers in Rivers State.

Table 4.3 Correlation Analysis showing the Relationship between Brand Salience and Referrals.

**Correlations**

		Brand Salience	Referrals	
Spearman's rho	Brand Salience	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.633**	
		N	.003	
	Referrals	Correlation Coefficient	.633**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.
		N	304	304

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: Field Survey Data, 2016, SPSS 21 Output

**Decision:** Table 4.3 above reveals a correlation coefficient of 0.633 and probability value of 0.003 . This result indicates that there is a moderate positive significant relationship between brand salience and referrals in

among University Lecturers in Rivers State. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis, because the PV (0.003) <0.05 level of significance.

## 4.2 Discussion of Findings

Unlike previous studies, the major aim is to relate brand evangelism attributes (customer brand identification and brand salience to loyalty of repeat purchase and referral. Brand evangelism traditional occurs more where there are multiple differentiated brands and heterogeneous consumers' needs. Consumers buy and evangelize automobile brand not just for the functional performance also for symbolic, metaphorical, brand equity and social reasons they are convinced the product has.

Hypothesis one and two ( $H_{o1}$  and  $H_{o2}$ ) examined the significant relationship between consumer brand identification on repeat purchase and referral. Our findings support that they are positive, statically and significantly relates. Social identity theory assumes that consumer will not buy automobile for transportation (functionally) seek alone but for what the automobile mean, the symbolism and help defines oneself. This is possible in Nigeria, because lecturers' perception of one's social identity; image, wealth, power, are making them automobile freak, and have repeat purchase that lead to fleet of cars, and referral and share the brand to their erudite scholar class. It is also common and to observe an average Kano indigene graduate to be loyal and have at least a Honda car due to social identity and brand evangelism. This corroborate the finding of Doss 2014, Bhattacharya and Sen (2003) that consumer brand identity positively relates with brand evangelism further brand loyalty and make them brand champion in referral. ( $Rho=0.687$  and  $R= 0.992$ ). This was supported with Ahearne et al. (2005); Kuenzel & Halliday (2008) that strong

identification of a brand leads to repeat purchase.

Hypothesis three and four ( $H_{o3}$  and  $H_{o4}$ ) examined the significant relationship between brand salience as a strategy of brand evangelism and repeat purchase, referral. And the findings support a statistically, positive and strong significant relationship between brand salience and repeat purchase; referral. It explains from the fact that as consumers get so much cues and expose to a brand, they tend to talk, have the brand on his lip all the time and always evangelize the brand and remember, mention the brand during purchase time and social interaction and discourse that lead to repeat purchase or continuous referral of the same brand. This agrees with the finding of (Doss,2014; Romaniuk and Sharp 2003) that brand salience lead to brand evangelism and relate to customer defection – used in negative connotation. Loyalty in the midst of category brands wanting to be noticed is not easy but customer show loyalty to the brand that present itself as to top of consumer mind and lip (Romaniuk and Sharp 2003).

## Conclusion

Researches have theoretically and conceptually considered brand evangelism especially at the normative stage of the concept ( Collier, 2007; Friedman 2007). However, to date scarce studies has empirically show it cursory and predictive power on the loyalty construct as this study provided. Brand evangelism is an external communication that has a strong tool of winning and persuading customers to use and stay. It is very clear that the practice of brand evangelism has not yet reaped the full potential of loyalty. This study

provides an evidence that brand salience and brand identification as attributes of brand evangelism can affect customer loyalty. It shows the possibility of automobile firms, to invest heavily in brand salience through brand promotion, appealing theme and messages that would have a lasting impression on the mind of the customers so as be used during evoke time. Firms wishing to gain recognition in customers loyalty should segment, target and position customer brand identities especially the identities

meanings in metaphoric name ( e, g. automobile nickname ‘*discussion continue, ‘end of discussion’ ‘spider’*), symbolic, cultural value, status and power. As these will influence the way they willing fully talk about their respected brand. Customer brand identification significantly determines the extent of loyalty that will be displayed by an average university lecturer. Brand salience easily aids recall and facilitates fast positioning in the minds of customers.

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