

Effect of Brand Storytelling on Customer Retention in Non-Alcoholic Beverage Industry in Delta State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study explored the effect of brand storytelling on customer retention in non-alcoholic beverage industry in Delta state, Nigeria. This study used a cross-sectional survey research approach. The study focused on customers of non-alcoholic beverage companies in Delta state. The Cochran formula was used to calculate the sample size of 384. The study used the judgmental sampling technique. The researchers designed a structured questionnaire to collect data directly from customers. The test-retest reliability method was employed to determine the instrument's reliability. The data collected for the study were analysed using frequencies, percentages, correlation and multiple regression analysis to arrive at a conclusion. Findings showed that the dimensions of brand storytelling explained 46% of the variations in customer retention. Genuine brand stories, brand emotional connection and consistent brand narrative has significant positive effect on customer retention. The study concluded that brand storytelling has a significant positive effect on customer retention in Delta state non-alcoholic beverage industry. The study recommended amongst others that firms should regularly review and update their narrative to align with evolving consumer preferences and market trends while maintaining the core essence of the brand. This consistency not only reinforces the brand identity but also helps consumers easily recognize and remember the non-alcoholic beverages in a competitive market.

Keywords: Brand Storytelling, Customer Retention, Non-Alcoholic Beverage Industry

JEL Classification Codes: M30, M31, M37

1. Introduction

Beyond traditional marketing tactics, brand storytelling has become a potent tool in ever-changing non-alcoholic beverage industry. As customers become more selective, a brand's capacity to engage with its audience on a

profound emotional level becomes crucial. The combination of storytelling and brand identification has been a significant development in this situation, providing non-alcoholic beverage firms with a distinct opportunity to build enduring connections with their customers. As the internet usage continue to grow, brands were central to online communities, with brand storytelling emerging as a very effective method for engaging users and promoting products (Pulizzi, 2012). Companies employ narratives as a means to generate and communicate meaning (Key, Keel, Czaplewski, & Olson, 2021), hence augmenting the perceived worth of their brand (Ganassali & Matysiewicz, 2021). Brand storytelling is the practice of connecting a brand to consumers by relating the company's values to those shared by their customers through a narrative. Brand storytelling is the method of creating an emotional bond between a brand and its audience through a narrative that emphasises shared values to evoke empathy. Narratives are fundamental to human existence and society; they assist individuals in comprehending their surroundings and their own identities (Çetinkaya, 2019).

Brand storytelling aims to create empathy between a brand and its audience by connecting the company's values with those of its customers. Establishing an emotional connection with the audience is crucial for effectively conveying compelling brand narratives and reinforcing customer retention. This particular advertising approach has a tendency to elicit emotional responses from consumers, particularly when integrated into narratives that aim to enhance the customer experience, so fostering brand recognition and establishing a robust brand value (Teraiya, Namboodiri, & Jayswal, 2023). Customer retention is the ability of a firm to keep existing consumers from defecting to its competitors and turn them into loyal repeat buyers. Keeping existing consumers happy with a product or service is a good indicator of their rate of retention. Customer retention is a crucial element of corporate strategy that centres on preserving and nurturing long-term relationships with current customers. It pertains to a company's capacity to maintain customers' engagement, satisfaction, and loyalty over a prolonged duration.

The diversified population in Delta state and her rich cultural background create a unique setting for the intersection of storytelling and beverage companies. The distinctive traits of the region provide marketers with a chance to fulfil both the physical and emotional needs of consumers. Brand storytelling is becoming crucial in a saturated market, enabling organisations to differentiate themselves by creating storylines that connect with local beliefs and values. The ideas, vision statement, history, or origin of a brand are all parts of its story (Kent, 2015). Companies can illustrate to customers how their offerings can make a difference by telling tales about

them (Singh & Sonnenburg, 2012). Customers are able to form an emotional connection with brands through stories because they provide a framework for integrating brand identification (Ryu, Lehto, Gordon, & Fu, 2019). Stories are extensively employed to elucidate objectives, assess the measures taken to attain the objective, and evaluate the results thereof (Lee, 2020). Previous research indicates that a strong brand can use storytelling through two perspectives: a contextual approach and a structural approach (Boje, 2014; Kent, 2015). One approach emphasises the narrative elements like brand values, character conflicts, and historical context, while the other centres on creating a story structure with a first-person narrative, plot development, and a chronological sequence of events.

Narrative can shape consumers' perceptions of a company and offer a crucial competitive advantage (Hemsley, 2016; Wang, Chang, & Chuang, 2016). Brands stand out in the market through narrative, making it challenging for rivals to imitate them (Cahill, 2017). People choose brands that do not only provide fundamental products or services. Individuals easily comprehend and acquire knowledge of their surroundings through seeing narrative sequences. Marketers can use storytelling to create vivid mental images for customers, directing their attention towards the company's message (Yu & Chang, 2013; Chiu, Hsieh, & Kuo, 2012). Storytelling is essential for brands to differentiate themselves in the digital age by communicating distinctive elements and assisting customers in comprehending the brand's uniqueness and core values (Mucundorfeanu, 2018). An impactful brand narrative can imbue a brand with character and worth throughout marketing campaigns (Xie, 2021). Consumers will purchase a product or service only if they are open to receiving sales messages. Brand storytelling has the ability to captivate consumers' imaginations and inspire them to take actions that are advantageous to the brand.

Customers' emotions become critical when they understand that not all stories end happily (Pera & Viglia, 2016). However, marketers craft a compelling narrative to positively impact consumers and prevent any adverse consequences (Chiu *et al.* 2012). Individuals can misinterpret brand content, even if it is transparent (Aydlett, 2016). Brand distinctiveness can be influenced by precise and immediate communication that mirrors unique brand associations (Hjelmgren, 2016). Stories serve as a medium for conveying emotions, experiences, perspectives, facts, and atmospheres in a manner that enables the listener to acquire knowledge, comprehension, or firsthand encounters (Tsai, 2020). In addition to narrative communication, people engage in the cognitive processing of information through storytelling, since it facilitates the comprehension of situations, the organisation of events, and the evaluation and management of emotions (Roxo, 2020). However, video

storytelling is beneficial for advertising to draw in and captivate customers (Mancuso & Stuth, 2015; Wendt, Griesbaum, & Kölle, 2016). Consumers' understanding of videos is crucial for differentiating brands through video storytelling (Yu & Chang, 2013). Brands that do not use videos often struggle to compete in brand content development (Newman, 2017).

Authentic brand narratives help establish trust with consumers. An inauthentic or inconsistent brand narrative undermines consumer trust in the brand. Humans have an inherent desire for authenticity and are prone to questioning the veracity of the information they receive (Cinelli & LeBoeuf, 2020). Stories are deemed "true" when they encompass significant values and objectives that correspond to individuals' actual life encounters (Andhini & Andanawarih, 2022). Trust is essential for customer loyalty, and its lack can lead to a decrease in customer confidence. However, emotional bonding between a brand and its customers cultivates loyalty. Customers may not feel inclined to stay loyal if the brand story lacks emotional impact or consistency. Without a strong connection, customers are more inclined to seek out other beverage choices, resulting in a decrease in customer retention.

Zhang, Qu, and Gao (2023) opined that the act of storytelling involves more than just presenting the object, location, and incident. It also entails the incorporation of the narrator's own recollections into the narrative, so transforming stories into a means of self-expression. Conflicting stories and absence of genuineness might lead to a poor brand reputation. Modern consumers are perceptive to brands that come across as disingenuous or exploitative. An unfavourable perception can rapidly disseminate by word-of-mouth, social media, and online reviews, affecting the brand's reputation. Uniform brand stories enhance a feeling of consistency and recognition among consumers. Without a coherent narrative, customers struggle to connect with the brand on a profound level. This may lead to reduced customer interaction and a diminished brand remembrance. The majority of the reviewed studies indicated a scarcity of research on brand storytelling, especially in a developing nation like Nigeria. Most of them were done in a foreign setting.

For instance, Teraiya *et al.* (2023) investigated how storytelling advertising affected Indian consumers' perceptions of advertisements and brand equity. Andhini and Andanawarih (2022) examined the significance of brand stories in shaping brand perception and purchase intention among Generation Z individuals in Indonesia. Dias and Cavalheiro (2022) investigated the impact of storytelling on the development of brand affection in Portugal, specifically focusing on the PANDORA case in point. Joshi, Domb, Chanda, and Bais (2022) assessed the influence of storytelling advertisements on the intention of consumers to make a purchase in India. Therefore, there is need to fill this gap in knowledge by exploring the effect of

brand storytelling on customer retention in non-alcoholic beverage industry in Delta state, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

- i. Assess the effect of genuine brand stories on customer retention in non-alcoholic beverage industry in Delta state, Nigeria.
- ii. Ascertain the effect of brand emotional connection on customer retention in non-alcoholic beverage industry in Delta state, Nigeria.
- iii. Determine the effect of consistent brand narrative on customer retention in non-alcoholic beverage industry in Delta state, Nigeria.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Concept of Brand Storytelling

A story is a narrative, whether true or imaginary, written in prose or verse with the purpose of entertaining, informing, or captivating the audience. Brand storytelling is a marketing strategy where a company tells a creative narrative to establish a connection with its customers (Onobrakpeya & Ugwuonah, 2023). A brand story is not just a series of events, but an engaging journey in which the audience actively takes part. Businesses can use unique characteristics, settings, and storylines to convey their brand narrative. They can develop a strong brand story by incorporating their business's history, inspiration sources, goals, and final offerings. Storytelling is a potent communication technique given that the content within a story tends to have a greater impact (Chiu *et al.* 2012).

Narrative is a powerful method for communicating a brand's comprehensive viewpoint by engaging and fostering relationships (Thier & Russin, 2018). Storytelling is recognised as a method for memory retention, raising awareness, recalling information, and establishing brand recognition, in addition to serving as a means of communication (Singh & Sonnenburg, 2012). Storytelling can assist individuals in understanding, conveying, assessing, and appraising brand (Pera, 2017). Storytelling is essential for branding. Lee and Jahng (2020) assert that stories have a significant influence on the brand experience, thereby affecting the perceived value of the brand within the minds of consumers. Grygsby and Mellema (2020) posited that the use of storytelling as a marketing approach fosters trust due to its comparatively less invasive nature when compared to conventional marketing initiatives.

Aristotle possibly established the first theory on narrative around 2000 years ago. The components of a story, as outlined by Chiu *et al.* (2012), include the beginning, middle, and conclusion, along with characters and a moral for the audience. Stories form the basis of human memory. Salespersons aim to influence customers by using video tales and visual elements to showcase

organisations' values and products (Wang *et al.* 2016). According to Williams *et al.* (2019), common themes in storytelling related to luxury products include craft, creation, beginnings, myth, superstars, pedigree, and collectability. Dias and Dias (2018) argued that narrative can transcend mere communication and be employed in products to enhance their value by incorporating a symbolic dimension. Storytelling is an effective approach for influencing customer behaviour by creating a reflective experience in the audience's mind. A story comprises various elements, including characters, setting, conflict, rising action, climax, and resolution. The audience may easily comprehend and retain a story by establishing these key elements. The consumer is the primary character in a brand narrative, rather than the company. For this to be successful, the customer needs to be the protagonist, with the brand acting as a mentor. By "what you stand for," we are referring to the fundamental principles of the brand. It is the primary motivation of the firm, distinguishing it from competitors. It is the company's purpose. In an ideal scenario, one could encapsulate their ideals in two or three words.

Nike is associated with athletic success rather than just footwear or sports equipment. Disney symbolises familial happiness, rather than just theme parks or films. Values are the traits that establish the identity of a company. Many companies include values such as ethics and creativity into their guiding principles. However, they do not really represent themselves; instead, they employ these names for their pleasing tone. The exemplary conduct of a company's top employees on their most successful days mirrors its core beliefs. If a company highly values a salesperson who is willing to bend the rules to secure a large deal, then honesty is not a top priority; success is.

2.1.2 Concept of Visual Storytelling

Visual storytelling refers to the utilisation of photos, graphics, and videos to captivate spectators, elicit emotions, encourage participation, and incite action (Shiao, 2020). Modern visual storytelling is used to fascinate and engage audiences. Marketers traditionally employed these strategies, but with the rise of digital marketing, they are now seeking designers' help to enhance the appeal of their messages. The key is to find the most efficient method of conveying information in an engaging and beneficial manner to the appropriate audience, rather than just pairing material with an image (El-Desouky, 2020). Scherman (2016) asserted that the effectiveness and efficiency of information are enhanced when the visual factor is most prominent. A narrative forms the basis of visual storytelling. A story is a portrayal of a sequence of events through many mediums such as written, spoken, and visual forms. A visual story is a narrative where the plot is conveyed mostly through visual elements. The visuals are inherently powerful. Images are significantly more potent than

words. Enhancing a captivating story with pictures strengthens the message further. The human brain processes up to 80% of sensory input from the world through the visual elements. One effective method to communicate a brand message to the audience is by targeting the sense of vision. Visual aids facilitate the understanding of complex ideas, reduce learning time, and improve retention of information.

Marketers can leverage visual elements like photographs, videos, GIFs, and simulations to showcase the worth of a product (Olson, 2019). Visual storytelling is a strategy that uses engaging narratives to enhance consumer experiences and improve company performance. It involves placing the consumer at the core of the story, creating emotional visual content, and strategically sharing it throughout the consumer's journey (Ron, 2016). Visual storytelling is beneficial for maintaining audience engagement and ensuring message clarity. The marketing company's interactions with clients may deepen, fostering a feeling of togetherness and devotion among persons who are captivated by the story. The images must adhere to a narrative structure that includes a clearly defined introduction, middle section, and conclusion. This can be accomplished by arranging the image and maintaining a consistent message. Visual media can enhance memory retention by 55% compared to using only words, making it more effective in establishing a long-lasting impact on the target demographic and successfully converting them into devoted consumers.

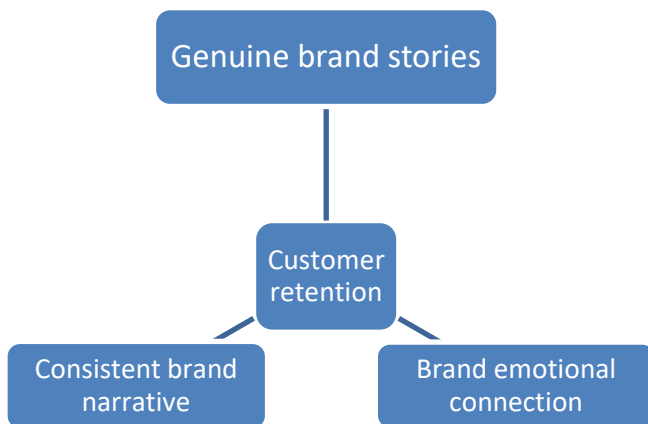


Figure 1: Dimensions of Brand Storytelling Influence on Customer Retention
 Source: Huang *et al.* (2022).

2.1.3 Concept of Genuine Brand Stories

Authentic stories are genuine and accurate narratives that a brand communicates about itself. The stories strive to create a genuine and relatable relationship with the audience, surpassing typical marketing buzzwords. Authentic brand narratives are deeply connected to the brand's past, principles, and mission, showcasing its genuine essence. Authentic brand narratives are sincere and clear, steering clear of hyperbole or deceptive details. They present a true reflection of the brand's identity and roots. Authentic narratives personalise a brand by highlighting its principles, purpose, and the individuals involved. Genuine narratives aid in establishing confidence. Customers are more inclined to maintain loyalty to brands they have confidence in. Authentic narratives can connect with customers' personal experiences or beliefs, making the company more relatable and enhancing the probability of sustained loyalty. Authentic narratives may set a company apart in a competitive market, increasing client loyalty towards a distinctive and real brand. The term "authenticity" is defined by Cambridge Dictionary (2019) as "the quality of being real or true." A brand's behaviour mirrors its fundamental principles and standards, which determine its authenticity (Fritz, Schoenmueller, & Bruhn, 2017).

Authenticity is a valued quality that is being more recognised by customers in today's society. Past studies have linked authenticity to emotions (Rose & Wood, 2005) and communication skills (Schauch, 2009), and the user established a connection between the concepts of one's authentic self and personal identities with related objects and surroundings. Whitmer (2019) emphasises the significant influence of authenticity, particularly in the age of social media when sharing personal aspects like settings, items, and feelings has become common through various visual mediums including photos, candid shots, blogs, vlogs, and stories.

Rodrigues, Brandão, Billore, and Oda (2023) stated that companies have affiliate groups comprising current, former, and potential consumers. The genuineness of information influences the depiction of brand attributes, qualities, and principles, as well as the establishment of brand loyalty and legacy. A brand's personality represents how consumers perceive the brand's relevance to them (Schmitt, 2012). Brand personality encompasses a set of personality traits that customers link to a brand (Aaker, 1997). Brand sincerity is a component of brand personality characterised by qualities such as honesty, wholesomeness, down-to-earthness, cheerfulness, and genuineness (Aaker, 1997).

2.1.4 Concept of Brand Emotional Connection

To establish a stronger bond with customers, this narrative typically connects a brand's mission with their ideals. Stories enhance a brand's emotional and visual heritage, increasing their attractiveness to customers. Storytelling evokes emotional responses and creates connections with buyers, making them more receptive and persuadable (Biesenbach, 2018). Stories can enhance emotional connections by emphasising facts, evoking feelings, and offering vivid descriptions. Junaid, Hou, Hussain, and Kirmani (2019) discussed the relevance of the imagination, stating that escapism is a hedonistic element of businesses that results in brand loyalty. Moreover, as businesses transform into storytellers, they become more human-like by cultivating and displaying a distinct personality (Biesenbach, 2018).

Delgado-Ballester (2020) highlights the significance of storytelling in forming brand-consumer identity. Kemp, Porter, Anaza, and Min (2021) conducted an online study on brand storytelling and the findings indicated that stories have the ability to establish personal relationships with brands, especially when they elicit emotional responses. Personal relationships lead to higher levels of online customers' engagement and favourable electronic word-of-mouth. This effect is heightened when the narrative is derived from user-generated material rather than branded content. The significance of effectively communicating a unique brand message is receiving more attention, as stressed by Mckee and Gerace (2018), and its symbolic aspect that conveys affection and values, as pointed out (Tormes, Silva, Pivetta, & Scherer, 2016; Mucundorfeanu, 2018).

Brand emotional connection is the strong link that develops between a consumer and a brand, going beyond simple transactions or logical preferences. This link is based on emotions and feelings, shaping consumers' perception and engagement with the brand. An emotional bond can lead to loyalty, advocacy, and a readiness to choose the brand above others, even if it costs more. Storytelling elicits emotional responses and establishes connections with potential buyers, enabling them to reduce their defences and be more readily influenced (Biesenbach, 2018). Brands must differentiate themselves in the digital realm by using storytelling to communicate unique aspects of their identity and core values to consumers (Mucundorfeanu, 2018). Establishing an emotional bond with a brand is a potent approach that surpasses conventional marketing methods centred on product attributes and advantages. This connection engages the consumer's feelings and emotions, fostering a more profound and significant engagement with the brand.

Emotional branding plays a crucial role in establishing brand loyalty as consumers tend to recall how a company makes them feel rather than technical details like product traits, features, and facts. Garg, Chhikara, Kumar,

and Kataria (2018) highlighted that emotional branding is now essential for most brands and is the primary driver of brand loyalty. Emotional branding is a strategy used to cultivate enduring emotional connections between customers and a company. An emotional connection goes beyond the fundamental value proposition of products or services, linking the customer's feelings and emotions to the brand. Customers who have an emotional attachment to a brand tend to be more loyal and less responsive to price fluctuations or rival offers. They are expected to keep supporting the business due to the emotional satisfaction they get. Customers that feel emotionally linked are more inclined to suggest the company to others, thereby increasing their loyalty through word-of-mouth marketing, which can help attract new customers and maintain current ones. Established research indicates that forming strong emotional connections with consumers is becoming more challenging due to the varying ways in which consumers perceive and assess brands (Torelli, Oh, & Stoner, 2021).

2.1.5 Concept of Consistent Brand Narrative

The term "narrative" pertains to elements of storytelling. Effective brand stories generate empathy, captivate the audience, and motivate them to take actions that benefit both the consumer and the company. Compelling stories captivate customers and ensure that key marketing messages are absorbed and retained. Woodside, Sood, and Miller (2008) provided five arguments for the significance of narrative in marketing. Narratives offer numerous advantages, such as the following: humans naturally think in stories, stories help with memory retention, stories provide pleasurable experiences, businesses and products can connect with neural identities, resulting in strong brand loyalty, and stories promote transparency. Some precursors of brand affection align with these arguments. Having a consistent brand narrative is essential for establishing a robust and easily recognisable brand identity that connects with audiences consistently. It requires ensuring a consistent narrative across all channels and interactions with customers, including marketing, social media, customer support, and product development. Consistent storytelling fosters trust, loyalty, and emotional engagement with the audience. The story is based on the brand's fundamental message and values, guaranteeing that all communications mirror these essential features.

Brand story advertising is convincing because of their precision and narrative structure when they convey ideas through stories (Lee, Lee, & Yang, 2017). Brechman and Purvis (2015) examined how brand narratives could impact consumer perceptions in a fictional world. Customer receptivity has a crucial role in determining the effectiveness of story advertising, as indicated by their research. An engaging video advertisement has the potential to

improve the way experiences are processed, decrease the amount of detail involved, and boost the power of conviction (Lim & Childs, 2020). Consistent messaging across all touch points guarantees that customers encounter the same message and experience, irrespective of their interaction with the brand. Consistent messaging strengthens brand awareness, facilitating customer recall and preference for the brand over competitors. Consistent storytelling indicates dependability and steadiness, characteristics that customers frequently look for in brands. Consistency in the brand's messaging enhances trust, a crucial element in customers' retention.

In the opinion of van Laer, De-Ruyter, Visconti, and Wetzels (2014), narrative transportation primarily centres around emotions rather than mental processes. This emotional engagement with a tale might cause buyers to become profoundly involved and perhaps impede their capacity to objectively examine claims. A crucial aspect to contemplate in stories and brand narratives is narrative conveyance, which pertains to the cognitive process by which the recipient of the story becomes deeply engaged in the narrative with a captivating story. Narrative transportation is the phenomenon in which an end user becomes fully engaged in a fictional world crafted by a tale, driven by their ability to empathise with the characters and their imaginative involvement in the plot.

2.2 Theoretical Review

2.2.1 Aristotle's Rhetorical Theory

Aristotle defined rhetoric as the ability to discern the persuasive techniques applicable in a given context, which he classified into logos (logical argument), ethos (ethical proof), and pathos (emotional proof) (Borchers, 2005). Logos emphasises the utilisation of logical reasoning in the statements made by speakers. Logos is an essential tool that enables buyers to make an objective assessment by examining the textual elements in a green brand narrative, demonstrating the credibility of a green brand. The use of pathos appeals to the target consumers by aligning with their ideas and wants, thereby producing a sense of cheerfulness. Ethos refers to the linguistic choices made by speakers to showcase their credibility, goodwill, or behaviour. Pathos is a rhetorical strategy that aims to evoke strong emotions or sensations in the listener (Bonet & Sauquet, 2010).

In order to persuade two parties with differing perspectives to reach common ground, it is essential to utilise the principles of logos, ethos, and pathos (Panigyrakis, Panopoulos, & Koronaki, 2020). Ethos pertains to the trustworthiness, dependability, and assurance that buyers derive from a green brand's professional knowledge and green business certifications as presented in the brand's narrative (Higgins & Walker, 2012; Chu, Deng, & Chuang,

2014). Essentially, ethos is essential for ensuring the genuineness of a green brand. The concurrent usage of the three methods of persuasion improves the effectiveness of communication (Yang, Lee, Lee, & Koo, 2018). Aristotle's rhetorical theory has been utilised in many fields such as advertising, industrial communication, and e-commerce marketing (Murthy & Gosal, 2016; Yang *et al.* 2018).

Contemporary rhetorical analysis primarily examines and assesses modern marketing strategies, rather than engaging in the criticism of old marketing controversies. Recent studies have demonstrated that the use of rhetorical figures, well-intended language, and proper behaviours can improve the effectiveness of marketing campaigns (Yang *et al.*, 2018; Panigyrakis *et al.*, 2020). Brand storytelling enhances consumer value by harmonising with their specific demands (Ryu, Lehto, Gordon, & Fu, 2019). The use of logos, pathos, and ethos effectively caters to the wants of the target audience (Borchers, 2005). Employing the three techniques of persuasion in brand storytelling aids in effectively captivating consumers and addressing their concerns (Huang, Zhuang, Li, & Gao, 2022). Brand sincerity is said to arise from the value-expressive attributes of a brand. Thus, by employing rhetoric to highlight favourable brand attributes in a brand narrative, one can augment the perceived genuineness of the brand.

2.2.2 The Solution, Access, Value and Education (S.A.V.E.) Model

The S.A.V.E. framework was initially developed by Ettenson, Conrado, and Knowles (2013). According to them, the conventional 4P marketing paradigm needs to be reinterpreted because it is no longer applicable in the current marketing climate.

Instead of Product, Focus on Solution: Ettenson *et al.* (2013) evaluated offers based on their ability to fulfil demands rather than their features, functions, or technological capabilities. Senic (2013) argues that a content strategy should prioritise being client-centric by focusing on answering consumer inquiries rather than pushing for sales without comprehension. Providing buyers with valuable and relevant information serves as a translator to assist them comprehend the benefits of the product or service. Consumers purchase the product because to its superior ability to fulfil their needs compared to competitors, fostering loyalty.

Instead of Place, Focus on Access: Create a cohesive cross-channel strategy that considers the entire purchasing journey of customers (Ettenson *et al.* 2013). Senic (2013) emphasises the importance of understanding the whereabouts and activities of potential customers. Developing a content distribution plan is the current objective. Prior to entering that industry, organisations should determine which types of communication are relevant to

potential customers and clients. It is crucial for a business to have a strong online presence, but they should avoid investing time in social media sites that do not cater to their intended demographic. When establishing a Facebook page or blog, businesses should carefully assess their objectives. Evaluating the value of investing time in a social network Businesses should not consider the type of content to post or the level of engagement to anticipate on these channels until that time.

Instead of Price, Focus on Value: Emphasise the advantages related to price rather than how pricing is linked to manufacturing costs, overall profitability, or competitors' prices (Ettenson *et al.* 2013). Salespeople often make the error of not effectively communicating how the technology on the product packaging translates into tangible benefits for consumers. This causes clients to focus on the value of the technology and overlook any pricing differences. Under these conditions, effective content marketing can function as a sales representative. Creating valuable content is akin to recruiting sales representatives. Tanton (2013) stated that important information should be timely, real, usable, and engaging to elicit a reaction from the audience at the right moment.

Instead of Promotion, Focus on Education: Deliver personalised information tailored to customers' specific requirements at every phase of the purchasing process instead of depending on advertising or public relations (Ettenson *et al.* 2013). This concept is explicitly articulated in multiple content marketing frameworks. Prospective buyers and clients require prompt, pertinent, and beneficial information to securely complete transactions and process returns. Providing valuable information can lead to customers returning more promptly, intentionally, and with lower expenses. Educational content providers are expected to experience a rise in customer referrals and sales.

The S.A.V.E. framework offers a reevaluation of the conventional 4P marketing model, prioritising solutions over products, access over place, value over price, and education over promotion. Within the non-alcoholic beverage sector, this particular model holds significant relevance in terms of brand storytelling and customer retention. It promotes the importance of recognising and satisfying consumer preferences, establishing integrated cross-channel strategies, highlighting value propositions, and providing customised educational content that caters to individual customer needs. These factors are crucial for establishing robust brands and cultivating enduring customer loyalty within a fiercely competitive market environment.

2.3 Review of Empirical Studies

Teraiya, Namboodiri, and Jayswal (2023) investigated how storytelling advertising affected Indian consumers' perceptions of advertisements and their perceptions of brands. The investigation employed a quasi-experimental design. The study recruited a total of 850 student participants for the study using simple random sampling. The study used a two-step approach in a single research model, employing structural equation modelling in AMOS 26.0 software, to analyse the model's goodness of fit and presented hypotheses. The results suggest that ad-elicited stories have a beneficial effect on several parts of the advertising experience. These findings also validate the notion that storytelling video advertisements have a significant impact on viewers' experiences and contribute positively to overall brand equity. Advertising communications have the potential to enhance brand awareness, loyalty, and perceived value, regardless of the specific product or platform, by establishing narrative transportation. Video storytelling advertisements encourage consumers to explore a brand's coherent and captivating evidence.

Apria and Parahiyant (2023) investigated the relationship between customer satisfaction, brand love, emotional brand attachment, and loyalty in hospital marketing. The study's population consists of Malang's class B hospital consumers. The precise number of customers is indeterminate, hence rendering it an infinite population. This study administered the survey to a total of 227 individuals. The study employed partial least squares structural equation modelling to analyse the data. The results demonstrated that customer satisfaction had a positive and significant influence on brand loyalty among customers of class B hospitals in Malang City, with emotional brand attachment acting as a mediator. The variable of customer satisfaction can influence emotional brand attachment, which in turn influences brand loyalty. However, the measure of customer satisfaction does not show a positive and significant influence on brand loyalty among clients of class B hospitals through the mechanism of brand love. Customer satisfaction does not influence brand loyalty through brand love.

Barbosa, Simões, and Leal (2022) examined the viewpoints of youth about digital storytelling marketing. They conducted eight focus groups using a qualitative method. The study comprised a cohort of 40 Portuguese who were both customers and users of social networking sites. The participants' ages ranged from 19 to 37 years old. The study shows that when a friend posts content, it captures their attention and boosts the likelihood of further interaction, including liking, sharing, and commenting. The study reveals that digital storytelling campaigns can have positive emotional impacts. However, if consumers are uncertain about the connection between the chosen theme of

the story and the firm and its products, it might lead to distrust. Furthermore, marketing advertisements may fail to improve the brand's image if they are not prominently included in the campaign.

Andhini and Andanawarih (2022) investigated the importance of brand narratives in influencing the perception and purchasing intention of Generation Z people in Indonesia. The study used an exploratory descriptive method, employing questionnaires to collect data. Additionally, the study conducted historical research on two fashion brands. Findings suggest that reliable brand narratives have a positive influence on a customer's perception of a brand and their decision to make a purchase. The study recommended that future research should give priority to investigating the impact of brand storytelling by evaluating different age groups, enterprises, and industries.

In Portugal, Dias, and Cavalheiro (2022) investigated the significance of narrative in fostering brand affection. The study focused on the Pandora jewelry brand's customers. The study found that storytelling has a valuable effect on consumers' emotional attachment to the brand. Customers' reliable narratives about their Pandora jewelry have a positive impact on their affinity for both the jewelry and the brand. This underscores the significance of a product story as a valuable idea for enhancing the value of both the product and the brand.

Joshi, Domb, Chanda, and Bais (2022) assessed the influence of storytelling advertisements on the inclination of consumers to make purchases in India. The study included a sample size of 150 individuals who encountered advertisements. Various elements such as word of mouth, amusement, memorability, and time duration influence purchase intention. The factors of annoyance and informativeness have no substantial impact on the consumer's buying intention. The study suggests that considering these elements during the development of storytelling advertisements can enhance their effectiveness in influencing customers.

Hong, Yang, Wooldridge, and Bhappu (2022) examined the influence of customers' brand storytelling on their brand perceptions, as well as its effects on consumer cognition and emotions. They conducted three experiments to validate the idea. Furthermore, a mediation analysis was conducted. The results indicate that when customers engage in genuine brand storytelling, it results in an increase in favorable brand perceptions. When consumers engage with consumer brand storytelling instead of a corporation-authored brand narrative, they display heightened cognitive processing and experience more positive emotions. This leads to a more positive perception of the brand.

Mafael, Raithel, Taylor, and Stewart (2021) examined the influence of uniqueness and consistency on the effectiveness of advertising. In order to

validate the reliability of this method, the study employed a dataset of Super Bowl advertisements spanning ten years, along with panel data on word-of-mouth communication for the advertised products (buzz). The results showed that the distinctiveness and reliability of the combination of an element, rather than the simple existence of any individual ingredient, is what is significant. Advertisements are more likely to be effective if they are unique compared to previous advertising for all brands, while also retaining consistency with ads for the same brand from earlier periods.

Ghorbanzadeh and Rahehagh (2021) examined the link between emotional brand attachment and brand love, with a particular emphasis on how these feelings contribute to the shift from satisfaction to loyalty in Iran. The researchers obtained 300 questionnaires from the respondents. These surveys focused on smartphone and apparel brands. The study analysed the data using the partial least squares method. The results showed that brand love has the greatest influence on brand loyalty, surpassing both satisfaction and emotional brand attachment in terms of its direct impact on brand loyalty. Moreover, the examination of indirect impacts has verified the concept that emotional elements, such as emotional connection and brand love, work as intermediaries in the sequence from satisfaction to loyalty in a specific manner. Demonstrating generalizability necessitates the inclusion of a more diverse range of consumer demographics. The poll was conducted in Iran. Subsequent research should assess identical product categories across diverse cultural contexts and incorporate additional product categories to guarantee the external validity of these findings.

3. Methodology

This investigation employed a cross-sectional survey research technique. Cross-sectional study involves the measurement of units from a group of participants at a specific moment in time, unlike observing them over a prolonged duration (Burns, Veeck, & Bush, 2017). The method was chosen because it helped the researcher to evaluate public opinion using questionnaires at a certain moment. The study focused on customers of non-alcoholic beverage companies in Delta state. This narrowed down the study's emphasis. Focusing just on Delta enabled a thorough examination of the particular obstacles and advantages in promoting non-alcoholic beverages in the state. The exact number of customers buying non-alcoholic beverages in Delta state is unknown. The Cochran (1977) formula is used to calculate sample size in studies where the population size is unknown.

The formula for the Cochran sample size calculation is as follows:

$$n = \frac{z^2(PQ)}{e^2} \dots \dots \dots (1)$$

Where:

n = sample size

z = z-score corresponding to the desired level of confidence

p = estimated proportion of the population with the characteristic or behavior of interest

q = 1 - p

e = level of precision desired (margin of error)

$$n = \frac{1.96^2 \times 0.5 \times 0.5}{0.05^2}$$

$$n = \frac{3.8416 \times 0.5 \times 0.5}{0.0025}$$

$$n = 384$$

The study used the judgmental sampling technique. Researchers use judgmental sampling to pick certain groups for the sample based on their knowledge of the community and the precise traits they were looking for. The researchers used judgmental sampling in the non-alcoholic beverage industry to identify participants who possessed specified features that were relevant to the research objectives. The characteristics encompassed in this category consist of consumer preferences, product knowledge, marketing expertise, and retail involvement. The researchers used their experience and judgement to identify persons or groups likely to offer pertinent and meaningful information for the study. The researchers designed a structured questionnaire to collect data directly from individuals, who are the primary source. A five-point Likert scale was used to rate responses: 1 for Strongly Disagree, 2 for Disagree, 3 for Undecided, 4 for Agree, and 5 for Strongly Agree. A preliminary study was undertaken to assess the research instrument for any potential problems prior to its complete implementation. A pilot research was conducted in Anambra state to pretest the questionnaire and assess its validity and reliability. Ten copies of the questionnaire were provided to sample respondents for this purpose.

An expert panel in the field of marketing also assessed the content validity of the instrument by reviewing and rating each item for relevance and representativeness using a Likert-type scale of multiple choice questions. Building upon the pilot study, the test-retest reliability method was employed to determine the instrument's reliability. The results indicated that all variables had Cronbach's alpha values between 0.811 and 0.821, which exceeded the threshold of 0.6, demonstrating that the instrument was reliable and appropriate for the research. Hair, William, Black, Rolph, and Ronald (2006) specified that the minimum threshold for acceptability in quantitative research is within the range of 0.6 to 0.7.

The data collected for the study were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods to arrive at a conclusion. The descriptive statistics used frequencies and percentages to examine the personal characteristics of the respondents. Correlation and multiple regression analysis were the inferential statistical techniques used. Correlation analysis was used to measure the degree of association between the variables under investigation. Multiple regression were used to ascertain the effect of each independent variable on the dependent variable. The above hypotheses were evaluated using multiple regression analysis. The analysis was conducted using SPSS software version 25 for Windows.

The model specification is presented as follows:

$$Y = f(X) \dots \dots \dots (2)$$

$$CR = F(GBS, BEC, CBRN) \dots \dots \dots (3)$$

$$CR = \beta_0 + \beta_1 GBS + \beta_2 BEC + \beta_3 CBRN + \varepsilon \dots \dots \dots (4)$$

Where:

- CR = Customer Retention
- GBS = Genuine Brand Stories
- BEC = Brand Emotional Connection
- CBRN = Consistent Brand Narrative

4. Results and Discussion

This section focused on the analyses of data collected from the respondents.

Table 1: Response Rate

S/N	Questionnaires	Frequency	Percentages
1	Total questionnaires administered	384	100%
2	Questionnaires retrieved	378	98%
3	Questionnaires rejected	4	1%
4	Questionnaires analyzed	374	97%

Source: Field Survey (2024)

Table 1 indicated a response rate of 97%. A 97% response rate was deemed adequate by the researchers to proceed with the investigation. Kothari (2004) stated that an analysis necessitates a response rate of at least 50%.

Table 2: Analysis of Respondents Profile

S/N	Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Gender:		
	Male	153	41
	Female	221	59
	Total	374	100
2	Age Range:		
	18-28	79	21
	29-38	108	29
	39-48	142	38
	Above 49	45	12
	Total	374	100
3	Marital Status:		
	Single	168	45
	Married	142	38
	Divorced	64	17
	Total	374	100
4	Academic Credentials:		
	SSCE	64	17
	OND/NCE	123	33
	HND/ B.Sc.	153	41
	Postgraduate degree	34	9
	Total	374	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 2 indicated that 41% of the samples were males, and 59% were females. 21% of respondents were aged 18-28, 29% were aged 29-38, 38% were aged 39-48, and 12% were over 49. 45% of the respondents were single, 38% were married, and 17% were divorcees. The majority (41%) of the respondents have an educational background of HND/ B.Sc.

Table 3: Correlation between the Study Variables

S/N	Variables	1	2	3	4	N
1	Genuine Brand Stories	1				374
2	Brand Emotional Connection	0.326**	1			374
3	Consistent Brand Narrative	0.177**	0.309**	1		374
4	Customer Retention	0.560**	0.473**	0.394**	1	374

Source: Field Survey (2024)

Table 3 showed that genuine brand stories has a strong positive significant correlation with customer retention ($r=0.560$). Brand emotional connection has a positive significant correlation with customer retention ($r=0.473$). Consistent brand narrative has positive significant correlation with customer retention ($r=0.394$). This implied that brand emotional connection was one among the variables that has a stronger relationship with customer retention.

Table 4: Effect of Brand Storytelling Dimensions on Customer Retention

Model	Coefficients ^a						
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1(Constant)	-.413	1.110		-.372	.710		
Genuine Brand Stories	.450	.042	.434	10.683	.000	.887	1.127
Brand Emotional Connection	.297	.048	.259	6.158	.000	.828	1.207
Consistent Brand Narrative	.264	.045	.237	5.862	.000	.898	1.114

a. Dependent Variable: Customer Retention

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 4 showed that genuine brand stories has significant positive effect on customer retention ($\beta = 0.434, p < 0.05$). Brand emotional connection has significant positive effect on customer retention ($\beta = 0.259, p < 0.05$). Consistent brand narrative has significant positive effect on customer retention ($\beta = 0.237, p < 0.05$). The result showed that there is no multicollinearity because the VIF of genuine brand stories (1.127), brand emotional connection (1.207), and consistent brand narrative (1.114) towards customer retention are below 10. Besides, the tolerance level is more than 0.1 where genuine brand stories have 0.887, brand emotional connection has 0.828 and consistent brand narrative has 0.898.

Table 5: Fitness of the Study Models

Model		ANOVA ^a				
		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	329.325	3	109.775	104.503	.000 ^b
	Residual	388.665	370	1.050		
	Total	717.989	373			

a. Dependent Variable: Customer Retention

b. Predictors: (Constant), Genuine Brand Stories, Brand Emotional Connection, Consistent Brand Narrative

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

The data presented in Table 5 demonstrated that the independent factors served as reliable indicators of brand storytelling. This was corroborated by the F measurement of 104.503 and the precise p value (0.000), which was below the significance level of 0.05. Hence, the model exhibited statistical significance.

Table 6: Variations in Customer Retention

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.677 ^a	.459	.454	1.025

a. Predictors: (Constant), Genuine Brand Stories, Brand Emotional Connection, Consistent Brand Narrative

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 6 showed that the dimensions of brand storytelling were seen as acceptable factors in explaining the variations in customer retention with adjusted R square of 0.454. This means that the dimensions of brand storytelling explained 45% of the variations in customer retention.

4.1 Discussion of Results

The study explored the effect of brand storytelling on customer retention in non-alcoholic beverage industry in Delta state. This study used a cross-sectional survey research approach. The study focused on customers of non-alcoholic beverage companies in Delta state. Findings indicated that genuine brand stories have a significant positive effect on customer retention in non-alcoholic beverage industry in Delta state. The result agrees with Mafael *et al.* (2021) study findings that advertisements are more effective if they are unique compared to previous advertising for all brands, while also retaining consistency with ads for the same brand from earlier periods. Hong *et al.* (2022) study findings indicate that when customers engage in genuine brand storytelling, it results in an increase in favourable brand perceptions. The result implied that the genuineness of information influences the depiction of brand attributes, qualities, and principles, as well as the establishment of brand loyalty and legacy.

However, findings showed that brand emotional connection has a significant positive effect on customer retention in non-alcoholic beverage industry in Delta state. As per Ghorbanzadeh and Rahehagh (2021) study findings, brand love has the greatest influence on brand loyalty, surpassing both satisfaction and emotional brand attachment in terms of its direct impact on brand loyalty. Barbosa *et al.* (2022) study reveals that digital storytelling campaigns can have positive emotional impacts. However, if consumers are uncertain about the connection between the chosen theme of the story and the firm and its products, it might lead to distrust. The result implied that brand emotional connection is the strong link that develops between a consumer and a brand, going beyond simple transactions or logical preferences. This link is based on emotions and feelings, shaping consumers' perception and

engagement with the brand. An emotional bond can lead to loyalty, advocacy, and a readiness to choose the brand above others, even if it costs more.

Furthermore, findings showed that consistent brand narrative has a significant positive effect on customer retention in non-alcoholic beverage industry in Delta state. Dias and Cavalheiro (2022) study found that customers' reliable narratives about a brand have a positive impact on their affinity for both the product and the brand. This underscores the significance of a product story as a valuable idea for enhancing the value of both the product and the brand. According to Andhini and Andanawarih (2022) study findings, reliable brand narratives have a positive influence on a customer's perception of a brand and their decision to make a purchase. This implied that consistent messaging strengthens brand awareness, facilitating customer recall and preference for the brand over competitors. Consistency in the brand's messaging enhances trust, a crucial element in customers' retention.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concluded that brand storytelling has a significant positive effect on customer retention in non-alcoholic beverage industry in Delta state. The dimensions of brand storytelling explained 45% of the variations in customer retention. Genuine brand stories, brand emotional connection and consistent brand narrative has significant positive effect on customer retention. Brand storytelling is a powerful method for communicating a brand's comprehensive viewpoint by engaging and fostering relationships with customers. Storytelling is recognised as a method for memory retention, raising awareness, recalling information, and establishing brand recognition. Storytelling can assist customers in understanding, conveying, assessing, and appraising brand. Storytelling is essential for branding.

Non-alcoholic beverage firms should focus on creating genuine brand stories that authentically reflect the company's values, history, and commitment to quality. By sharing genuine stories, firms will not only build trust with consumers but also differentiate their brand in a market where authenticity is increasingly valued. Create marketing campaigns that evoke emotions such as joy, happiness, and satisfaction, showcasing how the products contribute to memorable moments and healthier lifestyles. By fostering a genuine emotional connection, firms can cultivate brand loyalty and create lasting relationships with the target audience. Firms should regularly review and update their narrative to align with evolving consumer preferences and market trends while maintaining the core essence of the brand. This consistency not only reinforces the brand identity but also helps consumers easily recognize and remember the non-alcoholic beverages in a competitive market.

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